

COMING FULL CIRCLE IN 20 YEARS: A Synthesis of the DWDS Field Instruction Program Experience

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This article discusses the birthing of the Department of Women and Development Studies in parallel with the herstory of the Field Instruction Program or fieldwork to many students. This article is a synthesis of the DWDS 20th experience in doing fieldwork practice that were drawn out from the fieldwork assessments and sharing sessions, interviews with fieldwork students and partner agencies, and other DWDS documents and reports. As a synthesis paper it highlights the strengths and issues confronting the FIP, in particular, its impact to students, FIP administration and management, fieldwork placements, the partner agencies and students' contributions to these agencies. The article ends up by posing some questions and challenges to the DWDS as it embarks on a new phase of its journey in promoting women's studies.

*"The road to the creation and maintenance of the program, has, by no means, been a bed of roses. Its continued existence, however, makes it possible for a thousand flowers to bloom."- Prof. R.S. del Rosario
(WDP Coordinator 1984-1991)*

Introduction

Since its birth twenty years ago, the Women's Development Program has reaped a rich and meaningful existence, starting from a mere program of the College of Social Work and Community Development

(CSWCD) in 1988, it is now a full-blown department, the Department of Women and Development Studies (DWDS). One of the components that contributes to the Department's meaningful experience is the Field Instruction Program (FIP), popularly called the fieldwork program or practicum.

The FIP is an integral part of the Graduate Program of the DWDS. It is composed of two courses, the WD 280 and 281,¹ that students have to take as part of their course requirements. The FIP was designed as a core component of the Women and Development (WD) course to enable students to integrate feminist theories and practice in a community setting, either in collaboration with a women's organization or with a women's desk or program in a mixed organization (DWDS Revised Field Instruction Manual, 2006).

The FIP was conceptualized based on the belief that women's studies need to be relevant to the realities of women especially in poorer urban and rural settings. And through the FIP, the students are provided venues to refine feminist praxis as they work and learn together with grassroots women, while enhancing their knowledge, skills and attitudes for personal and professional development or as advocates of grassroots women (DWDS Revised Field Instruction Manual, 2006). As the practice side of the Women's Studies course, fieldwork enables both the faculty and the students to connect classroom learning to field experiences while creating impact on the lives of community women as well as among themselves as women and men. And most importantly, the "classroom-fieldwork practice" link provided to the students by the WD course is what sets it apart from other Women's Studies courses offered in the country. On the part of the students, the process of "theory- informs- practice, practice-informs-theory" enables them to experience learning as a complete, cyclical experience.

The twenty year-experience of the Department in implementing its FIP is long enough to take stock of the knowledge and lessons learned in the field. The theories learned in the classroom have been applied to community realities through the FIP in order to test and validate them, and over time, need to be synthesized as lessons and new theories that could serve as new input to classroom teaching. An attempt to synthesize the FIP 20-year experience is like coming full circle from where it started: knowledge learned in the classroom is practiced in the field and brought back into the classroom as new knowledge and theories.

This article is an attempt to capture and synthesize the journey of the DWDS field experiences through its FIP, though an initial synthesis of the lessons and insights of the field experience, this serves as input in the knowledge construction and theory building initiatives of the Department as a Women and Development course.

The Field Instruction Program: the core program of the DWDS academic course

The FIP as the core of the DWDS academic program is composed of two courses, WD 280 and 281. WD students under Plan A (with thesis) are required to take up WD 280 while those under Plan B (comprehensive examination) are required to take up both WD 280 and 281. As a further requirement, WD students are allowed to enroll in FI courses only when they have taken up all the WD core courses.

Below are the course titles, descriptions, requisites and learning objectives of WD 280 and 281 respectively:

Course Title	WD 280 (Field Instruction I)	WD 281 (Field Instruction II)
Course Description	A 3-unit course of supervised field practice in actual community immersion with focus on women's situation and gender relations	A 3-unit course of supervised field practice with focus on developing students' critical analyses of the situation of women and men, implementing interventions and enhancing students' capabilities in organizational development, program management and other aspects of development work. ⁴
Prerequisite	Completion of all the WD core courses	WD 280
Required Hours	250 hours	250 hours
Course Objectives	<p>Students are expected to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate their critical analyses of women's specific situation and needs vis-à-vis broader realities and issues affecting them; • mobilize women to collective action based on their identified needs and problems through the use of a range of strategies³; • document the processes students have undertaken and reflect on feminist concepts and methodologies operationalized, evolved and/or developed; and • propose recommendations for organizational and/or program development to the partner organization where they have been fielded and for the improvement of the FIP. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design a program of response strategies that will heighten social consciousness on women's issues and to develop collective action of women's groups; • Facilitate the development of knowledge and skills among grassroots women in planning and implementing a short-term project feasible within the fieldwork period; • Document the process undertaken and reflect on feminist theories and processes being operationalized, evolved and/or developed; • Reflect critically on community realities, issues and conditions; • Apply and test theories, knowledge and skills within the fieldwork experience; • Synthesize their ideas and experiences on feminist theory and practice.

The FIP is managed by a faculty coordinator whose functions include the following: to administer the identification of field placements, to assign students vis-à-vis their corresponding field placement and faculty supervisor, to conduct the orientation to incoming FI students, to coordinate the field sharing sessions and assessment of the Program, and to revise and update the fieldwork manual, when needed. These activities are done in close consultation with other faculty members of the Department.

The FIP has four components consisting of: (1) fieldwork orientation, (2) supervised actual fieldwork, (3) fieldwork sharing, and (4) fieldwork evaluation. The fieldwork orientation is a classroom-based activity conducted prior to actual fieldwork and is attended by the students, faculty supervisors, other DWDS faculty, and the agency supervisors (optional as their schedules permit them). It provides the students with information about the fieldwork requirements and processes. The actual supervised fieldwork takes place in either rural or urban community setting in an approximated four-week period. Each FI student is assigned with a faculty and an agency supervisor who assist the former in the actual fieldwork. Within a semester, the students are required to attend the two classroom-based fieldwork sharing sessions (mid-semester and end-semester sharing sessions). These field-sharing sessions provide an opportunity for students to learn from each other's experiences in their respective field contexts and to draw out common lessons and learning out of these unique experiences.

Aside from the 250 minimum-hour requirement, the students are required to submit the following documents: (a) individual plan, (b) logbook of regular activities, (c) fieldwork report every fieldwork sharing, and (d) reflection/journal to fulfill the fieldwork. Students' grades are based on students' performance and written work. The system of grading is as follows: faculty supervisor (60%), the agency supervisor (30%) and the student (peer/self-10%) (DWDS Revised Fieldwork Manual, 2006).

