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Although women are mostly at the receiving end of the negative impacts of neoliberal globalization and war, the reality is that they also go through various cycles of coping with, adapting to, and resisting the onslaught of the multiple crises.

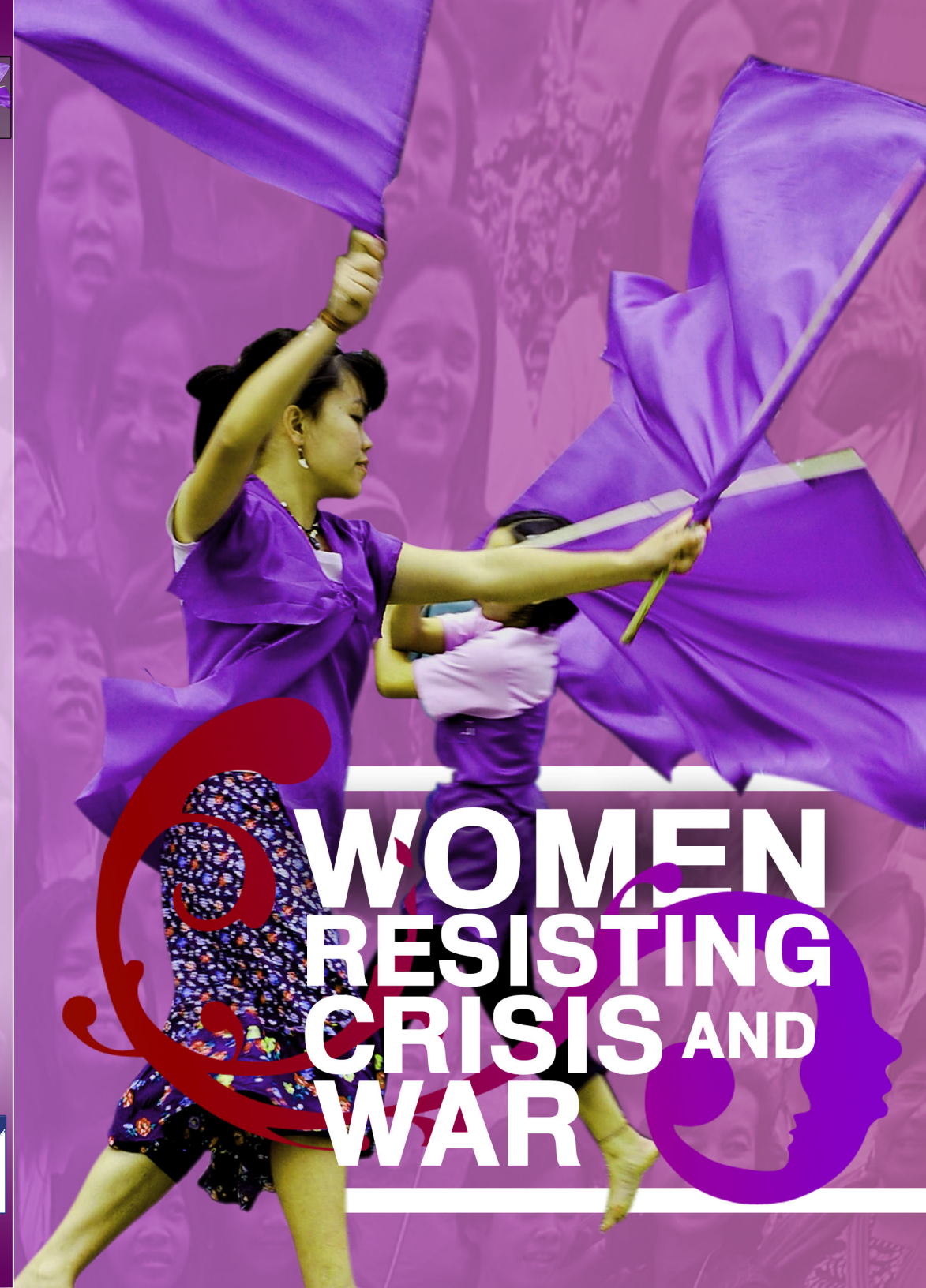


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 Asia-Pacific Research Network



WOMEN RESISTING CRISIS AND WAR





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WAR**



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Comments and inquiries may be forwarded to:



