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## Foreword

This issue of the Philippine Journal of Social Development (PJSD) is notable for two reasons: it is coming out on the golden anniversary of the College of Social Work and Community Development (CSWCD) and it is focused on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) having to do with poverty, hunger, gender, housing, transport, and other urgent concerns of Filipinos striving to live a full life—what we in CSWCD call *ganap na buhay*.

The goal of this journal issue is to promote analysis and dialogue about social development concerns and practices related to the building of sustainable, safe, and inclusive cities and communities primarily in the Philippine context but these can also be connected to other contexts, be they regional or global. The CSWCD vision is “Justice, Peace, and Sustainable Well-Being of the Filipino People and the Global Community,” which is premised on the close interrelationships between and among local, national, regional, and global realities and aspirations. The PJSD, being the national double-blind refereed journal of the CSWCD, “is committed to the promotion of socially responsive and appropriate interventions that engender social equality and challenge discrimination and oppression of marginalized sectors and populations.”

This PJSD issue is coming out on the second year of the implementation of the SDGs, issued by the United Nations at the end of 2015 and covering up to the year 2030, to replace the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which spanned the period 2001 - 2015. In the words of the United Nations Development Program:

*The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), otherwise known as the Global Goals, are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity.*

*These 17 Goals build on the successes of the Millennium Development Goals, while including new areas such as climate change, economic inequality, innovation, sustainable consumption, peace and justice, among other priorities. The goals are interconnected—often the key to success on one will involve tackling issues more commonly associated with another.*

*The SDGs work in the spirit of partnership and pragmatism to make the right choices now to improve life, in a sustainable way, for future generations. They provide clear guidelines and targets for all countries to adopt in accordance with their own priorities and the environmental challenges of the world at large. The SDGs are an inclusive agenda. They tackle the root causes of poverty and unite us together to make a positive change for both people and planet.*

Articles featured in this PJSD issue center on the SDGs and discuss social development theories, perspectives, policies, programs, and innovative solutions that can help build a useful body of new knowledge on the following key concerns, among others: safe, adequate, and affordable housing; cheap, sustainable, and accessible transportation systems for everyone; inclusion and participation of vulnerable groups such as women and children; universal accessibility of inclusive, green, and safe public spaces; constructive and mutually beneficial links between and among rural, urban, and peri-urban areas particularly on the issue of food security.

The CSWCD has a rich trove of development praxis spanning decades of living and working with diverse sections of marginalized and vulnerable groups in cities and communities. Professor Emeritus and former Dean Amaryllis T. Torres captures this in her introductory article entitled “The CSWCD’s Quest for Sustainable Human Development,” a reprise of the speech she delivered as keynote speaker during the CSWCD recognition rites in 2016. She takes off from the gains and gaps resulting from the pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and reflects on the enduring challenges confronting development professionals in the age of the SDGs. Can the CSWCD be proud of a distinct and exemplary tradition in development work wholeheartedly embraced and practiced by its graduates through decades of community immersion, and empowering as well as inclusive development interventions? Her article leans toward the affirmative, providing an eloquent basis for celebrating half a century of the CSWCD’s journey with those fortunate enough to enter its portals.

Poverty remains the foremost concern of the SDGs, and children in poverty are among the most vulnerable both at global and national levels. Asst. Prof. Excelsa Tongson explores this topic in a participatory way through her article entitled “Poverty in the Eyes of Children.” She contributes to a nascent but growing appreciation of the role of children in social development, beginning with their awareness of the key issues

affecting society. She discusses the results of her small exploratory study which shows that young children ages three to five with no direct experience of poverty can just the same reveal an understanding of it.

SDG Goal Number 2 is phrased this way: “End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture.” Dr. Teresita Villamor Barrameda’s article on “Surviving in the City through Home Gardens” is urgent and relevant, considering the levels of hunger and food insecurity afflicting the nation, resulting in severe malnutrition and stunting of many Filipino children. After providing a historical overview, she presents a small case study featuring home gardeners in Barangay UP Campus, showing how household-based approaches can prosper in urban communities, especially if there is support from local government. She provides a gendered picture of a practical and replicable development intervention that could be integrated in resettlement plans and programs.

In her article, Asst. Prof. Rowena A. Laguilles reveals that one billion people worldwide live in slums. SDG Goal Number 11 takes note of this by emphasizing safe, adequate, and affordable housing for all. The phrase “for all” underscores the necessity of universality and inclusivity, making it imperative to re-examine housing policies and programs from this vantage point. The author focuses on surfacing gender issues in housing, on which current Philippine policies and programs are largely silent, despite mandates contained in legislation such as the Magna Carta of Women which provides for women’s right to housing. Through a case study featuring the PATAMABA Home Owners’ Association in Angono, she reveals how women’s invisibility in housing policies as well as their lack of participation in housing programs lead to unfortunate results that could have easily been avoided if enabling and participatory mechanisms for women had been in place.

The proliferation of slums is not the only urban bane plaguing Philippine cities. In the case of Metro Manila, the horrific traffic situation is exacting a huge economic and social toll especially on commuters, aside from the alarming environmental costs of heavy pollution. It is in this context that Maritess D. Cruz provides a refreshing and alternative piece on the merits of cycling as a non-motorized mode of transport, which again should be a choice for all. She zeroes in on the gender aspects of cycling, showing the deterrents to women’s engagement in cycling stemming from intersecting inequalities based mainly on class and gender. She discusses the issues women face in urban transport and identifies key dimensions that sustainable cities can consider to promote cycling among them.

Sustainable cities, according to her, are also necessarily gender-responsive and cycling-friendly cities.

The last article in this issue is entitled “Paths to Power: Case Studies of Filipino Women Transcending Dynastic Politics” by Camille Genevieve M. Salvador. This is a most appropriate concluding piece and can be very much connected to SDG Goal no. 16, “Reduce inequality between and among countries.” The world is now experiencing extreme inequality of wealth and power, with eight men owning as much as the poorer half of the people on the entire planet. In the Philippine context, the 40 richest Filipinos accounted for more than three-fourths of the annual increase in income recorded in 2011. And in 2012, the top 20% of families had a 46.8% share of the total income of the country, while the bottom 20% shared a mere 6.8%. How is the power of wealth manifested in politics? Through the predominance of dynasties in securing political positions at both national and local levels. Can the dynastic barriers to democratic and transformative politics be transcended? The author says yes, by citing case studies of women who did not come from powerful dynasties and yet managed to get elected because they had strong educational and professional backgrounds, had civic experience before their political careers, and had good connections with social and women’s movements.

Ultimately, power relations determine the outcomes of development initiatives, particularly those connected with the pursuit of the SDGs. “Let no one be left behind” will not be much more than a catchy but empty slogan if power continues to be wielded and monopolized by a wealthy few who are mostly men, white, living in the North, well-educated, healthy, and able. Building power from below, in an inclusive, participatory, and sustainable way, is what development work is all about. And this is what CWSWD has been saying and doing all these years.

**Rosalinda Pineda Ofreneo, Ph.D.**  
Professorial Lecturer and Former Dean, UPCSWD  
Issue Editor







# THE CSWCD IN THE QUEST FOR SUSTAINABLE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

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Amaryllis Tiglao-Torres, PhD

## The Millennium Development Goals

The year 2015 marked a milestone in development. It was the year when nations that had embarked on the journey towards the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) had to report on how they measured up on the attainment of these eight goals. How DID the nations fare on the MDGs? Here are some useful statistics (UN, 2015):

- Globally, it is said that extreme poverty declined by more than half in a 15-year period, or since 2000, falling from 1.9 billion persons in 1990 to 836 million in 2015. More people earned wages, and the number of people in the working middle class—i.e., those living on more than \$4 a day—almost tripled between 1991 and 2015.
- The primary school net enrolment rate in the developing regions reached 91% in 2015, up from 83% in 2000, while the number of out-of-school children of primary school age worldwide fell by almost half.
- Meanwhile, the literacy rate among the youth aged 15 to 24 increased globally—from 83% to 91% between 1990 and 2015—and the literacy gap between women and men narrowed.
- Measures of gender equality improved. For instance, the target to eliminate gender disparity in primary, secondary, and tertiary education in the developing regions as a whole was achieved. In fact, in 2015, there were 103 girls enrolled for every 100 boys, with girls outstripping the educational gains achieved by boys.
- As workers, more women have entered the non-agricultural sector since 1990, now constituting up to 41% of paid workers outside the agricultural sector. Moreover, over a period of 20 years, or since 1991, the proportion of women in vulnerable employment as a share of total female employment declined by 13 percentage points.

- The global under-five mortality rate declined by more than half, dropping from 90 to 43 deaths per 1,000 live births between 1990 and 2015.
- The maternal mortality ratio declined by 45% worldwide, more than 71% of births were assisted by skilled health personnel, and contraceptive prevalence among women increased from 55% worldwide in 1990 to 64% in 2015.
- New HIV infections fell by approximately 40% between 2000 and 2013, and 13.6 million people living with HIV were receiving antiretroviral therapy (ART) globally, an immense increase from just 800,000 on ART in 2003.
- Other important health goals were met: both the global malaria incidence rate and the tuberculosis mortality rate fell by almost half within the past 20 years.
- On environmental sustainability, ozone-depleting substances have been virtually eliminated since 1990, and terrestrial and marine protected areas in many regions have increased substantially.
- Globally, 147 countries have met the drinking water target, 95 countries have met the sanitation target, and 77 countries have met both.
- The proportion of urban populations living in slums in the developing regions fell, from approximately 39.4% in 2000 to 29.7% in 2014.
- Official development assistance from developed countries increased by 66% in real terms between 2000 and 2014, reaching \$135.2 billion. Meanwhile, the proportion of external debt service to export revenue in developing countries fell from 12% in 2000 to 3% in 2013.
- Much of the world has now become connected through technology. As of 2015, 95% of the world's population was served by a mobile-cellular signal.
- Internet penetration has grown from just over 6% of the world's population in 2000 to 43% in 2015. As a result, 3.2 billion people are now linked to a global network of content and applications.

However, despite significant achievements attained worldwide on many of the MDG targets, progress has been uneven across regions and countries, leaving significant gaps. Millions of people are still being left behind, especially the poorest and those disadvantaged because of their sex, age, disability, ethnicity, or geographic location.

The “Philippines Fifth Progress Report on the MDGs,” written in 2014 as the country’s penultimate report on the MDGs, shows that the Philippines is on track to meet only six of the eight following targets. These are:

(1) Providing universal access to primary education, (2) providing educational opportunities for girls, (3) reducing infant and under-five mortality, (4) reversing the incidence of malaria, (5) increasing the rates for tuberculosis detection and cure, and (6) increasing the proportion of households with access to safe water supply.

One-half of the population now has access to basic sanitation, effectively meeting the target on this goal. Yet, we are (officially) lagging behind in the following areas: (1) completion rates in elementary education, (2) maternal mortality, (3) access to reproductive health, and (4) control of HIV/AIDS.

### **The CSWCD and the Global Agenda for Sustainable Development**

Students and graduates in Community Development, Social Work, and Women and Development Studies, know quite well the reasons behind the failure to attain the MDGs.

There are many field sites in our Field Instruction Program where the poverty and hunger of the residents are still very intense. Our fieldwork students interact with families whose children are out of school and working in dangerous and hazardous types of work. In the meanwhile, their fathers may have jobs but these tend to be non-regular, low-paying, and have no security. Their mothers are likely overburdened by unpaid care work, aside from having to sell, cook, and vend rice cakes, or do laundry to earn more.

Some of the CSWCD field partners are NGOs or government agencies with the goal of protecting the welfare of children and women. They bear witness to the different forms of sexual, physical, and economic

violence that these groups are subjected to. The perpetrators are usually men in intimate relationships with these women and children—their spouses, fathers, brothers, and other male relatives. Many other student groups have been assigned to localities visited by natural calamities and disasters. This provides exposure to the ways in which such calamities intensify the poverty of families and communities.

For many of the CSWCD faculty who have spent time living in vulnerable communities and interacting with the urban and rural poor and other disadvantaged sectors, it is difficult to accept that these realities still remain—the prevalence of poverty in the cities and the countryside, the lack of justice, the cruelty and violence against women and children, the high incidence of crime, incessant shooting and fighting in many corners of the country, the spread of corruption, the continuous increase in the gap between the haves and the have nots, and the massive harm wrought on the environment.

Because of these alarming realities, continuing advocacy and the molding of CSWCD students persist in accordance with the mission of the College: “academic excellence in the service of the nation and the global community.” This mission is meant not only to advance the disciplines of community development, social work, or women and development studies. It is being pursued through participatory, gender-responsive, empowering, and transformative development praxis. The vision of the College is “justice, peace, and sustainable well-being for the Filipino people and the global community.” This vision is meant to be attained through the CSWCD’s core values: people’s participation and empowerment, personal and social transformation, solidarity with the marginalized, and gender responsiveness. These were formulated ten years ago.

This year, 2017, is the second year of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which will continue the global struggle against poverty which the MDGs began. According to Helen Clark, UNDP administrator:

*This agreement marks an important milestone in putting our world on an inclusive and sustainable course. If we all work together, we have a chance of meeting citizens’ aspirations for peace, prosperity, and wellbeing, and to preserve our planet. - UNDP website, Sustainable Development Goals, <http://www.undp.org/>*

In the document signed by the member countries of the United Nations, the following is stated:

*We resolve, between now and 2030, to end poverty and hunger everywhere; to combat inequalities within and among countries; to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies; to protect human rights and promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls; and to ensure the lasting protection of the planet and its natural resources. We resolve also to create conditions for sustainable, inclusive and sustained economic growth, shared prosperity and decent work for all, taking into account different levels of national development and capacities.*

### **Inclusive Growth and Our Development Agenda**

The SDGs are the basis of a new social contract between the governments of the world and their peoples. They address the rights of different peoples and identify the obligations of all states in promoting these rights. Unlike the MDGs which are equity goals mostly addressed by developing countries, the SDGs are transformative in nature and reach out to all, rich and poor economies alike. Underlying the SDGs is a solemn promise to leave no one behind—*walang maiiwanan*. This is the essence of the SDGs: inclusive and sustainable growth—*pangkalahatan at likas-kayang kaunlaran*.

In the Philippine Development Plan (PDP), 2011-2016 (NEDA, 2016), inclusive growth refers to growth that is “rapid enough to matter” (NEDA, 2011). It is sustained growth that creates jobs, draws the majority into the economic and social mainstream, and continuously reduces mass poverty. In its analysis, the PDP concludes that “Growth has not only lagged, it has failed to benefit the majority, who feel increasingly alienated because their political institutions provide little relief and have drifted beyond their control. Growth, in short, has failed to be inclusive.” (NEDA, 2011, p. 18). Many sectors have been left out of development.

The PDP traces this situation to low economic growth, weak employment generation, and persistently high inequality in the country. Furthermore, growth for all has failed because of deeper structural underpinnings, such as (a) an inadequate infrastructure, inefficient transport network and unreliable power supply; (b) weak institutions and failures in governance, which weaken the civic spirit and erode people’s trust in the rule of law; (c) inadequate levels of human development, as in

unfavorable health, nutrition, and education outcomes, and (d) the poor and degraded state of the environment and natural resources (NEDA, 2014).

Thus, to attain inclusive growth is to reverse these shortcomings. It requires massive investment in physical infrastructure and the improved attainment of property rights, especially in agriculture. Underpinning inclusive growth must be governance that promotes transparency, accountability, the rule of law, and effective and impartial performance of the regulatory function of government. It should involve the active participation of private business, civil society, and the media as partners of government, so that the State can become more responsive to the needs of citizens.

Together with physical investment, capitalizing on the country's human resources is key to a sustained and broad-based growth (NEDA, 2011, p. 28). This necessitates equitable access to basic social services, stronger social safety nets, and social protection. For our planners, inclusive growth also entails employment generation—i.e., opening the widest “legitimate channels for all forms of employment, whether in the form of formal wage or self-employment, whether in firms, homes, or local communities, whether at home or abroad” (NEDA, 2011, p. 29).

Inclusive growth is also best achieved within the bounds of ecological integrity. Natural disasters and calamities are known to nullify hard-won gains in economic and human development by damaging physical infrastructure, endangering human lives and health, and destroying the means to livelihoods. Thus, it is important to devise and adopt measures that will conserve and improve the state of environment and natural resources, enhance the resilience of natural systems, and improve the ability of communities to cope with environmental hazards, including climate-related risks.

The PDP's discussion on inclusive growth translates the Asian Development Bank's (ADB's) own framework into one that can be applied to the Philippines. Inclusive growth is one that enhances opportunities and equalizes access to these opportunities (Klasen, 2010). It could refer to broad-based growth that includes nondiscriminatory participation. For ADB, income growth is inclusive under the following conditions (Klasen, 2010):



- It allows participation and contribution by all members of society, with particular emphasis on the ability of the poor and disadvantaged to participate in growth;
- It is associated with declining inequality in non-income dimensions of well-being that are particularly important for promoting economic opportunities, including education, health, nutrition, and social integration.

Despite the inclusion of broad-based participation and non-discrimination as components of inclusive growth, this construct still rests on economic growth. As one author declares, “The strong primacy of economic growth as the foundation of all efforts to promote inclusive growth is not questioned.”(Klasen, 2010, p. 3)

Should social workers, community development workers, and women and development professionals frame their own work on inclusive growth within these parameters? Or, rather, should they enrich the operational meaning of inclusive growth by drawing from their own practical experiences?

To begin with, to attain inclusive growth is to realize that the category ‘poor’ or ‘disadvantaged’ is not unidimensional or homogeneous. Rather, these constructs refer to a diverse set of communities, sectors, or vulnerable groups. The aim of inclusive growth to “leave no one behind” requires a thorough realization of diversity and differences.

Development praxis has revealed that poverty is experienced in many ways. For example, even if the environment surrounding indigenous communities is rich in plant and animal life and other produce from the land, they may have no roads or bridges to enable them to transport and sell these. There are other communities that are suffering because their land has been occupied by loggers and miners. There are farmers whose fields, because of climate change, are affected by severe drought or floods. There are persons with disability who are very intelligent but remain at a disadvantage because they have no access to educational and work facilities. Worse, they are not even accepted in these facilities.

Disadvantage is experienced not only by those who have no work. Gender discrimination is experienced by women in various spheres of society—in the family, school, office, factory, and even in the church. In other countries, discrimination is intense because of religion. In Bangladesh, for instance, Christians have been killed by Muslims. In Europe, Muslims

find it difficult to access good jobs. Retirees and other older persons do not enjoy enabling laws and benefits. In fact, they are not even mentioned as a specific sector in the SDGs.

Sustainable human development for all should also focus on the need to preserve local culture and language. Part of this is the promotion of literature, music, and arts based on the nation's vision and values. In a world dominated by globalized sources of communication and entertainment, there is a danger of being inundated by animè, Korean pop culture, and the likes of Justin Bieber. Let us celebrate instead the achievements of Filipino writers, artists and artisans, and our nontangible heritage expressed in traditional crafts. Moreover, the measure of a good movie from Filipino film-makers should not be allowed to descend to "poverty porn," the romantization or idealization of life in the slums, and of other decrepit conditions of the vulnerable sectors. This is an insult to their being, and to the developmental aspirations of all Filipinos.

The processes required to attain inclusive and sustained growth and development are manifold. Drawing from the CSWCD experience, community organizing, consciousness-raising, capacity building, leadership training, and collective action, among other expressions of human agency, need to accompany asset reform and the promotion of human rights. These dynamic processes take time to be realized. The strengthening of human capacity for the transformation of society does not happen overnight. It may not even happen after a year or two. Thus, all that may be achieved in a two- to three-year project are outputs, with no significant outcomes or impacts yet. Development partners need to realize this.

So many development projects are now anchored on the principles that the CSWCD worked with and struggled to refine over the years. Social scientists and other implementors are now talking about community organization and people's participation as the answers to good governance, disaster risk management, heritage conservation, minimization of corruption, and innovations in education, among others. It has become a "magic wand" for the attainment of different goals. There is no certainty, however, that these individuals or groups are speaking the same language, or referring to the same sets of processes as we are.

CSWCD graduates are fortunate because they have learned the theory and practice of various concepts related to organizing, consciousness-raising, vulnerability, resilience, empowerment, and equality. They know

the latitude of what needs to be done to completely develop the various sectors of society. They know that patience, critical thinking, reflection and analysis, creativity, solidarity with others, and humility are necessary ingredients in this process. Other development workers need to acquire these competencies as well, so that they can serve the people and the global community with a firm commitment to inclusive and sustainable development that promotes the well-being of diverse sectors.

For development workers, the words of Apolinario Mabini still resonate today:

*Those who are capable of serving others have achieved freedom of mind. Those who are not, are yet bound to their animal instincts.*

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*Dr. Amaryllis T. Torres is the current Executive Director of the Philippine Social Science Council. She served as Dean of the UP College of Social Work and Community Development from 2007-2010. In recognition of her academic contribution, she was awarded the title of Professor Emeritus by the University of the Philippines in 2013.*

# POVERTY IN THE EYES OF CHILDREN

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Excelsa C. Tongson

## Abstract

*Filipino preschool children's views about poor people, and what they can do to help them are explored in this paper. Results show that children can make sense of the poor's experiences with various forms of deprivation. Confined to short-term solutions, their responses about helping the poor are derived from observations of how their parents have provided assistance to help them. This study recognizes children's rights and their capabilities to express their views and participate in decision-making on matters that affect their society. Understanding poverty through the eyes of children who have not experienced poverty may inform our awareness on how they construct meanings that may have implications on how they regard the poor and the vulnerable; as well as how they may build alliances and partnerships with them to eradicate poverty, achieve sustainable communities, and create a world fit for children and future generations. Further research may be geared towards discovering the views of children from both urban and rural areas and indigenous communities, and of children experiencing poverty that inform not only the ontological, epistemological, and methodological issues confronting research with children but how actions can take shape in the social development arena.*

## Introduction

Many images and interpretations come to mind when poverty is mentioned. Income-based poverty measures have always been widely used and considered to be the most objective measures of poverty (Short, 2016). Also referred to as the subsistence minimum approach (Midgley, 2014), it is reflected both in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In the MDGs, the poor were identified as people living on less than \$1.25 a day, while in the SDGs, they are currently recognized as those living on less than \$1.90 a day.

Over the years, various discussions and studies on the subsistence minimum approach have shown that income is not a complete measure of poverty (Minujin et al., 2006; Todaro & Smith, 2009). It has also been criticized as a grand strategy of the market economy to influence people's

minds and fuel consumption needs (Rahnema, 2006). Likewise, it has been considered to exclude a “wider dimension of ill-health, illiteracy, hunger and other forms of deprivation that characterized the lives of poor people, their families and communities” (Midgley, 2014, p. 44).

During the World Summit in Copenhagen, 117 members of the United Nations agreed on the definition of absolute poverty as a “condition characterized by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information. It depends not only on income but also on access to social services” (UN, 1995, p. 57). This continues as the only internationally agreed definition of poverty that is used for policy purposes.

Experts have been engaged in debates on how to define and solve poverty. Countless anti-poverty policies and programs have been enacted and implemented (Midgley, 2014; Todaro & Smith, 2009; Torres, 2011). Noticeably, it has always been the experts who have a say on poverty. Hakovirta and Kallio (2016) noted that adults as subjects have dominated the study of poverty for many decades, while studies that pertain to children’s perceptions of poverty are rare especially in indigenous communities and with younger children (Attree, 2006; Tafere, 2012; Weinger, 1998).

