Mapping the Terrain of Feminist Organizing among Selected Organizations in Luzon and the Visayas

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Using in-depth interviews, documents review, and focus group discussions, this article examines the organizing experiences of 15 organizations led and dominated by women and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual + (LGBTQIA+) individuals to determine how they provide conditions for growth and empowerment of women members and other marginalized groups, particularly LGBTQIA+ members. At the same time, it provides an analysis of their organizing processes and practices that could inform theorizing in feminist organizing. This qualitative study was conducted in selected areas in Luzon and the Visayas. It highlights the following findings: 1) these organizations can be located in a continuum: from bureaucratic to democratic structures; from an accommodating political orientation to transforming the existing social structures, and; from service-oriented, alternative to progressive entities; 2) their common features include: a vision of an egalitarian society; democratic and participatory organizational processes, and; recognition of women's leadership and significant roles in organizations; 3) their organizational processes and practices reflect some principles and values of feminist organizing such as respect for diversity; the personal is political; an egalitarian vision of society; a de/reconstructed notion of power; and consensual and democratic organizational processes. In addition, their organizing processes and practices reflect, in some ways, feminist organizing principles such as how organizing women and LGBTQIA+ individuals leads to actions promoting women's and LGBTQIA+ rights or addressing gender issues; enables women and LGBTQIA+ individuals to make informed choices; promotes an awareness of the need to change the existing patriarchal culture and practices in organizations and communities; promotes non-sexist values; and most importantly, contributes towards an egalitarian vision of development and society. In conclusion, the following points are put forward: 1) the organizing processes and practices of these organizations reflect some similarities to feminist principles; 2) feminist organizing could complement the current practices and processes of these organizations; 3) since the processes and practices of these organizations, though in varying degrees, reflect feminist organizing, mainstreaming gender concerns in these organizations as well as coalition-building with them is feasible.

Keywords: feminist organizing, gender mainstreaming, women, LGBTQIA+, organizing processes

Introduction

Civil society organizations such as non-government organizations and grassroots organizations have been at the forefront of developing communities and social movements particularly during the repressive years of Martial Law in the country. The 1987 Philippine Constitution provides the mandate towards the formation of these autonomous organizations as well as highlights their roles in development, to wit:

> The State shall encourage non-governmental, community-based, or sectoral orga nizations that promote the welfare of the nation.

> The State shall respect the role of independent people's organizations to enable the people to pursue and protect, within the democratic framework, their legitimate and collective interest and aspirations through peaceful and lawful means. People's organizations are bona fide associations of citizens with demonstrated capacity to promote the public interest and with identifiable leadership, membership and structure. (1987 Philippine Constitution, Art.11. Declaration of Principles and State Policies, Sect. 23)

Consequently, many grassroots and community-based organizations were established at that time and flourish until the present. For women's organizations, in particular, some claimed to be feminist organizations while others refused to be labelled as such or did not even want to be identified with feminism. A number of these organizations have organized grassroots women's organizations, established women-oriented services, and formed coalitions that championed women and gender causes.

According to Freeman (1979, as cited in Martin, 1990), a feminist organization has a pro-woman political perspective that seeks to improve women's political status, economic and social conditions, self-esteem, as well as access to power and opportunities. As Freeman (1979, as cited in Martin, 1990) asserted, a pro-woman, politically and socially transformational organization can be counted as feminist. Based on this definition, Martin (1990) affirmed that programs of mainstream organizations could be counted as feminist, for instance, a rape crisis center in a public or private hospital, and mental health agencies catering to women.

On the other hand, there are organizations that took efforts to develop new forms of democratic organizations such as lesbians' collectives and women-run organizations that consciously practice feminist values. Others established mechanisms for women's concerns such as women's desks in predominantly-male formations such as trade unions, peasant, and fisherfolk organizations. There are also organizations that established feminist modes of workplaces such as women's crisis centers, support groups, healing/counseling centers, and reproductive health clinics to supplement the inadequate traditional services for women provided by the government. The most recent are organizations that evolved in response to the growing needs and concerns of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual + (LGBTQIA+) communities.