ASIA PACIFIC RESEARCH NETWORK  
Secretariat

3<sup>rd</sup> floor, IBON Center, 114 Timog Avenue  
Quezon City, Philippines 1103  
Tels. (632) 9277060 to 62  
Fax: (632) 9276981

Email: <secretariat@aprnet.org>  
Website: [www.aprnet.org](http://www.aprnet.org)

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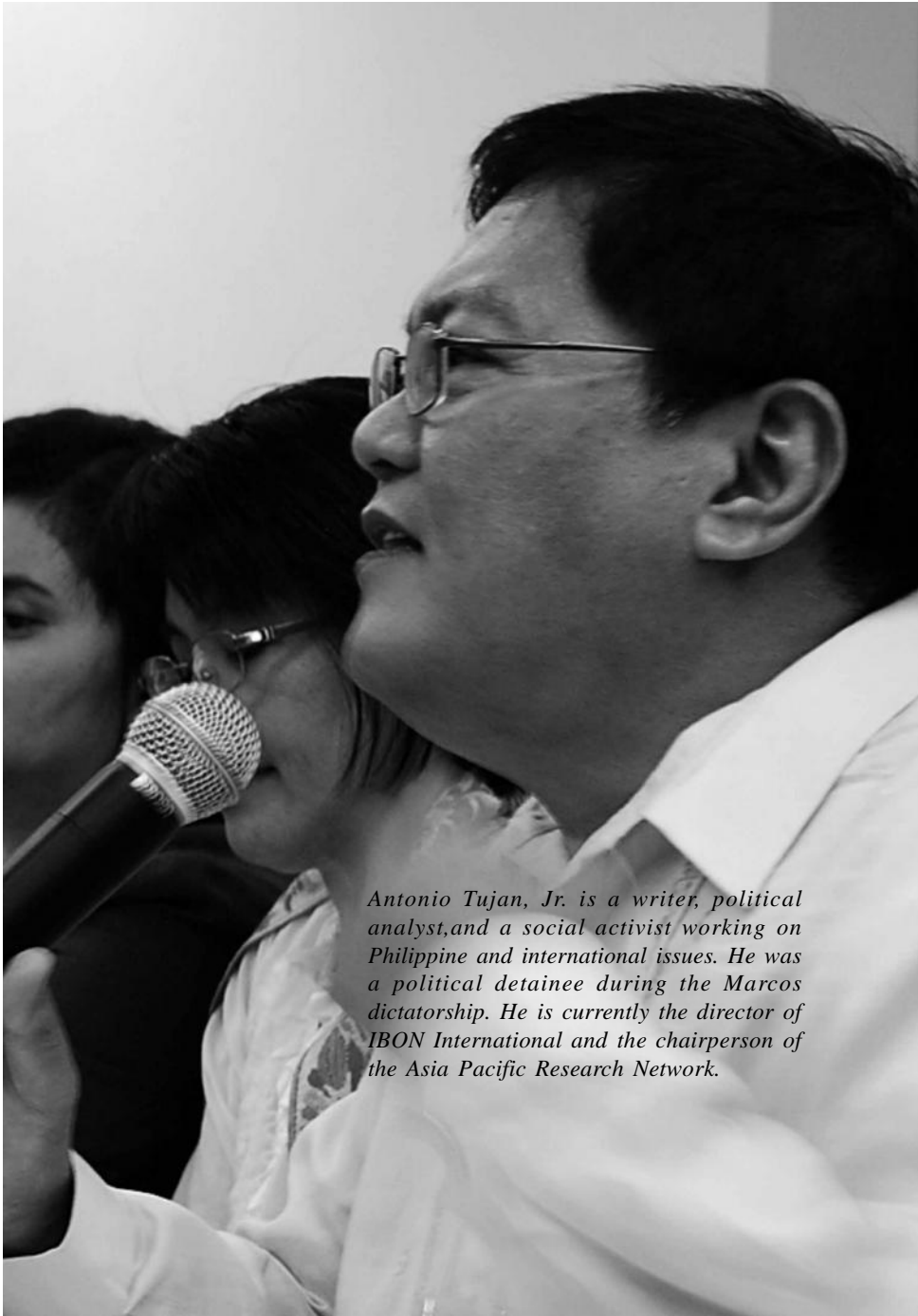
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# INTRODUCTION



*Antonio Tujan, Jr. is a writer, political analyst, and a social activist working on Philippine and international issues. He was a political detainee during the Marcos dictatorship. He is currently the director of IBON International and the chairperson of the Asia Pacific Research Network.*

## Introduction

Antonio Tujan Jr.

