



## Endnotes

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# Reflections on CEDAW SEAP: Finally... CEDAW makes an impact

“CEDAW, *Ano Daw?*” (“What’s that?” in Filipino) This was the tagline of an awareness-raising campaign back in 2005 to reintroduce the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the international bill of rights for women that has been enforced in the country since 1981.

The question clearly implied how low CEDAW was in the radar of public consciousness.

The awareness-raising campaign was one of the activities spearheaded by the CEDAW South East Asia Programme to facilitate its implementation in the seven Southeast Asian countries of Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Thailand, Vietnam, Timor-Leste, and the Philippines.

Four years later, CEDAW SEAP in the Philippines is “happy” to report that awareness of the Women’s Convention has not just increased but there are concrete applications on how to implement it.

“CEDAW SEAP not only enhanced awareness, it also sharpened the focus of application of CEDAW in the country,” says Luz Lopez-Rodriguez, the programme’s National Coordinator.

## Country reporting to the CEDAW Committee

One of the gains achieved by the programme, according to Rodriguez, is the “well-commended” country reporting made by the Philippines to the United Nations CEDAW Committee on how the Women’s Convention is being carried out in the country.

“It was even considered a good model on how to do country reporting to the UN,” she adds.

The CEDAW SEAP helped the Philippine delegation prepare for the country report, from the consultations and dialogues to get data and inputs, to the writing of the report, and the holding of a mock session to better prepare the delegation for its presentation to the CEDAW Committee. It worked with the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women, the lead agency for CEDAW reporting, and its partner agencies on how to measure and evaluate the impact of CEDAW and identify gaps in its implementation.

Rodriguez observed that there was extensive participation of key government officials in the preparation for the CEDAW reporting. This might explain why there are government officials who stood their ground as “duty holders” in supporting the reproductive health bill in Congress despite strong pressures to go otherwise. An example is Secretary Esperanza Cabral of the Department of Social Welfare and Development who also happened to head the Philippine delegation that reported to the CEDAW Committee.

“Secretary Cabral stuck her neck out in publicly declaring her support for the bill. I think her participation in putting together the CEDAW country report made her acutely aware of her role as a duty bearer who has the obligation to see to it that the rights of women are respected, protected and fulfilled,” she says.

Aside from government, non-government organizations also got assistance from the CEDAW SEAP in preparing the shadow report they presented to the CEDAW Committee. It highlighted issues they felt government was remiss in addressing, especially migration, reproductive rights, rural women, and extra-judicial killings. By presenting both official state report and NGO shadow report, the CEDAW Committee was able to get a more balanced picture of the real state of CEDAW implementation in the country.

## Legislating CEDAW

Legislation is still another area where the CEDAW SEAP was able to help women advocates, this time in their campaign to have the bill on the Magna Carta of Women passed. To date, the bill has been approved on by the Bicameral Conference Committee.

“Clearly the Magna Carta is an anti-discrimination and gender equality legislation. It is significant because it translates the CEDAW into a national law. With the law in place, government can no longer ignore violations that discriminate against women and women can take government to task about this,” Rodriguez explains.

Rodriguez is amazed at the quickened pace that the Magna Carta bill is going through in the legislative mill since the 14th Congress convened.

“Based on our experience, pro-women legislation takes time to be approved. The anti-rape law took about 10 years, the anti-trafficking and the anti-violence

against women laws also took more than five years to be approved. The CEDAW-based Magna Carta bill is now into its third year in Congress and chances are good that it will be finally enacted into law this year," she says.

The briefings and forums on the CEDAW given by NCRFW and NGO advocates to key legislators and their staff, Rodriguez adds, had much to do in getting their support for the bill and the commitment to have it passed. "You feel gratified when, during legislative hearings for the Magna Carta of Women, you hear the chorus of support from both the panel of government representatives and a wide spectrum of women's NGOs endorsing the bill."

It was not just government officials, legislators and NGOs that the CEDAW SEAP was able to involve in its projects. Among the activities it supported were training the judiciary on CEDAW so they can apply it in deciding cases, helping the academe develop tools to monitor CEDAW implementation, and making rural, indigenous, and Moro women become aware of their rights under the CEDAW and working out initial steps on how to claim them.