The Evolution of the DWDS and the Field Instruction Program: a herstory of challenges and growth

The herstory of the FIP can never be narrated without recalling how the Women and Development Studies Program (WDS) evolved to become a full-blown department. As such, narrating the FIP herstory is also an opportunity to share the birthing of the WDS and its concomitant struggles to become a program and later a department. Below are the nodal points in the herstories of the Department and FIP:

1984: The earliest initiative on women studies was spearheaded by the Department of Community Development (DCD) through the offering of CD 224, a course titled Seminar in CD Practice I, which was re-titled as Women and Community Development. It was offered to test the reception of students to women's studies and to firm up the preparation for a full-blown Women's Studies Program. This seminar course with focus on women was offered until 1986 (Del Rosario, 1998).

1987: At the CSWCD, a committee on Women's Studies was created to develop a proposal for a Women and Development Program (WDP). Preparatory activities included meetings and consultations, the roundtable series "*Kuro-Kuro Ukol sa Kababaihan*," syllabi development workshops for the new program in 1988, and a seminar on feminist theories during the summer of 1989 (Del Rosario, 1998).

1988: The period marked the formal establishment of the WDP of the CSWCD with the aim of "providing a holistic and comprehensive perspective to the study of women and development particularly in the context of the Third World and the Philippines." It offered two graduate degrees - a Diploma in

Women and Development and later a Master of Arts in Women and Development (WDP brochure, 1988).

1988-1991: Prof. Rosario del Rosario became the first WDP Coordinator during this period. Since the creation of the WDP was not a policy decision of the university but rather the result of the relentless efforts of women and some men, its creation and maintenance as a Program in the university has never been "a bed of roses" as Prof. Rosario del Rosario² had put it. The Program had no faculty item and the coordinators who handled it over the years had to fight for equal treatment in terms of benefits (del Rosario, 1998).

1991-1994: The WDP was under the leadership of Prof. Maureen Pagaduan. During this period, the program thrusts included curriculum development, student-advising program and the fieldwork program.

At this period, Program consolidation was given priority. The process involved review and revisions of courses, institution of creative strategies to motivate students to appreciate and have deeper involvement in Women's Studies, and the promotion of the WD Program (Pagaduan, 1998).

Specific for the FIP: This period focused on the enhancement of the FIP to provide the students with opportunity for community exposure and involvement. The FIP, being closely linked to the development orientation of the College, has articulated its strong bias for the poor, especially grassroots women. As a course, the WDP fieldwork program borrowed from the DCD the course titles CD 280 and 281 respectively.

With its developmental orientation, the fieldwork program had established partnership with NGOs and people's organizations with women's desks or programs and those organizations implementing women-focused community programs and projects. Students were assigned to have their fieldwork with these institutions with the hope that through exposures to these fieldwork placements, the students would learn to understand the realities of poor women – their conditions, needs, priorities, and perspectives. And by drawing out lessons from these field experiences, the students may develop a more grounded and holistic view of development issues and women's issues in particular (Pagaduan, 1998).

1994-1997: Under the leadership of Dr. Rosalinda Pineda Ofreneo, this period had the following highlights:

- in 1994 there was a discussion on renaming the Program from Women and Development to Gender and Development. However, upon further debates and discussions, the title Women and Development Program was retained.
- the Program embarked on reviewing the curriculum to make the courses career- and skills-oriented that resulted to the institutionalization of additional courses.³
- the Program also developed distance education modules reflecting the socio-cultural realities while various WD courses yielded valuable papers and theses on women's issues and realities and major publications to include the CSWCD update and a review of literature on Women/Gender issues⁴ (Ofreneo, 1998).

- various training activities and fora were conducted from 1994 to 1996. The “Gender Awareness Training” and a “Trainors’ Training on Gender and Development” were conducted at the College in 1995 (Ofreneo, 1998).

Specific for the FIP:

- efforts were toward the systematization of the FIP through these strategies: (1) reaching out to the UP community through the Center for Women’s Studies; (2) strengthening links with groups in the women’s movement; (3) assigning students to NGOs with thrust on violence against women; and (4) maintaining partnership with grassroots organizations.
- the FIP expanded its network of institutions and grassroots organizations to include the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (NCRFW), Center for Women’s Studies, Urban Poor Associates, Women’s Crisis Center, Women’s Legal Bureau and Arugaan, to name a few. Students’ involvement in these institutions and organizations are varied that included education and training, research, documentation, women organizing, counseling and group work facilitation, and advocacy.
- in 1997, the partnership with fieldwork partner agencies was institutionalized for the following reasons: (1) to ensure continuity of partnership, (2) to facilitate smoother coordination, and (3) to create better impact. With this thrust, the first set of institutional partners was identified based on these set of criteria (DWDS Revised Field Instruction Manual, 2006):
 - Pro-women standpoint
 - Diversity of areas of concern

- Rich experience in feminist development work
- Capacity to supervise students in the field
- Smooth placement and coordination with the FIP based on past experience
- Expressed interest in institutional partnership

2000-2006: in March, 2001, the WDP became a Department. As a full-blown department, it continued partnership with its institutional partners and also expanded partnerships with grassroots women's groups, mixed NGOs, feminist organizations, and issue-based networks.

Specific for the FIP:

- In 2000, there was an increase in fieldwork placements that provided a rich diversity for exposure of WD students to Women and Development work. It was also during this period that a research was conducted among selected partner agencies that served as information base during the fieldwork program review. As a result, the fieldwork guidelines were reviewed and reoriented to address academic, administrative and coordinative problems.
- Enhancement and further systematization of the fieldwork program was given focus in later years. One significant improvement in 2002 and 2003 was the delineation of learning goals and requirements between CD 280 and 281. Likewise, the contents of the mid-semester and end-semester sharing sessions were defined and guidelines for reporting were developed. Such systematization and program enhancement culminated in the development of a powerpoint FIP orientation in collaboration with the Research and Extension for Development Office (REDO).

- In 2006, two significant developments in the FIP were noted – one was the approval of changing the FI courses, CD 280 and 281 to WD 280 and 281 respectively and the other was the development of a revised field instruction program manual.

Looking back, the FIP has made great leaps in enhancing the WDS Program and is constantly refining its systems, processes and contents.

The FIP in practice: a tripartite partnership of equals

The FIP is a unique feature of the Department's WDS, thus, setting it apart from other Women's Studies programs in the country. As such, fieldwork supervision plays a very important aspect of the program.

During the actual fieldwork, the students are assisted and provided guidance by a faculty supervisor and an agency supervisor to achieve their fieldwork objectives and targets, though both have distinct supervisory roles to play: the faculty supervisor facilitates the learning process by providing the framework to structure the students' lived experience and practical learning as well as, assists them in linking classroom theories in actual community settings while the agency supervisor provides assistance to the students while in the field to ensure that the fieldwork objectives are achieved. These are done through facilitating the students' entry and immersion in the field or community, providing access to needed information about the community and agency, monitoring the progress of the students' work in the community, and providing logistical support (DWDS Revised Field Instruction Manual, 2006).