As a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the Philippines is committed to upholding and protecting the rights of all Filipino children under 18 years of age, and in providing a foundation to support meaningful participation of children and youth in development activities. To further strengthen this commitment, the Philippine National Strategic Framework Plan for Development for Children, 2000-2025 or Child 21 was crafted to ensure that children’s participation is incorporated into policies for children.

It is in this context that this researcher embarked on a small exploratory study that sought to answer the following questions: What is poverty in the eyes of young children? What do they know about people living in poverty? What can children do about people living in poverty?

With the adoption of the MDGs at the turn of the new millennium, and the SDGs in 2015 that set the direction for poverty alleviation policies and programs, poverty remains at the forefront of economic and social development discourse in the Philippines. Taking from Minujin et al. (2006), “children experience poverty as an environment that is damaging to their mental, physical, emotional and spiritual development” (p. 483).

Thus, it is imperative to focus not only on the elimination of child poverty but also in directing strong efforts towards attaining SDG 11 – Build Inclusive, Safe and Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements. This paper hopes to contribute to social development discourse by drawing from the UNCRC principle that “the children are subjects of rights and not merely objects of charity.” The author recognizes that, regardless of age, gender, and social status, child participation is an essential component in removing barriers to social development.

### Focus on Child Poverty

According to Newhouse, Bacerra, and Evans (2016), “poverty rates for children are higher at any poverty line” (p. 7). Compared to adults, they are twice more likely to experience its brunt. In 2013, there were 385 million children in extremely poor households worldwide who lived on less than \$1.90 a day. Poverty rates are slightly higher in younger children than in older children. Ninety-four percent of poor children are found in low income and lower income countries, and most of them are in rural areas. They also pointed out that household income is reflective of children’s socio-economic status. Hence, impoverished households have poor children. There is a need “to explore the characteristics of poor children in greater detail, and analyze the variations across child poverty rates across countries, and whenever possible, to also consider non-monetary aspects of child poverty” (p. 19).

The first ever internationally agreed definition of child poverty states:

*...children living in poverty are deprived of nutrition, water and sanitation facilities, access to basic healthcare services, shelter, education, participation and protection, and that while a severe lack of goods and services hurts every human being, it is most threatening and harmful to children, leaving them unable to enjoy their rights, to reach their full potential and to participate as full members of society (UN General Assembly, 2006: paragraph 46).*

In 2003, Gordon and his colleagues studied how children in developing countries fare in relation to seven measures of severe deprivation. Severe food deprivation results from severe anthropometric failure where the child’s weight is three standard deviations below the median of the international reference population. Children are considered experiencing severe water deprivation when they use surface water like

rivers for drinking, and the nearest source of water is 15 minutes away from the house by foot. Lack of access to a toilet facility in the place of residence or no private or communal toilets or latrines may result in children experiencing severe deprivation of sanitation facilities. Not being immunized against diseases and not being able to receive medical attention when ill with diarrhea is an indication of severe health deprivation. When children are living in cramped spaces with more than five people in a room and in houses with no flooring, they are considered suffering from severe shelter deprivation. Severe educational deprivation is manifested when children 7 to 18 years old have never attended school or are out of school. And lastly, children who have no access to radio, television, telephone or newspapers at home are severely deprived of information. Over one billion or 56% of children in low- and middle-income countries are experiencing one or more forms of severe deprivation while South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa have severe deprivation rates of more than 80%. Rural children are reported to be suffering the most.

### **Filipino Children in Poverty**

In the Philippines, the Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC, 2011) stated that child poverty has three measures: “children living in poor families, deprivation of basic amenities such as electricity, potable water and sanitary toilet facilities, a child development index which is a composite of health, education and quality of life indicators” (p. 29). Children from poor families are vulnerable to sickness and diseases, dropping out of school, and reduced food consumption which may lead to severe malnutrition. In this report, child poverty is in line with Gordon’s (2003) seven measures of severe deprivation.

Despite the robust Philippine economy with an average growth rate of six percent a year since 2005, many Filipinos are still suffering from extreme hunger especially in regions with a high poverty incidence. The estimated number of poor families increased from 3.8 million to 4.2 million in 2012 (NSCB, 2013), and the UNICEF Country Program for Children 2012-2016 noted that child poverty remains high at 41%.

While there is a need to consider income poverty among children as an important indicator in the analysis of children’s poverty, Reyes et al. (2014) pointed out that it does not encapsulate the multi-dimensionality of Philippine poverty as well as the multiple and overlapping deprivation that poor children experience. In 2009, around four million children suffered from severe deprivation of shelter and sanitation facilities. Children in



slum areas increased from 1.3 to 1.4 million since 2003 and about 260,000 children suffered from severe shelter deprivation. Moreover, 6.5 million did not have access to electricity in their homes and 3.4 million faced severe information deprivation. In 2011, poverty was responsible for keeping 5.5 million children away from school as they were forced to work to contribute economically to their families, making them less employable in better paying work in the future. It was also found that older children and boys are more likely to be engaged in child labor than girls.

Caragay, Adaro, and Rolle (2016) reported that poverty and the yearning to help their families satisfy their basic needs encouraged child laborers to work in the sugarcane industry. Similar to the findings of Reyes et al. (2014), these child laborers experienced a host of severe deprivations. Sixty-one percent of the participants obtained elementary education and only 25% reached secondary level. Lack of financial resources for school requirements was responsible for the high dropout rate. They also suffered from severe health deprivation since they lacked work benefits that cover work-related injuries and illnesses like cuts and wounds from farm tools and sharp leaves, fractures, snake bites, muscle pain, skin irritation, and sunburn. Oftentimes, their families would spend for their medical treatments thus taking away money for food and other needs that also resulted in severe food deprivation causing stunting among these children. Meanwhile, 52% spent close to 16 minutes to fetch water from sources like deep wells, public hand pumps and pipes, while 15% fetched water from rivers, streams, and surface water making them suffer from severe water deprivation. Since majority belonged to large families with six to eight members living in small houses made of light materials provided by their employers, these child laborers experienced shelter deprivation. For lighting, 20% used kerosene while 18% used petrol lamps, which meant that they do not have electricity at home thus limiting their access to television and the Internet making them severely deprived of information.

### **Children's Perception of Poverty**

Short (2016) stated, "a large literature shows that our perception of who is poor depends on which measures we use" (p. S46). Rahnema (2006) observed that, while people from different cultures and traditions have developed their own concepts of who the poor are, the common idea across concepts of poverty dwell on "the lack of something or unsatisfied needs" (p. 38). He added that, historically defined in every culture, poverty is both contextual and culture-specific. People have devised their own ways and wisdom to identify the poor and assist them to resist destitution. Studies



suggest that learning about things like poverty is a complex undertaking that appears to begin in early childhood.

Vygotsky (1978) posited that children's learning of concepts happens on two related levels—the social level and the individual level. Children's ideas about their world are not only products of their social interactions about specific structures disclosed by individuals they deal with, but are also based on how they interpret the world around them. Vygotsky also stated, “under adult guidance and in collaboration with more capable peers” (p. 86), children are able to acquire knowledge, solve problems on their own and attain a higher level of cognitive processes (Vygotsky, 1978; 1979).

Intergenerational transmission is a significant factor in influencing how the privileged regard the poor and how the poor think about themselves (Bullock, 1999). A comparative study among preschoolers ages three to five years old from middle- and low-income groups regarding their awareness and understanding of social class differences revealed that children from both groups “can make global distinctions between rich and poor and have a few ideas about these discrepancies” (Ramsey, 1991, p. 81). The author also found that children acquired impressions about wealth and poverty through books, media, and interaction with their families and other adults.

Hakovirta and Kallio (2016) stated, “even relatively young children have certain impressions and perceptions on what the poor and the rich are like” (p. 321). Similarly, Weinger (1998) found out that poor American children are aware of their deprivations and the gaps in terms of income and wealth. Because they consider themselves living in small shabby houses, wearing old hand-me-down apparel, and acting differently from their more affluent peers, they believe that they would not be fully accepted in socio-economic circles other than their own. Meanwhile, Tafere (2012) learned that rural and urban poor children describe their own poverty characterized by an overall scarcity, and lacking in basic necessities such as food, clothing, and proper housing, and lacking in resources such as income, livestock, and farmland.

## **Children's Participation**

With the recognition that children are not merely recipients of adult-crafted policies and programs as well as the widespread favorable reception of children's visibility in democratic processes (Lansdown, 2001), the Inter-Agency Working Group on Children's Participation (2007) noted

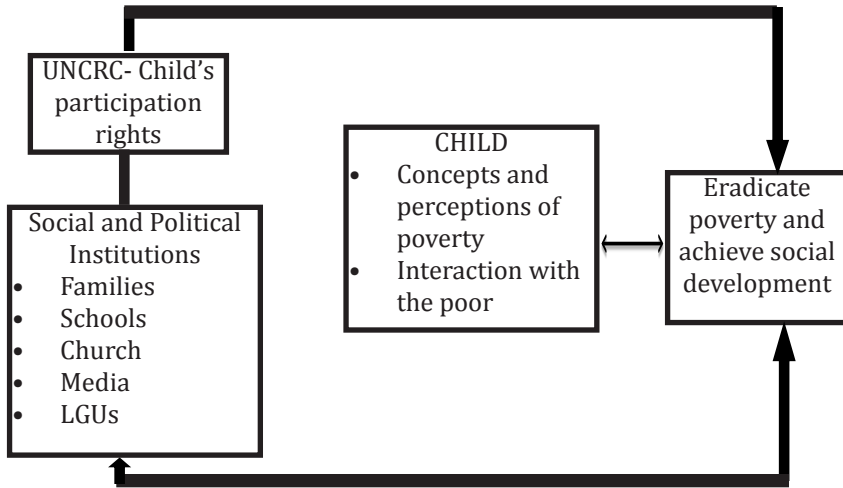
the increasing participation of children in public decisions, engagement in international and national discussions, and involvement in grassroots advocacies within various cultural and political systems worldwide.

Homans (2004) found that older children from many parts of the globe could successfully participate in shaping policies, implementing and monitoring of National Plans for Actions through countrywide consultations and training aimed at reducing poverty, trafficking, and violence against children. Take for example the participatory budgeting process in Cordoba City, Spain, through the Child-Friendly Cities Initiative, which involved children regarding how the municipal budget should be allocated and used. This initiative resulted in children's education being given priority in the budget. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, children were involved in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper and the development of the National Youth Strategy. Yet there is still a need to develop mechanisms for monitoring children's participation in such initiatives.

In the Philippines, the Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC, 2014) reported that child participation in different aspects of program planning and implementation has brought positive results among children, especially in the way they interact with parents, teachers, community leaders, and agency workers. They also demonstrate desirable behaviors, improved communication skills, and a higher level of self-confidence and self-esteem. Children who have "higher levels of participation in school and in the community are more likely to protect themselves from possible abuse, exploitation or discrimination, than children who are not involved at all" (p. 4).

Bessell (2009) found the presence of "innovative children-centered approaches to development such as child-facilitated events and organization of children" (p. 313) in the Philippines. However, at the heart of the practice of involving children are the seeming lack of a clear definition of child participation and the poor understanding of policy makers about it. The prevalent adult views of children, cultural and social contexts, and the traditional regard for seniority and respect for elders pose great challenges to child participation. Similarly, CWC (2014) remarked that the primary challenges to child participation are limited resources and logistics, inadequate capacity to promote children's involvement, parents' and teachers' refusal to involve children, and the community's beliefs that children are not yet capable of making sound decisions.

Figure 1 shows how children who have not experienced poverty may develop concepts and perceptions of poverty as influenced by their participation rights and interactions with social and political institutions, thereby informing how they will regard the poor as well as build partnerships with them to eradicate poverty and achieve social development.



**Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study on Poverty in the Eyes of Children**

### Exploring Young Filipino Children's Perceptions of Poverty

Studies on poverty among preschoolers three to five years old and among those who have not experienced poverty are rare in the Philippines. The preschool stage is considered part of the formative years where much cognitive, moral, and socio-emotional development occurs. Young children have the capacity to identify motives of human action, which are indications of an early emerging cognitive and socio-moral competence that propels them to respond and act on things such as determining who are rich and who are poor, giving empathy, helping others, and donating to needy classmates (Denham et al., 2003; Loureiro & Souza, 2013; Margoni & Surina, 2016; Ongley, Nola, & Malti, 2014).

With only age as the criterion, 15 children from three preschool classes were selected through simple random sampling from the class lists provided by their teachers. To protect the children's identities, this study has adopted fictitious names for them.

This study was conducted at a laboratory school in a state university where faculty, students, and local and international researchers conduct observations of preschool children, and engage in practicum and research. Permission was obtained in writing from the school authorities. The teachers of three classes introduced the researcher to the children and requested them to cooperate with her. A quiet corner in the classroom was provided during class hours for the interview to be conducted.

Prior to the interview proper, the researcher asked for the children’s permission and explained that they could stop the interview at any time. The language used was that which the children are fluent in. The researcher did not force them to answer, write or draw anything. She remained sensitive to their cues throughout the interview. While all of them were comfortable with her, one child did not answer the question about where poor people are found and one child did not draw anything.

**Table 1. Sampling Distribution**

Age	Total
3	5
4	5
5	5
Total	15

Context-bound patterns and information (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013) resulted from generating categories and themes from data collected from the interview. Answers that are relevant to the study were highlighted or labeled. Once meaningful statements were generated, they were clustered to represent different themes related to the research topic. Each theme was supported by direct quotes from the children and their drawings.

**Results**

Not all the children in this study have a concept of poverty. Seven out of the 15 children declared either “I do not know” or “I have not seen a poor person,” while the rest were able to talk about poor people.

**Table 2. Frequency of children with and without a concept of poverty**

With a concept of poverty	With no concept of poverty	Total
8	7	15

Three three-year-olds, one four-year-old, and three five-year olds did not have a concept of people living in poverty. The following are their answers:

“I don’t know.” – Benny, 3 years old

“I have not seen a person living in poverty.” – Inna, 3 years old

“I don’t know. I have not seen one.” – Marina, 3 years old

“I have not seen a poor person.” – Lia, 4 years old

“What is it? I have not seen one.” – David, 5 years old

“What is poor?” – Eddie, 5 years old

“I have not seen a poor person.” – Ana, 5 years old

Follow-up questions were asked to confirm whether they understood the question or not. These yielded the same results.

Eight out of the 15 children view the poor in a variety of ways. The succeeding section presents the children’s answers and corresponding drawings about them, as well as their suggested actions on how to help the poor.

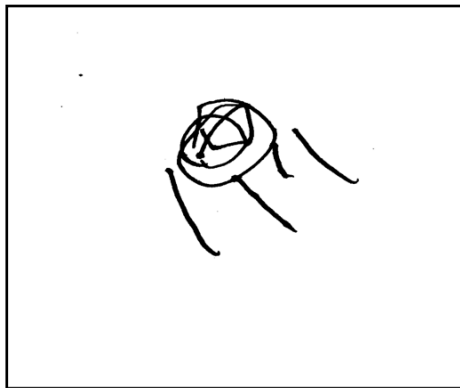
Two three-year old children shared the following:

“... *Ang taong may pilay at ubo... Lolo ko yon. Matanda na. Hindi na sya makatayo at makalakad.*”

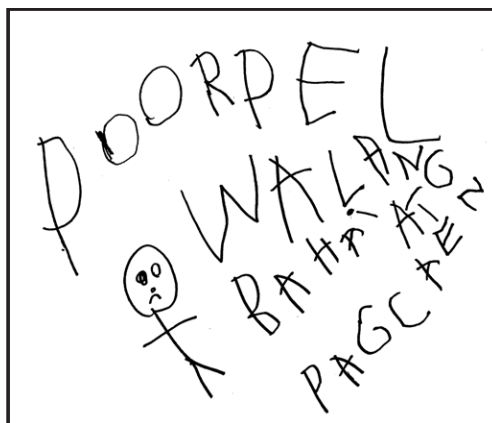
(...Someone who has broken limbs and coughs...my grandfather. He is old. He can no longer stand up and walk.) – Dezza, 3 years old (See Figure 2.)

*“Kaya malungkot sila...Walang bahay at pagkain.  
Walang tatay at nanay.”*

(That’s why they are sad. They have no house and food...no father and mother.) – Sandra, 3 years old (See Figure 2.)



**Figure 2. Drawing by Dezza, 3 years old**



**Figure 3. Written production by Sandra, 3 years old <sup>1</sup>**

*“Poor people.. Walang bahay at pagkain.”* (No house and food.)

<sup>1</sup>“PEL” in Figure 3 stands for “people.” The child’s written output is recognized as inventive spelling, a writing stage in children’s literacy development. For further reading, refer to Tongson, EC. (December, 2014) Teacher’s interaction styles during sociodramatic play that promote reading and writing among preschoolers. *Social Science Diliman*, 10 (2), 56-99, and Otto, B. (2008). *Literacy development in early childhood reflective teaching from birth to eight*. New Jersey: Pearson Education.

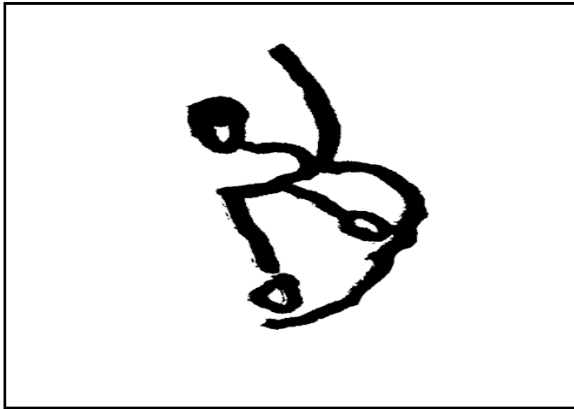
Dezza explained that, since her grandfather can no longer walk and is elderly, she considers him poor. Sandra shared that her mother told her what being poor means. For Dezza, a poor person is found at the doctor's clinic, while Sandra did not give an answer.

In terms of what can be done to help people living in poverty, Dezza said bringing her grandfather to the doctor is her solution while Sandra shared that giving them food and a home would get them out of poverty.

The three four-year-olds provided the following answers:

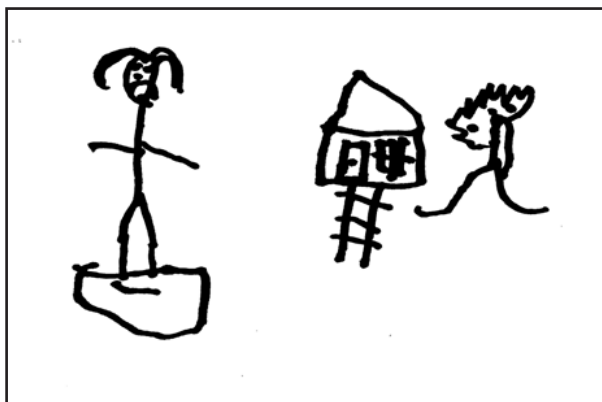
*"...Naka wheel chair kasi hindi sya makapagsuot ng slippers."*

(Someone who is in a wheelchair because he/she could not wear slippers.) – Mara, 4 years old (See Figure 4.)



**Figure 4. Drawing by Mara, 4 years old**

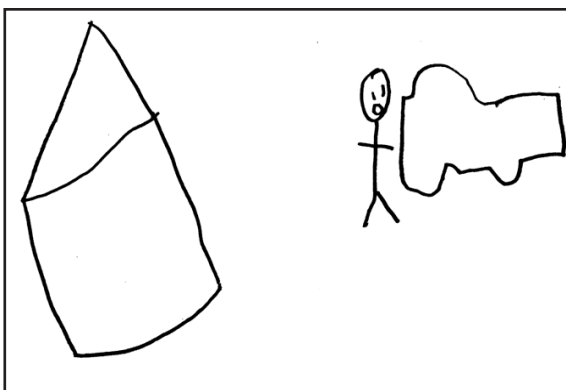
*"...Poor are the street children...They sleep in their houses on the street. The street children are sad because they don't have a family."* – Hannah, 4 years old (See Figure 5.)



**Figure 5. Drawing by Hannah, 4 years old**

*“...Hindi sya makatulog kasi wala syang bahay kaya pwede syang masagasaan.”*

(He/she could not sleep because he/she does not have a house so he/she could be run over by a vehicle.) – John, 4 years old (See Figure 6.)



**Figure 6. Drawing by John, 4 years old**

*“...No money...walang damit at sira-sira ang damit... walang bed. Madumi sila.”*

(Someone who does not have money, no clothes, with tattered clothes...and no bed. They are dirty.) – Lia, 4 years old (See Figure 7.)



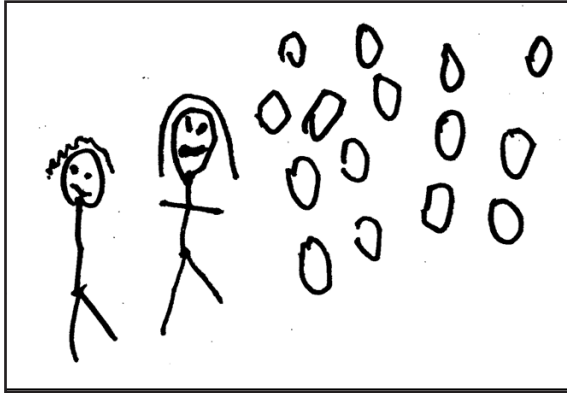


Figure 7. Drawing by Lia, 4 years old

For Mara, poor people are seen in hospitals because they cannot walk. According to Hannah and John, they are found on the streets while Lia mentioned that they are outside, “*sa labas*.”

Mara’s concept of being poor was a product of her seeing Boggart, her cousin, who could not walk. Hannah explained that, on her way to school, she always sees children begging on the street. Her father told her that they are called street children. John and Lia shared that their mothers told them what poor means.

Regarding how to help the poor, Mara suggested pushing Boggart’s wheel chair around, while Lia shared her mother’s advice of showing kindness by giving them money to buy a house and clothes. Hannah’s way of helping the poor is by giving street children toys that other children no longer use and for carpenters to build their houses.

The five-year-olds had the following answers regarding the poor:

“...*napapagod sila...kasi pinapahirapan sila.. walang makain.*”

(They are tired...because they are abused...No food.)

– Gem, 5 years old (See Figure 8.)



**Figure 8. Drawing by Gem, 5 years old**

“A poor person could not walk and carry objects.” – Bruce, 5 years old

Bruce did not draw anything about poor persons but he explained that he just knew what they look like. Gem disclosed that her neighbor is poor, as told to her by her grandmother.

In terms of what can be done for the poor, Gem thought of helping them by providing them food and assisting them in doing things. Bruce said that they need to take medicines so they would not have a hard time walking and carrying objects. For these two children, poor people are in a house.