## Specific initiatives

The seven southeast Asian countries under CEDAW SEAP have to selectively focus on the issues of women's participation in politics and governance, and domestic violence in their projects. But because of different social, economic, political and historical contexts in terms of CEDAW implementation, countries differ in their approaches.

Its four-year duration, as cited by the CEDAW SEAP evaluation report, was "divided into several stages with a clear and realistic focus."

For the first year, in 2005, efforts focused on raising awareness on CEDAW among policymakers, legislators, the judiciary, the academe, media, women in the grassroots, and the general public. In 2006, the focus was building the capability of both government agencies and NGOs in preparing the country report and the shadow report, respectively, to the CEDAW Committee. In 2007, the focus was on applying CEDAW and monitoring compliance to it.

Another initiative was the holding of a partners' forum involving all those participating in the programme. "I believe that whenever you are managing a big project such as the CEDAW SEAP, it is important that you consult with your partners at least once a year and report to each other the progress of your respective project components," Rodriguez says.

A UN Joint Programme was also established initially involving five UN agencies that pooled their funds to facilitate CEDAW implementation. More agencies are

joining in with parallel projects. It was meant to support government in fulfilling its obligation to CEDAW, the civil society groups in monitoring government action, and disadvantaged women claim their rights.

“One of the best parts of doing this job is steering resources to advance women’s rights. Approximately eighty per cent of CEDAW SEAP’s funds went to women’s NGOs and supported projects that targeted poor and marginalized women,” Rodriguez says.

CEDAW SEAP is ending by March 2009 but there are plans to have a phase two of the programme.

“Unlike the other countries, we did not really start from zero in our CEDAW implementation. We also have a sophisticated women’s movement that has been advocating for it for quite a while. But our advocacy has still not reached the level of local governments – the towns and villages – where ordinary women are. Patriarchal values are still very much a part of the thinking and attitude of many of us, a number of women included. Obligations to advance women’s rights are not yet prioritized. For these reasons, a phase two of CEDAW SEAP is very much welcome,” Rodriguez explains. ♦



## CEDAW SEAP Implementing Partners, 2005-2009

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[Al-Mujadilah Development Foundation \(AMDF\)](#) is named after “Al-Mujadilah,” a *Surah* (Chapter) in the Holy Qur’an (Surah 58) which is translated as “The Woman who Seeketh (Justice)”. It is a non-government organization of Muslim women which tackles the sensitive issues of gender and women’s rights within the context of Islam. AMDF is a Lanao-based women’s organization that works in the five provinces of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao. It also actively participates in various forums at different levels—provincial, in the whole of ARMM and national—on participatory governance, women’s rights, reproductive health and peace processes.

[Ateneo Human Rights Center \(AHRC\)](#) is focused “on the continuing formation of human rights lawyers and advocates, the monitoring of the human rights situation in the Philippines and abroad, research, education, publications, and legal assistance to victims of human rights abuses.” It conducts training and seminars for government and non-government organizations and grassroots communities, publishes human rights legal treatise, and renders legal assistance to indigent clients and grassroots communities. Its beneficiaries include urban poor communities, women, children, laborers, migrant workers, indigenous peoples, asylum seekers, students, NGOs, and the general public. Based at the Law School of the Ateneo de Manila University, the AHRC was established in 1986.

[CEDAW Watch Philippines](#) was established in 2006 as a multi-sectoral advocacy network of individuals and organizations that are committed to promote women’s human rights through the CEDAW Convention and its General Recommendations. The network advocates for the full integration of CEDAW Convention in the Philippine constitution, legislation and the judiciary. It works on the twin approaches of lobbying for state compliance and sustained public information campaign involving all sectors of civil society as well as communities and sectors. It supports other sectoral and sub-national women’s NGOs in their advocacy and monitoring work on CEDAW compliance by enhancing monitoring tools and systematizing resource-sharing among the CEDAW SEAP partners; strengthens networking and linkages between and among CEDAW Watch network and other institutions (regional, national, and local), and develops policy briefs for government planners and donors on integrating CEDAW in Philippine MDG reporting. It also supports and strengthens the capability programme of CEDAW Youth to enhance their advocacy campaign on CEDAW.