Over the years of organizing women, one of the significant outcomes worth noting is the passage of several gender-responsive and women-friendly laws and policies at the national and local levels. Another is the establishment of diverse and vibrant women's movements that despite differences in ideology and political position had worked together for the enactment of Republic Act 8353 (Anti-Rape Law). However, given the current social condition, these gains are slowly eroding. Misogyny is rampant in social media, as well as in public statements by government officials. For instance, derogatory statements against women are peddled as "harmless" jokes by these officials, while hate crimes and sexual abuse are regular news in media. In communities ravaged by extra-judicial killings, women are left to singly eke out a living; orphaned children suffer the shame over the death of a father addicted to or who is a peddler of drugs. And worse, children have died as collateral damage during police operations. These events happened in the midst of indifference and non-involvement of community residents.

As these gender concerns remain pervasive, organizing women and other marginalized groups to address them is once again necessary. As large number of women are members of various organizational formations – trade unions, self-help groups, cooperatives, and people's organizations with mixed (women and men) membership, it is important to determine how organizations, which are not necessarily feminist, develop and empower women as leaders and members.

At the same time, we interrogate how these organizations address women's and other gender concerns within their organizations and in their partner communities. Further, we look into the lessons that can be drawn from their organizing experiences that could inform theorizing in feminist organizing.

The article has four sections: the analytical framework and methodology; discussion of data; analysis and findings; and, conclusion.

Analytical Framework and Methodology

Feminist organizing is "a process designed to legitimize the lived experience of marginalized women, include diverse partners, equitably distribute power and responsibility, and foster respectful connections" (Acker, 1995; Callahan, 1997; and Chinn, 2001 as cited in Ponic and Frisby, 2001). Winthorn (1984, as cited in Van Den Bergh and Cooper, 1986:1) noted that it is rooted in feminism that is "a transformational politics, a political perspective concerned with changing extant economic, social and political structures." Further, it brings in the transformational perspective of feminism as it envisions a society that does not yet exist in which social, political, and economic change are requisites for the attainment of this vision (Mueller, 1987; Taylor, 1983 as cited in Martin, 1990).

On the other hand, Weil (1986) noted that a feminist framework for organizing melds organizing methods and action strategies with feminist principles, values, and approaches. Similarly, Hooyman and Cunningham (1986) observed that organizing with a feminist perspective embodies and carries out feminist values and principles in its strategies for action. These principles include: a) support of values of nurturance, attention to process, and respect for women's intuitive processes; b) emphasis on both process and outcome; c) recognition on the importance of consciousness raising and praxis; d) wholeness and unity that fosters sisterhood and solidarity rather than separation and dichotomy; e) a reconstructed notion of power and empowerment; f) democratic structuring in organizations; g) the personal is political, and; h) a social change orientation (Weil, 1986). These principles also reflect Van Den Bergh and Cooper's (1986, p. 10) premises of feminist analysis – "eliminating false dichotomies and artificial separations; reconceptualization of power, valuing process equally with [outcomes], renaming, and the personal is political."

Given the above notions, Hooyman and Cunningham (1986, p. 166) asserted that (a) "all organizations run by and for women are not necessarily feminist, and (b) feminist administration is not necessarily limited to consensual or cooperative organizations."

Drawing from the claims of Hooyman and Cunningham (1986), this study views organizations within a continuum ranging from consensual to bureaucratic. As such, it assumes that feminist organizational processes and practices might reside in varied organizational formations – in informal groups, in collectives, in mixed (with men and women members), in bureaucratic, and other forms of organizations.

The purpose of the study is to examine the organizing processes and practices of selected organizations to determine how they provide conditions for growth and empowerment of women members and other marginalized groups, particularly LGBTQIA+ members. At the same time, it aims to analyze their organizing processes and practices that could inform theorizing in feminist organizing.

This article is based on a qualitative study utilizing a sample of 15 organizations composed of all-women's groups, organizations with mixed membership, organizations with predominantly women members, women-led organizations, and LGBTQIA+ organizations. These organizations were purposively selected from Luzon and Visayas based on the following criteria: 1) members/staff are predominantly women; 2) formally or informally led by women; 3) organizations with program/s for women; and 4) LGBTQIA+ organizations or collectives. A combination of key informant interviews, documents review, and focus group discussions were used to gather data.

The analytical framework of the study is adopted from the organizational dimensions used by Hooyman and Cunningham (1986) in their exploratory study of the administrative style of women's organizations in terms of organizational structure, decision-making process, and organizational values. These organizational dimensions were further developed in this study based on the author's experience in organizational development and community organizing.