For the FIP to materialize, the role of the primary stakeholders – the students, the faculty supervisor and the agency supervisor are crucial. Through the FIP, these three entities gain a mutually beneficial relationship and partnership: the partner agency serves as fieldwork

placement while generating benefits from the involvement of both the students and faculty in their work while the partnership with the agency provides both DWDS students and faculty great opportunities for learning. In addition, the fieldwork practice provides venues for students to apply, test out and validate feminist theories, principles and strategies learned in the classroom while creating opportunities for community involvement and extension work to DWDS faculty.

Since its implementation, the FIP has established a considerable number of partner agencies having a wide latitude of concerns: women workers, home-based workers, rights of migrant workers, reproductive rights and health reforms, women and globalization, women's leadership, women and sub-contracting, violence against women, and organizing urban poor women. Along these concerns, the students were exposed to different field realities as well as varied experiences and involvement: feminist research, documentation, advocacy, counseling, documentation, advocacy, community education and training, networking and mobilization, women organizing, technical assistance, and support group building for violence against women (VAW) survivors. The placement of students in these agencies is done through the matching of an agency's needs and the student's present capabilities and interests.

For practical and manageability considerations, the FIP limits its fieldwork placements to only four partners, namely, the Center for Women's Resources (CWR), PaTaMaBa, LIKHAAN, and MAKALAYA. Though limited in number, these partners cover geographical-wide communities and have a wide range of programs and concerns. Though the FIP is into institutionalization of partner agencies, it does not close its doors to other agencies, whether former partners or new ones that are interested in forging future partnership. Thus, it had engaged in short-term partnership with Batis Center for Women, Camarin Barangay Women's Desk, Migrant Forum-Asia, and Samahang Kababaihan Para sa Kaunlaran.ng UP Campus.

Summary of Partner Agencies and Students' Involvement

Name of Organization	Nature of Work/Sector	Duration of Partnership	Nature of Students' Involvement
KMK	Urban poor	Before 1994	Training
Urban Poor Associates	Urban poor; issue-based organizing	Before 1994	Gender sensitizing CO and training
Center for Women Studies	Training and research	1994-1997	Research; training
Arugaan	Advocacy; education on VAW	1994-1997	Community training; advocacy
Women's Legal Bureau	Legal advocacy	1994-1999	Advocacy work
Women's Crisis Center	Services for VAW survivors; Advocacy for women's rights	1994-1999	Research, documentation, casework & counseling, group work facilitation
PETA-women's Theatre Program	Feminist Pedagogy	1999	Documentation; research
Center for Women's Resources	Urban and rural women	1999-present	Feminist research and training
Makalaya-Learn	Women and trade union organizing; reproductive health	1999-present	Training; research; documentation; life stories writing; library systematization
PaTaMaBa	Informal sector; home-based workers' issues	1994-present	Training; technical assistance; organizing and organizational development
LIKHAAN	Women's health care; reproductive rights policy advocacy; women and youth organizing	1999-present	Community training; advocacy; research; library systematization; documentation; youth organizing around sexuality issues

Batis Center for Women	Migrant women in Japan	2002	Organizing; organizational development
Migrant Forum in Asia	Migrant workers	2002-2003	Research; training
Camarin Barangay women's Desk	VAW	2003-2004	Counseling
Samahang Kababaihan Para sa Kaunlaran ng UP Campus/ Brgy. UP	Urban poor issues; VAW	2005; 2006-2007	Women organizing; research on adolescent sexuality; research on conflict mediation

Source: Students' FIP Integrated Reports

The FIP and Fieldwork Realities: when theory and practice meet

Since its shift to working with four institutional partner agencies in 1997, the DWDS confined student placement to communities covered by these partner agencies. The case experiences in two fieldwork placements discussed below illustrate how students applied classroom learning to real community settings.

1) Feminist Research in Brgy. Bagong Silangan: A Fieldwork Experience in the Center for Women's Resources⁵

During the Second Semester AY2004-2005, a WD 281 student was fielded in CWR to conduct research on Gender and Development (GAD) mainstreaming specifically, towards the establishment of a women's desk at the barangay level. The research site was Brgy. Bagong Silangan, a barangay in Quezon City that has no Women's Desk yet. The research was facilitated through the institutional partner agency, the CWR.

The CWR is a women's service institution that provides education, research, advocacy, library and data banking services on women. Through its services, CWR aims to empower grassroots women through consciousness-raising towards improving their situation and effecting structural change. It is instrumental in helping build women's organizations such as the *Samahan ng Maralitang Kababaihang Nagkakaisa* (SAMAKANA), a national organization of urban poor women and GABRIELA, a political center of progressive women's movement in the country. At present, it has linkages with a network of national grassroots women organizations and 17 regional centers. To fully serve the grassroots women, CWR implements these programs – research and data banking, education and training, advocacy, and publication (CWR brochure, undated).

Primarily, the research problem focused on how SAMAKANA-Veterans Chapter, a local women's group, could push for and influence the establishment of the Women's Desk at Brgy. Bagong Silangan. The objectives of the research are as follows: 1) to determine how women's issues (e.g. VAW) figure within the barangay space and among its actors; 2) to determine the socio-political space of SAMAKANA-Veterans Chapter and situate it within the larger barangay context; 3) to assess workable strategies and processes that could be undertaken by SAMAKANA and its support group to introduce, create and implement Women's Desk at the barangay level; and, 4) to cite implications when these strategies and processes are undertaken.

The research employed participatory and feminist processes that included documents review, key informant interviews and informal thematic storytelling among community women. This research includes some basic feminist research assumptions and principles. These are:

- the use of a feminist perspective in which central to its analysis is the awareness of the issues of power in all women's experience;
- the primary goal of research is to improve women's lives;
- the valuation of women's knowledge and experience; and
- reflexivity instead of the researcher as objective and detached from the researched topic and subject.

Utilizing the above feminist assumptions and principles, the student was aware of the issues of power in women's lives that she is ever very careful on how this power dynamics manifested in her relationship with the staff from CWR and the leaders and members of SAMAKANA in the conduct of the research. Aware of these power dynamics, she made sure that there was consultation and consensus in every process of the research. Likewise, she ensured that the CWR staff and the SAMAKANA leaders and members played active roles in the research process from conceptualizing the research problem, designing the research, gathering and validating data, and evaluating the entire research process.

In order to gain insights regarding community women's perception and level of knowledge about VAW issues, the student immersed herself in the community by sleeping overnight for a few days in the community, integrating with the women in their daily activities and attending VAW lectures by women's groups in the community. Further, she did participant observation and conducted transect walks to enrich her knowledge about the community. She engaged in informal conversations with people she met during these transect walks and gained rich information about the community history and local perceptions and beliefs about VAW that women and men hold. Every story shared by community women was valued and taken into the research as valid information. Out of her informal conversations with community women, she formed vignettes of women's experiences that provided some glimpses of how VAW issues are lived by women in their daily existence.