**The Communication Foundation for Asia (CFA)** is a pioneer in development communication. It was established in 1973 as a non-stock, non-profit organization, but its origins go way back to 1960, when the Social Communications Center was founded by the Dutch missionary, Fr. Cornelio Lagerwey, MSC. CFA has evolved into a multi-media center with almost 100 staff working on video documentaries and TV programmes, producing regular educational and religious publications for distribution to around 300,000 student subscribers nationwide; conducting training workshops on communication skills and media education, and organizing media events such as film festivals, peace communication camps, environmental forums and traveling photo exhibits. It was tapped to coordinate the Feminist Film Festival for the Centennial of the women's movement in the Philippines.

**EnGendeRights** was founded in December 2003 as an advocate for sexual and reproductive health and rights. It has engaged in training and advocacy for women's rights through domestic and international legal and policy advocacy, research, publication, training. It submitted shadow reports to and participated in the 36th session of CEDAW and in the 2008 Universal Periodic Review to the UN-Human Rights Council. EnGendeRights is a lead organization of "Task Force Inquiry Procedure on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) violations in the Philippines (Task Force Inquiry)". EnGendeRights is part of the Reproductive Health Advocacy Network (RHAN) – a network of 36 NGOs working for sexual and reproductive rights; and the Alternative Law Groups (ALG), a nation-wide coalition of nineteen (19) NGOs involved in developmental lawyering.

**Miriam College Women and Gender Institute (WAGI)** advocates for and provides gender-fair education by integrating issues of women's rights, gender equality & equity into academic and non-academic programmes, development programmes for faculty, students and staff and, school administration system. It also undertakes consultancy work, research and trainings on women's human rights and empowerment, and conducts activities on gender-fair education including professional and short courses that promote values and critical perspectives on good governance, democracy, and gender justice. It has a resource center that produces and collects women's studies feminist resources available for researchers, academe, and students.

**National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (NCRFW)** is the Philippine machinery for the advancement of women. It reviews, evaluates and recommends measures, including priorities to ensure the full integration of women for economic, social and cultural development at the national, regional and international levels, and to ensure the equality between women and men. It serves as an advisory body to the President on issues and concerns of women and is the lead advocate for women's empowerment and gender equality and a catalyst for gender mainstreaming. It was established in January 1975.

**Nisa Ul-Haqq fi Bangsamoro** or Nisa (Women for Truth in Bangsamoro) is a small group of Muslim women who are active in advocating for the rights of Muslim women, using Islam and gender as framework. Its members have established their track record as women leaders of their own non-government organizations and have recently formalized their working relationship with each other by the formation of Nisa. It conducts gender workshops with Muslim religious leaders and does research, with a current project focusing on early marriages among Muslim girls in the ARMM. It participated in the shadow reporting for the CEDAW Committee in 2006.

**Pambansang Koalisyon ng Kababaihan sa Kanayunan (PKKK)** or the National Coalition of Rural Women is a coalition of organizations and federations of associations of women peasant, fisherfolk, farm workers, and indigenous peoples; including rural women in the sectors of informal labor, elderly, youth, and persons with disabilities; and NGOs and individuals who work for the interest of the above sectors. It has been organizing a national rural women's congress since 2003 when it was founded until it grew to 50 provincial chapters around the Philippines. Its organizing and advocacy work is framed by Article 14 on Rural Women of the CEDAW as they push for the fulfillment of rural women's property rights and representation in agrarian reform, ancestral domains, coastal resources, access to safe and adequate food, potable water, and basic services, including reproductive health.

**PILIPINA** is a mass-based feminist organization which affirms the vision of a transformed society in which both women and men possess dignity, autonomy, and equality. It is working for women's full participation in public governance, with stress on public office and movements for social change. Founded in 1981, PILIPINA has become a national organization with ten provincial chapters. It has sought to raise the issues of gender in many ways such as through legislative and policy advocacy, coalition building, pioneering grassroots programmes and other projects that enable women to take hold of themselves and their lives.