## **Discussion**

This study noted that, despite their tender age, eight of the children who participated in this study are aware that poor people are “experiencing deprivation of resources, choices, security and power” (UN HCHR, 2001) such as financial resources for buying the most basic human needs. Income has been considered as the conventional indicator of poverty among individuals (Rahnema, 2006; Midgley, 2014; Todaro & Smith, 2009). Lia identified lack of income or money as an indicator of poverty. Two children mentioned that poor people experience food deprivation, while four children mentioned shelter deprivation. John

mentioned that, due to shelter deprivation, the poor could meet an accident. His drawing (Figure 6) shows a car that is about to bump into a surprised and terrified person. Their answers are in line with Gordon's (2003) study on the seven measures of severe deprivation. Like the children in Weinger's (1998) and Tafere's (2012) studies, they are aware that the poor experience various deprivations. However, their concept of poverty revolved around more tangible measures—food, clothing, shelter, and health deprivations.

Four children mentioned that the poor belong to sub-groups such as elderly, persons with disability, and children, who are the most vulnerable to the ill effects of poverty, which restricts their access to opportunities and privileges that lead to inequality and marginalization (Gordon, 2003; Mapa, Davila, & Albis, 2010; Mori & Yagamata, 2009; Sanchez, 2008; Torres, 2011, UNICEF, 2005).

This study is consistent with earlier studies that children's understanding of the economic system that distinguishes the rich and the poor was obtained from their immediate environment and how social institutions like the home, school, and media hold discussions about wealth and poverty (Bullock, 1999; Ramsey, 1991). Children's concepts about their world are products of their interaction with more knowledgeable members of society (Vygotsky, 1978; 1979). Except for Bruce, all of the children in this study who have a concept of poor people learned about it through their parents and relatives. Take for example Hannah who learned about street children from conversations with her father on her way to school. John and Lia learned about the poor from their mothers, while Gem became aware that their neighbor is poor through her grandmother.

Almost all of the children's drawings in this paper depicted sad faces, an indication of how the children make sense of how people feel when they are hungry, homeless, sickly, or unable to walk due to disability. While the participants did not show any indication that they have experienced poverty themselves, this study affirms that children may learn about the world by observing, acting on objects, and interacting with people (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009; Halik & Webley, 2011; Ramsey, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978).

This study also reveals that children's responses about helping the poor were derived from observations on how significant adults have provided assistance to the poor, in most cases, simple practical, random acts their families have done. For instance, Lia cited her mother telling her to be kind to the poor by giving them money for food, clothes, and shelter. Similarly, Gem, Hannah, and Sandra mentioned giving the poor

their basic needs. Dezza, Mara, and Bruce stated that providing medical assistance and supporting them when moving around are their ways of helping the poor.

Vygotsky's theory (1978) could help explain why seven children in this study responded "I don't know" or "I have not seen a poor person." Perhaps, their parents had not disclosed to them specific structures and processes about poverty and its impact on people.

## **Implications**

The UNCRC provides the cornerstone for all children to exercise their rights to express their views freely. This study does so for children, as the author recognizes children's rights and capabilities to articulate their insights regarding development issues like poverty. With the growing recognition that children constitute a social group and that they are valuable members of society, involving them on matters that affect their lives and society is a necessary step towards a better and fuller understanding of how and why a particular social order works and how social development could be achieved in the long run (Clark, 2005; James, 2007; Mayall, 2008; Tafere, 2012).

Regardless of its abstractness and multi-dimensionality, poverty cannot be hidden even from the eyes of children like those in this study who have not experienced it. While their concepts of poverty provide a picture of suffering and sadness, and their non-conventional views of being poor such as being differently-abled or sick do not automatically imply poverty, this study provides glimpses of their limited exposure and interactions with the poor. Meanwhile, children who are themselves poor have a way of making sense of their situation, which may be different from other children's standpoint (Bullock, 1999; Ramsey, 1991; Tafere 2012; Weinger, 1998).

Vygotsky (1978) proposed that the more experienced members of society have an important role in assisting children understand the complexity of the social world. They can "scaffold" (Berk & Winsler, 1995) children in comprehending the conditions of the poor. Relating this with Rahnama (2006) who pointed out that each culture has developed its own concept of poverty and has devised solutions to prevent destitution, understanding and finding a solution to this long-standing and serious problem could be derived by means of cooperation and collaboration. While the concept of poverty among children in this study is limited to

concrete forms of deprivation, and their answers to poverty are confined to short-term solutions, it was revealed that it is never too early for anyone to make sense of what the poor are experiencing.

Understanding poverty from the eyes of children will not be complete without reference to their cognitive and moral stage, because children develop higher cognitive functioning and more complex skills as they relate to themselves and others (Loureiro & Souza, 2013; Vygotsky 1978; 1979). As children grow older, they become more aware of social and economic inequalities, and discover new and useful ways of solving poverty that consider the aspirations of the poor and the vulnerable present in their culture (Halik & Webley, 2011; Ramsey, 1991).

It is not always necessary for persons to experience poverty firsthand in order for them to have an interest in it as “the poor and their friends, regardless of the societies to which they belong, can indeed do a lot to change their fate” (Rahnema, 2006, p. 44). Drawing from the literature and from the findings of this study, one can claim that there is hope for a better world for everyone where there is no poverty (SDG 1) and where cities and communities are sustainable (SDG 11) for the benefit of future generations. Likewise, the vision that every Filipino child is “actively participating in decision-making and governance, in harmony and in solidarity with others, in sustaining the Filipino nation” (Child 21, p. 5) will not be far behind.

James (2007) pointed out that, whether children’s ideas will be dismissed by adults or not, asking them “is not only about letting children speak; it is about the social world that children’s perspectives can provide” (James, 2007, p. 262) that inform not only the ontological, epistemological, and methodological issues confronting research with children but how actions can take shape in the social development arena (Homans, 2004; James, 2007; Lansdown, 2001; Tafere, 2012). As experts continue to work closely with children, they have found that children are competent social actors who are capable of expressing themselves and participating in decision-making (Mayall, 2008). With the UNCRC as an anchor, studies and development work with children over the past three decades suggest that various hurdles could be overcome by means of finding new ways of working with and for children (CWC, 2014; Hart, 1992; Homans, 2004; IAWGCP, 2007).

This study is one of the first attempts to understand poverty from the eyes of Filipino children ages three to five years old. With its limited

scope and very small sample size, future research can be conducted in urban, rural, and indigenous communities using a bigger sample size employing both quantitative and qualitative approaches.

Since this study was conducted among children who have not experienced poverty, research studies on children's perception of poverty that consider socio-economic status and gender may be conducted. Likewise, how and why parents and other adults discuss poverty with children can be explored, identifying their motivations to talk about it and how they involve children in solving it. Future studies may likewise investigate how social and political institutions fashion the standpoint of children regarding the UNCRC.

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# **SURVIVING IN THE CITY THROUGH HOME GARDENS: A Case Study of Home Gardeners in Barangay UP Campus**

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**Teresita Villamor Barrameda, DSD**

## **Abstract**

*This article demonstrates the potential of home gardens as a food security strategy that could be adopted by urban residents and as a mechanism that could be integrated in resettlement plans and programs. It examines how gender relations are linked to food security and the right to food, as well as traces the historical development of small-scale home or communal gardens as responses to food insecurity in different localities and time periods. The case study featured in the article surfaces the voices of 13 women and men as they discuss about the economic, social, health, and nutrition benefits of home gardens to their households as well as the problems they face in gardening other peoples' lots. It concludes that home gardens can be a sound strategy for food security in urban communities as well as in resettlements. It also asserts that, for home gardens to be sustainable mechanisms for urban food security, a strong people-government partnership should be forged and the participation of women in decision-making in such partnership should be taken into account since the majority of home gardeners are women.*

## **Introduction**

Urbanization and the growth of urban slums are the two aspects to be considered when examining the development of cities. The emergence of megacities, each with at least 10 million residents, is one of the distinct features of urbanization in Asia. These megacities serve not only as magnets to internal migrants but also as entryways to international migrants (Hugo, 2014). Asia is one of the fast-growing regions in the world while Manila is one of the fast-growing cities in Asia. Based on United Nations (UN) estimates, Manila's population had grown from 10.14 million in 2001 to 12.76 million in 2014, and is projected to grow to 16.76 million by 2030 (UN DESA, 2014). Based on the 2010 UN estimates (cited in Mohiddin, Phelps, & Walters, 2012), 828 million urban dwellers in developing countries lived in slums as compared to 767 million in 2000 and 657 million in 1990—growth that was arguably fast over a 21-year period. Consequently, urban

poverty and the growth of urban slums are priority concerns of governments and global institutions adopting urban agriculture as a key strategy to address urban hunger. A parallel development is home gardening, which is an independent initiative of households to address food and nutrition insecurity and to increase their incomes.

In terms of hunger and malnutrition in the Philippines, the 2011 Annual Poverty Indicator Survey (APIS) noted that, at the national level, 6.3% of all families had experienced hunger. Of these families, 2.7% are from the National Capital Region while the Eastern Visayas region has the highest incidence of families experiencing hunger with 16.2%, even higher than the national average (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2013). Based on the 2015 Global Hunger Index (GHI),<sup>1</sup> a tool developed to measure and track hunger, its level of hunger scores 20.1 equivalent to a serious hunger condition. Of the 117 countries measured, the Philippines ranks 51. Considering the multi-dimensionality of hunger, the index uses the following measurement: undernourishment, child wasting, child stunting, and child mortality. Based on these components, stunting—when a child is too short for her/his age—is the most prevalent problem among children in the country. A high prevalence of stunting is considered a sign of chronic malnutrition. The Philippines is one of the 14 countries where 80% of the world's stunted children live (Gavilan, 2015).

Citing data from the 2015 Updating of the Nutritional Status of Filipino Children by the Food and Nutrition Research Institute (FNRI), Save the Children (2016) noted that the country faces the worst condition of chronic malnutrition rates among children aged 0-2 years old at 26.2% in the last 10 years. There is also a significant increase in overall chronic malnutrition or stunting rate for children under five years old from 30.5% in 2013 to 33.5% in 2015. In the case of reduction of acute malnutrition or wasting—when a child suffers from starvation and illness—no progress has been noted. Given the worst condition of hunger and malnutrition in the country, the “Zero Hunger Bill”<sup>2</sup> is a positive development because, once it is passed, it will provide a policy framework for ensuring the right to food for everyone, especially the vulnerable, disadvantaged, and marginalized groups.

While the above data provide snapshots of hunger and malnutrition in the Philippines, the lack of disaggregated data in terms of rural and urban locations as well as gender, age, and other differences poses constraints in capturing the complete picture of the state of hunger and malnutrition in the country.

## **Gender, Food Security, and the Right to Food**

According to the 1996 World Food Summit, food security is achieved at all levels—individual, household, national, regional, and global—when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (FAO 1996). In the second World Food Summit in 2009, the four pillars of food security—availability, accessibility, utilization, and stability—were identified: food availability refers to the physical presence of food in a given locality; food accessibility is the capacity to have sufficient amounts of food (Ofreneo & Narito, 2012 cited in Barrameda, 2016); food utilization is about the extent to which food is meeting the specific nutritional needs of persons; and stability of food supply specifically refers to the situation of poor countries as it is affected by local, national, and global factors and processes in trade, investment, and finance (Brody, 2016).

It is argued that the presence of all four pillars is necessary to ensure food security for all. Thus, a person is considered food insecure when s/he lacks access to an adequate quantity of safe and nutritious food necessary for normal growth and for enjoying an active and healthy life. Food insecurity can be chronic, seasonal, or transitory and may be due to food unavailability, lack of capacity to buy food, unequal food allocation, or insufficient food utilization at the household level. Poor nutritional status is a result of food insecurity, together with poor health and sanitation conditions, as well as improper care and feeding practices (FAO, IFAD & WFP, 2015).

FAO et al. (2015) further noted that, based on recent global estimates, about 795 million people were undernourished or unable to eat adequate nutritious food to have an active and healthy life. Likewise, Brody (2016) noted that over 60% of those hungry were women and girls as a direct impact of gender inequality and argued that food insecurity and gender inequality are interlinked. The inequitable processes governing the food systems at the local, national, and international levels disadvantaged women and girls more than men and boys. Thus, food insecurity is not only a political, economic, and environmental issue but also a gender justice issue.

Women and girls are involved in the various phases of agriculture—in production, processing, and distribution. As food producers, they are responsible for growing food for family consumption in subsistence farms

and are also the unpaid farm workers in family farms. As food providers, they are responsible for putting food on the table as well as ensuring the survival and nutritional needs of the family in times of economic crises and disasters (Barrameda, 2015). Yet, these contributions are unrecognized and undervalued. They lack access to land, technical and extension support, and agricultural training opportunities. Likewise, their lack of access to capital, credit, information, and market connections prevents them from moving beyond subsistence production.

In terms of gender roles in households, providing food on the table is a primary responsibility of women. O Campos and Garner (2012) noted that, as household meal planners, women resort to prioritizing male family members and children over themselves in the allocation of food in times of food scarcity. However, Neogy (2012) noted that gendered cultural norms in some societies influence household food distribution such that women and girls eat last and least even in times when food is available or affordable. Furthermore, women are not only responsible for ensuring the nutrition of their families but are also the shock absorbers who sacrifice for the sake of family food security by eating less and increasing their workloads to gather fire and water in times of increasing prices, food insecurity, and climate change (Quisumbing, Meinzen-Dick, & Bassett, 2008; Hossain & Green, 2011; O Campos & Garner, 2012). With the pressures of feeding their households, many women coped in times of food price spikes by engaging in informal work such as petty trading and low-paid services (Hossain and Green, 2011) and tending home gardens as safety nets for daily survival and in extreme events (Barrameda, 2016).

Moreover, FIAN International (2013) noted the link of food insecurity to gender-based violence as it can affect women's capacity to grow and market food, as well as to access inputs for food production. Likewise, Hossain and Green (2011) noted that food insecurity can trigger violence against women as household food scarcity causes tensions that can lead to physical or psychological violence perpetrated by men against women or by older women towards their daughters-in-law. Evidence to support this was gathered during the global food price crisis in 2008, when men's inability to support their families led to arguments in the home, triggering alcohol abuse and violence against women.

Despite the central roles of women and girls in ensuring the food security of their households, unequal gender relations reinforce their experiences of food and nutrition insecurity. Since gender inequality is inextricably linked to food and nutrition insecurity of women and girls, the

failure to address its root causes can perpetuate gender injustice, poverty, and food and nutrition insecurity. As the current policy response is limited only to the availability pillar through increased production and imports, Brody (2016) argued that a political approach that integrates gender equality is needed to ensure food and nutrition security for all and proposed that the four pillars should be used to create a framework for integrating gender equality in designing food and nutrition interventions.

Though food security is viewed as an economic goal of governments, it is synonymous to the right to food<sup>3</sup> that every person should enjoy as a human being. Like the notion of food security, the right to food entitles every person in all places to have the capacity to produce, purchase, and access safe, nutritious, and culturally acceptable food for an active, healthy, and dignified life. A rights-based perspective complements the notion of food security by way of recognizing the legal entitlements of people as rights holders and the legal obligations of governments as duty bearers towards them (World Bank, 2008). Thus, every citizen has the right to demand from government the latter's obligation in ensuring a food-secure citizenry.

With the current development agenda known as the Sustainable Development Goals, <sup>4</sup>there is an imperative for governments to promote sustainable development with the aims of ending poverty, promoting prosperity and well-being, as well as protecting the environment by 2030. Particular to the issues of food security, the SDG 2 (zero hunger) targets<sup>5</sup> provide guidelines to ensure ending hunger by 2030. As these goals are interconnected, the achievement of each goal entails addressing issues related to other goals. As such, the achievement of SDG 2 targets is linked to the achievement of SDG 11, which is having sustainable cities and communities.

## **Global Trends in Urban Home Gardening/Farming**

The growing concern for food security in urban centers became a priority agenda of governments and international institutions in which, through a series of consultations, urban and peri-urban agriculture (UPA) has evolved. UPA refers to "an industry located within (intra-urban) or on the fringe (peri-urban) of a town, a city or a metropolis, which grows and raises, processes and distributes a diversity of agriculture products, using largely human, land and water resources, products and services found in and around that urban area" (World Bank, 2008, p.10). It was officially acknowledged as a key component in food security during the 15<sup>th</sup> Food Agriculture Organization-Commission on Agriculture (FAO-



COAG) session in Rome in 1999 and by the World Food Summit in 2002 (World Bank, 2008). Despite various initiatives in promoting UPA, the United Nations Standing Committee on Nutrition (2012) noted that it was still part of an informal economy that needed to be integrated into urban planning, national strategies on food security programs, and agricultural policy development.

Although home gardening has existed for more than a hundred years, it has regained popularity among urban residents in recent years, gradually growing into a global movement. People across classes raise their own food in backyards, parks, open spaces, window sills, and porches to ensure food security as well as to have control over the food they eat. Some home gardening practices developed around the globe that are worth noting are:

- In the United States of America, the Three Sisters Iroquois community gardens made use of “companion planting” in the 1200s not only for food security but also to provide the complete dietary needs of the tribe. In the 1890s, “potato patches” were established in vacant lots in response to the economic depression (Andrews, 2016) while growing vegetables in backyards or “victory gardens” served as women’s patriotic response during the wartime economy of the Second World War (Ban Breathnach, 1995).
- In Cuba during the economic crisis in the early 1990s, Cubans established *organoponicos* (organic farms or gardens) in urban and suburban areas by making use of available spaces such as garbage dumps, parking lots, and other abandoned areas. These community efforts were complemented by the government’s land reform measures in which state farms were subdivided into small farms and the farmers were provided with infrastructure support including compost, pest and disease control centers, and farmers’ markets (Danaher, Biggs, & Mark, 2007).
- Recently popularized in Kenya by the Grassroots Organizations Operating Together in Sisterhood (GROOTS) is sack gardening or growing vegetables in burlap bags thus requiring limited soil and water. GROOTS is a global network of women-led groups that assists women to address food security issues in communities (Stone, 2016).
- All over the world, community supported agriculture (CSA) farms are rapidly growing, ranging from individual plots to community



gardens using vacant lots, abandoned buildings, rooftops, and every unused land to grow food and to raise livestock. Part of the produce is sold in community markets in which the clients are members of the neighborhood themselves. Some CSA farms are funded by local governments (Andrews, 2016).

Likewise, the Philippines has a long history of urban home gardening initiatives:

- Home gardening has been part of the historical evolution of Metro Manila since the 16th century as residents grew crops alongside the Pasig River banks, considered as the earliest practice of urban agriculture (Campilan, Boncodin, & de Guzman, n.d.).
- In 1974, the Asian Rural Life Development Foundation (ARLDF) in Davao del Sur promoted the “FAITH” (Food Always in the Home) garden technology to provide enough food for the daily needs of households at lower cost and with minimum labor and minimal land use (Sommer Haven Ranch International, 1998).
- In 1990, the Bureau of Agricultural Research (BAR), through its Urban Agriculture Program (UAP), developed technologies for crop, livestock, and fish production in urban areas such as composting of biodegradable solid waste, waste water recycling, integrated pest management, and herbal fertilizer production (Morcozo, 1995 cited in Nitural, n.d.). The UAP was widely implemented in backyard gardens, in community or local group-managed gardens, and in farms run by schools, civil society groups, church groups, and cooperatives in 1998 (Campilan et al., n.d.).
- In 1999, the Receptacle Farming Model was established in Central Luzon State University, in Muñoz, Nueva Ecija (Nital, n.d.). Now known as container gardening, it is still practiced among households in Quezon City and Makati City, in informal settlements in Mandaluyong, Parañaque, and Las Piñas. Because of the portability of the plants, container gardening has been widely adopted in flood-prone Malabon and Valenzuela City (Duldulao, 2001 cited in Campilan et al., n.d.).
- Bio-intensive gardens in Negros have been instrumental in reducing malnutrition among urban children from 40 to 25%. In Cebu, vegetable gardens complemented public health interventions in increasing the vitamin A levels of children and provided other nutritional benefits (Smit, Nasr, & Ratta, 2001).

- In North Fairview, Quezon City, residents in an urban poor community at the periphery of a 50-hectare subdivision grow vegetables in almost 70% of the unused areas in the subdivision. They entered into agreements with land owners and the homeowners' association in which the local government acts as the mediator and guarantor (Campilan et al., n.d.).
- "The Joy of Urban Farming," a project initiated in 2010 by Vice Mayor Joy Belmonte of Quezon City in partnership with local barangay councils, aims to reduce poverty and to improve the nutrition of urban residents. It assists households through the provision of start-up seeds, simple farm implements, and training on organic farming (Joy of Urban Farming brochure, n.d.). From three demonstration farms, the project has expanded to 166 urban farms in communities, public elementary schools, day care centers, and parishes in all the six districts of Quezon City (Yap, n.d.).

### **Home Gardens and the Policy Environment in the Philippines**

The Philippine government has put forth efforts to promote urban agriculture as a means to address food insecurity in urban centers through policies and programs that include the following:

- Organic Agriculture Program based on RA 10068 (Organic Agriculture Act of 2010) promoting the implementation and practices of organic agriculture in the country;
- *Gulayan sa Paaralan* Program, established in 2011 to promote self-help food production in schools and communities and to impart the value of agriculture as a life-support system;
- Agri-Pinoy Urban Agriculture, implemented in 2012 to attain self-reliance and sufficiency among urban households by capacitating them to grow their own food through the promotion of the communal garden model showcasing small-scale food production. At present, it is being implemented in 30 Congressional Districts of the National Capital Region (NCR) (PhilFSIS/PSA, 2017); and
- House Bills 2818 (the Integrated Urban Agriculture Act) and 4354 (the Urban Farming Act of 2016)<sup>6</sup> filed in the 17th Congress that aim to institutionalize urban farming in cities and municipalities in the country to promote food security and minimize the impact of climate change; and Senate Bill 111 (the "Right to Adequate Food Bill") otherwise known as the "zero hunger bill" filed in the Senate in 2014.

Once enacted, this Bill mandates the government to develop a policy framework for the progressive realization of the right to adequate food and for ending hunger within a 10-year time frame (Micalat-Teves, 2016).

### **A Case Study of the Home Gardeners of Area 17, Brgy. UP Campus**

Area 17 is one of the 12 *puroks*<sup>7</sup> (zones) situated in the southern sector of Barangay UP Campus in Quezon City. It is the former location of the cottages and self-built houses of employees of the University of the Philippines. In the early 1980s, however, the area was occupied by informal settlers who were not connected to the University (Z. Lectura, personal communication, 28 January 2017). At present, the place is a community of about a hundred households working in the informal economy. It is also a thriving area of home gardens.

#### ***Profile of the Respondent Home Gardeners***<sup>8</sup>

According to Ched, one of the respondents in this study, there are around a hundred women and men engaged in home gardens in the various parts of the barangay, particularly in Puroks Arboretum, Dagohoy, Palaris, Ricarte, Village B, Daang Tubo, Libis, Area 17, and C.P. Garcia. In Area 17 alone, around 30 women are into home gardens and their planting spaces range from two to 1,500 square meters. For the purpose of this case study, 13 respondents (nine women and four men) were interviewed. The average age of the respondents is 50.9 years, with ages ranging from 26 to 65. Majority are working in the informal economy and engaged in various work activities or livelihoods such as fish vending, street food selling, running a small variety store, and washing/ironing clothes; while five of them are barangay health workers and volunteer counselors in the barangay women's desk, and one is a barangay councilor. The volunteers in the various barangay offices receive a monthly honorarium ranging from 1,000 to 4,000 pesos, while those who are engaged in multiple livelihoods note that their pooled household daily earnings range from 300 to 600 pesos.

