

The WDP: Enhancing the Fieldwork Program, 1991- 1994*

Maureen C. Pagaduan**

Sharing with you the story of the WD Program is an opportunity to recall what we've been through, to relate the past with what we have continued.

I was the coordinator for 1991-1994. In mid-1991, I finished my M.A. in Development Studies (Women Studies) at the Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, Netherlands. Then, I took Sario's place as WDP Coordinator.

Looking back, Sario's leadership was a tough act to follow. In many ways, the beginning broke so many barriers exposing hierarchies of power, the dominance of men, men's thinking, men's ways in the university.

To provide continuity for the program, we focused on curriculum development, the fieldwork program, and the student-advicing program. The WD committee which was composed of representatives from CD (Community Development) and Social Work, and the faculty of WDP, took the lead. In day, as sole WDP faculty then, tried to do some consolidation of the program. These involved looking at the courses, course revisions, instituting creative strategies by which we could inspire students to appreciate and go deeper into Women's Studies, as well as to look at avenues and opportunities within the college to promote the WD Program.

Not surprisingly, we already had the pattern of increasing enrollment even at that time. And, I think if I go into that period, my personal bias would still be with the field work program not only because I come from the Department of Community Development, but I still think, for us being a Third World country, any development program should have a bias or should have a particular favor for poor women in communities.

So, the Fieldwork Program is one aspect of the Women's Studies program at the College that provides such an opportunity for community exposure and involvement. If I would quote what was written then at the annual report, ***I think the uniqueness of the Women and Development Program in the University is that, it is closely linked to the development orientation of the College.*** And as such, it has a very strong orientation towards social action or what we would say a contribution **towards building a transformed society that is free, more just and humane.**

I think we were looking more into the development of career paths for students enrolled in Women's Studies, more as development workers who had a strong bias for the poor, especially poor women. This became a major expression of the CSWCD commitment to a transformed society. So, increasingly, the Field Work Program in the Women & Development Program expressed that bias. Also, as a career path, we were trying to influence women's studies students to share the development orientation of service to poor women. Given that perspective, we actively sought partnership with NGOs and people's organizations, those with women's desks and/or women's committees.

We fielded students with these institutions and/or organizations that were seriously implementing women-focused community projects, with students taking an active role in project activities.

Hopefully, such an exposure will show students the reality of poor women's lives, their conditions, their priorities and their perspectives. With these lessons, students can develop a more grounded and holistic appreciation of women and development issues and concerns.

*Excerpts from an informal talk given by Prof. Pagaduan during a lecture tracing the history of the Women & Development Program last February 12, 1998.

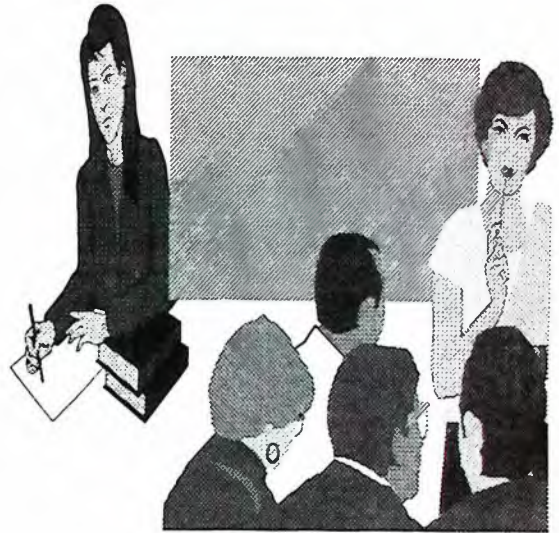
**Prof. Pagaduan is an Associate Professor at the College of Social Work & Community Development. She teaches courses in community development and women & development. She was the Coordinator of the Women & Development Program from 1991-1994.

We also developed other supporting networks such as the University Center for Women's Studies and the Women's Studies Association of the Philippines (WSAP). As a consortium, WSAP membership includes teachers in Women's Studies and other related fields of professionals, of academicians who are interested in women's studies.

So, we continue that involvement but also in the early 90's, the WDP has expanded its network of institutions. These include the NCRFW (National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women), other women NGOs, and people's organizations or mass organizations so that we could easily field students to get exposed to development work.

As development workers, as women development workers, we would like to work for a commitment to change --- a change toward women's empowerment, so that a critical mass of the enlightened can participate in their development, and, decide how they want their future to be. We also wanted to open career options for women who would be practitioners as well as advocates for participatory methods, strategies and processes. We aim to develop students who are firm believers in participatory feminist development, that works not only for development in general, but also for the development of relationships among leaders - men and women - that is characterized mainly in terms of a partnership, genuine partnership.

A relationship among men and women, free of all forms of violence. Whether you are husband, wife, father, mother, daughter or as



workers, boss, director, assistant, coordinator, implementors, teacher or student, you show a *recognition of the others' potential, a recognition of their interests, their capacities and the will or wish to share and not really to show or to exhibit any inequality.* This personal internalization of perspectives and values explored and studied in the program will hopefully work towards better relationships, better men and women.

Finally, though the program always lack adequate resources, we prioritize the development of teaching and reference materials.

We tried to do more in terms of coming out with student papers, research, materials, studies, that would provide a balance of ethnocentric western materials on women that we were getting from abroad with local eastern studies. So, we would encourage really, at that time, a lot of our students to go into thesis writing.

Women studies' students now don't have time to write their thesis, but at that time, more students were into thesis writing. But the need to develop local materials is strong. Thus, we continue to encourage and support efforts of students, as well as faculty, to produce local studies, essays, researches, literary pieces that would expose the wealth of Philippine women's studies.