In operational terms, this study examined the processes and practices of these organizations in terms of: 1) organizational processes – a) vision-mission-goals; b) decision-making process; c) division of labor, and; d) organizational values or ideals; and 2) organizational practices – a) theoretical and organizing approach/es used; b) leadership/membership development; c) strategies for membership expansion & consolidation; d) strategies for mobilization; and e) sustainability mechanisms.

At the analytical level, salient themes drawn from the study are considered inputs that could inform theorizing in feminist organizing. Further, the analysis examined other critical factors affecting the sustainability of the organizations in terms of sources of funding, leadership and membership development, and the extent to which each organization responds to the changing socio-economic and political conditions over time.

Discussion of Data

Profile of Respondent Organizations

Of the 15 respondent-organizations[1], six are from the Visayas (five in Cebu and one in Iloilo) and nine are from Luzon (two from Isabela, one from Palawan, one from Batangas, one from Camarines Sur, one from Albay, and three from Quezon City). The composition is as follows: three non-government organizations (NGOs), two government-run service facilities for women with spcial needs (survivors of violence and grieving mothers, respectively), one community-based savings group, two cooperatives, one regional network of cooperatives, one student organization, and five people's organizations (POs) or membership-based organizations (MBOs). The five POs/MBOs are comprised of two LGBTQIA+ organizations, one peasant organization, one fisherfolk organization, and one urban poor organization.

Organizational size ranges from nine to 438, while years of operation range from four to 33 years. In terms of geographical scope, six organizations have province-wide coverage, while nine organizations operate at the barangay level. Members or beneficiaries of these organizations are as follows: two organizations cater to women with special needs, three to LGBTQIA+, while the remaining ten organizations provide services for both women and men. Except for the community-based savings group and the two service facilities for women, the rest of the organizations have multiple programs.

1 From the Visayas island, five organizations were from Cebu and one from Iloilo while those from Luzon included two organizations from Isabela Province, one from Palawan, one from Batangas, two from the Bicol Region – one in Camarines Sur and one in Albay, and three from Metro Manila, in particular, Quezon City.

The areas of concern of these organizations cover one or two issues such as gender discrimination, violence against women, grief counseling, rural poverty and landlessness, access to health, HIV-AIDS, disaster, child labor, informalization of work, urban poverty, environment, social enterprise, and advocacy on local economic development. Particular to gender concerns, the three LGBTQIA+ and the two service facilities have programs and services on gender issues/concerns. For the organizations with mixed membership or staff, three have programs on gender concerns and one NGO is aware of the need to mainstream gender concerns in its programs but has difficulty accomplishing this.

Organizational Processes

a. Vision-Mission-Goals. The organizations' statements of purpose, constitution and by-laws, mission statements, and brochures, if available, were examined to determine their development orientations. Except for the community savings group, the rest of the organizations have vision, mission and goals (VMG) statements. Common across these organizations is the vision of a fair, peaceful, and equitable society. The three NGOs and the regional network of cooperatives are concerned with improving the lives of women and men towards a transformed society, while the LGBTQIA+ organizations focus on inclusive development, the elimination of discrimination, and respect for diversity.

The organizations address either the practical needs – basic services, livelihood, health, counseling, social protection, and access to credit – or strategic interests – agrarian reform, empowerment, and equality – of their beneficiaries. These organizations noted that they were achieving their goals through the provision of basic services (46.6 percent), advocacy (40 percent), and counseling (20 percent). Majority of them have various programs or services, while the two service facilities started as counseling centers but later began to provide economic assistance to survivor-clients.

b. Decision-making in the organizations. The decision-making process of the organizations was measured through their strategies in resolving conflicts as well as in policy decision-making. Feminist organizing principles such as consensus, democratic and participatory decision-making, and collective processes are also common across the organizations. Conflicts are resolved through consensus where every opinion is heard and every option is discussed in order to come up with the best decision.

Despite the time-consuming process required in a consensual decision-making approach, the organizations prefer it over other processes. Such approach creates spaces for honing their skills that eventually empower them. As noted by some women respondents: "it made us committed to contribute to whatever decision we come to as a result of the process;" "we always have passionate debates and discussions but it made us feel good having our opinions and ideas heard and seriously considered, which is very empowering for me;" "though the process is tedious - considering each member's ideas in the process and imagine we are twenty-five in the organization - yet it made us accountable to whatever decision we arrive at." On the other hand, the three NGOs noted they use "criticism and self- criticism" as a feedback mechanism in assessing individual performance.