**University of the Philippines Center for Women's Studies (UPCWS)** is a system-wide unit under the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs of the University of the Philippines that encourages and strengthens teaching, research, extension work and advocacy on and for women in the university. It coordinates the women and gender studies programmes and some service facilities of the nine campuses in Manila, Diliman, Baguio, Los Baños, the Visayas, Mindanao and the Open University.

The Center's five major programmes are research, publication, curriculum development, training and outreach and services that include crisis counseling and day care facility. Among its tasks as a system unit is the coordination of the collection of data from the campuses that are related to the implementation of the Anti-Sexual Harassment policy of the University, the efforts in engendering the curricula, and research on women and gender issues.

**Women's Feature Service (WFS)** began in 1978 as a UNESCO-UNFPA initiative for the UN Decade for Women to put women's perspective in mainstream media. Until 1991, it was a project of Inter Press Service (IPS) Third World News Agency. WFS became an independent news agency with headquarters in New Delhi, India, where news and features are edited for international release.

WFS Philippines started in 1987 as a Philippine Bureau and was registered as a non-stock non-profit corporation in 1992. It has a pool of writers nationwide. WFS covers development issues from the women's perspective and human rights framework. It is into multimedia advocacy campaigns, media events, publications, and media training with focus on women's rights.

**Women's Legal Bureau (WLB)** pioneered in feminist lawyering in the country when it was founded in 1990. It is a non-government organization composed mainly of women lawyers and para-legal staff. Its activities and projects include direct legal service to victim-survivors of gender-based discrimination and violence, policy advocacy and reform, and feminist legal research. WLB led the first Philippine shadow report to CEDAW undertaken with the SIBOL Network (a national coalition of 9 women's groups and organizations) in 1997 and in the comprehensive shadow report submitted in 2006 involving 95 women's NGOs all over the Philippines.

# Country Consultative Committee CEDAW SEAP - Philippines

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The Country Consultative Committee is an advisory body composed of representatives of key programme stakeholders in the country. It guides the Programme Manager, the National Coordinator and implementing agencies on programme framework, strategies and implementation at the country level. It provides comments on the annual country plans and results and assists in scanning the external environment, including major stakeholders, for emerging issues and trends that need to be considered by the programme. It advises on alternative responses and suggests on strengthening linkages among country programme components being implemented by diverse partners. It assists in drawing out the lessons learned, and identify priority areas for future programming related to CEDAW and women's human rights. The members are:

1. **Rosario G. Manalo**  
Immediate Past Chair of UN CEDAW  
Chairperson, CCC for CEDAW SEAP
2. **Mary Grace C. Agcaoili**  
Local Policy and Institution Development Specialist, UNICEF  
Member, UN Gender Mainstreaming Committee
3. **Erlinda (Lyn) Capones**  
Director, Social Development Staff-National Economic Development Authority
4. **Rina Jimenez-David**  
Columnist, Philippine Daily Inquirer  
President, Abanse! Pinay & PILIPINA
5. **Aurora Javate de Dios**  
Executive Director, Women and Gender Institute (WAGI) Miriam College
6. **Raissa H. Jajurie**  
Mindanao Branch Coordinator, Alternative Law Groups Network
7. **Myrna Jarillas**  
Senior Program Officer, Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)
8. **Emmeline Verzosa**  
Executive Director, National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women

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**The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. CEDAW.** Talk about putting life to a treaty on women's human rights that was obscured for more than two decades, and just now catching up with the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Development Goals. And this is what this book "Going CEDAW in the Philippines" is about.

With support from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), it documents the UNIFEM CEDAW South East Asia Programme in the Philippines, involving partners in government, academe and women's NGOs. Spanning pioneering work from 2005-2008, this book is divided into three sections:

- 1. Going CEDAW in government:** how the executive, legislative and the judiciary and their NGO counterparts built government capacity to fulfill its obligations under CEDAW.
- 2. Organized women go CEDAW:** how women's NGOs played their roles in monitoring, shadow reporting, making an unprecedented claim for justice under the Optional Protocol to CEDAW, and exploring CEDAW application to Filipino Muslim women.
- 3. Educating and Partnering for CEDAW:** tracing the beginnings of awareness-building and a tenacious campaign to influence culture through various methods involving partners from all sectors including the UN agencies in the Philippines.

