



PHILIPPINES

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

STATEMENT

delivered by

Hon. CORAZON JULIANO-SOLIMAN

Secretary of Social Welfare and Development

on the occasion of the

56th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women

27 February – 9 March 2012

Madam Chairperson, distinguished delegates,

The Philippine delegation appreciates the attention the Commission is giving to the advancement of rural women and in highlighting their role in poverty and hunger eradication.

Rural women play an important role in my country since they are largely involved in agriculture, fisheries and forestry, the engines of economic growth. This notwithstanding, their economic and political participation often remains limited to socially ascribed gender roles and responsibilities. Of the 10.4 million women in rural poor households, around 4.9 million have no access to electricity. In these areas, 7.9 million do not have access to health facilities and 1.4 million have not completed elementary school. In 2011, only 6.7 million rural women were gainfully employed. Most occupy a weaker position than men with less control over property and resources, lower pay for the same work, higher concentration in the informal economy and vulnerable forms of employment. They are exposed to gender-based violence, face unsafe working conditions, especially in the case of rural migrant women, and are most affected in times of disasters and armed conflict.

Against this backdrop, the Philippine government has put into place a number of legislative and executive policies and programs to address poverty and achieve inclusive growth. It has enacted, among others, the Magna Carta of Women (MCW), our gender equality law patterned after CEDAW, which guarantees social, economic, civil and political rights of women and the Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act, which ensures efficient mobilization of resources and a more comprehensive, integrated, gender-responsive and proactive response in lessening the socio-economic and environmental impacts of disasters and climate change.

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To synergize the programs and initiatives of various agencies, maximize resources and provide more timely, effective and efficient delivery of services, the Philippine government has adopted the "Convergence Approach." The National Household Targeting System for Poverty Reduction (NHTS-PR), for example, identifies the most marginalized in society. In agriculture, the Registry System for Basic Sectors in Agriculture and Related Industries (RSBA) has been set up to provide data support for agricultural services. Women farmers and fishers from various rural-based organizations identified in the system have availed of training on technologies, access to farm inputs, soft loans, credit and markets.

The Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) Program [or *Pantawid Pamilya Pilipino*] provides social protection for extremely poor families. In 2011, the program covered 2.3 million households, 82% of which are in rural areas. Women who receive and manage the conditional cash grants are required to undergo health check-ups, to keep their children in school, and to attend family development sessions, which include gender sensitivity trainings and reproductive health education, among others. Another example of convergence among economic agencies at the national and local levels is the Gender-Responsive Economic Actions for the Transformation of Women or the GREAT Women Project. The positive results include participation of women micro-entrepreneurs in gender-responsive governance, simplified and streamlined business permit systems, product development and occupational safety, technology transfers, socialized fees and taxes, provision of social protection, and development of sustainable social enterprises.

In the area of international cooperation, the government has systematized the tracking of Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) resources for gender equality using the Harmonized Gender and Development (GAD) Guidelines, a tool developed by the ODA-GAD Network to assess the gender responsiveness of programs and projects in various stages of the project cycle.

While a number of initiatives have been undertaken for the empowerment of rural women, much remains to be done, particularly in the institutionalization of such policies and programs at the local community level. Nevertheless, we remain optimistic. We will continue to open spaces for women's effective participation in basic sector councils, in interagency policy- and decision-making mechanisms, and in local poverty reduction planning and budgeting processes. We are committed to providing more equitable asset reform, access to social services and employment, and the means to grow viable eco-friendly enterprises for rural women despite the threats of climate change and disasters.

Madame Chair, it is time that we listen to rural women who, with their wisdom, knowledge, practices and generations of experience have much to contribute to poverty and hunger eradication, sustainable development, and lasting peace.

Thank you.