In terms of decision-making, the organizations are very democratic and participatory as reflected in their structures. The NGOs and the POs with larger memberships employ a bottom–up approach to policy decision-making. The general assembly (GA) is a mechanism by which all the members are involved in policy-level decisions. Across the POs, NGOs, and cooperatives, the GA is considered the highest policy-making body.

In a similar manner, the members of the Board of Trustees or Directors (BOT/D), the second highest-level decision-makers, come from the membership body. For the three NGOs, their beneficiaries have representations in the BOT, while in the POs and cooperatives the BOT/D is composed of members and shareholders, respectively. It is also worth noting that even in the two government service facilities – within a group therapy work setting – survivors participate in decisions that would affect them.

c. *Division of Labor.* Except for the community-based savings group and the two service facilities for women, all the rest are formal organizations with an organizational structure, a set of officers, a constitution and by-laws, and are registered with the SEC or CDA as in the case of the NGOs and the cooperatives, respectively.

In terms of structures, majority of these organizations showed characteristics of a "flattened hierarchy." According to Morgaine and Capous-Desyllas (2015, p. 267), a "flattened hierarchy" is "an organizational structure with very few managerial or upper level staff and where many staff or organizational members are considered equal in terms of decision-making powers."

Although these organizations have a hierarchy, it only serves to facilitate the delineation of tasks and functions towards the efficient and effective achievement of goals. Instead, "collective leadership" (Batliwala, 2011, p. 27) is the predominant practice in which leaders, members, and staff members are treated as equals and decisions are based on consensus. As noted by some respondents:

> *"I feel like we are a family where every member has an assigned task yet we are involved in other aspects that may affect us and the entire organization."*

> *"Despite the division of functions, we encourage the participation of members especially in decision-making and in providing inputs in whatever we do – in day-to-day interactions and activities – and most importantly, in planning and assessment activities."*

d. *Organizational Values or Ideals.* Organizational values were measured in terms of an organization's political orientation and sharing of power among staff, members, and beneficiaries. Political orientation is best reflected in their vision of social change - either addressing the structural causes of poverty or accommodating the existing social structures - as well as in the ways by which they engage with the government. Respondents categorized their organizations as follows: progressive, alternative, and service-oriented.

The NGOs and POs working for a transformed society consider themselves "progressive" organizations. Explicit in their methods of work is a clear pro-people standpoint and viewpoint of working for structural change. On the other hand, those claiming to be "alternative" organizations noted that their services and systems provide alternatives to the government. These include the cooperatives and the regional network of cooperatives that advocate for an alternative economic system promoting solidarity economy, fair trade, patronage (tangkilikan), and mutual aid (damayan). Likewise, some POs and the community-based savings group promote an alternative savings and credit system that bank on women and men considered not credit-worthy by mainstream financial institutions. In addition, some NGOs provide services to populations underserved by the government, while some self-help POs work outside the purview of the government.

In contrast, those that claim to be service-oriented organizations provide services to clients and communities and veer away from "political" activities that they consider "radical." The two government-initiated service facilities for women follow the "bureaucratic" work style of government agencies.

On the other hand, the nature of their engagement with the State depends on their political orientations. Engagement ranges from full partnership to critical collaboration. The service-oriented organizations usually engage with the government either as beneficiaries or co-partners of government projects, while the "alternative" and "progressive" organizations engage in government projects through critical collaboration for fear of being coopted by government institutions that they want to transform.

Sharing of power with staff, beneficiaries, or members differs in the three categories of organizations. The "progressive" organizations noted that participatory democracy is central to their practice in which staff, members, and beneficiaries are involved in all aspects of decision-making – from planning to evaluation of programs, projects, and activities. Similarly, the processes of the "alternative" organizations are participatory, especially in matters that would affect their members or beneficiaries. In contrast, service-oriented organizations view their target beneficiaries as clients who are either beneficiaries or consumers of their services, and power sharing is limited to the latter's participation in program implementation.