The respondents have been engaged in home gardening for a varying number of years. Edna, Ester, and Ched have been into gardening since the 1980s when they first set foot in the area and planted the vacant spaces near their respective houses. The couple Nap and Didith were rice farmers from Mindanao who claimed that their great grandparents had already been farming before the University was established. Hector, Jun,

and Dante went into gardening in the early 2000s when they were laid off as casual janitors in the University because of active involvement in union activities. Verna, Salome, and Olivia started gardening after attending the training conducted by the Department of Agriculture (DA) extension workers facilitated by a Women and Development student doing her practicum in the community. Lastly, Marie and Cristy are beneficiaries of the “Joy of Urban Gardening Program.”

### *Reasons for Engaging in Home Gardens*

The home gardeners have diverse reasons for engaging in home gardens. Didith and Nap shifted to vegetable farming because rice farming was no longer viable as a source of income due to pest infestation, climactic variability, and a longer harvest period. Edna, Ched, and Ester are into gardening to lessen household food expenses, while the rest grow crops mainly for household consumption. Surplus produce is sold for immediate cash to buy either food (e.g., rice, salt, sugar, coffee, condiments) or provide non-food items (e.g., children’s transportation, school supplies, medicines, and other small household expenses). It is also given as gifts to neighbors and friends or swapped with other food crops produced by neighbors.

Didith and Nap earn from 500 to 1,000 pesos daily from their home garden. They sell three pieces of lettuce for 25 pesos and a bunch of spinach for 10 pesos—cheaper than market prices. Residents in Area 17 as well as in other communities within the Barangay UP Campus are among their clients. They also supply vegetables to vendors in the *talipapa* (small wet market) of Krus na Ligas, Daang Tubo, and Libis. Hector, Jun, and Dante supply herbs to a few small canteens and restaurants nearby. They earn from 100 to 500 pesos from the sale of lemon grass and herbs thrice a week. The rest of the women gardeners produce primarily for home consumption and occasionally sell their vegetable crops to walk-in buyers.

In terms of division of labor, Didith and Nap who work full time in the garden claim that they have equal division of labor as well as equal hours spent in tending the garden—from five to ten o’clock in the morning and three to six o’clock in the afternoon. Likewise, marketing is done by both of them. Since they work the entire day in the garden, domestic work is relegated to their older children. According to the couple, other couples working fulltime in gardens have a similar work division. Hector, Jun, and Dante work full time in their gardens and none of their families are involved in gardening. The women home gardeners who have full time reproductive work spend from 30 minutes to an hour in tending their small gardens,

while their husbands who have salaried or waged work do not participate in gardening. The women gardeners who have regular paid work tend their gardens on weekends while cleaning and watering are assigned to both female and male older children. In some cases, husbands and children help in watering the gardens during weekends.

### ***Strategies for Dealing with Limited Space***

Except for Didith and Nap who have a larger space, the majority of the home gardeners make do with the limited spaces available to them. Salome, for instance, makes use of two small raised garden beds in her two-square meter space on the side of her house. Hector, Jun, and Dante plant vegetables and herbs in available open spaces near their houses, eventually creating several small pocket gardens along the road to the community. Verna, Olivia, and Cristy who are senior citizens grow vegetables and ornamentals in containers and hang them vertically on the walls and fences at eye level, a practice which has freed them from having to bend while tending their plants. The rest have home gardens in their small backyard spaces and in containers.

Common crops raised in these home gardens include: early maturing crops (those that can be harvested in two to three months) such as tomatoes, pepper, corn, beans, and leafy vegetables like *pechay*, mustard, spinach, and lettuce; semi-annual crops like winged beans, eggplant, okra, different varieties of gourd, ginger, and turmeric; and annual or year-round crops like sweet potato, cassava, peas, *alugbati*, lemon grass, and Chinese *malunggay*. The home gardens are enclosed by recycled wire and stakes. Small-growing trees and semi-permanent plants like *malunggay*, *kakawati*, banana, *atis*, and guava serve as live fencing. Recently, planting of trees and fencing have been discouraged by the University security guards, exposing the gardens to animals and chickens as well as to pilferage.

Some gardeners swap seeds or buy their seeds, while others source their seeds from the office of the “Joy of Urban Farming” Program. The limited space has led the home gardeners to adopt strategies that maximize space, require less labor, and provide a variety of vegetables. Some of these strategies include:

- container gardening which makes use of repurposed styrofoam, fruit crates and all unused containers;

- vertical gardening in which plants in containers are mounted on either walls or fences one on top of each other to maximize the use of space and to save water by watering from the top container and letting the water drip down to the containers below;
- companion planting in which a raised plot or container is planted with two to three kinds of plants to ensure a variety of vegetables;
- bin composting using old pails or drums for collecting kitchen waste to decompose into organic compost;
- mulching by planting sweet potato (*camote*) as crop cover to discourage the growth of weeds;
- raised bed planting to ensure ample drainage;
- maximizing water use by collecting and saving rain water, as well as recycling kitchen and other household waste water; and
- preserving seeds through sharing or swapping with neighbors and friends who are also gardeners.

When asked where they learned these techniques, the respondents had varied responses. Of the 13 respondents, only five noted that they learned them from the seminars conducted by the DA extension workers and the trainers of the “Joy of Urban Farming” Program. Four respondents noted that they farmed during their childhood while the rest considered their knowledge as a result of common sense and a “trial-and-error” mode of learning.

As home gardeners, the common problems they encountered are: theft, pest infestation, non-germinating seeds, and lack of water during summer. However, the most pressing concern is the news of an eviction plan by the University as well as harassment from the University security guards who have begun to prohibit them from cultivating the land or erect fences for their gardens. They, thus, sought the assistance of the local official who authored the Barangay Resolution<sup>9</sup> that allows residents to plant in unused spaces in the community. The local official wrote a letter to the University officials informing them that residents will plant vegetables in unused spaces in the campus by virtue of the said resolution.

## *Benefits from Home Gardens*

When asked about the benefits of their home gardens aside from monetary rewards, the home gardeners had these to say:

- Lowered household food expenses

*“Ang laki ng tipid sa gastusin sa pagkain. Dati, bumibili kami ng gulay, e ang gulay mas mahal pa sa isda.”* (We save a lot on food expenses. Before, we bought vegetables more expensive than fish.) – Ester

*“Ako nga noong wala pa ang garden ko di na ako bumibili ng gulay dahil mahal, kaya nagkakasya na lang kami ng lutong gulay. Pero ngayon kukuha ka lang sa likod-bahay at di ka na bibili.”* (Before when I still didn't have my garden, I didn't buy vegetables because they were expensive; I just bought ready-cooked vegetables. But with my garden, I just pick the vegetables. I don't have to buy them.) – Salome

*“Dati ang kita napupunta lang halos sa pagkain. E, maliit lang ang kita kasi kaswal lang kami. Ngayon may income na, may pagkain pa.”* (We used to spend a large portion of our income on food. We only earned minimum wages because we were just casual workers. But now we earn and have food besides.) – Hector and Jun

- Developed recycling and solid and water waste management practices for a cleaner and healthier environment

*“Natuto akong mag-recycle ng mga bote, iba pang container, kaya walang kalat at kumonti ang basura namin. Dati sako-sako ang basura namin kada linggo.”* (I learned to recycle used bottles and other containers, so less garbage. Before, we used to dispose of several sacks of garbage every week.) – Ester

*“Mas malinis ang paligid dahil ang basura mula sa kusina ay ginagawa naming compost.”* (Our surroundings are cleaner because we make compost out of our kitchen refuse.) – Cristy

*“Natuto din kami mag recycle ng gamit na tubig tulad ng hugas-bigas at pinaghugasan ng isda para gawing fertilizer at pandilig, lalo na sa panahon ng tag-init.”* (We learned to recycle waste water as fertilizer and for watering the plants, especially during the dry season.) – Salome

- Access to fresh and safer foods

*“Natutugunan nito ang pang-araw-araw na gulay, sariwa at ligtas pa dahil walang kemikal.”* (It [the home garden] provides us with a daily supply of fresh, safe and chemical-free vegetables.) – Olivia

*“Ang saging, kamote at kamoteng kahoy ay mas masustansya kaysa bibili ka ng chichiria ng mga bata. Mas masarap dahil sariwa. Ikaw na lang ang didiskarte kung paano ang luto para di magsawa ang mga bata.”* (Bananas, sweet potatoes, and cassava are more nutritious than buying store-bought snacks for the children. They are more delicious because they are fresh. It is up to you to be creative in cooking them so the children won't tire of them.) – Marie

- Improved quality of the surroundings and enhanced sense of well-being

*“Ang sarap ng pakiramdam sa malamig na hanging dala ng mga halaman.”* (The cool breeze brought by the plants boosts my mood and feelings.) – Edna

*“Pag nakikita mong matataba ang mga halaman at luntian ang paligid, kalmado ka rin at nalilimutan ang mga problema.”* (Seeing the plants healthy and the surroundings all green, makes you feel calm, too; and problems are temporarily forgotten.) – Hector

*“Pag nagtatrabaho ako sa garden, mas malakas ako kahit senior citizen na. Ito na rin ang aking exercise bukod sa zumba sa Circle.”* (I feel strong when I'm working in the garden despite being a senior citizen. This is my form of exercise aside from my regular zumba sessions at the [Quezon Memorial] Circle). – Verna

*“Masarap ang pakiramdam na ikaw ang nag-produce ng iyong pagkain. Mabuti ito kesa sa mga luoy na gulay na tinitinda sa palengke na may spray lang ng malamig na tubig para magmukhang sariwa.”* (It's a nice feeling knowing you raised your own food. This is better than eating wilted vegetables sold in the market which were sprayed with cold water to make them appear fresher.) – Dante

*“Parang exercise lang, kaiba naman sa exercise ng gawaing bahay.”* (It's like doing exercise, yet different from the exercise of doing housework.) – Ched



- A sense of community among home gardeners

*“Dahil nga tabi-tabi ang plot namin dito sa tumana, madalas nagkakasabay kaming maglinis at nakakapagkuwentuhan tungkol sa mga pang-araw-araw na buhay, at mga pamamaraan sa pagtatanim.”* (Since our vegetable plots are side by side here in the field, we often have the chance to chat with each other about daily life and about planting techniques.) – Didith

*“Ako pag may nagpupunta dito sa bukid, binibigyan ko ng libreng gulay para matikman ang sariwa at ma-encourage na magtanim din. Ang iba nga natutuwa pag nakikita ang berdeng paligid at gusto ring magtanim, kaya binibigyan ko ng binhi.”* (I give away free vegetables to those who visit the farm to encourage them to also garden. Others are delighted with the green surroundings and are encouraged to go into gardening, so I give them seeds.) – Nap

*“Nagtutulungan kaming magkakapit-bahay—sa pagbibigyan ng ulam, pagtingin sa maliliit na bata kung may aalis at pagbibigyan ng mga gulay lalo na kung maraming ani. Nagpapalitan din kami ng mga binhi para di na bumili.”* (We help each other as neighbors in many ways—exchanging viands, taking care of small children when one of us has to leave, and giving away garden produce especially when there is a surplus. We also exchange seeds and seedlings, so that we no longer need to buy them.) – Ched

Aside from these home gardeners interviewed, there are other women and men who are drawn into home gardening either in their spare time from reproductive or productive work. For instance, the driver of the barangay government in the UP Campus has planted a variety of vegetables at the back of buildings within the vicinity of the barangay hall. A group of women from Malinis St. in Area 17 who are beneficiaries of the “Joy of Urban Farming Project” has cleared a garbage dump and transformed it into a vegetable and herb garden and recently received an award for such initiative. The formation of seven chapters<sup>10</sup> of the Joy Belmonte Volunteer Movement in Barangay UP that tend community and backyard gardens is another of the initiatives that show the feasibility and acceptability of home gardens as a strategy for food security.

## Some Concluding Notes and Recommendations

Food insecurity is a major challenge to poorer households in urban settings. This particular study examined home gardens as a strategy for food security and found that home gardens, though small in size, play a crucial role in the household food security of informal settlers in urban settings. Thus, home gardening could be a food security strategy for the following reasons:

One, it increases the households' access to safe, nutritious, and sufficient food which cannot be met through market or store-bought food. Since food travels just a few steps from the home garden to the kitchen, households are ensured of fresh, safe, and nutrient-dense food. Likewise, with the use of home-made organic fertilizer, diversified plants, and sustainable gardening systems, the quality of food is ensured. Two, it becomes a reliable source of food supply for the households. Most of the households' daily food consumption is from the limited waged or salaried incomes of one or more members which are sometimes pooled together to constitute the household income. Prior to gardening, the households noted that a large portion of their pooled incomes were devoted to food consumption. With limited purchasing power, they would buy food on a retail basis which is expensive. With home gardening, however, they became less dependent on ready-made food from *sari-sari* stores and markets, eventually making food more affordable.

Three, the knowledge gained by the home gardeners in raising food attuned to seasonal requirements enables them to have sufficient vegetables, herbal plants, and root crops all year round. Their households are provided with a steady and continuous production and supply of home-grown food.

Four, it provides greener spaces in their immediate surroundings. The varied textures and colors of plants provide a sense of well-being that is therapeutic to the mind, body, and emotions. The greenery and the atmosphere provided by the gardens not only uplift the mood but likewise calm the mind, while working in the garden provides a workout for both the body and the mind. In addition, the practice of recycling household waste and refuse not only cleans the surroundings but offers health benefits as garbage is reduced and managed.

Fifth, the interaction of home gardeners, neighbors, and friends within the community fosters a spirit of solidarity and community

connectedness. The sharing and swapping of produce, seeds, and gardening knowledge and techniques strengthen the social networks and support system in the community. At the same time, knowledge on gardening gained through practice, common-sense wisdom, and informal education enables gardeners, especially the women, to reclaim their historic role as food producers.

And most importantly, engaging in home gardens and being at the center of their household food system provides these households with a measure of control over what food to produce and consume, and how to use them. Having control over production, utilization, and consumption of food produced from home gardens gives them a sense of empowerment.

Home gardening has a gender dimension, too. Majority of home gardeners are women. They are drawn into gardening primarily for food consumption and for the nutritional concerns of their families. On the other hand, only those men who do not have paid work are engaged in gardening, making it their primary livelihood. In terms of labor participation in home gardens, four patterns emerged from the study: (1) equal participation of labor in households where gardening is the primary source of livelihood for both women and men, while domestic work is relegated to older children; (2) zero participation of women in home gardens tended by men as their primary livelihood; (3) occasional participation of men in gardens where both women and men have regular paid work, while domestic work and watering the garden are relegated to older children during weekdays; and (4) zero participation of men with paid work in gardens tended by women who are full-time housewives.

The women, being primarily responsible for food preparation and consumption in the household are the ones pressured to look for food when it is not readily available. With women's home gardens, households are able to smoothen out fluctuations in consumption and incomes. Yet, such contribution is not distinctly recognized and valued because it is indirectly masked as part of the women's domestic responsibilities.

As gleaned from the study, home gardening is an important food security strategy of some informal settlers' households. The benefits of home gardens showed that it could be a development strategy to address food insecurity as well as in greening the urban surroundings. At the same time, it could be an integral component of resettlement programs and relocation plans and mechanisms. On the other hand, as competition for

space is a pressing concern of urban areas, home gardens could be factored in in the zoning and land use planning of local governments.

Since home gardens are independent initiatives of households out of economic necessity, these initiatives could be sustained, enhanced, and upscaled through partnership with local governments: 1) by facilitating access of urban households to resources—unused public land and cheaper water costs; 2) by providing technical support to upgrade the gardeners' knowledge and skills in agriculture; and 3) by creating a conducive policy environment for these home gardens to thrive. Further, the government could assist these home gardeners to upscale production by opening more spaces for individual and communal gardens. In line with this, the former could act as mediator or guarantor between the latter and owners in entering into agreement for the temporary use of vacant and unused private land. The local government could also assist by facilitating better markets for the gardeners' produce. Moreover, since majority of those engaged in home gardens are women, provision of day care services would be beneficial to them. On the other hand, organizing these home gardeners is deemed necessary especially when production is geared towards upscaling. Finally, for a truly empowering partnership, a mechanism for participation of home gardeners, especially women, in decision-making over urban gardening/farming, zoning, and land-use planning must be instituted.

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## **End Notes**

<sup>1</sup>The Global Hunger Index (GHI) is a tool that comprehensively measures and tracks the hunger situation in a country using four components: undernourishment, child wasting, child stunting, and child mortality. It was developed by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI). The index notes that as a country scores higher, it faces higher hunger problems based on these measurements: >9.9 score = low level of hunger; 10-19.9 = moderate level; 20-34.9 = serious level; 35-49.5 = alarming level.

<sup>2</sup>The “Zero Hunger Bill” was filed by Sen. Aquilino (Koko) Pimentel III in 2014 at the higher chamber of Congress. Adopting a rights-based legal framework for food programs, the bill frames the food issue not as a charity but rather an entitlement concern. A similar bill (HB 61) was simultaneously filed by Representatives Karlo Alexei and Jericho Jonas Nograles in the Lower House of Congress (Miclat-Teves, 2016).

<sup>3</sup>“The right to adequate food is recognized under Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (G.A. Res. 217 A (III), U.N. Doc. A/810, at 71 (1948)), and under Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (adopted on 16 December 1966, G.A. Res. 2200(XXII), U.N. GAOR, 21st sess., Supp. No. 16, U.S. Doc. A/6316 (1966), 993 UNTS 3), as interpreted by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (General Comment No. 12: The right to adequate food (1999), UN doc. E/C.12/1999/5). The Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security, adopted by the FAO Council in November 2004, provide practical guidance addressed to all States for the implementation of the human right to adequate food” (World Bank, 2008, p.18).



<sup>4</sup>The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) or Global Goals consist of 17 development agenda set to be achieved by 2030. These goals took effect in January 2016 and are built from the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). These are considered a universal call to action to end poverty, ensure prosperity and well-being for all people, and protect the environment (UNDP, n.d.b.).

<sup>5</sup>These targets include: (1) ending hunger and ensuring access, particularly for the poor and vulnerable, to safe, nutritious, and sufficient food throughout the year; (2) ending all forms of malnutrition among children and addressing the nutritional needs of women and girls in the different stages of the life cycle; (3) doubling agricultural production and incomes of women and men small-scale food producers through access to land and other productive resources, related services and opportunities for added value and non-farm employment; (4) ensuring sustainable food production systems and agricultural practices that increase production, that help maintain the ecosystems, that increase capacity for adaptation to climate change and other extreme weather events, and that improve soil and land quality (UNDP, n.d.a.).

<sup>6</sup>HB 2818, An Act Promoting Integrated Urban Agricultural Development was formerly filed as HB 5597 in the 16th Congress and was re-filed by Rep. Estrellita Suansing in the 17th Congress. It aims to institutionalize integrated urban farming in urbanized cities and municipalities in the country; while HB 4354, An Act Promoting the Use of Urban Farming in the Metropolitan Regions to Address Food Security Concerns Establishing Ecological Community Functions and for other Purposes, was filed by Rep. Michael Romero in the 17th Congress to highlight the utilization of inactive, unused, and abandoned government lots and buildings owned by the national and local governments as well as other available land areas in state colleges and universities for urban farming, particularly in growing crops, raising livestock, and producing food.

<sup>7</sup>These include: Pook Arboretum, Ricarte, Dagohoy, Palaris, Sumakwel (Area 1, 2, and 3) in the North sector and Area 17, Amado V. Hernandez (Village A, B, and C), C.P. Garcia, Daang Tubo, Purok Aguinaldo (including Hardin ng Rosas and Bougainvilla), Libis/Libis Annex, and Sikatuna BLISS in the South sector.

<sup>8</sup>For consideration of confidentiality and to maintain their anonymity as they fear threats from the security guards of the University, the real names of respondents were not used.

<sup>9</sup>Barangay Resolution #076 Series of 2013 (*Barangay Resolusyon Para sa Pagpapatupad ng Programang Pangkabuhayang Pagtatanim ng Ibat-Ibang Uri ng Halamang Gulay sa mga Bakanteng Espasyo/Lugar sa Bawat Pook na Nasasakupan ng Barangay UP Campus*) was passed on March 6, 2013 and authored by Kag. Zenaida Lectura. The resolution promotes gardening in unused spaces as a source of livelihood.

<sup>10</sup>These include Area 17, Daang Tubo, Libis, Malinis, Purok Aguinaldo, Village A and C.

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# SURFACING GENDER ISSUES IN HOUSING: Insights from a Case Study in Angono, Rizal

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Rowena A. Laguilles

## Abstract

*This paper looked into the experiences of women from the Pambansang Kalipunan ng mga Manggagawang Impormal sa Pilipinas Home Owners' Association (PATAMABA-HOA) in Angono, Rizal as they responded to their urban poor housing situations. It raised the question of housing issues as gendered, and focused on the need for a consistently gendered approach in ensuring housing for all. The case study employed qualitative data-gathering methods including the focus group discussion, key informant interview, and document review. Among the paper's findings is that the housing policy approach of prioritizing the legalization of informal settlers over ensuring the quality of living conditions for the people greatly determines the gender issues found in women's urban poor housing situations. It also found women organizing to be central in PATAMABA-HOA's response as it made possible not only a nuanced understanding of housing issues but a truly community-led response that both challenges as well as provides an alternative approach to urban poor housing.*

## Introduction

In September 2015, countries the world over ratified the Sustainable Development Goals or SDGs, among which is Goal No. 11, Sustainable Cities and Communities. In recognition of rapid urbanization in many parts of the world especially among developing countries, this goal highlights the adverse effects of the phenomenon—congestion, pollution, and poverty—and calls for a consideration of a more sustainable path to urban development. The call is urgent, with the projection that by 2030, urbanization will reach 60% of the world population (Bloom et al., 2010).

Focus is given to inadequate housing, which characterizes many of the world's urban areas. In fact, slums, where the backwash effects of urbanization are most felt, are now home to one billion people (Bloom et al., 2010). Thus, among the targets set in Goal No. 11 are the following: 11.1) “By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and

basic services and upgrade slums” and 11.3) “By 2030, enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries” (Sustainable Development Goal 11, 2017).

The phenomenon of urbanization, or the increase in the population of urban dwellers resulting from high fertility rates among them and the influx of migrants from rural areas, is a reality for the Philippines as well. In 2050, 56.3% of the country is expected to urbanize (Ojastro, 2016). And already, informal settlement areas “characterized by unsanitary conditions, congestion, and limited access to basic urban services” were home to as many as 582,059 households as of 2010 (National Economic Development Authority [NEDA], 2011, p.174). Overall, the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC) identified the need for 5.5 million housing units in the country by 2016 (Ojastro, 2016).

The call for a sustainable path to urban development in terms of housing is strengthened by existing international standards for the right to adequate housing. The United Nations Human Settlements Program (UN Habitat) not only provides for the states’ obligations to respect, protect, and fulfill their citizens’ right to quality living conditions, but outlines minimum standards for adequate housing: security of tenure; basic services, materials and infrastructure; affordability; habitability; accessibility; location; and cultural adequacy (UN Habitat, 2014).

An examination of inadequate housing as an urban phenomenon, however, would be incomplete without surfacing a most widespread and deep-seated, yet neglected, aspect: the disproportionate burdens that women bear. Women make up at least half of the urban population; and with the related trends of the feminization of urban migration and the feminization of urban poverty, the context is set for women’s particular vulnerability to inadequate housing (UN Habitat, 2013; Porio, 2009).