When her data was complete, a feedback and validation session was held with leaders and members of SAMAKANA and other community women. The findings of the research were posed as questions to ponder on for SAMAKANA and the community women alike. These include:

- How to better prepare SAMAKANA Veterans Chapter to further elevate its initiatives from addressing basic social services to that of tackling VAW issues, i.e. the forms of VAW experienced by community women in Brgy. Bagong Silangan?
- How would SAMAKANA eventually define its work to convince the “unbelievers” within the barangay structures?
- What then are the forms of work that it should do to make the barangay government more accountable?
- While forming various initiatives at the barangay government structures, what parallel efforts should it do at the community level?
- How would it start up linkages with other groups in the community to work towards a common goal? What form of partnership would it create with these groups that come from another political line?

During the feedback and validation session, she took into account their insights and recommendations as valuable knowledge to enhance the research findings. In addition, the session did not only validate some data gathered but also raised questions that led SAMAKANA and the community women to ponder on their potential advocacy work with VAW issues and possible actions to take to pressure the barangay government, of the latter’s responsibility toward the establishment of an engendered barangay Women’s Desk.

Through this research, the positionality of SAMAKANA Veterans Chapter, other community groups and the local government

structures in relation to the issue of VAW and in the establishment of a Barangay Women's Desk was revealed. How concepts and perceptions on VAW were reproduced, performed and contested by different community actors were also identified. And since transformative actions to change women's lives are what this research aimed to achieve, it posed the following recommendations for SAMAKANA and other groups to take on in their advocacy work towards engendering the barangay structures:

- There is a need to revisit existing GST/GAD/VAW⁶ modules both for local groups and barangay actors to assess how they intend to address changing participants' consciousness about VAW and the need to rethink the frameworks used by advocates in looking at VAW issues, i.e. should the emphasis be still on the myths and truths about VAW or should it be seen in a holistic manner incorporated along the issues of reproductive rights, patriarchal issues, unequal gender relations, and other problematic structures that advocates work to change. As such, is it necessary to view VAW as a public issue that needs to be responded with services that local governments have to provide.
- There is a need to deliberately create opportunities and spaces for women's groups and barangay actors to continuously engage in VAW discourses.
- There is a need to train and equip local women's groups with skills in utilizing VAW data and statistics as legitimate source to press "unbelievers" to respond to the issue.
- There is a need to create empowering spaces for women as local advocates to work with the barangay officials as allies in improving women's lives.
- As VAW is considered a public issue that needs concrete responses from the government and groups, this should not be separated from other basic issues like water, land tenure, housing, livelihood, and other basic needs, as all issues are also women's issues.

Indeed, this research experience has provided possible transformative actions that community women could do. On the part of the student, through the reflexive character of feminist research, she has also gone some transformation as a WDS student and as a feminist, as gleaned from her personal account of her fieldwork experience:

"I consider this action research not just a simple course requirement to fulfill and to mark my last semester with the Program. But more so on a personal level, I was enriched by the quality of interactions with ordinary women yet exceptional with the way they live their everyday lives in struggle with power, with poverty, with issues of everyday living, and with issues of violence. Such interactions, short as they may seem, enriched me beyond my expectations. Women's everyday lives have drawn from me the depth and nuances that informed me how I should see them and their struggles and how I should relate with them. In over one month of staggered immersion, I came to better understand power relations at play within the structures of a given locality and how women are trapped in between. Yet, trapped as they are, I saw in them the capacity to strategize, to display their resistance, to move collectively, and to negotiate their spaces. And to me, these are good sources of energies to fuel community advocacy work against VAW and other issues. These are the very reasons why I want to be associated with them still by volunteering my time and skills even after as required by the course. Mostly, I have realized that I have long gotten over my existential question such as: why am I doing what I am doing? Rather, I know the exigencies of change that need to be staged by women like myself – that it is necessary to form associations and alliances with grassroots women to do something against our continued oppression, subordination and marginalization. I see this as required from every feminist like myself, as well as to never get tired of committing to transformative actions though it may not happen in this lifetime!" (Mercado, Integrated Paper, March, 2005, p 37).

2) Organizing and Community Education for Women in Sitio Kumunoy:
A Fieldwork Experience in MAKALAYA ⁷

During the second semester of 2004, a team composed of two students was fielded in MAKALAYA (Manggagawang Kababaihan Mithi ay Paglaya), a women's organization composed of women workers from the formal and informal sectors. It was established in 1998 with the aim to integrate the concerns of women in the trade unions' programs and activities. It focuses on the development of women's potentials as leaders. In particular, it aims to integrate women's concerns and issues to trade unions' programs and activities. It advocates to trade unions the following concerns: (1) the institutionalization of gender education programs; (2) the representation of women at all levels of the union structures; (3) the formation of Women's Committees; the inclusion of women-friendly provisions in collective agreements; and (4) the integration of women's concerns in the policy documents of unions. As an alternative space for women, MAKALAYA serves as a parallel women-only structure that is independent but working closely with trade unions on women's issues and gender equity. In organizing women, it fuses trade unionism and community unionism as a strategy in reaching out to women in formal and informal sectors. It has chapters in different areas of the country (MAKALAYA brochure, n.d.).

The students were assigned by MAKALAYA to do fieldwork in Sitio Kumunoy, an urban poor community in Bagong Silangan, Quezon City. They were tasked to conduct a needs assessment towards designing an education program on reproductive health issues, which at that time was the thrust of MAKALAYA. It was also expected that this education program would serve as the entry point strategy for MAKALAYA to organize and strengthen the existing organization, the Golden View Homeowners Association. Working as a team, the students initially immersed themselves in the community to enable them to craft a work plan for the entire fieldwork period. The team came up with the following objectives for the semester:

- To develop a community profile and design a training program for the women members of Golden View Homeowners Association;
- To strengthen the core group and the organization; and
- To document women's processes (e.g. leadership development, decision-making and conflict management).

Armed with the feminist perspective and processes, they conducted the needs assessment. In the field, they were guided by the principles of feminist pedagogy, in particular:

- the creation of a community of women learners who are responsible for their own learning as well as those of others;
- empowerment, not as power through domination, but as creative energy;
- leadership through consensus decision-making and non-hierarchical processes;
- women's experience as source of knowledge; and
- education towards consciousness raising and transformative action to improve women's lives.

Applying these principles, the team conducted small group study circles on various themes such as VAW, sexuality, women's leadership, migration, globalization, the informal sector, etc. These topics were identified from the needs assessment and from the suggestions of women during their informal "*huntahan*." Based on their observation, the team found out that the most effective strategy in gathering data is to start where the women are, for instance, taking part in women's processes and activities like the informal "*huntahan*" and domestic activities, since it is only during these activities that women gather to talk about things that concerned them. At the same time, the team felt that only through immersion that they were able to experience the lives of women.