Organizational Practices

a. Theoretical and Organizing Models/Approaches Used. All the organizations do not follow any organizing model or approach; however, all of them practice participatory and empowering processes in relating to their staff, members, partner-beneficiaries, or clients, though in varying degrees. In addition, the political orientation of each organization is reflected in their interpersonal relationships with staff, members, clients or beneficiaries and especially in the nature of their services.

Organizations belonging to the "progressive" and "alternative" streams adopt principles of human and women's rights, participatory democracy, collectivity, and social justice as core principles in organizing. These principles are reflected in their organizational practices – collective leadership, committee system, task rotation, and rotational leadership – while decision-making is based on collectivity and participatory management. Likewise, the principles of human rights inform their programs, education/consciousness-raising, and advocacy work. Common across these organizations is the importance of consciousness-raising in which the members or partners-beneficiaries are capacitated to develop their awareness on current conditions and to take action to address such conditions.

On the other hand, the service-oriented organizations organize their members or clients within the context of a project. However, clients or members are encouraged to form autonomous or self-help organizations in the eventual termination of a project. Further, these organizations view their respective organizations either as a collective, support group, or "family."

b. Leadership/Membership Development. Majority of the organizations view leadership and membership development as the core component in sustaining their organizations.

Common across the 15 organizations is the presence of an education committee or program that is tasked with the leadership and capacity-building needs of their members, staff, and clients. In-house education and capability-building activities cover knowledge and skills related to their organizational and program concerns. The women-led and women-dominated organizations view their organizations as safe spaces for sharing problems, joys, and fears as well as for building relationships: "When our leader assured us that as humans we have the right to err, I was encouraged to express my ideas. And when my suggestion was affirmed by others, it was very empowering that my suggestion mattered."

"It is not only learning about our community problems and getting benefits from the fruits of our collective actions, but I treasured more the relationships that we have built inside our organization. As we do our work collectively, our relationship grew and nurtured each of us as women."

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The service facilities have capability-building education programs for their clients. These education programs aim to assist clients to move from survivors to advocates or from "case to cause," as articulated by a respondent. On the other hand, the education program of the cooperatives and the regional network of cooperatives focus on value formation, cooperativism, solidarity economy, and social protection. For the self-help and some POs, leadership and membership development education was provided by partner NGOs, while the progressive NGOs and POs have a holistic training package that covers the orientational, political, and organizational needs of leaders and members.

Although these organizations used different terms in describing their leadership styles - collective, shared, inclusive, rotational leadership, and bridge leadership - democratic participation is the common feature. As expressed by the respondents:

"We practice rotational leadership and the term of the elected leaders is only for a year to give everyone a chance to lead."

"We measure our effectiveness when a survivor became an advocate working to end violence and became a bridge-leader linking our services to their communities."

"Ours is a sort of inclusive leadership in which all stakeholders are represented in our organizational structure. This is how diversity is practiced here in our organization."

On the other hand, the NGOs provide mentoring support or on-the-job training to their partner-POs in terms of managing organizations and on organizing. Since most of the POs have limited resources, they tap and participate in education programs provided by their networks and allied organizations.

c. Strategies for Membership Expansion and Consolidation. The organizations have varied strategies in expanding and consolidating their members. Recruitment and membership expansion strategies include mass mobilizations, community assembly, one-on-one recruitment, word of mouth, social media/on-line recruitment, "bring a friend" in general assemblies, and house-to-house visit cum recruitment. A distinct strategy used by those working for agrarian reform is membership by household. Membership covers all the female and male youth and adult members of a household based on the rationale that agrarian reform as a long-term struggle requires generations of peasants to sustain it. Respondents shared that the current members of their organizations are fifth and sixth generations of peasants.

Moreover, strategies to consolidate members include consciousness-raising and other educational activities, regular meetings, planning and assessment, participation in mass mobilizations, and team-building activities. "Progressive" POs and NGOs give importance to education to ensure that the consciousness-raising needs of members are adequately attended to. Likewise, the cooperatives provide education to inculcate social values among their shareholders and members.