The Magna Carta of Women (MCW) or RA 9710 specifies women’s right to housing in the Philippine setting, capturing the right to housing as well as to non-discrimination and empowerment of women, as it is also informed by the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA). The MCW states, in Section 21:

*The State shall develop housing programs for women that are localized, simple, accessible, with potable water, and electricity,*

*secure, with viable employment opportunities and affordable amortization. In this regard, the State shall consult women and involve them in community planning and development, especially in matters pertaining to land use, zoning, and relocation.*

Furthermore, HUDCC, which oversees all Key Shelter Agencies (KSAs) in the country, has recently declared that it “re-affirms its commitment in furthering the objectives of the Magna Carta of Women, specially those found under Right to Housing” through Resolution No.4, Series of 2015. The Harmonized Gender and Development Guidelines for Project Development, Implementation, Management, Monitoring and Evaluation, produced by the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW), and the Official Development Assistance Gender and Development Network (ODA-GAD Network) originally in 2004 and most recently in its third edition in 2016, also provides a Gender and Development (GAD) checklist for Housing and Settlement Projects. The checklist serves to guide agencies in ensuring that national development goals of gender equality and women empowerment are achieved.

The existence of policy guidelines for women’s right to adequate housing, however, hardly ensures it for women in urban poor communities. In the most recent time slice of the Philippine Plan for Gender-Responsive Development 1995-2025 (PPGD), which is the Women Empowerment, Development and Gender Equality 2013-2016 (WEDGE), the PCW explains that women still face at least four “priority issues” when it comes to housing. First is “Continued Prevalence of Gender Inequalities in Housing and Security of Tenure in the Country,” which points to how women have less access to and control over housing resources, mainly land and property, due to discrimination in policies and traditions such as those having to do with inheritance. Second is “Invisibility of Women in Current Shelter Laws, Policies, Mechanisms, Structures, and Plans,” which stresses the discrimination against women in the current legal framework on housing, such as with the privileging of the husband’s decisions in cases of property disputes. Third is “Current Housing for Low-Income Groups and Informal Settlers,” which points out how women’s needs and preferences are not reflected in the design of housing programs and projects. Last is “Women from Low-income and Informal Settler Communities Unorganized and Not Consulted on Decisions Involving Human Settlements,” which describes how the majority of women living in urban poor communities remain unorganized and therefore are more vulnerable to exclusion from consultations and negotiations over housing services (PCW, 2014).

Taking off from these, this paper focuses on the experiences of the *Pambansang Kalipunan ng mga Manggagawang Impormal sa Pilipinas Home Owners' Association* (PHOA), a women's organization-led Home Owners' Association in Angono, Rizal, in examining the gendered nature of urban poor housing issues in the Philippines and organized women's responses to their housing situations.

Many of the PATAMABA members in Angono were among the informal settlers in the municipality who could not afford to access and sustain housing services. Being workers in the informal economy, their incomes were not as regular or predictable as most housing programs in reality require of beneficiaries; neither do they have membership in social insurance such as SSS, or PAG-IBIG with which they could have worked to secure access to housing. Angono's Zero Squatters Program (ZSP) was the opportunity they needed, and which needed them as well: in 2002, the local government of Angono sought organized groups that could benefit from the program. It was in 2003 that the PHOA was registered with the ZSP, initially with 217 members. As of 2016, 116 houses had finished construction, while most basic services including water and electricity had been secured by PHOA in cooperation with the local government as well as non-government organizations. The PHOA is women-led; and while it is comprised of all the households in the community, it is the mother or adult women members of these households who are active in the organization (Josie Lipio, PHOA president; Gloria Bolarin, PHOA vice president, and Maritess L. Oriaes, PHOA Secretary, personal communication, 2016).

## **Literature Review**

Four main housing issues that characterize women's experiences with housing are reflected in related literature. One is how women find it harder to access housing services. For instance, housing programs usually entail eligibility requirements that do not accommodate women's socio-economic status, such as availability of fixed income or regularity of income (Rakodi, 2016). Another is how women find it harder to secure land tenure, owing to discrimination. For instance, women are less likely to inherit and own land and property whether because of tradition (Gilroy, 1994) or laws (COHRE, 2004). Another issue lies in housing design. Roberts (1991) asserts that questions of "location and dwelling form and density to more detailed questions of internal layout, fixtures, and fitting," are hardly based on the needs and preferences of women (p.1). Last is that authors note how women's participation in housing projects is still mainly in its implementation, rather than in decision-making. For Hood and Woods

(1994), this is due to the fact of women's reproductive work, which limits their resources for genuine participation, as well as the bureaucratic nature of policy-making, which tends to intimidate women who are not familiar with such.

Related literature also reveals the variety of women's roles in addressing housing issues. One of these is that women's experiences are the most authoritative sources of empirical evidence to surfacing gender issues in housing (Rabenhort, 2011). Another is that women participate in the implementation of housing projects, which according to Moser (1987) is "an end in itself...a means to improve project results...[and a means for] the participation of women in other spheres of life" (p.16). Other studies highlight the initiatives by women in securing access to and tenure in housing. Vance (1987), in a case study in Managua, Nicaragua, tells the story of women who worked alongside men in initiating a self-help housing project and whose efforts from house construction to mobilizing the community paved the way for the government's recognition of their initiative and allocation for their infrastructure needs. Chant and McIlwaine (2016) also note successful cases in South Africa, Chile, Kenya, and India, where the advent of "pro-female land and property titling," complemented with micro-credit and legal aid programmes, were met with the efforts of women-led cooperatives and other community groups (p.85). Finally, in some sources, women's organizing for housing is shown to form part of a larger women's agenda. This includes the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), an organization of workers in India's informal economy who developed initiatives for housing finance (Obino, 2013); and the *Damayan ng Maralitang Pilipinong Api* (DAMPA) (2004), an organization of grassroots women in Metro Manila which includes housing in their overall anti-poverty agenda.

### **Analytical Framework**

This study uses a complementation of the Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) and the Triple Roles Framework (TRF). On one hand, the HRBA operates on the clear relationship between people as rights holders and the state as duty bearers in respecting, protecting, and fulfilling the right to adequate housing. Apart from directly providing housing, the state is expected to fulfill its role through the establishment of a legal framework that guides all actors involved in the provision of housing (UN Habitat, 2014, p. 6). Such role is informed by the principle of progressive realization, so that the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESR) says that states should "take steps...to



the maximum of its available resources” towards full realization of human rights in the covenant (UN Habitat, 2014, p. 30). Also following the ICESR, the right to adequate housing is enlightened by non-discrimination against “race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status [which] may include disability, health status (e.g., HIV/AIDS) or sexual orientation” (UN Habitat, 2014, p. 10).

On the other hand, in the TRF, which was designed by Caroline O. N. Moser (1993) in specific consideration of low-income women in developing countries, three conceptual tools are used. First is the ‘household,’ which goes beyond the following assumptions: 1) that the household is a nuclear family of two heterosexual parents and a few children; 2) that there is equal decision-making and power among adult members of the household; and 3) that family members follow a complementary gender division of labor, where men do productive or paid work performed outside of the home and women do reproductive or unpaid care work usually within the home (p.15). Second is ‘women’s triple roles’: 1) homemaker, with their unpaid work within the privacy of the home; 2) breadwinner, with their paid work usually done outside of the home; and 3) community manager, with their unpaid care work outside of the home but within the community (Moser, 1993, pp.29-34). Third is ‘gender needs,’ which can be practical or strategic. Practical needs are based on their immediate living conditions, or “needs women identify in their socially accepted roles in society,” such as the proximity of social services that make their tasks of taking care of their children’s immediate health and education needs easier; while strategic needs are “the needs women identify because of their subordinate position to men in their society,” such as increased participation in making decisions over housing issues vis-à-vis men (Moser, 1993, pp.39-40). Moser (1993) emphasizes that the state has an important role in meeting these needs, not the least of which is through policies and programs that directly address them, making the connection with the HRBA even more apparent.

## **Methodology**

This research holds a feminist standpoint, putting women’s lived experiences at its center. First, it assumes that women’s experiences are a source of knowledge that can lead to understanding society. Second, it believes that women’s experiences provide a richer and more complete knowledge of a given phenomenon, because they bring with them the dominant (male) as well as the subordinated (female) perspectives and experiences. Finally, the feminist standpoint looks at women’s experiences



not only as a source of understanding society but also of changing it. In the words of Brooks (2007):

*Feminist standpoint epistemology...challenges us to 1) see and understand the world through the eyes and experiences of oppressed women and 2) apply the vision and knowledge of oppressed women to social activism and change. (p.55)*

This paper focuses on the case of PATAMABA in Angono, Rizal. Data gathering methods used for the study were focus group discussion (FGD), key informants interview (KII), and documents review, the participants for which were selected through purposive sampling. For the FGD participants, the women were: 1) members of the PATAMABA-Angono HOA (PHOA); 2) residents of Brgy. San Vicente, Angono where the housing project is located; and 3) active participants in the organization's programs and activities. Eight to 10 women were invited for each of the FGD sessions. These included both officers and members of the organization. For the KII, officers of the PHOA were invited for a group discussion on the housing program covering their housing situation; and the head officer of the Urban Settlement Development Office (USDO) of Angono was also interviewed for a background on local policies and programs. Finally, for the documents review, relevant policy papers on housing frameworks and strategies were analyzed.

In conducting the research, the challenges encountered were found mostly during data gathering. One area was time management. Great flexibility on the part of the researcher was required as the availability of the primary participants did not always coincide with the proposed timeline of the research. Managing the groups for the FGDs was also quite a task; much effort was necessary to make sure that the less vocal women joined in the discussion as much as the more assertive ones did. Not only were these challenges important in preserving the integrity of the data, they were also ethical issues that the researcher needed to be especially sensitive about.

## **Findings**

### ***The Policy Context of Housing***

The following documents were reviewed for this section: 1) Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan (MTPDP) 2011-2016; 2) National Urban Development and Housing Framework (NU DHF) 2009-2016; 3) the final report on Developing the National Informal Settlements

Upgrading Strategy (NISUS); 4) National Drive Against Professional Squatters and Squatting Syndicates (NDAPSSS) Primer; 5) Department of Interior and Local Government Memorandum Circular (DILG MC) 2012-04; 6) Municipality of Angono Executive Order (EO) 2012-16 & MC 2014-10; and 7) Municipality of Angono Resolution (Res.) 15-003 and Res. 15-702. A KII with the head of the USDO in Angono was also conducted.

### *Eliminating ISFs*

The Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan for 2011-2016 (MTPDP) frames the housing problem as one of urban development. It cites the government's inadequate response to it, captured by low spending for housing, as well as a supposedly responsive role in addressing it that needed firming up. The MTPDP focuses on a target of providing 1.47 million housing units in 2016, in the context of the worldwide call for 'urban renewal' and 'slum upgrading,' which comes with the perspectives of infrastructure, services, and construction standards as well as the need to consider related factors such as employment needs, Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM), and Climate Change Adaptation (CCA).

The National Urban Development and Housing Framework 2009-2016 (NUDHF) frames housing consistent with the MTPDP. It looks to economic growth as essential in capacitating people to afford housing, and thereafter zeroes in on housing credit, lowering the cost of land, and housing production as the solution while maintaining the need to sustain communities. Its strategies for housing affordability and delivery are: 1) local and regional planning, 2) land access and management, and 3) exploring promising financing sources and schemes; while its strategies for sustainable communities are: 1) use of market-based incentives/disincentives to provide public amenities to support urban land use objectives, 2) sustainable planning/green building, and 3) integration of Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction and Management into community and regional development.

The National Informal Settlements Upgrading Strategy (NISUS) echoes both the MTPDP and the NUDHF as it considers Informal Settler Families (ISFs) to be the problem that must be solved. It aims to turn one million ISFs into formal residents by 2025. To achieve this, it focuses on improvements in the production of housing units, capacitating ISFs, and improving involved institutions. The National Slum Improvement Action Plan for 2011-2016 is also emphasized; focusing on rehousing

ISFs from danger areas, upgrading ISF communities, and establishing Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) to meet the demand for socialized housing; the establishment of a financing facility for urban development, a housing subsidy program for ISFs, and enhancing the role of microfinance institutions and banks in financing housing; and enhancing the capacities of the local government, national housing agencies, and community-based organizations.

A related document, the National Drive Against Professional Squatters and Squatting Syndicates (NDAPSSS) Primer, specifically seeks to “take action against” ‘professional squatters’ and ‘squatting syndicates.’ This is implemented at the local level through the DILG Memorandum Circular 2012-04 on Creation of local committees against squatting syndicates and professional squatters (LCASSPS) and/or similar bodies, among whose focus is to “curtail professional squatters and squatting syndicates, monitor eviction and demolition activities.”

#### *From State to Household*

Angono’s Zero Squatters Program (ZSP) effectively reflects national frameworks and strategies towards improved housing for the urban poor. The ZSP began in 2003 with 12,000 families considered as squatters, and is geared towards a projected total elimination of squatter households by 2020. According to the Urban Settlement Development Office (USDO), most of the squatters in Angono came from the provinces seeking work in Metro Manila but were unable to afford its cost of living, or were displaced from Metro Manila. Angono, being peaceful and with its services, becomes their destination. Consistent with the national approach to housing, the Angono LGU does not support an “as is, where is” approach to housing but instead works towards establishing a more habitable environment. At the time of the interview, only approximately 2,000 families are considered as squatters. In anticipation of continued migration to Angono which might upset this projection, the Angono LGU upholds DILG MC No. 2012-04.

Through the city’s USDO, households undergo a selection process guided by a checklist and a computerized data banking system which looks at their capacity to pay, years of residence in Angono, nature of residence—renter or otherwise, among others. They are organized into groups, and may undergo available orientation and training. A site development plan is then drawn. Access to services and facilities is similarly facilitated through assistance with physical development including providing

*panambak* or land fill, facilitating financial assistance, and tapping donors. The beneficiaries take care of the costs for the construction of their own houses and maintenance of the site. Post-“take-out” phase, the program beneficiaries are beyond the municipality’s control, although the latter can still assist them in further development of the site.

The Angono LGU facilitates the qualification of deserving households to various national housing programs through the ZSP. For instance, under direct buying, owners who seek or threaten to have squatting households evicted from their property are negotiated with by the LGU to come to an agreeable arrangement with the households, particularly for the owner to sell the affected land to the squatting households—so that they now become lot buyers. The USDO also continuously coordinates between the households and the housing service providers.

To discourage ‘abuse’ of the program, a “One-time Program Recipient” policy is also implemented, which allows individuals to benefit from the ZSP only once. To enforce this, the LGU keeps a database of housing program beneficiaries in Angono that records their beneficiary status and monitors their housing status. Among the strengths of the program, according to the USDO, is how the LGU tries to negotiate the terms of pricing and payment of land and housing services in order to fit into the needs and capacities of the beneficiary. The LGU also helps constituents directly in terms of accessing housing, and even with financial assistance although to a limited extent. The USDO also observes that there has been little need for relocation. Only during the aftermath of Typhoon Ondoy were some 300 plus households relocated out of Angono. After that, efforts were made to keep the people within the municipality. More importantly, the individual household’s own capacity and preference determines which program the household chooses and what payment terms would define its engagement with the program. As much as possible, the LGU tries to match the terms of their housing program with the capacity of the households. For example, the LGU makes payment of Php500 per month possible with implications on the duration of the household’s contributions.

Among the issues in the ZSP, according to the USDO, is how some households also resent being relocated or otherwise tasked with improving their housing according to the site development plan, mainly because of the costs, financial and otherwise, that these entail. Some sites are also unable to follow the site development plans. Another is that some beneficiary households go back to their home provinces for various reasons including the lack of income to sustain their membership in the program, a family

emergency that requires their return home, or the separation of married couples.

Another issue cited is the limited budget for the program. The USDO explains that 60% of their office budget is intended for personnel pay, and the other 40% is divided into several projects. Thus, as long as the budget for the ZSP remains limited, services and assistance are also limited.

### *Vague Views on Women*

In the national documents, acknowledgment of gender issues appears in a few sections. For instance, in setting out the MTPDP's objectives, it is mentioned how women's participation in the development process should be promoted. Consistent with this is the declaration of the need to reflect gender concerns in housing together with other national planning initiatives and frameworks in the section on its vision and mission. They also appear in some of the MTPDP's discussions on strategic recommendations. In NISUS, women are cited in "Appendix I: Comprehensive Assessment Report," which mentions under "Issues Central to Informal Settlements" that "Inadequate, Unharmonized, and Unfocused Socioeconomic Development Policies and Programs" entail challenges that affect "very poor households and women" the most.

In the ZSP-related documents, gender issues are not mentioned at all. The USDO head explains, however, that his office sees securing housing as securing protection for women. The USDO considers women's lives to be at stake in the matter in the sense that, with a decent community, women and daughters are secured. Also according to the USDO head, women are more involved than men in securing housing or working for these housing programs

### *Women's Views and Experiences with Housing*

Three of the PHOA's officers were interviewed while two FGDs, of 10 and 8 women, were held for this section. The FGD participants' ages ranged from 34 to 60. Three finished elementary school, two reached 2nd year high school, and 12 graduated from high school. The majority earned their income by reselling goods—charcoal, fish, water, and other basic consumption goods; sewing rugs, doing beadwork, or serving as barangay volunteers. The majority earned less than P5,000 per month. Most of them have another earner in the family, yet the majority (11) of the women had

a pooled household income of less than P5,000 per month. At the time of the FGD, 11 of the 18 women were married, two were single, one was separated, one was in a live-in relationship, and one was a widow, while two did not indicate their civil status. The number of their children ranged from none to six, with the average being four children.

The following results of the in-depth interview (IDI) and FGD are divided into three parts: 1) Views on adequate housing; 2) Actions to secure adequate housing; and 3) Gains and challenges in securing adequate housing.

*Views on adequate housing*

For their views on housing, the women were asked to draw what for them was *maayos at sapat na tirahan* or “adequate housing.” They were then asked to discuss the drawing and point out its specific parts or items, which were then identified as elements.

Their drawings indicated concerns for housing facilities and utilities at the community and household levels. Their discussion of these items further revealed their appreciation of what they represented. These are organized below according to whether these are more inside shelter- or external environment-related.

**Table 1: Elements of Adequate Housing**

Element	Item: Description
<b>A. Inside Shelter-Related</b>	
1. Adequate utilities	Electricity: “ <i>May kuryente ang komunidad at kabahayan.</i> ” (The community and homes have electrical power supply.)
	Water: “ <i>May malinis na tubig sa komunidad at kabahayan.</i> ” (There is clean water in the community and the homes.)
2. Sanitation	Bathrooms: “ <i>Syempre kailangan may CR, yung may poso negro.</i> ” (Of course there needs to be a bathroom, one with a septic tank.)
	Drainage: “ <i>May maayos na daluyan ng tubig.</i> ” (There is proper drainage.)

3. Autonomy regarding the house	Furniture, appliances: <i>“May mga gamit sa bahay: appliances./ Sabi nga namin, gusto namin ng kumpleto sa bahay.”</i> (There are appliances inside the house. / We want our houses fully furnished.)
	Closed doors inside houses: <i>“May mga bagay para sa mag-asawa na hindi na dapat makita ng mga anak.”</i> (There are things for married couples that children do not need to see.)
	Different appearances for different houses: <i>“Kanya-kanyang style sa paggawa; kung ano ang gusto mong gawain. / Kalayaan sa pagsasaayos ng sariling bahay.”</i> ([People] have their own style in the construction of their house; whatever you want to have done. / Freedom in improving one’s own home.)
4. Spatial concerns	Division between rooms inside the house: <i>“Importante yun, dapat naman talaga hiwalay ang kwarto sa --- CR; proper dapat ang dibisyon. / Tamang laki at dibisyon sa loob ng bahay: may lugar para sa bawat gawain – kusina, sala, CR, tulugan.”</i> (That is important, [for example], bedrooms should really be separated from --- the bathroom; the division should be proper. / Appropriate sizes [of rooms] and divisions [between them] within the house: there is a place for every activity – kitchen, living room, bathroom, bedroom.)
	Proper lot sizes or equal lot shares: <i>“Importante yun, equal shares, bawal sumobra/lumampas; tamang pagsusukat.”</i> (That is important, equal shares, none should go beyond their land allotment, [there should be] proper measurement.)
	Proper distance between houses: <i>“Dapat may tamang distansya sa ibang bahay.”</i> (There should be proper distance between houses.)
5. Tenure	Land ownership: <i>“Motibasyon (mas papagandahin mo) at permisiong pwede mong pagandahin ang tirahan); wala kang pangamba; may kasiguruhan.”</i> (Motivation (you commit better to it) and permission that you can improve your home; you do not have fears; you feel secured.)

<b>B. External Environment-Related</b>	
6. Emergency preparedness	Roofs, walls, doors, windows: <i>“Kailangan may exit ka-pano ka makaalis, kung naka-padlock halimbawa ang gate mo. / “Hindi kulong o kulob; may emergency exit.”</i> (You need a way out – how can you escape if the gate is locked? The house should not cage or trap you; there should be an emergency exit.)
	Housing materials/construction: <i>“May maayos na pagkakagawang istruktura ng bahay.”</i> (There is a properly built housing structure.)
	Two-storey houses: <i>“Kasi may tubig dito; kailangan talaga may taas ang bahay; paghahanda sa panahon ng baha.”</i> (Houses need a second floor because water rises here—we need to prepare for floods.)
	A bell tower along with the chapel: <i>“Kalembang para sa pag-a-announce sa mga tao ng balita o alarm pag emergency.”</i> (A bell for public announcements or for sounding the alarm when there is an emergency.)
7. Cultural expression	Chapel: <i>“May chapel kung saan sama-sama kaming mananalangin. Kung hindi sila Katoliko, pwede naman gamitin ang multi-purpose hall.”</i> (There is a chapel where we will pray together. Those who are not Catholic can use the multi-purpose hall.)
8. Community life	Multipurpose hall: <i>“May multipurpose na pwede pagdausan ng anumang events na gagawin ng aming samahan.”</i> (There is a multipurpose hall where our organization can hold any event or activity.)
	Basketball court: <i>“May court para sa kabataan, o sa mga may edad na gusto maglibang, kesa mapunta sa masamang bisyo.”</i> (There is a court for the youth, or the aged, who want to spend their leisure time; better that than for them to get into vices.)
	Park: <i>“May park na pwede naming gawing palipasan ng oras kapag kami ay naiinip. / Lugar na pahingahan.”</i> (There is a park where we can spend our spare time. / A place for rest.)
	Children’s playground: <i>“Mas magandang may palaruan ang mga bata.”</i> (It is better for the children to have a playground.)
9. Environmental concerns	Trees and plants: <i>“May halaman na nagsisilbing aliwalas sa paligid. / Maaliwalas (maganda at malinis) na kapaligiran.”</i> (There are plants that make the surroundings pleasant./ Pleasant–nice and clean surroundings.)