The team together with the women decided to have a one-hour study circle every week while the women's houses served as venues for the study sessions on a rotation basis. Participatory methods such as personal sharing, story telling, drawing and other creative methodologies were utilized in the study sessions. The use of these processes has been effective in drawing out women's ideas and insights as well as in raising their consciousness on gender issues. In every study session, the team started with evoking women to share stories from their personal experiences, as such, the topics were never abstract and out of these personal experiences, together they eventually draw out the analysis and insights. Although the team served as the facilitators, they were at the same time learners, as they learned from the ideas and insights of the women. Since the atmosphere of trust and mutual learning was established at the very start of the study circle sessions, personal as well as communal learning, were reinforced. Consequently, the practice of valuing the personal experiences of women as sources of knowledge contributed in enhancing their self-esteem and empowering them. For the women, these education activities not only raised their awareness about issues that concerned them as women but most importantly, strengthened their solidarity as women, as neighbors.

However, in the middle of the semester, the issue of eviction cropped up and as a result, the women set aside other concerns and focus on the land issue as the immediate concern at that time. The women were busy attending consultations about the land issue that attendance to the study circles waned. Faced with the dilemma of implementing the training program or to refocus the consciousness raising activities on the land issue, the team held a meeting with the women to decide on what to do amidst the possible eviction and demolition. The team served as facilitators while the women brainstormed possible strategies and identified contingency plans. As the students observed, because the home is the place where

majority of women's activities are conducted, landlessness and its concomitant issues like demolition and eviction are of primary concern to women. For the women, defending their homes is a matter of defending their lives and they were determined to struggle to defend their homes from being demolished. As students were confronted with the complex issues faced by the women in the community, in response, they were flexible enough to adjust their fieldwork plan to accommodate the issue of land in the education program. The issue of land was integrated in every discussion of other issues. For instance, the students integrated the discussion of landlessness with its impact on women's reproductive health. Instead of compartmentalizing issues, they tried to see the interconnections of issues as these affect women and men's lives. After all, as the students enthused, all issues are women's issues.

As students got involved with women and the issues in the community, it also became clear to them the connectedness of their lives to the women in the community as gleaned from the students' insights:

"In the end, it dawned upon us that the realities and complexities, enveloped within women's lives in the community and in the larger society, are connected with our own issues as well. We came to terms with our selves, the community processes and the lives of women; the methods of learning and unlearning and the full realization that we are bounded by the related experiences of systemic oppression and exploitation." (de Guzman and Mendoza, Integrated Paper 2005, p. 2).

In the course of their fieldwork, the team has culled the following good practices:

- *addressing conflicts as a team.* The students realized the importance of responding immediately to every perceived conflict

or changes. As problem or change cropped up, there was always consultation among the students, the faculty supervisor and the agency supervisor. Such practice helped to facilitate dialogue, to avoid misunderstandings and to minimize aggravation of conflicts.

- *learning with and from the community.* Although the students are armed with theories and workplan, it is important for them to be flexible to accommodate any change in the field context. Women in the community have rich experiences that served as input to validate theories learned in the classroom. The key is to listen to them and to acknowledge the experiential knowledge of community women as legitimate knowledge.
- *utilizing innovative approaches and processes.* Interactive, creative and non-threatening processes and methodologies that encouraged women to participate and learn are important in drawing out women's voices and personal stories.

In addition to the above insights by the students fielded in CWR and MAKALAYA, the effects of the fieldwork on other students vary – for some it is affective, cognitive for others while others experienced both. As gleaned from the mid- and end-semester sharing sessions, other students have these to say about their fieldwork experiences:

"The fieldwork made me understand what feminist research is all about – feminist research has no pretensions of objectivity. Its standpoint approach affirmed my conviction that there is no one position from which value-free knowledge can be developed but some positions are better than others. And for me, the women's point of view is the better position." --a student in CWR fieldwork placement.

"The fieldwork experience gave me a real situation of our country and that of women, as discussed in class. The negative impact of globalization, poverty, class differences, and the cost of migration

-- all these concepts were concretized by my fieldwork experience. Prior to my fieldwork, these were just concepts, but now, I can put faces to these concepts." -- a student in MFA fieldwork placement.

"Since I had witnessed the hardship that most families face, like being able to eat only once a day. I can honestly say it changed me. I now feel that I have the obligation not to be wasteful, not to buy things that I do not need, or even as simple as not wasting food." --a student in CWR fieldwork placement.

"Working as a team is advantageous for me. It made me sensitive to the needs of others. Even when the assigned task seems hard, I would still do it so as not to disappoint my other team members. One also gets to appreciate the different characteristics of each member because in one way or another, these differences would help complement the team to come up with better ideas and outputs." --a student in MAKALAYA fieldwork placement.

"The provision of quality health care services takes a decidedly feminist stance. Women are given all the information necessary for them to make clear choices about their health and their bodies. In the process, they were made aware that they have right to decide on their bodies. My exposure to these women made me realized just how disempowered I am and many of my friends are when it comes to our health and our bodies, in a sense. As a result, I have had tremendous desire to inform myself about my own body." --a student in LIKHAAN fieldwork placement.

"Empowering women economically is brought about by a confluence of factors: access to technology, education and markets. All these help to address their practical interests, which potentially raise their status in the community and could contribute to the attainment of their strategic gender interests. At the household level, a woman's bargaining position and power is strengthened by both personal and economic empowerment, wherein the former clarifies her perceived interest of her own well-being, and the latter allows her to make a patent economic contribution to the household." -- a student in PaTaMaBa fieldwork placement.

The FIP Experience: A Synthesis of Experience and Lessons Learned

Through the years of fielding students in various women's organizations, the WDS FIP experience has produced considerable gains and lessons worth noting, specifically, in terms of: ⁸

1. Choice of Partner Agencies/Fieldwork Placements

- The students affirmed that the fieldwork course served as a venue for them to apply theories learned in the classroom to fieldwork settings. Like the faculty supervisor, the agency played a crucial role in creating an enabling environment for students to learn from the field practice. Among the enabling factors are: consistent support and quality of supervision by agency supervisor, regular meetings with agency staff, regular feedback and assessment with agency supervisor, adequate orientation about the agency and its programs prior to fieldwork, levelling off on frameworks and positions on issues between students and agency, clear tasks and roles of both the students and the agency stipulated in a memorandum of agreement, and realistic targets and outputs to be delivered by the students. On the other hand, there were students who have difficult field experiences with partner agencies. There are agencies that are not prepared to handle fieldwork students because of the following reasons: agencies have no program for practicum students, non-availability/non-supervision of agency supervisor and the notion of students as source of "additional staff" or volunteer labor. The quality of agency supervision and institutional support provided by partner agencies serve as enabling mechanisms for students to apply classroom learning to field realities. Thus, the selection of partner agencies is a crucial element in the fieldwork program.