Across organizations, education programs are given primary importance as a consolidation strategy to raise awareness on issues and to capacitate members and staff. As leaders and members have similar levels of capacity, members could easily take leadership roles once elected. Aside from education, regular meetings, and planning-assessments, the women leaders and members, in particular, used informal discussions (huntahan) and life story-telling (kuwentuhang-buhay) to consolidate their ranks and for sisterhood-building/support.

d. Strategies for Mobilization. Except for the service facilities and the community-based savings group, the rest of the organizations give importance to mobilization as a form of power. The cooperatives had utilized petitions and dialogues with the Cooperatives Development Authority (CDA) when they were confronted with stringent requirements.

Among POs, members were capacitated to lead and take action to address community issues through mass mobilizations, caravans (lakbayan), petitions, and dialogues to air their demands to the government and to claim entitlements over community needs such as accessing health services, road repair, water, irrigation, livelihood, to name a few. As these concerns were addressed, such small gains were utilized as stepping stones to assert and demand for other community concerns. The achievement of these gains, no matter how small, enabled these organizations to gain confidence in their strength and unity. They observed that mass mobilizations are educational and instrumental in empowering members and raising awareness about issues and power. As such, planning and assessment need to be embedded in mobilization activities.

On the other hand, the three NGOs support PO mobilizations in various forms – through financial, organizational, and technical assistance. The NGOs indicated that when POs take action on their own to address community concerns, it is an indicator of empowerment for the latter and a measure of organizing success for the former. One NGO deconstructed the concept of lakbay-aral (educational tour) in which partner-POs were mobilized to visit government offices to educate them about the latter's functions and services. Having knowledge on how the government works, the POs submitted a petition demanding for a bridge for easy access during evacuation as the community lies at the foot of an active volcano. Within months of painstaking follow-ups and dialogues with government officials, the bridge was granted.

e. Sustainability Mechanisms. Two categories of strategy are used by the organizations in sustaining their respective organizations. One is internal or external resource generation and the other is institutionalization of programs in other organizations. Sources of funding are either from external donors or internal/self-generated from members. Self-help POs and community/school-based support groups generate their funds from members' monthly dues, fund-raising activities, and in cash or kind donations. The cooperatives and the regional network of cooperatives generate their resources from members and shareholders' monthly dues and individual shares. The NGOs rely largely on external foreign and local funding while the service facilities from government budget allocations.

Aside from financial/resource generation, institutionalization of programs is an innovative strategy developed by organizations to ensure program sustainability. One NGO institutionalized its social enterprise (rice mill and palay buying enterprise) by transferring its management to the partner-PO, in which the revenues were used to support the activities of the partner-PO and ensured the continuity of the enterprise when the project ended. Another NGO institutionalized its education program on disaster risk reduction (DRR) by capacitating public schools and barangay local government units (LGUs) to implement it in their respective localities. As an outcome, several public schools and LGUs adopted the program that benefitted more children and communities while the NGO took on a technical support role.

Moreover, other strategies devised by these organizations include raising funds from local communities - in kind contributions, sharing costs through partnerships with other organizations, cultural and community events, to name a few. Likewise, engaging in social movements, particularly, linking up with other organizations by joining networks and coalitions is considered as another strategy, especially by organizations pursuing long-term goals such as agrarian reform, the elimination of sexual discrimination, and environmental protection. As such, they have worked in partnership with other organizations especially in campaigns and advocacy work. Other organizations maximize the available resources such as information and training provided by coalitions and networks affiliated with them. Some POs and self-help organizations shared that they received trainings on gender by being part of a coalition or network.

Since external funding is difficult to acquire at present, the three NGOs developed alternative sources of funding to sustain their operations by establishing their own social enterprises and, eventually, be independent from foreign assistance. One of these NGOs even severed its ties with a donor as the latter was considered too imposing. Some respondents noted that:

> *"We don't want donors to control our work by imposing on us their own agenda."*

> *"It is frustrating that funding nowadays is sort of 'flavor of the month' of these funding agencies; in previous years its women, then environment, and now sustainable development goals, and what it is for tomorrow? We don't want to tweak our development agenda to conform to them; besides, a two- or three-year funding won't have much impact on our partner communities."*

> *"I am saddened that instead of collaboration among NGOs with same goals or complementary programs and services, we are made to compete for that limited funding."*

On the positive side, the "imposition" by foreign donors, in some ways, contributed to the adoption of a women's agenda by these NGOs as part of the requirement for funding.