	Gardens: <i>“Dapat may gulayan, kahit sa labas ng bahay.”</i> (There should be a vegetable garden, even just right outside the house.)
10. Livelihood concerns	Sari-sari store, dress shop, bakeshop, “Ice for Sale,” from their own houses: <i>“Pwedeng maghanapbuhay sa loob ng komunidad.”</i> (Livelihood within the community is possible.)
11. Peace and order	Barangay hall: <i>“Para sa peace and order.”</i> (For keeping peace and order.)
12. Safety and security	Streetlights: <i>“May liwanag, nagsisilbing liwanag; may ilaw. / Kaligtasan sa loob ng komunidad.”</i> (There is lighting. / Safety within the community.)
	Gates: <i>Sa mga dulo-dulo ng kalsada; para mahiwalay sa ibang samahan; at para sa siguridad ng komunidad at bahay – dahil minsan may pumapasok na lasing.../ Seguridad mula sa labas ng komunidad.”</i> ([Gates] where roads end; to distinguish one housing association from another and to ensure security of the community and home – because sometimes, drunk people do get in [the community].../ For security from beyond the community.)
13. Accessibility	Location: <i>“Access sa iyo, access sa labas.”</i> (Access to you, [your] access beyond the community.)
	Cement roads: <i>“Dahil flat na ang kalsada pero hindi pa sementado.”</i> (The roads have been leveled but are not yet concrete.)

### *Actions to secure adequate housing*

For the second part of the FGD, the women were asked what they did in order to achieve their idea of adequate housing. They identified what they did for each element, whether at the individual or organizational level. These are compared with the interviews with PHOA officers.

**At the collective level**, those taken on by the PHOA as an organization are the more physical requirements, and the network building required to help achieve adequate housing. Below is a list that summarizes PHOA’s role as an organization with regard to each element of adequate housing:

- Adequate utilities.** PHOA was able to tap the projects of the Manila Water Foundation and the Meralco Foundation in order to ensure that the entire community gets electrical and water connection at discounted rates.

2. **Sanitation.** Putting up drainage pipes in the site is on top of the list of PHOA's future goals.
3. **Spatial concerns.** PHOA participated in the identification of households to be included in the site, and led the assignment of lots to the households.
4. **Land tenure.** It was the formation of PHOA that made access to the ZSP possible. It is also PHOA that continues to manage the requirements of the housing program that can eventually secure ownership of the land for the households.
5. **Emergency preparedness.** PHOA leaders mentioned that among the training the organization has undergone is disaster awareness and response. They particularly cite a project with students from the Ateneo de Manila University for this.
6. **Cultural expression.** PHOA decided to allot space in the site for the chapel that the landowner has promised to donate.
7. **Community life.** PHOA works to qualify for housing projects that will enable them to have a basketball court and park. They have also tapped housing projects that will construct a multipurpose hall and a children's playground.
8. **Environmental concerns.** Urban gardening is among PHOA's very own projects from PATAMABA.
9. **Livelihood concerns.** Livelihood skills training for home-based workers is among the priorities of PATAMABA and, by extension, of PHOA. PHOA also worked to have a multipurpose hall that will serve as their workspace or the display area of their products.
10. **Safety and security.** PHOA is similarly looking for possible donors for streetlights and gates that the site needs.
11. **Accessibility.** PHOA negotiated with the municipal office over the choice of their housing location. Initially, they were considered for relocation to another part of Rizal, but they insisted on staying in Angono. PHOA also led the leveling of the land of the site, mainly by working with the municipal office which contributed the *panambak* (land filling materials) and encouraging the community to work together.

When it comes to ensuring emergency preparedness, peace and order, and autonomy over houses, PHOA members also act as support to individual efforts. For instance, the original site development plan was not strictly followed as it specified bungalow houses while the households found two-storey or otherwise elevated housing units as more appropriate to their location because of flooding. It was not a PHOA decision per se for households to customize their construction, but they did not hold each other back from doing so either.

**At the individual level,** PHOA members most importantly support PHOA decisions and actions. In their personal capacities, however, they further ensure the achievement of adequate housing especially at the household level or as neighbors.

1. **Sanitation.** The women participated in the actual digging of *poso negros* for their houses.
2. **Autonomy over housing design.** Each house looks different, as the women have different preferences as well as financial capacity. The women try their best to save up for the appliances and furniture they need.
3. **Spatial concerns.** Generally, the women followed the lot assignment plan. In at least one instance where a neighbor had mistakenly occupied a small part of another's lot, the latter decided to simply let it pass to avoid conflict. Within their houses, the women try as much as they can to distinguish spaces, for instance by placing curtains between areas inside the house if they cannot yet afford to build wooden or cement wall dividers.
4. **Emergency preparedness.** The women participate in the decision-making over the design of their houses and some in the actual construction as well. Here, their emphases on strong materials, elevated housing, and inclusion of basic parts of the house—as much as their household can afford—are considered.
5. **Cultural expression.** The residents still attend Mass together, elsewhere beyond the PHOA site.
6. **Community life.** People in the community convene in front of or in one of their houses, allow children to play outside, and otherwise find spaces for social activities.

7. **Environmental concerns.** The women have urban gardens or otherwise have plants around their houses. Some do planting even in vacant lots. "*Pagwawalis at pagtatanim, kahit sa ibang loteng bakante*" (Sweeping and planting, even in other vacant lots).
8. **Livelihood concerns.** The women do their income-generating work at home such as sewing clothes and rags, making beaded accessories, and selling iced water.
9. **Peace and order.** The women commonly take part in resolving neighborhood conflicts among themselves or others within their area.
10. **Safety and security.** In place of streetlights, some women leave a lit light bulb in front of their houses. "*May mga nagpapailaw sa labas ng bahay*" (Some leave lights on outside their houses). In the absence of gates, the women make sure their own houses have fences, as much as they can afford.
11. **Accessibility.** The women actually helped in leveling the site land area or otherwise participated in *bayanihan* (collective action) for the same.

When it comes to ensuring adequate utilities and land tenure, the women as active members of PHOA in their households are the ones that accomplish project or program beneficiary requirements, as well as see to the fulfillment of their financial obligations for these.

#### *Gains and challenges in securing adequate housing*

The discussion below further details PHOA's experiences, organized chronologically.

1. **Qualifying to the ZSP** was a clear gain for the PHOA. As early as 2001, members of the PATAMABA in Angono explored their options for securing their members' housing needs, so that they easily qualified to the ZSP in 2002. PHOA was registered with the ZSP in 2003, with 217 members.
2. **Choosing the housing site** was also a gain. The original plan for PHOA was relocation to Baras, Rizal, but PHOA did not agree since their needs (market, schools, workplace, etc.) were in Angono. Instead, they looked for available land within the municipality. In 2014, they

found an area of 8,935 square meters that was approved for the PHOA site. This was then divided among 196 owners, including roads within the site.

3. There were gains as well as challenges in **setting the terms of payment** for the land. The land for the PHOA site costs Php800 per square meter. At an average of 30 square meters per household, this amounted to Php2,400/month. They arranged for direct buying from the landowner at Php1,250/month, with implications to the duration of payment depending on the size of lot. While the ZSP considers this low cost, some of the households still find it hard to sustain.
4. **Developing the site** also had its gains and challenges. The PHOA officers took care of the lot assignment, but the plan was not followed in its entirety. Some households did not like their location because it was lower than ground level or was in an area more prone to flooding. Others gave up their membership and passed it on to others, while others found it financially and physically difficult to construct their homes. Leveling the land was a challenge as some areas were almost one storey lower than ground level. But through the municipal office, truckloads of *panambak* from other construction projects were delivered to the area. Households helped each other out finding *panambak*, and in doing the filling up and leveling of the land.
5. **Construction of the houses** was a challenge given that each of the households had to look for its own resources for construction. Simple wood structures could initially cost Php 50,000 to Php 60,000. With this amount, a family could already live inside the house. The larger concrete houses could amount to as much as Php 600,000. But there was general *bayanihan* in the community. Some households asked for help from men who could work, and would pay them with food, cigarettes or some drinks. Typhoons and flooding also slowed construction.
6. **Availing of water and electrical services** was a special challenge the PHOA was glad to overcome. In 2007, PHOA was a beneficiary to a program by the Manila Water Foundation, *Patubig sa Barangay*. By 2008, water pipes were installed in the area for 56 households (the number of households with constructed houses at the time). The project is presently continuing on towards completion. Then in 2012, in order to avail of electrical services, the PHOA tried to enroll in a credit institution but their application was rejected since the area was flood-prone. Fortunately in 2013, they learned through the municipal

office that the Meralco Foundation was looking for a beneficiary organization for an electrification project. PHOA qualified, and 80 houses benefited from the project.

7. In **securing other housing needs**, PHOA continues to look for opportunities, such as through projects by NGOs or the LGU's Bottom Up Budgeting (BUB). They have been identified as beneficiary for the construction of a multipurpose hall; and they have already applied for the installation of a drainage/canal through the BUB. They also look forward to a chapel to be donated by the landowner.
8. **Sustaining the PHOA organization** thus far is a clear gain, but it has its challenges. As of 2016, PHOA has 196 members, 17 core members, and 7 officers. The officers note that their women members are continually changing, becoming more assertive of their rights in the household and outside of it. They negotiate with their husbands who may be violent or are otherwise authoritarian; their skills in livelihood and other capacities are also continually improved and increased through training. They also continuously work with other organizations towards common goals. However, much can still be improved regarding their participation in PHOA activities, such as more actively attending meetings and training projects.
9. **Sustaining the PHOA site** is a challenge especially for the women. As the households have yet to achieve their ideal housing situation, the women do the best they can to take care of their families' needs. As women mostly do informal work for income such as sewing clothes, doing beadwork, or making rags, their incomes are also irregular at best, and meeting bills can be difficult. On top of their reproductive and productive work, the women of the households are also the active members of the PHOA. Their roles become heavier in times of emergencies, such as when someone in the family is sick, or disasters such as heavy flooding—taking up more of their time and money, according to the women.

## **Analysis**

Gender issues lie within the policy framework on housing as it is unmindful of pre-existing inequalities contextualizing the situation of urban poor households. Such lack of consideration of the realities on the ground not only makes housing policies and programs limited, it can also worsen these inequalities particularly for women. This is captured in the following points:

1. **Legal status versus quality of living.** Housing policies' focus on the elimination of ISFs translates in practice to a focus on changing their legal status rather than really improving their living conditions—which is what ensuring people's right to adequate housing should be about. The former may be linked to the latter; but in reality, the living conditions are hardly a priority. This is burdensome to women as homemakers who compensate for the inadequacy of their families' housing. This is evident in the experience of the women of PHOA, whose triple roles continue, with community management roles particularly enhanced, as they work towards securing their housing needs—the delivery of which is beyond the available local housing program.
2. **Passing on the duty of ensuring the right to adequate housing.** The state has a limited role in ensuring adequate housing, especially with how housing services are anchored on public-private partnerships (PPPs) and microfinance schemes. It actually assumes the passive role of a facilitator of housing services rather than the active role of service providers or even capacity-builders. Furthermore, the devolution of securing housing to LGUs, in its present configuration, only localizes such limitations from the national level rather than empowers LGUs to really help their local constituencies. The bottom line is how financial and managerial responsibility of securing adequate housing falls back on the communities. In the case of Angono, and particularly of PHOA, financial and managerial work involved in housing was placed on the shoulders of women, given their social roles of ensuring the sustainability of their households and communities.
3. **Assumptions of regular income.** The “formalization” of ISFs is most apparently designed with the assumption of regular income, upon which housing programs can be realized. This may reflect the deeper assumption that beneficiary households are traditional families with members having complementary roles of breadwinners and home makers. This becomes an issue against women in the urban poor who mostly have informal work as their source of income and who usually have compounded roles regardless of the composition of their families. This further highlights the need for social protection among workers in the informal economy, a reality for the members of PHOA.
4. **Women's unrecognized role in housing.** The vagueness with which women are incorporated into the housing policy framework and their practical invisibility in housing strategies ignore the significance of housing to women as well as of women to housing. This is observable

in the ZSP of Angono, where there are no provisions that formally recognize women's role in the housing program despite their practical role in its implementation. In fact, their role in the program is taken as a consequence of their role as homemakers or otherwise as ones that "stay at home" in contrast to their husbands.

Secondly, the experience of PHOA in Angono shows how recognizing women's roles in housing, whether as individuals or as an organized group, offers much basis for the improvement of housing policies and yet these are insufficiently reflected. On one hand, women's relationship with housing as homemakers, breadwinners, and community managers, simply places them in a position that sees housing with the details it demands, as well as with all the work securing it entails. On the other hand, these roles specify women's needs and interests that housing programs must consider as a matter of recognizing their right to adequate housing. The following points are stressed:

1. **Housing from women's point of view.** The women of PHOA have an appreciation of how housing means not only a piece of land or physical structure but the quality of everyday life through the availability and accessibility of proper community facilities, services, and utilities; thriving social relationships and even cultural freedom; environmentally sustainable communities; as well as spaces for income work. These perspectives on what makes housing adequate are not actually part of the local program. And while the program facilitates tapping service providers for this, it is the women's push for them that drives their fruition.
2. **Women's ways of knowing and doing.** More than what women's views on what constitutes adequate housing may be, the process through which they came up with such views is also worth noting: consultative and participatory. Not one person or group of persons produced drawings during the FGD, for instance, which reflect their approach to their housing project; several hands intent on working together did.
3. **Women's triple roles.** The actions women take to secure adequate housing reflect their triple roles. To highlight a few, their concerns with ensuring they can do income-generating work within their homes, or be able to display products for sale at a multipurpose hall demonstrate their productive role; their concerns with overseeing the design of the house on the one hand, and ensuring privacy and safety on the other hand emphasize their reproductive role; and their concern over



infrastructure for children and the youth, and ensuring peace and safety demonstrate their community managing role. These roles can become a source of information and foresight into what housing requires.

4. **Women's practical and strategic needs.** PHOA's organized responses to the women's housing situation focused mostly on meeting their practical needs: housing services particularly as their socialized roles require them. From this, however, PHOA's actual gains grew to address what was seen as their strategic needs. For instance, meeting their practical need for emergency preparedness by redesigning their houses as well as seeking education and training about disasters leads to meeting their strategic needs of becoming decision-makers. The process of achieving practical needs may be the key factor here: as they work to ensure access to housing services, they also improve their knowledge of their situation, believe in their ability to change that situation, and gain skills at problem-solving and negotiation.
5. **The weight of women's work within limited housing programs.** Women's gains and challenges in securing housing demonstrate the weight of taking on the role of securing adequate housing within such limited programs. For PHOA, these were in the context of maximizing the terms of the ZSP regarding the space it allows for negotiating payment terms, the finance schemes it can facilitate to complement the provisions of the program, and networking within the LGU to benefit from related programs such as the BUB.

Finally, the role of women organizing cannot be overemphasized. The PHOA's most direct accomplishments in ensuring housing lie in how they maximize the housing program as it is currently designed, despite its limitations. From qualifying as beneficiaries to the ZSP to tapping related projects from donor institutions, the association successfully made use of opportunities from the available housing program. As the PHOA was formed within a wider understanding of the women's situation and an agenda for women's empowerment, its efforts at securing housing also falls within the sense of collective action and in view of engaging the state in securing women's rights.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Women's right to adequate housing is among women's rights that are enshrined in international and local laws and policies. The CEDAW, BPfA, and MCW are among these laws, pronouncing what is upheld

by international human rights instruments and local legislation. The persistence of gender issues, however, requires an exploration into the irony of the situation. As this study showed, housing policies and programs have much to improve on in capturing and thus addressing the realities of the urban poor—with this alone increasing the burdens of women. It also demonstrated that women's social position affords them a more exhaustive perspective into what adequate housing looks like and what work it entails, thus providing a rich resource for policymaking. Moreover, this study also found that the role of grassroots women organizing is essential in the pursuit of securing women's right to adequate housing, both as it addresses women's practical gender needs and promotes women's strategic gender needs.

Based on the findings and analysis of the study, it is recommended that a firmer stand at ensuring adequate housing for the urban poor must guide housing policies and programs. This would mean making minimum standards for adequate housing a priority in efforts at 'urban renewal' or 'upgrading informal resettlements,' rather than placing too much focus on legalizing residential statuses. Furthermore, the availability and affordability of housing services must be contextualized in the gendered realities of the urban poor, including their financial capacity. This might entail a larger portion for housing from the national budget. This may also require an integrated approach to securing housing, social protection, and basic social services such as health, education, and employment. LGUs, being at the forefront of serving communities, must also be better capacitated to provide for the housing needs of their constituents.

Moreover, the importance of grassroots women's organizations having adequate meaningful participation in housing processes from the national to the local levels is stressed. They must be part of planning committees for housing programs, as well as in the monitoring and evaluation of these programs. The conduct of gender analysis and planning in communities must also form part of the processes of creating local housing programs. This will serve to identify local gender issues that must be taken into account by these programs. Moreover, the mainstreaming of gender perspectives from among national to local level government agencies, as mandated by the MCW, must be strengthened and sustained.

Goal No. 11 or Sustainable Cities and Communities of the SDGs is a timely undertaking for the Philippine government. As the case of Angono, Rizal showed, urbanization is a real and growing concern for local communities—not the least of which is in terms of achieving adequate

housing for all. More than concern for people's residential status, however, there must be a strong adherence to seeking quality living conditions. The experience of PATAMABA-HOA enlightens the debate by demonstrating that housing is a gender issue that requires a gendered response. The importance of ensuring adequate housing in an increasingly urbanizing context, once viewed with a gender lens, becomes at once more apparent and urgent.

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# WOMEN, CYCLING, AND SUSTAINABLE CITIES

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Maritess D. Cruz

## Abstract

*Research shows that gender parity in cycling rates is a crucial indicator of a cycling-friendly city. However, encouraging women to cycle proves to be more complex than previously anticipated. Within the Philippine context, cycling adoption by women is made more challenging by intersecting inequalities brought about by their class, gender, and race; a top-down approach to urban transport development; and the high incidence of poverty. Through a review of related literature, the paper identifies safety of roads and public spaces, material and symbolic access to cycling, and women's participation in transport governance as the key dimensions in promoting cycling as a transport mode to women in Metro Manila.*

## Introduction

The world is experiencing rapid urbanization with half of the world's population living in cities (United Nations, 2014). Mass transportation is a key area of concern as cities strive to fulfill the transport demands of its inhabitants. As with many cities in developed and developing countries around the world, the trend points towards increased motorization of transport. While the transport sector continues to be integral to urban development, it is also a major contributor to high levels of pollution and congestion, and a huge spender of non-renewable energy (Parkin, 2012). This is true for the Philippines where the transport sector accounts for 65% of air pollution and 70% of the country's petroleum consumption (UNCRD, 2010). In Metro Manila, the most densely populated mega-city in the country, traffic congestion is a pressing transport problem causing the Philippines billions of pesos in losses (Tan, 2016). To make way for more motor vehicles, urban spaces are increasingly converted into road networks displacing entire communities, green spaces, and landmarks among others.

Increasing motorization in urban transport is also linked by the World Health Organization (WHO) to two significant health problems—

physical inactivity and road traffic injuries. A sedentary lifestyle is a known risk factor for dreaded diseases like diabetes, some types of cancer, and cardiovascular illnesses while road traffic injuries places ninth in the top ten causes of death and indisposition around the world (WHO, 2010). In the Philippines, cardiovascular diseases (33%), cancers (10%), and diabetes (6%) are among the most deadly non-communicable diseases (WHO, 2014). The number of obese Filipinos is also on the rise (Ramirez, 2015) and total deaths from road traffic accidents in 2015 were estimated to be at 10,379 (WHO, 2015).

In 2016, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a set of targets with corresponding guidelines that must be met in order to improve human conditions in a manner that is protective of the entire planet, were introduced and adopted by more than 150 countries. Under the SDGs, it is required that urban transport development is committed in ensuring the sustainability of cities and promoting social inclusion, especially among those at the margins, including women (United Nations, 2015).

To this end, the promotion of cycling as a sustainable transport mode has become one of the crucial strategies. The many cited benefits of cycling include reduction in the following: transport costs; hours in traffic; health costs; reliance on non-renewable energy; pollution; and allocation of large areas of urban space for road networks (Dekoster & Schollaert, 1999). It also offers inclusive mobility for the young and the old, men and women, and the rich and the poor. There are even bicycles that are designed for differently-abled persons. Compared with other sustainable transport options such as electronic and solar-powered vehicles, cycling brings improved health conditions to its users, particularly for the cardiovascular system, muscles, bones, and balance (Harvard Medical School, 2016). Cyclists also take up less road and parking space. Cycling offers many other advantages but, in general, promoting it as an urban transport mode points to an enhanced quality of life for individuals and communities.

As early as 2010, the Philippines, along with 22 Asian countries, signified its commitment to the promotion of sustainable transport by signing the Bangkok Declaration (2010). One of the key stipulations in the treaty is the across-the-board integration of Non-Motorized Transport (NMT), including cycling, in transport planning. By the following year, the country started to act on its pledge by formulating the National Environmentally Sustainable Transport Strategy for the Philippines. Consistent with the Bangkok Declaration, the document emphasizes the integration of cycling as Non-Motorized Transport (NMT) in the transport



system as among the key components of sustainable transport initiatives (UNCRD, 2010).

Despite the sustainability discourse backing the promotion of cycling as an urban transport option, persuading people to cycle for daily transportation proves to be more difficult and complex than previously imagined, specifically in places where a strong bicycle culture is not present (Aldred, 2012; Aldred, Woodcock, & Goodman, 2016). Even in Asian countries with long histories of cycling like China and India, bicycle use is in decline (Tiwari, Arora, & Jain, 2008). Gender becomes a crucial element in cycling advocacy as studies reveal that low rates of cycling in a city means less women cyclists (Spotswood, Chatterton, Tapp, & Williams, 2015; Steinbach, Green, Datta, & Edwards, 2011). Unfortunately, in Metro Manila, cyclists are unaccounted for by the Land Transportation Office. Thus, gender-differentiated information on the levels of cycling is not easily available. Still, the fact that the Philippines holds the distinction of being among the countries with the lowest bicycle ownership levels in the world (Oke, Bhalla, Love, & Siddiqui, 2015) and the dismal number of women cyclists on the road tell us that the same trend holds true for most cities in the country including Metro Manila. Thus, in the promotion of cycling as a sustainable urban transport mode, there is a need to unpack cycling's lack of appeal for women in non-cycling cities.

The objective of this paper is to provide a preliminary examination of the key dimensions in promoting women's cycling in a Philippine urban context, particularly in Metro Manila by identifying: (1) the deterrents to women's adoption of cycling as a transport mode in non-cycling places and (2) women's urban transport issues in the Philippines. An analysis will be made based on these two data sets that would situate the identified deterrents to women's cycling adoption within the Metro Manila context. The ultimate goal is to provide a starting point for building knowledge and practice that will support the advocacy of gender-responsive and cycling-friendly cities in the country.

Why a separate study on women's cycling in Metro Manila? This paper subscribes to the notion of intersectionality such that different women will have particular issues and concerns because of their intersecting gender, racial, and class identities. This means that various groups of women will have different relationships with cycling. That is why Filipino women would have different issues and concerns when it comes to cycling as a transport mode because the transport context in the Philippines has its unique characteristics. Likewise, some issues would not carry equal weight

for all Filipino women. The scope of this study is limited to Metro Manila because of its massive transport demand and its failing transport system. In addition, most of the available data on women's transport issues only applies to the location and because this researcher's commuting and cycling experience is limited within its bounds.