- The strategy to “institutionalize” (i.e. establishment of long-term partnership) fieldwork partner agencies is a good mechanism to monitor the impact of the FIP in terms of depth of partnership, continuity of fieldwork areas and students’ learning. The idea of having institutional partner agencies as field placements was appreciated by the students. However, they had expressed apprehension regarding this strategy as this limits the opportunity for them to work with other agencies, as well as, limits their involvement with other issues that are of interest to them (e.g. prostitution, indigenous women, legislative advocacy, counseling, etc.) that are beyond the scope of work of current institutional partner agencies.
- Since the FIP has already worked with these institutional partner for almost a decade now, thus, there is a need to conduct an assessment of the experience in working with these partners to determine whether to continue the partnership or not in the coming years.

2. FIP Structure and Management

- During the early part of the WD course program, the DWDS had the premise that those enrolling in the Program were former activists, that is, people with development work practice, especially, in community organizing. Consequently, the WDS course gave more emphases on theories and perspectives. However, the profile of the WD students had changed over time. For the Department, the fieldwork served to gauge the gaps that need to be filled in by classroom learning. Likewise, the changing composition of students was taken into account in the assignment of fieldwork placement as well as in the choice of partner agencies. Considering this reality, matching the partner

agency with students' interests and capacities is a crucial step in fieldwork preparation.

- Based on the fieldwork learning goals, the students find the FIP very relevant. The FIP provided the needed exposure and practice for students to apply the theories, feminist principles, processes, and skills they have learned in the classroom. In addition, the students find the delineation of learning goals and requirements for each of the FI course (WD 280 and 281) helpful as it helped them delineate target deliverables as well as division of functions. Because of the well-defined goals for each course, i.e. WD 280 and WD 281, the students were able to identify concrete outputs for a given time period. As a case in point, when both WD 280 and 281 students are assigned to the same partner agency and community, they work as a team but with clear delineated tasks and deliverables as WD 280 and 281 students respectively. Because of this, the students can easily establish a mechanism to complement each other's work towards a unified output by the end of the semester.
- Most students are working students, thus, fieldwork placement in Metro Manila areas is the most feasible. On the other hand, rural and out of Metro Manila placements are discouraged except, when the student is a full-time student.
- The fieldwork sharing and orientation sessions are considered as class sessions where students and faculty supervisors are required to attend. Each sharing session has different focus and concerns to avoid students from presenting repetitive information. The strategy to provide guidelines for fieldwork sharing helped the students to delineate the contents of mid-semester sharing from end-semester sharing, as well as the reports of WD 280 from WD 281 students. Based on students' feedback, the field sharing

guidelines helped them in structuring their presentations and guided them in synthesizing their fieldwork experiences. Further, the workshops during fieldwork sharing sessions (attended only by the DWDS faculty and students) facilitate students' interaction among themselves and an opportunity for theorizing field experiences.

- The fieldwork sharing sessions are venues for the students, the partner agencies and the faculty to discuss experiences, distill learning, draw out lessons, and proposed recommendations towards the improvement of future work. Based on the insights and learning culled from the field sharing sessions, some themes are recurring that span several semesters, these include: women's leadership, feminist organizing, education and creative pedagogy for women, strategies for women's empowerment, women-friendly health services, among others.

These themes are valuable to the Program on two considerations. First, the themes were utilized during sharing sessions as inputs for our theorizing process with the students. One concrete action in translating these themes into concepts and processes was the launching of the feminist leadership seminar series⁹ to explore the various dimensions and processes of feminist leadership and the Summer Camp on Adolescent Sexuality.¹⁰ These activities were participated in by members and communities of partner agencies. Significantly, these activities provided an opportunity for both students and people in the fieldwork communities - for the students to work on a common project and an opportunity for the community partners to interact and learn from each other. Second, these themes served as input in curriculum development. As an example, the course on Feminist Pedagogy was developed in response to the recommendation of fieldwork students who saw

the need to include skills in designing and implementing education activities for women.

- Some of the good practices of the Program that the students had acknowledged include: (1) fixing the dates of the fieldwork sharing sessions during the orientation session provided the students with ample time for preparation; and (2) assigning students to document and synthesize discussions made the process participatory and meaningful to students as this enabled them to lead in synthesizing and theorizing their experiences.
- The fieldwork sharing sessions provide a framework for monitoring the progress of the fieldwork program as well as in synthesizing the students' experiences – this framework contains the description of agency placement and support, the mode of supervision that facilitate and/or hinder work in the field, the theories/models and principles tested and validated, the perceived changes on self, team and the community field placement, as well as the gains from the Department-Agency partnership. The data gleaned from the sharing sessions served as inputs towards the continuous enhancement of the management and conduct of the FIP.
- In terms of fieldwork requirements (i.e. 250-hour fieldwork, log book and journals, field outputs, and integrated paper)

For the students, all the FI requirements are necessary. Students are encouraged to update the logbooks and journals regularly. An updated logbook and journal are of great help for both the students and faculty supervisors – for the faculty to monitor students' field activities and as data for students in writing up their integrated paper. On the other hand, the 250-hour course requirement is still considered adequate for students to experience community

immersion and interaction. However, the 250 –hour time span should be balanced with an output approximate to this time duration. Thus, the FIP does not encourage students to stay overnight in the fieldwork areas just to earn the hours required without the corresponding output. Another important consideration is the presence of a memorandum of agreement that clearly contained the outputs expected from the students and the support to be provided by the partner agency. Having a MOA serves as reminder for the students about the outputs they have to deliver as well as, the support that the partner agency has to provide. In this case, the faculty supervisor is key in ensuring that students' outputs are realistic vis-à-vis the fieldwork period to avoid delays that may affect the partner agency's program or project.

In terms of major changes in the field, whether initiated by the FI Program or the partner agency, it is best that the students should be consulted, especially on matters that would affect them. These changes may be in the form of changes in faculty or agency supervisor, fieldwork area and agency requirements. Students' feedback and feelings should be elicited before a decision is made as this may affect the students' momentum in the field.

3. Fieldwork Supervision (Faculty and Agency)

- For the students, the key to an enriching fieldwork experience is the quality of supervision of both faculty and agency supervisors. Since students are in the field trying to put into practice the theories they have learned in the classroom, therefore, the guidance and support of the faculty supervisor is important. Although the faculty supervisor is required to visit the student/s, at the minimum, four times within the semester, it is best to maximize and employ creative means of getting in touch with the student/s. Regular contact through cell phone

communication, regular weekly out-of-field updating sessions, establishment of an e-group among the students, the faculty and the agency, and the conduct of planning and assessment sessions among students, faculty and agency supervisors prior to fieldwork sharing sessions are some of the mechanisms that worked in the field. On the part of the partner agency, it should provide only one agency supervisor in the course of the student's fieldwork to provide continuity of supervision. Students expressed difficulty in working with different supervisors as this entails changes in methods of work, requirements, outputs, and deliverables. Likewise, problems cropped up, especially, when students' deliverables are not put into a memorandum of agreement.