For instance, the NGO in Cebu went beyond compliance with such requirements. As an outcome, it reviewed its policies to ensure that these are responsive to the needs of women beneficiaries and staff. It also required its partner-POs to acquire gender sensitivity training, particularly on women's rights. It also improved its system by incorporating gender analysis in its social investigation and class analysis (SICA) tool for project development and in organizing communities.

Findings and Analysis

The following findings are drawn out from the themes that were surfaced in the study, which mirror, in some ways, organizing principles similar to feminist organizing. At the same time, these themes surfaced salient gaps that could inform theorizing in feminist organizing.

- *Organizing leads to action that promotes women's and LGBTQIA+' rights or addresses gender issues.*

The organizations can be categorized within a spectrum: from the bureaucratic type that provides services to women, to organizations that empower women, and to organizations that fight for gender equality. Majority of them have awareness on the importance of upholding rights, especially those of marginalized groups. These organizations, though in varying degrees, provide opportunities for the development of women and LGBTQIA+ individuals – as staff, members, partner-beneficiaries, and clients. Although not all organizations have specific programs for women and LGBTQIA+ individuals, they have varying levels of responses to their practical gender needs – social services, psycho-social support and livelihood – as well as in empowering them to achieve their strategic gender interests – empowerment and freedom from gender-based violence and gender-based discrimination.

- *Organizing provides opportunities for women and LGBTQIA+ individuals to make informed choices.*

The organizations value education and consciousness-raising as important components of organizing. Through consciousness-raising, members, staff, and clients of these organizations learned to understand the factors – socio-economic, political and cultural - that influence their lived experiences and find commonalities out of these experiences. Moreover, through these consciousness-raising activities, personal experiences of poverty, marginalization, discrimination, and subordination were discussed, analyzed, and linked up to other social issues for them to see the connections. At the same time, these activities enabled them to see the connections that their individual problems have, and how these problems are rooted in societal structures and bred and perpetuated by social institutions.

Common to these organizations, whether progressive, alternative, or service-oriented, is the valuation of individual experiences, ideas, and analyses. The informal and formal meetings, planning and assessment sessions, and general assemblies serve as spaces in which these experiences and ideas are heard, contested, and supported. Particularly in organizations with mixed membership, the first opportunity for women to speak and have their voices heard was a very empowering experience. But prior to having the courage to speak, the women were able to utilize the informal huntahan and kuwentuhang-buhay sessions to speak out, to test ideas, and to be supported.

Moreover, the capacity-building and leadership/membership development programs and activities of these organizations provide members, staff, and clients with new knowledge, skills, and attitudes. They apply these learned capabilities in different situations - organizational meetings, relating to co-members in their organizations and communities, as well as in dealing with other organizations and government units. Most importantly, these capability building and consciousness-raising activities enabled them to make informed choices on household and organizational - related decisions.

The above processes and practices of these organizations reflect the feminist analysis and perspective of the personal is political wherein the personal experiences of women are linked to community and societal issues, eventually making them realize their common conditions and enabling them to take collective action to address these conditions. Since most of the organizations focused only on a single oppression - class or gender - the intersectionality framing of feminism could enhance the analyses of these organizations by locating the lived experiences of members, staff, and clients as women, men, and LGBTQIA+ members within the interlocking systems of oppressions – class, gender, and other systems of discrimination - operating simultaneously in their lived experiences.

At the same time, such framing also challenges the notion that one oppression subordinates another oppression, as well as the notion that class is the overarching oppression in the layers of oppressions experienced by poor and marginalized people.

- *Organizing promotes an awareness of the need to change the existing patriarchal culture and processes in organizations and communities.*

Common among organizations is the practice of sharing power, though in varying degrees, as observed in their decision-making processes, leader-members relations, and the practice of leadership itself. They also share a common notion of leadership, though couched in different terms - collective leadership, shared leadership, participatory leadership, democratic leadership, etc. Despite differences in political orientation - either working to transform or accommodate the existing societal structures - their notions of leadership as collective, shared, participatory and democratic are alternative leadership styles that challenge traditional notions of power as dominance. As majority of these organizations practice power sharing in their organizational practices and processes, they have, in a way, challenged patriarchy, since hierarchy and the leader-subordinate divide are attributes associated with patriarchy.