The study uses review of related literature as its data-gathering method, with one major limitation being the lack of local studies on women and cycling. Most of the cited references on the subject came from the UK, the United States, and Australia. However, these countries share a common characteristic with the Philippines in terms of a general lack of a strong cycling culture, and low percentage of women cyclists. Considering the modest objective of this paper, these references are deemed useful.

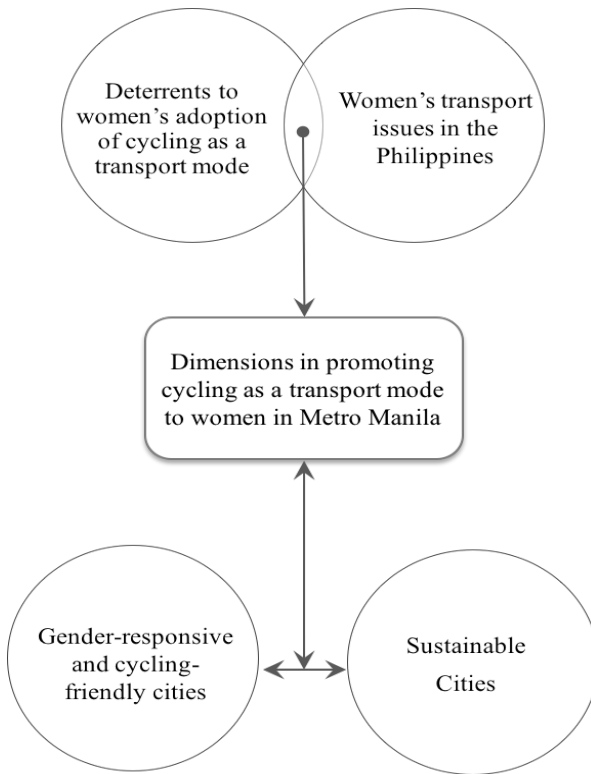
### **Framework of the Study**

There are several ways by which cycling scholars have looked at women and cycling. However, the particular focus of this article is the promotion of cycling as a transport mode to women. Cycling can be considered in a lot of ways—as a leisure activity, as an extreme sport, as a physical fitness component, etc. This study looks at it as an everyday means of moving people and goods from point A to point B.

The study chooses to focus on research articles that identify deterrents to women's cycling as a transport mode. Thereafter, the deterrents are considered in connection with women's transport issues in the Philippines. By doing this, the key dimensions in promoting cycling as a transport mode for women in Metro Manila are culled. These dimensions must be addressed in order for Metro Manila to make the transition to become a "Gender-Responsive and Cycling-Friendly City," envisioned as one of the defining characteristics of "Sustainable Cities." Before going further, it must be emphasized that cycling promotion in this paper does not mean imposing cycling on people, especially women, but opening up and transforming the city to accommodate and encourage women's cycling if they wish to do so.

Broadly speaking, cities are economic, knowledge, and cultural centers with large and dense human settlements. As explained earlier, urbanization leads to increased demands for transportation. The introduction of cycling as a transport mode is

considered a sustainable urban development strategy. “Gender-Responsive and Cycling-Friendly Cities” refers to cities where the needs and interests of women and women cyclists are sufficiently addressed in the urban development process. The article adopts the UN’s broad definition of “sustainable cities” as cities that consider the “balanced accomplishment of social and economic development, environmental management and effective governance” (United Nations, n.d., p.62) in their design and management.



### *Why won't women cycle?*

During the late 19th century, bicycles were symbols of modernity (Hallenbeck, 2009; Macrae, 2015; Simpson, 1998). Riding the bicycle turned the ideas of freedom, independence, and technological progress into bodily experiences. But these were different for men and women. Men on bicycles were unchallenged. Women, in turn, were simultaneously celebrated, monitored, derided, and feared (Jungnickel, 2015). Back then,

efforts were made to stop women from cycling. Nowadays, the trend is opposite with sustainable cities and cycling advocates actively encouraging all people, including women, to cycle. Unfortunately, most women remain unenthusiastic in adopting cycling as a transport mode.

There are three major deterrents to women's cycling identified in the literature—safety concerns, deviant images of cyclists, and compliance to the demands of normative femininity. In general, people regard cycling as a risky mode of transport. Concurrently, cyclists are seen as deviants. Women also experience difficulties in trying to meet the demands of looking feminine while riding the bicycle, and adopting cycling in the absence of any personal history and/or cultural connection with cycling.

### *Safety issues in cycling*

Safety is the dominant discourse that cyclists deploy in their advocacy, simply because cycling is potentially life threatening. Cycling is considered as one of the riskiest modes of transportation and this is backed by accident reports (Krizek, Johnson, & Tilahun, 2005; Le Vine, Miranda-Moreno, Lee-Gosselin, & Waygood, 2014). In the Philippines, a study profiling cyclists who use the Marikina Bikeways Network revealed that safety was the primary concern of many cyclists and that 47% of the respondents have had accidents, mostly involving motorized vehicles (Rivera, 2002). More and more cycling-related deaths are also being reported (Matias, n.d.).

Safety issues are among the major deterrents of cycling for women especially in low-cycling countries (Garrard, Rose, & Lo, 2008). Cited concerns include road crashes and motorist confrontations, physical assaults, and even dog bites (Handy, 2014). Having considerable cycling experience somewhat reduces women's fear, but for non-cyclists, news of cycling-related accidents continues to be a major source of concern (Handy, 2014), while another study reveals that women cyclists do not feel safe at all (Akar, Fischer, & Namgung, 2013).

### *Deviant images of cyclists*

In general, cyclists are viewed as deviants. They are perceived as risk takers and law breakers (Daley & Rissel, 2011); out-of-reach (Leonard, Spotswood, & Tapp, 2012); and a source of annoyance (Basford, Reid, Lester, Thomson, & Tolmie, 2002). In low-income countries, the association of cycling with poverty deters poor people from adopting it (Mohan, 2008).

Among the students of the University of the Philippines, cycling is not regarded as a useful transport mode (Gozun & Guillen, 2005)—although this may be gradually changing due to the UP Bike Share initiative launched in 2015.

Images of cyclists are tied to strict notions of masculinity and femininity. Men and women cyclists plan, decide, and execute a kind of cycling that is aligned to their gendered identity. Men talk of being aggressive on the road and take pleasure from the risks of cycling. Women, on the other hand, speak of assertiveness in managing these risks. “Assertiveness” here puts an emphasis on compliance with proper behavior on the road. Women, more than men, appear to actively negotiate their performance of gender when cycling. Some women try to balance the physical demands of cycling and the requirement of looking feminine by wearing fashionable clothes while riding (Steinbach et al., 2011).

However, not all women are willing or have the means for such negotiation. While cycling may be appealing and accessible for some, cycling is too threatening, unacceptable, and burdensome for many others. It is therefore not surprising that increases in cycling rates in low cycling cities mean gaining more of the same kind as exemplified by Aldred et al.’s (2016) study that reveals the demographics of the cycling population as homogeneously young and male.

### *Compliance to the demands of normative femininity*

Adherence to characteristics that customarily define femininity is also a known deterrent to cycling. Among women, concerns about looking fashionable while cycling negatively influence their perception of the social acceptability and likeability of cycling (Handy, 2014). Some women would try to work around this unladylike image of cycling by expressing their femininity through fashionable riding clothes and accessories (Steinbach et al., 2011).

Women are also stereotyped as conscientious and good-natured cyclists in charge of everyday errands, while men cyclists are stereotyped as self-assured young professionals who cycle to work (Gatersleben & Haddad, 2010). Although these are but stereotypes, they restrict the images of cycling that are available for both women and men.

Cycling is said to be compatible with women’s transport needs because women tend to make multiple trips, mostly over short distances, to

perform their daily tasks such as going to work, fetching children, grocery shopping, etc. But compatibility is tied to notions of femininity, which in turn have cultural and class dimensions. In Netherlands, a high cycling country, women immigrants and refugees would not even know how to bicycle because of the unconventionality of cycling for women in their countries of origin. Ironically, even after successfully completing bicycle lessons, some of them will have limited opportunities for cycling because they must prioritize household chores and child-care responsibilities (van der Kloof, Bastiaanssen, & Martens, 2014). In this instance, the fact that cycling has simply not been associated with women's everyday lives explains their indifference to it.

### **Women's Transport Issues in the Philippines**

Identifying women's transport issues in the Philippines is important in order to situate women's cycling concerns within the local urban transport context. Although there is a lack of available local materials on women and cycling, women's safety concerns in public spaces, including public transport, are serious issues as highlighted in several local sources. Two other women's issues in transport are also evident in the literature: 1) limited access to transportation due to the large number of people living in poverty in the country, and 2) women's marginalization in transport planning.

#### ***Women and safety in public transport***

Aside from bodily harm because of road accidents, fear of attack, sexual assault, theft, and catcalling are the forms of harassment that women have to face when they travel. Department of Transportation and Communication Undersecretary Anneli Lontoc reveals that Manila placed seventh in a survey of the most dangerous places for women because of perceived dangers and experiences of harassment (WiTL, 2017). In her graduate thesis, Herrera (2007) documents the sexual harassment experienced by women in Metro Manila's public transport. Her findings indicate that these incidents are commonplace but rarely addressed. In a 2015 survey of two local communities, the Safe Cities Manila project discovered that three out of five women experience sexual harassment on the street but half of these cases go unreported (Caballar, 2016).

### *Access to transportation*

A 2015 data set from The World Bank (n.d.) shows that the poorest of the poor Filipinos spend the least on transportation. Poverty is tied to transportation because less mobility means less access to opportunities (Titheridge, Christie, Mackett, Hernández, & Ye, 2014). Women are doubly disadvantaged because of their gender. As Peters (2002) observes, poor women have less access to modes of transport, including bicycles, and are thus more likely to walk. This is also the case in the Philippines, where walking is the mode of transport for more women as compared to men (WiTL, 2017). In Delhi, Anand and Tiwari (2006) note that poor women have limited access to work opportunities because of their inability to afford more expensive means of transport. As a result, their job prospects are limited to those within walking distance or short travel by bus. Put into this context, walking becomes both a cause and effect of gender inequality, such that women's mobility and access to opportunities are hampered by their lack of access to more efficient modes of transportation.

### *Gender-blind transport planning*

Generally, transport planning in the Philippines is blind to people's needs and interests. To illustrate, Metro Manila's mass transport system is consistently unreliable and daily commuting remains terribly difficult despite the fact that 80% of all trips in Metro Manila are made through public transport (Romero & Guillen, 2014). The lack of transport options drives innovations in informal modes of transport such as tricycles and *habal-habals*, a modified motorcycle that can accommodate more than two people used in Davao City (Guillen & Ishida, 2004), and pedicabs in Metro Manila (Gozun & Guillen, 2005).

Citizen participation is key for sustainable transportation (Peria, 1997 cited in Gozun & Guillen, 2005), but the transport sector in Asia Pacific is still dominated by public officials and the private sector (Rivera, 2007). Particularly in the Philippines, mechanisms for meaningful citizen participation are still lacking (Romero & Guillen, 2014).

Transport development in the Philippines is not only elitist and bureaucratic, it is also gender blind. Urban development is generally unresponsive to women's issues (Le Vine et al., 2014) and several sources strongly indicate that women are marginalized in transport planning, policies, and decision making ("Bridging the Gap," 2014; Peters, 2002; Rivera, 2007). The Philippines' First Women in Transport Leadership

Workshop-Meeting echoes this claim—there are not enough opportunities and mechanisms for women to participate in transport planning and implementation. Thus, one of the key conclusions from the meeting is the importance of women leaders in transport (WiTL, 2017).

### **Implications of Findings**

Sustainable cities call for a balanced development of the economy and the society with due attention to environment management and effective governance practices. The compatibility of cycling to the formation of sustainable cities comes from two sources. One, cycling is friendly to the environment as it promotes clean air, less noise pollution, and requires less space. Two, it promotes healthy people and communities. Cycling is also good for the economy. A report by the London School of Economics (2011) argues that a thriving cycling culture can provide a long-term boost to the economy through cycling-related industries, retailing, and employment while lowering government spending on health services. Cycling also promotes social inclusion because it democratizes mobility. However, it is true that in non-cycling cities, women cyclists are disproportionately underrepresented. Here lies the conflict. If everybody can cycle but women are not cycling or cannot cycle, it is not democratic at all. In fact, the low proportion of women cyclists could be interpreted as cycling being exclusionary to women. If it does so little good to half of the population, is it sustainable at all? Cities that want to promote the mass adoption of cycling as a transport mode must come to terms with this conundrum.

To reiterate, the paper adopts a structural change perspective in promoting cycling, emphasizing that it is the city and the institutions within it that must be transformed in order to encourage women's cycling, rather than forcing the individual to adjust or to adapt. Rather than it being a matter of managing individual attitudes or behavior, this paper argues that the identified deterrents to women's adoption of cycling as a transport mode and women's transport issues in the Philippines are modifiable conditions that require systemic change mostly in urban environment transport planning and in social—especially gender—relations. Sustainable cities must be able to make cycling work for women, and not the other way around. This is what it means to be a cycling-friendly and gender-responsive city.



From the data presented, three key dimensions of promoting women's cycling have emerged—safety of roads and public spaces, material and symbolic access to cycling, and women's participation in transport governance. Each of these areas involves aspects that Metro Manila must address in order to make the city and cycling more inclusive and responsive to women.

### *The spatial and gender dimensions of cycling safety in Metro Manila*

Safety as a dimension of promoting women's cycling in Metro Manila is obvious enough since it is both identified as a deterrent to cycling and a women's transport issue in the country. As a deterrent to cycling, the urban environment is revealed to be too risky for women cyclists while as a women's transport issue in Metro Manila, women's wariness of sexual violence in public spaces throws light on the gender aspect of safety in the city.

Sustainable cities must address the risk posed by the high incidence of road traffic injuries since it is a major urban health issue. In cycling, safer roads not only serve to protect cyclists from physical harm, they also minimize the fear of cycling, especially for women who have greater sensitivity to these risks. Studies have found that off-road paths, separation from traffic, streetlights, and daylight hours are more significant for women cyclists (Dolati, 2014; Garrard et al., 2008; Handy, 2014).

Addressing safety in cycling should also take into consideration a most serious concern of women in public spaces—sexual violence. This aspect of transport safety is a serious issue for women. It encompasses women's mobility, access to opportunities, and health and well-being. Due to its scope and negative impact, UN Women has even launched a flagship program on “Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces” across the world.

Compared to car or public transport vehicle drivers or passengers, cyclists are more exposed to their environment. Bicycles and safety gear are not able to provide full concealment or protection for the riders. As a consequence, women cyclists are not only more exposed to road hazards but to sexual violence as well. Thus, considering the life-threatening conditions that cyclists must face on the road and the high incidence of sexual harassment in Metro Manila, cycling becomes doubly risky and unappealing to women.

*The material and symbolic aspects of access to cycling among Filipino women*

Access to cycling has two components—the material and the symbolic. In cycling, this points to the lack of relatable images of cycling as a transport mode for women and women's lack of personal history with cycling. As a transport issue in the Philippines, the data highlight the economic aspect of transport access due to poverty. Applying a gender lens, this economic issue becomes a social issue as well since the literature reveals that women have less access to transport modes, including bicycles, as compared to men.

As mentioned before, Filipinos living in extreme poverty spend the least on transportation. Poor women are doubly disadvantaged because they have less access to transportation. So in promoting cycling to women in Metro Manila, one important consideration should be the economic capacity of the poor to invest in a bicycle, and the gender differences in the allocation of resources among households, specifically for transportation.

Access does not only pertain to the material but also to the symbolic. Women do not have access to images of cycling either through personal experience or popular culture. Despite the individual and community benefits that cycling has to offer, it has yet to be adopted on a mass scale especially among women. On the other hand, car ownership remains to be among Filipinos' top indicators of a good life, as revealed by the *AmBisyon Natin 2040* report by the National Economic Development Authority. This indicates the mass appeal of cars as a transport mode for the majority of the population, something that the bicycle does not have. Unfortunately, the discourse of sustainability of bicycling vs. car riding is not enough to inspire people to adopt cycling in Metro Manila.

Curiously, the incompatibility of cycling with normative ideas of femininity has less to do with the physical demands of cycling as a physical activity (in high-cycling countries like the Netherlands anyone—young and old, men and women—cycle) than with their concern about keeping up with the standards of the feminine, particularly in looking fashionable. In Metro Manila, images of cycling are not associated with traditional markers of femininity such as dresses, a made-up appearance, and delicate comportment. There are more male cyclists on the road, making the connection between cycling and masculinity stronger. To make cycling inclusive for all women, there is a need to make the display of femininity possible while cycling, as well as a need to eliminate gender stereotypes that limit women's participation in activities such as cycling for fear of these being judged as unbecoming of a woman. In other words, cycling must be possible for all women—from those

who want to stay fashionable while cycling to those who wish to defy gender stereotypes—without social judgment and penalty.

### ***Women's participation in Metro Manila's transport governance***

Women's participation in transport governance as a dimension in promoting women's cycling is especially salient in Metro Manila because of the lack of mechanisms for citizen participation and gender sensitivity in its transport development. Women's participation requires both women leaders and active women constituents.

Among both cycling advocates and feminists, a gender-responsive urban cycling advocacy is still relatively unexplored. There is a lack of strong constituency for the cause. Women leaders and women's mass support is required to push for the women's agenda in transport development (WiTL, 2017), including cycling advocacy. However, no literature has been found nor any search engine hits that describe any local women's organization's engagement with cycling. Women's transport issues are commonly subsumed under other issues, such as the rising prices of fuel, commodities, and transport fares.

Among cycling advocacy groups, leaders and members are predominantly male. Although there are initiatives that specifically encourage women cyclists, like the women's ride organized by the Firefly Brigade, the specific dimensions of cycling promotion for women that is anchored on women's needs, interests, issues, and concerns have yet to gain widespread appreciation among cycling advocates.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

Promoting women's cycling in Metro Manila is a daunting task because it not only requires the city to re-examine the principles and mechanics of its transport governance, but it also demands a cross-disciplinary perspective and approach to gender, cycling, and transport. Safety is not just a matter of building safe cycling infrastructure but also working against sexual violence in public spaces. Access does not only pertain to financing in order to procure a bicycle but also confronting gender stereotypes and including maintaining feminine appearances as a legitimate cycling issue. Women's participation in transport governance invites the women's movement to support cycling for women, and urges cycling advocacy groups to put emphasis on women's leadership and membership among their ranks.

Cycling without women's participation puts its status as a sustainable transport mode on shaky ground. Yes, it offers advantages to the health of people, communities, and the environment, but sustainability means equitable development as well. Therefore, if cycling is exclusionary to half of the population, then it is not completely sustainable. Should the promotion of cycling, therefore, be abandoned? Not yet. This paper highlights the fact that the key dimensions that must be addressed in order to encourage women to cycle are not personal traits and attitudes that individual women must strive to overcome, but rather economic, social, environmental, and governmental conditions that are still possible to transform.

### **Ways Forward**

This paper is a preliminary analysis that hopes to provide a starting point for the discussion on women, cycling, and sustainability. The prominence of cycling in the sustainable transport discourse and its nascent stage of adoption in Metro Manila provides an opportunity for gender advocates to come in and work towards making cycling responsive to the needs and interests of women.

The limited pool of data which this study relies upon makes it neither conclusive nor exhaustive. Thus, in order to strengthen the call towards a gender-responsive cycling advocacy, further evidence to support the claim of this paper must be gathered. Particularly, case studies of cities with long-term cycling initiatives, such as Marikina, can be done with particular attention to women's rate of cycling, the factors that led to women's adoption of cycling as a transport mode, the benefits that women have acquired from using cycling as a transport mode, and the needs of women cyclists that are yet to be responded to. In this way, it will be possible to establish and identify the conditions that will lead to adoption while gathering further data to make cycling-related transport development more responsive to women. The key dimensions of women's cycling promotion in Metro Manila that are described in this study could serve as an initial guide in the development of the research design.

The data from the said research could be used to introduce gender-responsive cycling principles and strategies to cycling advocacy groups and related government institutions, as well as to muster the support of women's organizations in promoting cycling as a transport mode to women. A feminist cycling advocacy group or a special interest circle within women's organizations and cycling advocacy groups could be organized to lead the enactment of these recommendations.

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# **PATHS TO POWER: Case Studies of Filipino Women Transcending Dynastic Politics**

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**Camille Genevieve M. Salvador**

## **Abstract**

*This article presents case studies of four incumbent Filipino women politicians who are not members of any political dynasty, focusing on their backgrounds as these bring to light possible alternative paths that may also be open to other women. Highlighting their education, professional background, affiliations, and political and civic experience prior to their political careers, the article examines how the intersecting social identities arising from these factors have paved the way for their entry into politics. An important entry point for women is their involvement in the women's movement and in various socio-civic organizations through which they gain the credentials that would allow them to be recognized as possible political candidates or leaders.*

## **Introduction**

One of the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action's strategic objectives is to take necessary measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power and political decision-making (UN, 1995). The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal No. 5 on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, reiterates the same point. Although women have the right to vote and, in fact, make up almost half of the voting public in most countries, they remain underrepresented in public office. More than two decades after the Platform was adopted, only 23.3 percent of all national parliament members at the end of 2016 were women, according to the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU, 2017). In the Philippines, from 1998 to 2013, women comprised an average of only 18% of elective positions (Commission on Elections, 2015).

Political representation and equal participation in decision-making are important as these are "not only a demand for simple justice or democracy but can also be seen as a necessary condition for women's interests to be taken into account" (UN, 1995:119). Once elected, women are more likely to be responsive to women's needs and interests and to initiate and sponsor bills and programs on behalf of women and other marginalized groups (Schwindt-Bayer, 2003). Having a critical mass of women in decision-making positions may initiate a shift in priorities

favoring women's issues and concerns. Women have also formed caucuses and standing committees in several developing countries to coordinate work in legislative committees and focus on women's rights and equal opportunities, demonstrating leadership by working across party lines (UN Women, 2013; IPU, 2008). In local governance bodies, women have had a greater voice in public administration, allocating public resources to human development priorities such as health, nutrition, and employment (UN Women, 2015).

It is thus important to explore the various ways women are able to enter politics, especially as there has been a significant number of research studies showing that women are more likely, or even only able, to enter politics by having close family ties to male politicians (Labonne, Parsa, & Querubin, 2017; Folke, Rickne, & Smith, 2017; Smith & Martin, 2017; Basu, 2016; Tolentino, 2016; Querubin, 2015; Jalalzai, 2010 and 2004; Dal Bó, Dal Bó, & Snyder, 2009). It is in this light that this article attempts to highlight other paths to power by presenting case studies of several Filipino women, currently occupying elective national positions in the Philippine government, who have transcended dynastic politics by entering politics through paths other than political dynasties, and while in position, have consistently pushed for women's rights and empowerment.

Exploring the backgrounds of these women politicians would be crucial in "understanding the ultimate success of women reaching the highest positions of political power" (Jalalzai, 2004:86) and would hopefully add to current discussions on plausible alternative paths women could take so that more would be able to occupy political decision-making positions. Given that present circumstances around the world have seen a significant drop in the number of female political leaders worldwide, with the recent loss of Hillary Clinton in the 2016 United States presidential elections and of Keiko Fujimori in Peru, as well as the removal from power of Brazil's Dilma Rousseff (Coolidge & Bell, 2017), it is imperative that we find more effective ways and paths women could take to have equal access to and full participation in decision-making and political processes.