- Like the classroom, the community is a dynamic and complex context. Power dynamics are constantly at play in the community. As such, conflicts and problems happen in the course of fieldwork. However, the key to address a problem as it crops up is regular consultation with both faculty and agency supervisors. Every concern or problem, regardless of magnitude, has to be discussed and clarified immediately with supervisors to avoid disruption of the entire fieldwork process. Likewise, regular consultations allow a transparent process of learning and unlearning between the students and the faculty/agency supervisors. In this manner, the students are being guided and monitored, as a requisite to a smooth-running process throughout the entire fieldwork period.
- There were cases when the students' orientation ran in conflict with the agency they worked with. As a result, the students have difficulty reconciling such differences. In these cases, the faculty supervisor can mediate and facilitate the leveling off on frameworks and perspectives. One strategy that worked in the field is encouraging the students to conduct regular study sessions to be

attended by the students, the agency staff, and the faculty supervisor. Through these activities, the students can learn the agency's positions on particular women's issues and an opportunity for both of them to find the middle ground, to negotiate and to level off. In another way, the students can use these education sessions to conduct advocacy work to raise the level of awareness of the agency regarding the WD perspectives.

4. Impact of Fieldwork on Students

- The diverse concerns of the partner agencies provided the students with the opportunity to apply feminist theories and processes to various issues and concerns of the partner agencies, particularly the integration of feminist perspective in their respective field contexts. On the other hand, the varying fieldwork contexts provided them the opportunity to apply, test out and validate theories and processes learned in the classrooms. At the same time, it provided them the opportunities to apply feminist principles, among them: (a) starting where the women are; (b) facilitating new inputs such as systematization, documentation, synthesis, women-friendly tools for education; (c) working as team with grassroots women in non-hierarchical relationships; and (d) valuing and affirming each other's capabilities and creating communities among women.
- Depending on their field assignments, they had expressed varying application of their WD courses.¹¹ For instance, students tasked to do research had expressed the relevance of the WD 291 (Feminist Research). Similarly, for those assigned to an informal sector organization find the WD230 (Women and Work) lessons very useful while those who were into counseling in a barangay women's desk find the WD 270 (Feminist Counseling) very useful. Likewise, they commonly expressed that the other core courses had provided them the theoretical frame in analyzing community

realities and dynamics. However, a majority of them expressed that they should be equipped with skills in designing, facilitating and conducting community education for women.

- Through the fieldwork practice, students were able to work directly with women in the communities and together, they were able to evolve various innovative strategies that include creative processes and methodologies in community education, leadership, research, marketing strategies for women's products, and most importantly, in empowering women.
- To sum up, the major impacts of the fieldwork on most of the students are as follows: (1) the opportunity to integrate and immerse with grassroots women and their communities; (2) direct participation in various aspects of work towards women's empowerment; (3) interaction and exchange with feminists activists from women organizations; (4) the opportunities for exposure to deepen their understanding and appreciation of feminist perspective on reproductive health, globalization, contractualization, women organizing around women's issues like VAW, and (5) the engagement with various institutions and organizations.

The FIP Issues and Challenges: towards theorizing, de/constructing knowledge and re-visioning

Problems encountered

The WDS fieldwork program is not complete without the heartaches and problems, as well as, issues that it is confronted with. Problems encountered are also worth noting to serve as areas for future improvement. These include the following:

1. On Fieldwork Placement

Among the issues raised by the students in terms of choice of agencies and fieldwork placements are: the limited choice of fieldwork placements and agencies, some agencies are not ready to handle practicum students, non-availability of agency supervisors, students with financial constraints have difficulty in doing fieldwork, and consultation with students in regard to change of fieldwork placements or change of faculty supervisors.

Recommendation: To further improve the identification and selection of agencies and field placements, the students had the following recommendations: (a) an assessment of the partner agencies should be conducted during the end-semester evaluation to determine if partnership with them will be continued or not; (b) a student should take both WD 280 and 281 in one particular agency to have a fuller grasp of the conditions of a community, unless there is a problem that the student is requesting for a new field placement, and (c) provision of a wide variety of placement agencies.

2. On Fieldwork sharing sessions

In the course of the classroom-based sharing sessions, two major problems were noted: (a) the problem of punctuality that resulted to longer sessions; and (b) conflicts and strong reactions from agencies about the students' reports. In response to these concerns, the students had these recommendations: (a) the FIP should find a mechanism to hold shorter yet substantial and productive sessions, (b) to conduct assessment with agency prior to the fieldwork sharing sessions to avoid strong, negative reactions; and (c) to conduct a separate session for students and faculty to discuss learning and lessons.

3. On the 250-hour Requirement and Deliverables

Since most students work full-time, there were cases when they were not able to finish the fieldwork that resulted to an unfinished commitment or deliverables to the partner agencies. Thus, to avoid recurrence of this problem, the faculty supervisors have to ensure that the tasks and outputs expected of the students are achievable within a one-semester period.

4. On Support for Fieldwork Expenses

Since financial constraints have been a constant concern of students doing fieldwork, thus it would be better if the Department maintains a fund to accommodate the financial needs of fieldwork students, even only for the provision of transportation allowance to those who have financial limitations.

Dilemmas and crossroads

As part of the continuing search for knowledge and good practices *vis-à-vis* the problems encountered in the course of doing fieldwork, the FIP is being confronted with questions and dilemmas. However, with the Department's determination to make the FIP truly relevant and enriching for both the students and the women in the fieldwork communities, it continues to search for answers to these nagging questions:

- Had the fieldwork experience created opportunities for students to apply and integrate classroom learning?
- Had the FIP allowed students to develop and demonstrate positive attitudes towards community work and working with grassroots women?

- Had the FIP provided venues for students to practice their skills, to innovate and to apply appropriate strategies in empowering women?
- Did the FIP create the opportunity for students to sharpen their perspective, hone their skills in feminist processes and methodologies and practice feminist values and empowering relationships with co-students and other women?
- Did the FIP create an opportunity for students to create community among women?

Moreover, the FIP is also faced with other concerns that have administrative and organizational implications:

- How could the Program maximize the involvement of foreign students? What are the considerations in fielding foreign students?
- How will the Program clarify the objectives and requirements for those students taking both the WD 280 and 281 simultaneously within a semester?
- How will the Program balance the students' learning process, the academic requirements and the needs of the partner agencies and community women? Is the 250-hour practicum requirement enough or too much?
- How long will the Program continue its partnership with a particular "institutional" partner agency? What are the indicators to say that the goal of partnership is already achieved?

Learning and theories developed from the field

Since the FIP has weathered two decades as a Program, like a learning loop, as it comes full circle towards a new phase in its organizational life, lessons learned from the field have to be distilled into

new theories and learning. As students were involved in various lines of work – organizing, community education, research, counseling, advocacy work, etc. theories learned from the classroom were affirmed and validated and new learning were culled from these fieldwork experiences. As students were involved in various lines of work – organizing, community education, research, counseling, advocacy work, among others, theories learned from the classroom were affirmed and validated and new learning were culled from the fieldwork experiences. The following theories and learning serve as common thread that runs through these various lines of work:

- The Feminist visions, perspectives and analyses provide the framework for understanding women's conditions and realities in the field.