Likewise, the notion of power sharing within the organizations is translated to the household level, especially among the progressive organizations. The trainings on gender sensitivity, laws on women, and women's rights separately given to women and men members are contributory factors in raising the awareness of both women and men about power relations within organizations and households. The requirement of donors and the Cooperative Development Authority (CDA) to mainstream gender in NGOs and cooperatives, respectively, is another contributing factor.

Further, the practices of sharing power and the rejection of hierarchical relations are somehow similar to the feminist organizing principle of deconstructing power, in which power is not viewed as dominance. Instead, it is "re-conceptualized as transactive, limitless, and collective" (Weil, 1986, p. 202), and "a process that enables the accomplishment of aspirations" (Bricker-Jenkins & Hooyman, 1986 as cited in Weil, 1986, p. 202). As such, there is a commonality in regard to the notion of power between feminist organizing and the organizations in this study.

- *Organizing promotes non-sexist values and practices.*

Goldstein Wicker (1986, p. 33) defines sexism as "any action or social structure that subordinates individuals or groups because of their sex." It was common among the organizations to claim that sexist values and practices were not tolerated as part of their everyday culture. Such claim was reflected in their constitution and by-laws, policies, and practices in relating to different groups.

The women, especially those in organizations with mixed membership, do not condone sexist and green jokes made by men. For instance, a woman member reprimanded a male co-member who made derogatory remarks against LGBTQIA+ people. In another instance, the leaders of a PO, after attending a training on women's rights, reviewed their by-laws and drafted rules to address gender issues in the practices of the organization. As revealed in the study, organizations that had undergone a series of trainings on gender awareness were most likely to be open to the integration of gender concerns in the organizations. Further, women members in these organizations who attended gender awareness trainings learned to assert their rights on matters affecting them in their households and organizations, especially when both spouses are members of the same organization.

Aside from the observance and practice of non-sexist values, majority of the organizations, though in varying degrees, uphold the principles of democratic participation, collectivity, valuation of experiences, reciprocity, and upholding of rights - in dealing with women (including LGBTQIA+ individuals) as staff, members, clients, or partner-beneficiaries. Likewise, democratic participation and collectivity are stated in their constitutions and bylaws as well as in policies and rules, while consensus decision-making and cooperation are part of the day-to-day practices of most of the organizations. These values are also core ideals of feminist organizing.

- *Organizing contributes towards an egalitarian vision of development and society.*

All the organizations, regardless of their political orientation, have a common vision of an egalitarian society in which equality is a key attribute of that envisioned society. The goals aspired for by each of these organizations whether in the domains of economic, political, socio-cultural, and environmental were observed as contributing towards this envisioned society.

Further, their processes and practices of democratic participation, collectivity, cooperation, mutual support, and power sharing which are crucial elements in building an egalitarian society reflect values of feminist organizing.

Conclusion

The organizations in the study can be located in a continuum: from bureaucratic to democratic structures; from an accommodating political orientation to one that aims to transform the existing social structures, and; from a service-oriented to alternative and progressive entities.

Despite these differences, their common features include: a vision of an egalitarian society; democratic and participatory organizational processes, and; recognition of women's leadership and significant roles in organizations

On the other hand, their organizing processes and practices reflect, in some ways, feminist organizing principles such as feminist values of respect for diversity; a de/reconstructed notion of power; the link of the personal and social issues, sisterhood, reciprocity, consensus, and consensual and democratic organizational processes.

Moreover, these organizing experiences could inform theorizing in feminist organizing based on the following lessons: organizing women and LGBTQIA+ individuals leads to actions promoting women and LGBTQIA+ rights or addressing gender issues; enables women and LGBTQIA+ individuals to make informed choices; promotes an awareness of the need to change the existing patriarchal culture and practices in organizations and communities; promotes non-sexist values; and most importantly, contributes towards an egalitarian vision of development and society. On the other hand, feminist values and perspectives such as intersectionality, women's experiences as sources of knowledge, nurturance as leadership quality, and attention to both process and outputs are the ones that feminist organizing could offer to these organizations to further enhance their organizing work for the benefit of women.

And in conclusion, the following points are put forward: 1) the organizing processes and practices of these organizations reflect some similarities to feminist principles; 2) feminist organizing could complement the current practices and processes of these organizations; and 3) since the processes and practices of these organizations, though in varying degrees, reflect feminist organizing, mainstreaming gender concerns in these organizations as well as coalition-building with them is feasible.

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