Taking off from Farida Jalalzai's 2004 study of past and present women political leaders as well as from Pamela Paxton and Melanie Hughes' 2014 book *Women, Politics, and Power* (in which they identified seven structural factors that influence women's political participation), this article will focus on four incumbent women politicians and their backgrounds as characterized by the following factors: (1) education; (2) profession before joining politics; (3) any political or civic experience prior

to their current political positions; (4) various affiliations (with any political party, party-list, socio-civic organization, or women's organization); and (5) familial ties to former or current politicians, if any. The intersecting social identities arising from these factors have shaped and resulted in their varied career trajectories and political experiences, which may lead to a privilege through which women successfully enter politics, or to an obstacle in which women, despite being qualified in terms of experience or education, may prove unsuccessful due to the lack of the economic and family background perceived to be required for a successful entry into politics. A combination of these social identities may both grant a woman entry into "certain positions of power yet keep...her out of others" (Davidson-Schmich, 2011:332).

The four subjects of this study were selected from among women politicians occupying national elective positions primarily because they are not members of a political dynasty and have not been attached by name to powerful men. While there has yet to be an official, legally enforceable definition of a political dynasty (only a provision in the Philippine Constitution on its prohibition, without an actual enabling law), definitions from various academic sources were adopted and consolidated. In this article, a political dynasty is defined as one in which a family occupying or having held elected office through its multiple members, whether through subsequent or simultaneous terms, having earned political positions through electoral advantage because of their "family brand" while self-perpetuating their family's political power, which is used for the benefit of their families (Smith & Martin, 2017; Feinstein, 2010; Roces, 1998). Without being a part of a political dynasty, these women have demonstrated the possibility of winning national elective positions, showing alternative paths to power.

This research uses data gathered from various government websites as well as from the official websites of these women and the organizations they are affiliated with, particularly focusing on their backgrounds as characterized by the aforesaid five factors. In addition, information on the women's advocacies, as particularly reflected in the type of legislation or programs that they initiate or endorse, was also collected to illustrate whether and how they were able to use their positions to support and promote women's rights. This article also provides a review of scholarly work to present factors affecting women's political participation, various political entry points for women, and a profile of women in Philippine politics.

## **Review of Literature**

Related literature was reviewed and is discussed below, primarily focusing on three main parts: factors affecting women's political participation, political entry points for women, and women in Philippine politics.

### ***Factors Affecting Women's Political Participation***

Women's historic exclusion from political structures is a result of multiple structural, functional, and personal factors, the impact of which differs according to the various social contexts in countries where these women reside (Aguilar, 1992; Mungai, 2014; Bledsoe & Herring, 1990; Dahlerup, 1978). While there are no actual formal or legal barriers in most countries, in practice, women continue to be excluded from political office because of discriminatory attitudes and "old boys' networks" in political parties; lack of funds for election campaigns; and family responsibilities that compete for time with the inflexible work hours of political institutions (UN Women, 2015; UN, 2005). These obstacles at a religious, legal, economic, social, and political level can be particularly discouraging for women considering running for public office (Labani, Zabaleta, Kaehler, & De Dio Ruiz, 2009).

Men have traditionally dominated politics, causing many women to find it unwelcoming or even hostile. Some societies, where patriarchal values are strong and where there are still prejudice and cultural perceptions about the role of women, disapprove of women entering politics, with women often relegated to the margins and their access to resources and decision-making reduced, thus weakening their political power (Hega, 2003; UN, 2005; IPU, 2008). Moreover, leadership continues to be perceived as an exclusively male characteristic, often claimed to be a sign of strength, with women only pictured as supportive of the "leader husband" and mainly expected to entertain male constituents (e.g., socialization and diplomacy) and take part in charity work (e.g., social welfare). As part of their family responsibilities, women are also expected to take care of the next generation of politicians in the family (Hega, 2003). Women also face a range of practical barriers to entering politics, including the lack of financial resources, lower levels of education, increased capacity gaps, lack of access to health care, and greater and more family responsibilities (the single most important deterrent to women's political participation). Women also often lack the political networks necessary for electoral success (UN, 2005; UN Women, 2013; Mungai, 2014).

Recognizing these structural constraints, the IPU noted four factors most influential in creating more gender-sensitive parliaments: (1) support of the ruling party in parliament; (2) work of parliamentary committees; (3) work of women's parliamentary caucuses (or the cross-party networks of women); and (4) rules that govern the parliament's operations. However, even with these, the adoption of electoral quotas and the implementation of sensitization programs remain important mechanisms to address the structural constraints faced by women when entering politics (IPU, 2008).

### ***Political Entry Points for Women***

There are four main political entry points for women: (1) political dynasties; (2) political parties; (3) quota systems; and (4) the women's movement.

As mentioned, women have had more access to political networks and resources if they were related to male politicians. In Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, and the Philippines, politics has been dominated by large political dynasties, with families presenting various members successively for political positions as the common practice. The first successor is typically the father's son and only if there was none should the daughter be considered as the next in line for the position. Wives, and particularly widows, can also extend their husbands' political position and power (Labani, Zabaleta Kaehler, & De Dio Ruiz, 2009; Paxton & Hughes, 2014; Hega, 2003). Everett (2008) writes about "proxy women" or women in decision-making positions as relatives of powerful men only being put in such positions for their signatures or mere presence rather than substantially representing women (Everett, 2008).

Hega (2003) writes about the "push factor" leading these women to politics in which their relationship with a male politician helped them win their seats through their political machinery and knowhow, as well as the family's political name. In the Philippines, family connection is a key factor in political involvement in general, with most politicians having close relatives in either politics or government. Hega also writes of women benchwarmers. "Due to term limits, wives and daughters have taken over the positions left by the husbands or fathers for one term and then the man makes a comeback" (Hega, 2003:7). While this reaffirms that women tend to be mere appendages of men's political power, there are still instances when women have managed to create their own spaces and niches in politics (discussed in a later portion) (Hega, 2003).

The second entry point is through political parties. Among the most important institutions that affect women's political participation and being the most common route to elected office, they determine which candidates are nominated and elected and which issues are brought to the fore. Candidates depend on these for their base of electoral support, assistance during the campaign, financial resources, and continued assistance once elected into office. These parties vary in the extent to which they seek to promote women to occupy leadership positions; to recruit women as candidates; and to address political, economic, and social concerns of women. What role women play in political parties determines their prospects for entry into politics (Mungai, 2014). Given the influential role that such parties play in women's political empowerment, governments and international organizations focus on developing mechanisms to enhance women's political participation through these parties (UN, 2005; Mungai, 2014).

In the context of the Philippines, the political party system has been a peculiar one. The main political parties are hardly ideological nor programmatic, still being driven mainly by patronage and personality politics and characterized by turncoatism. Political parties in the Philippines remain tied to political dynasties in which women members of political families may also be supported by political parties controlled by the same families and figureheads. It has thus been the trend for elite women, who are members of political dynasties, to run under and be supported by a major political party (Hega, 2003).

The third entry point is through quota systems, which are one of the most effective ways to ensure that women are elected into office. It is a legal obligation in many countries for party candidate lists to be gender-balanced and include a certain proportion of women, with the usefulness of such a system being dependent on how it is implemented. A zippered list, in which every other candidate is a woman, provides the best chances for women. Countries like Bosnia and Herzegovina implement a quota system as enshrined in their election law, requiring that men and women constitute at least one-third of the candidates listed and that both occupy positions high enough on the lists to ensure a more balanced representation (UN, 2005). These quota systems were introduced in countries like Jordan and Afghanistan where women historically were almost totally excluded from politics, effectively initiating women's entry into politics. In other cases, quota systems were introduced to strengthen existing efforts. Such systems increase diversity among the types of women elected, raise awareness of women's issues, change the gendered nature of



politics, and inspire female constituents to be more active and vocal in politics (Escartin, 2014).

The last entry point is through women's organizations and movements. This is an ideal way for women to enter politics, as participation in such entities may provide them with the credentials necessary to become a party candidate or even leader. Women's movements may also influence political party platforms, ensuring that women's issues are addressed. Overall, non-government organizations and other civil society institutions could contribute to the advancement of women's political participation by identifying women to become candidates, providing various training programs, improving and expanding networks to further women within and across parties, as well as assisting with gender-sensitive voter's education (UN, 2005).

In the Philippines, various organizations created along gender-specific issues serve as platforms for women to enter politics. Groups like PILIPINA, GABRIELA, *Ugnayan ng Kababaihan sa Pulitika*, the SIBOL Legislative Network, and KILOS KABARO have led the way in advancing women's issues and concerns through various policies and legislations. Intense lobbying by these groups resulted in the passage of several landmark laws, among which are the Anti-Sexual Harassment Act of 1995 and the Anti-Rape Law of 1997 (Hega, 2003).

### ***Women in Philippine Politics***

In Carmencita T. Aguilar's study (1992), she profiled Filipino women in electoral politics in terms of their socio-economic backgrounds, entry into politics, and career backgrounds, among others. She notes that women career politicians are typically from elite and middle-class families, expounding that, to be an elite in the Philippines, "one must come from a traditionally rich family (old rich); the family has been prominent in the community where they originated and must also be known in the country in certain cases" (Aguilar, 1992:25). Members of elite families have usually held important private and government offices by virtue of their prestige and prominence and are known to have provided leadership in their communities. Meanwhile, those belonging to middle-class families may not be as wealthy but have attained a college education, thereby allowing them to have lucrative positions that enable them to afford basic living requirements and send their children to decent schools. An examination of each Philippine legislative body she studied showed that a majority of the women legislators could be considered as elite: (1) the 1978-1984 Interim



Batasang Pambansa had 70% elite women; (2) the 1984-1986 Batasang Pambansa had 90% elite women; and (3) the 1986-1992 Congress had 62% elite women (Aguilar, 1992).

This shows that financial resources matter when running for public office, with political elections being so expensive that only the elite and moneyed middle class can afford to enter politics. “The wealthy women who can afford to compete in national elections can do so by virtue of their birth, their marriage to rich husbands who are supportive of their political inclination and by their own business acumen” (Aguilar, 1992:26). Meanwhile, women politicians in local governments, although some still belong to prominent families, are generally known for their involvement in socio-civic activities prior to their election into office. Most local women politicians had also been working women before their assumption to office, with their husbands as businessmen or professionals with substantial earnings. Both husbands and wives were members of civic and social organizations in their community—often considered as those whom the poorer members of the community could ask financial assistance from for emergencies. “They may not be so rich as to afford all the dole outs that the less fortunate members of the community would require, but they are people who are ready and willing to give their money and time to charity work and to give a helping hand to others” (Aguilar, 1992:27). People elected them in recognition of their community work and what they were capable of doing.

With regard to their academic backgrounds, women national legislators received their education from exclusive schools, even pursuing degrees or special programs abroad. Alternatively, those who were only high school graduates had rich experience in government service and public office, and those who appeared lacking in formal education and experience compensated with their wealth, social status, and political capital. These women were also professionals prior to entering politics, working as teachers, managers, social workers, lawyers, or businesswomen. In terms of career history in politics, these women at both the national and local levels may not have had lengthy careers. However, those already elected into national office built their political careers by serving first in local government positions, with some of them as re-electionists (Aguilar, 1992).

### **Filipino Women Transcending Dynastic Politics**

The women politicians whose backgrounds are presented herein are from both the upper and lower houses of the 17th Congress.

As aforementioned, they were chosen because they were able to win national elective positions without enjoying any electoral advantage because of any familial ties with powerful men—able to transcend dynastic politics. Their backgrounds will hopefully underscore possible alternative paths to power that women could take and make use of in order to occupy crucial decision-making positions.

### **Senator Loren Legarda**

Senator Loren Legarda has been in the public eye for a long time, first becoming popular as a multi-awarded broadcast journalist before becoming a well-known politician who is notably the only female to top two senatorial elections. She is well known for her advocacies involving the environment, women, children, and indigenous communities, among others.

Senator Legarda hails from San Pablo, Laguna, where her grandfather previously served as mayor as indicated in her Senate profile. That she came from a family of public servants is clearly something that she takes pride in and draws credibility from. However, unlike other typical women in Philippine politics who were able to access their male relatives' political network or were members of influential political dynasties, Senator Legarda won senatorial seats several times based on her own merit and popularity, which were steadily established during her years as a broadcast journalist covering a wide range of stories and issues.

She graduated cum laude from the University of the Philippines with a degree in Broadcast Communications and earned her master's degree in national security administration. In terms of political backing and support, Senator Legarda has, through the years, changed parties and was often accused of turncoatism because of her timing of changing parties nearing election periods (i.e., LAKAS-NUCD to *Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino* to Nationalist People's Coalition to the Nacionalista Party). Despite her changing of political parties, Senator Legarda has twice failed to win in her bid for the vice-presidential post (i.e., the first time as the running mate of the late actor Fernando Poe, Jr. and the second time with former Senator Manny Villar).

While Senator Legarda is not part of a political dynasty and not backed by a political party only because of a "family brand advantage," she has the educational and professional background most would consider as qualifying her for a position in public office. What really helped her win seats in national elections is her exposure to the public as a well-known broadcast

journalist. Notable from the onset has been her consistent support for women's causes, even establishing foundations like the Bessie Legarda Memorial Foundation, Inc., which provides medical assistance to indigent breast cancer victims. This support has translated into legislation she has authored or co-authored, among which are the Anti-Violence Against Women and Children Act, the Magna Carta of Women, the Anti-Child Labor Law, and the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act, among other vital pieces of legislation (e.g., the Universal Healthcare Act, the Enhanced Basic Education Act, the Climate Change Act, and the Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act).

Other foundations she established include the *Libro ni Loren* Foundation, Inc., which aims to help improve the literacy level in the country's poorest provinces, and the *Luntiang Pilipinas* 1998, which seeks to raise environmental awareness in the country.

### **Senator Risa Hontiveros**

Senator Risa Hontiveros is also one of the incumbent female politicians who have transcended what is expected from women in traditional politics due to her roots in the women's and civil society movements.

Educated at St. Scholastica's College and the Ateneo de Manila University, Senator Hontiveros was previously a broadcast journalist who shifted to NGO work, eventually becoming a party-list representative and a director of the Philippine Health Insurance Corp. (PhilHealth). She ran for the Senate thrice, eventually winning a seat in the 17th Congress. Her activism started early when, in high school, she actively campaigned against the Bataan Nuclear Power Plant. She also served as member of the government panel for peace talks with the National Democratic Front from 1998 to 2004, earning for herself a Ten Outstanding Young Men (TOYM) Award for Peace Advocacy. She is also affiliated with various civil society groups, including the Akbayan Citizen's Action Party and PILIPINA, and has served as one of Akbayan's representatives in the House of Representatives.

Senator Hontiveros has a strong education background and experience in the women's movement. She has been unfortunately widowed, although her late husband was not a politician (thus, invalidating any discussion of the "widow's succession" route to politics [Kincaid, 1978]). Rather, she has been steadily working towards entering politics by building up her background, expanding her network, and being very staunch and passionate in pursuing and lobbying for measures to help her advocacies gain support. She was able to enter politics through her party list and with the support of the Liberal

Party. However, it must be noted that, despite the backing of the Liberal Party during her first and second attempts running for a Senate position, she was not able to win, but it was through effective media exposure and a more focused platform that she was finally able to do so. As she once stated in an interview, someone like her who does not come from a political family and did not have enough financial resources to support her campaign proved that it is possible to have a fighting chance for a Senate position.

Senator Hontiveros has continually pushed for women's rights, from her stint as a member of the House of Representatives for the Akbayan party list, and until now as Senator of the country with a wider and better reach and a more powerful platform. Legislation that she authored or co-authored as a representative include the Cheaper Medicines Law, the Reproductive Health Act, and the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program Extension with Reforms; while as Senator, she has filed the following bills: the Anti-Rape Bill (SB No. 1252), the Anti-Sexual Harassment Bill (SB No. 1250), and the Gender-Based Electronic Violence Bill (SB No. 1252).

### **Dinagat Islands Representative Kaka Bag-ao**

Like Senator Hontiveros, Rep. Kaka Bag-ao has her roots deeply set in the women's and civil society movements as an alternative lawyer and human rights activist.

Rep. Bag-ao received her degree in Political Science from the De La Salle University and her Juris Doctor from the Ateneo de Manila University. She was also a Hubert H. Humphrey fellow for Law and Human Rights at the University of Minnesota. She used her educational background in Political Science and Law to help marginalized communities as a coordinator of the Peasant Unit of the *Sentro ng Alternatibong Lingap Panlegal*, handling litigation work cases on agrarian reform and labor and for women, the urban poor, fisherfolk, and victims of violence, as well as conducting seminars on local legislation, poll watching, and the role of women in governance and development. She also served as the legal counsel of the Sumilao farmers when they marched from Sumilao, Bukidnon to Manila.

Rep. Bag-ao also served as the Executive Director of BALAOD Mindanaw, an alternative law organization working toward the advancement and protection of the rights of farmers, fisherfolk, indigenous peoples, women, and other marginalized communities through their legal empowerment, the creation of a network of practicing lawyers to work with them, and raising awareness on alternative lawyering among law students and schools, among others.

Prior to winning as the representative of Dinagat Islands under the Liberal Party in 2013, Rep. Bag-ao was the Akbayan party-list representative. She was also appointed the caretaker of Dinagat Islands by then House Speaker Feliciano Belmonte Jr., since the seat had been vacant since former Representative Ruben Ecleo (of the ruling Ecleo family) went AWOL after being convicted of his wife's murder. In 2016, she was re-elected for her second term as Dinagat's representative, calling for the advancement of people empowerment to eliminate political patronage and strengthen the province's recent development. As part of Congress, she has continually pushed for the passage of legislation focusing on the just and rational use of land resources, environmental protection, LGBT rights and welfare, and youth empowerment, among others. She also co-authored the Reproductive Health Act and the *Sangguniang Kabataan* Reform Act, as well as bills like the National Land Use Bill, Anti-Discrimination Bill (or the SOGIE Equality Act), Freedom of Information Bill, Security of Tenure Bill, and the Philippine HIV/AIDS Policy Bill, among others.

Like Senator Hontiveros (who ran under the Liberal Party and won), Rep. Bag-ao has used her educational background and professional experience as an alternative lawyer to work toward the empowerment of marginalized groups. Remarkably, she won over the political dynasty in Dinagat Islands (although admittedly this was made possible by Rep. Ecleo's conviction) and continues to use her position to push for legislation that would benefit these marginalized groups. It must be noted, however, that she had the backing of a party list and a long-established political party to help her during the campaign season.

### **GABRIELA Women's Party Representative Emmi de Jesus**

Rep. Emmi de Jesus has been a long-time figure in the women's movement and, as one of the representatives of the GABRIELA Women's Party, has shown how important the party-list system is in giving marginalized groups access to political representation.

Rep. de Jesus came from a hardworking peasant background, with her father working as a taxi driver and her mother as a home care provider. She graduated from the Manila Science High School and earned a degree in BS Physics from the University of the Philippines Diliman where she first became an activist during the Martial Law years. She was part of the First Quarter Storm, and eventually had the opportunity to work with trade unions and gain experience on how to assist Filipino laborers who were exploited. She has been an advocate for women's and human rights since being detained

during Martial Law. In 1983, she helped found the *Samahan ng Malayang Kababaihang Nagkakaisa* or SAMAKANA. The following year, she helped establish the GABRIELA National Alliance of Women, mobilizing women to strengthen their voices in society while opposing oppression and injustice. She worked as a grassroots organizer of women—students, professionals, workers, and mothers from urban poor communities.

Together with previous GABRIELA representatives, Rep. de Jesus has pushed for important pieces of legislation, which, once approved, finalized, and implemented, may help women empower themselves and, in so doing, empower other women as well. Among these pieces of legislation are Acts amending the Anti-Rape Law of 1997, the Revised Penal Code to provide for a system of protection for victims of prostitution, and those decriminalizing adultery and concubinage, increasing the maternity leave period, and prohibiting the establishment of political dynasties, among others.

Rep. de Jesus has shown the importance of the women's movement in giving women the opportunity to participate meaningfully in political processes and platforms. She has her feet firmly planted in grassroots and women's organizing, and was also supported by the same movement during the national elections in order to catapult her onto a platform where she could make meaningful changes in society. This also shows how critical the party-list system is, despite its many flaws, for specific sectors that would otherwise not have the platform to raise their voices and express their concerns and issues.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

In the past, women who entered Philippine politics were mostly part of elite, political dynasties, often well-educated and wealthy enough to support an electoral campaign. They were often urged by male members of the family to run for office in order to continue their family's foothold over certain places or regions—with most women believed to have won electoral seats because they were related to powerful and influential men. To some extent and for some, they were considered as “proxy women” needed only for their signatures and presence, without actually substantially representing their constituents, especially their women constituents and other marginalized groups.

However, recent years have seen an increase in women entering politics with the sincere intent of changing the status quo in order to

empower other women by providing them with enough tools and capacity-building mechanisms and assistance programs. Moreover, there have been women, not related to male politicians by blood or marriage, who have entered politics successfully through their own merit and hard work in various civil society and women's movements and organizations. These women, despite not belonging to political dynasties, have found ways to enter politics successfully—by building solid credentials, whether through education or professional experience, that would make the voting public consider them eligible or competent enough to represent them in government.

The importance of women's movements as a way for women to enter politics should also be underscored. It is through these that women gain the credentials that would allow them to be recognized as possible candidates or leaders. This subsequently ensures that women's issues are brought to the fore and addressed, since coming from the women's movement, these leaders would know firsthand what issues, concerns, and problems need to be addressed. Still, it should likewise be noted that a party-list system may seem to address women's political participation now (in which women are represented by a sectoral party [i.e., GABRIELA]), but a more long-term mechanism should be put in place to ensure that women's political representation in the Philippines reaches a more equitable proportion. Implementing quota systems and zippered lists, as well as rethinking how to address patronage politics in the country, should also be considered.

However, it should also be noted that alongside easing women's access to public office, the state and the political parties should also be responsive to women's issues in order to translate women's political presence into substantial and progressive change in terms of policy and its implementation. The state should likewise provide support and resources to women's organizations and movements to strengthen them and capacitate them to engage other women in order to bolster their agency, voice, and participation. It should also reconsider the electoral process and its facilities to make these more friendly to families that have a difficulty balancing family and political obligations (especially for women who do not belong to elite families with the resources to hire other women to alleviate them of their domestic responsibilities). Likewise, the state should provide training programs to women in order to capacitate, encourage, and empower them to take on leadership positions.

On the side of research, data gaps remain, particularly on the impact of women's representation on policies. More research should be conducted



to provide policymakers with more information on what should be done to effectively address and possibly accelerate whatever progress has been achieved thus far on women's political participation and representation.

Lastly, both women and men should recognize that “real change requires political will and partnership” (IPU, 2008:23), as equal participation of women in the political process would benefit the entire society, while it would also mean a chance to correct longstanding inequality in terms of political representation and participation. As Elizabeth Broderick, Sex Discrimination Commissioner of the Australian Human Rights Commission, said in her speech celebrating International Women's Day in 2012, “Public policy has the capacity to either perpetuate or eliminate discrimination and gender inequality. It is only by making gender a central consideration in the development and implementation of public policy that we can hope to advance gender equality and women's human rights...” (Broderick, 2012).

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