For the students, feminist theories learned in the classroom gave them the handle in framing and naming women's experiences. The feminist vision of transforming or improving women's lives guided them in defining what actions to take given the findings and data culled from the researches, education activities and working with community women. Feminist analysis provided them the perspective in analyzing power dynamics between women and men in the community, between the students and the women in research projects, between the students and women in education and study circles, and between student -counselors and women survivors. Feminist perspectives guided them in viewing women's lives in a holistic and integrated manner, that all issues that concern women are women's issues. For instance, the issue of landlessness and lack of water are women's issues as these affect women as informal workers and home keepers of their families.

Further, researches conducted in the field provided information about women's lives in the different fieldwork communities. The application of feminist visions, perspectives and analyses enabled the students to understand the conditions and lives of community women that were previously invisible and unimportant in mainstream research and knowledge construction. Through these researches conducted by the students, the lives and hardships of women were given voice and informed the advocacy agenda of partner agencies: the exploitation of women in sub-contracting work in Taguig; the ill-effects of water privatization on the health and well-being of women and children in Tondo; the reproductive and health issues of young women and men in Pasay, Angono and UP Campus, and the VAW problems encountered by community women in Quezon City.

- De/reconstruction of the notion of power not as domination but rather as shared energy and collective strengths

The fieldwork experience provided a forum for students to challenge the patriarchal notion of power as domination. The researches, community education activities, organizing, advocacy work and similar activities conducted in the field have proven that enhancing women's creative energy from within is power in itself. As reflected in the study circles, both the students and community women experienced shared power as facilitator-learners. Informed by the principles and values of feminist pedagogy, the education and study circles focused on creating a community of learners among women in which each woman is responsible for her learning as well as for others to also learn. In like manner, the students not only served as facilitators but also acted as learners. Apparently, the processes and structures of these education and study circles

reflected that power could be facilitative and collectively shared among women. And most importantly, these education experiences of both students and community women taught them a new notion of power that enabled them to take control over their lives and not that of others.

- An awareness of the differences among women

The exposures and immersions of students in various communities provided them with direct experience and valuable knowledge about the realities of women in different sectors (urban poor women, rural women, home-based workers, migrant women, women artist-teachers, youth, LGBT, etc.) and their lived contexts (urban, rural and NGO settings). The students' experiences in working with various women have affirmed the notion of difference among women, as mediated by class, age, sexual orientation, physical disabilities, etc. Because of this awareness on the differences on women, the students were able to surface the problems and issues of lesbians, elderly and women with disabilities. And by giving voices to their conditions and issues, the students have helped in giving voice to their marginality and invisibility.

- Valuation of women's personal experience as sources of knowledge and speaking out these experiences are affirming and empowering experience.

The feminist principle of valuating women's experience as resource in research, community education, counseling, organizing, and advocacy work resonated in the fieldwork experiences of the students. By utilizing women's experiences as a take-off point in discussions about issues that are of concerns to women, the researches, education and other activities in the

field, in a way, have challenged patriarchal notion of “male as the standard.” The practice of valuing women’s experiences as sources of knowledge is both empowering to the community women and the students. For the women, it affirmed their importance, their identity and their value in the community. On the part of the students, it enabled them to make sense of the reflexive value of hearing women’s stories and voices as these resonate in their own lives, thus, reaffirming the principle of “the personal is political.” Moreover, the group process employed in community education, focus group discussions and group counseling sessions, with their awareness raising potentials can bring about changes in women’s self perceptions and self-esteem. These processes also provided a forum for speaking out and exploring ways of making changes in their daily lives.

Action points for the future

Looking back from 1988 where the DWDS used to be known as the WDP in the university, it was elevated to full department status by the Board of Regents of UP on March 29, 2001 (DWDS brochure). Now in its 20th year of teaching Women’s Studies, the Department is looking forward to new challenges. Equipped with the lessons and learning culled from its 20 years experiences of classroom teaching and field practice and fueled by the continued enthusiasm and passion to make a dent in the lives of women in poorer communities, the Department, through its FIP, is ready to face future challenges and new ways of collaboration with partner agencies and other organizations:

- Exploration of a common fieldwork placement with other Departments;
- Collaboration with the REDO in developing classroom materials like case studies and video documentation of field lessons and experiences;

- Institution of regular Summer Camps tackling cutting edge themes and topics like sexuality, spirituality, etc., and involving the partner agencies, the fieldwork students and community women and youths;
- Institution of a regular FIP planning and synthesis of experiences among faculty, partner agencies and students; and lastly,
- Exploration of a mechanism for sourcing funds for fieldwork scholarship to needy students.

Although these challenges seemed daunting, yet, they are achievable and the FIP is all set to face another stage of its journey that may become another herstory in the future.

End Notes

¹WD 280 and 281 are described as Field Instruction I and II respectively. These field courses were formerly CD 280 and 281 but were change to WD 280 and 281 in 2006 by the University Council. A student under Plan B (with comprehensive examination) of the Masters Program is required to take up both WD 280 and 281.

²Prof. Rosario del Rosario is the first WDP coordinator. She handled the Program from 1984 to 1991.

³Courses include WD 231 (Gender responsive Planning & Administration); WD 291 (Women and Development Research); WD221 (Feminist Perspectives & Strategies in Organizing)

⁴The review of literature was later published by UNDP (*A Woman's Work is Never Done*, 1996):

⁵Data in this case study were based on the Integrated Paper of Nellibeth V. Mercado entitled, "How Could Partnership Be Possible? Towards instituting engendered structures in Brgy. Bagong Silangan, Quezon City." Unpublished research report, second semester 2005.

⁶GST/GAD/VAW, are abbreviations of Gender Sensitivity Training/Gender and Development/Violence Against Women.

⁷Data in this case study were based on the Integrated Paper of Ginger de Guzman and Ma. Christina Mendoza entitled, "Reflections." Unpublished report, 2nd semester, 2005.

⁸Information discussed here is based on interviews with students, assessments of FIP during mid- and end-semester sharing sessions and fieldwork reports from 2001-2006.

⁹ The Feminist Leadership Seminar Series were conducted every Saturday during the First semester of AY2004.

¹⁰The Summer Camp on Adolescent Sexuality was conducted on May 19-20, 2007, which was participated in by youths from the communities of PaTamaBa, Likhaan and SKPK.

¹¹ These WD courses are: WD 201 (History of the Women's Movement in the Philippines); WD 210 (Feminist theories); WD 221 (Feminist Organizing); WD230 (Women and Work); WD 231 (Gender Responsive Planning and Administration); WD 291 (Feminist Research).

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