The research theme women oppression and empowerment has an important place in the 14 years of collaborative work by members of the Asia Pacific Research Network. Among these were the coordinated research on globalization and women labor that explored the combination of gender and class oppression and exploitation as it is intensified in neoliberal forms of policy and practice in booming Asia and the issue of women in situations of war.

Late into the first decade of the twenty-first century, multiple crises and wars have become the defining phenomena not only for Asia but for the world as well. In the current context of a deep, lingering global crisis, Asia stands out as an exceptional self-contradiction – a high growth region in a world of recession and anemic recovery but also a region with severe poverty and where more than half the world's poor continue to persist. And to top it all, Asia is where most of the wars of the past decades and up to the present are located.

Economic crisis and wars provide the conditions for women to suffer more extreme forms of gender discrimination ending up more abused, exploited, repressed, victimized than they normally already are. The combination of class and gender oppression result in greater exploitation for women toiling masses – women workers who are made ineligible for equal wages because they supposedly work less, of low quality or only a second breadwinner or rural women who lack entitlement in the feudal order. Women are most affected by the crisis as it destroys the sources of livelihood of communities and results in lower or loss of incomes for many, especially the poor. Thanks to systematic age-old gender discrimination, women suffer from joblessness or make do with lower paying, low quality jobs lacking in security, and as a result women then suffer the brunt of crisis - lay-offs, loss of benefits, loss of social services and so on.

Not only do women comprise a disproportionately large share of the poor in countries all over the world who are more vulnerable to economic crisis, they are also more vulnerable to the myriad disasters and other effects of climate crisis – hurricanes, floods, drought, landslides, pestilence and the like.

The women's role in reproduction also means that in these situations of economic and physical dislocation, women face even more difficult circumstances to fulfill their responsibility of foraging for food and water and other needs of survival.

With shrinking means of subsistence and material returns from livelihood, women's displacement has included physical dislocation ranging from rural-to-rural, rural-to-urban and forced migration. This physical dislocation hides within yet many other contours of dispossession, emotional distress, physical and sexual abuse, and violence. There has also been particular erosion of women's intangible spaces such as the solidarity and community support, leaving the basic survival weave of women's lives being torn apart under the push of individualistic value systems generated by market-based consumption patterns and policies.

Wars should not be simply approached in their impact to peoples and their communities as passive victims caught in the crossfire. Wars are often the act of elites in the extreme political framework of physical elimination where the people are the principal victims. Rather, the people are also subjects in asserting their interests, whether in wars of liberation or armed resistance or in peaceful resistance to oppression and to war itself. In Asia, most of the wars are being fought as imperialist aggression mostly by the United States such as the wars in Iraq the Korean peninsula, Pakistan and Afghanistan. Armed conflict continues to rage in resistance to oppressive states such as in India, Burma, Nepal, the Philippines and so on.

As in economic and social crises, wars severely impact women because of the multiple vulnerabilities created by gender discrimination – the miserable conditions that displacement due to militarization and war inflict on women and children especially girls, war abuse of women and children including such abominations as systematic rape as acts of war and suppression.

Women's empowerment is probably a more fundamental responsibility as a continuation of the effort to achieve gender equality as an approach to achieving equal rights, because one cannot achieve gender equality without the empowerment of those who are marginalized, those who are oppressed. We know that women empowerment is about self-organization, women's affirmative action. The fact that it's not simply about effacing inequality, that one has to be pro-woman. If one is truly for equality, one has to be feminist.

## From Survival to Resistance

Just as economic crises and war present situations that result in extreme oppression, abuse and exploitation of women, they also provide situation that challenge the agenda for women's equality and empowerment just as extremely. In a proactive approach for women empowerment, the issue of crisis and war is better addressed in the spirit of survival and resistance, and not just the spirit of resistance, but in the framework of resistance.

This was the conclusion at the APRN Bali conference, on the occasion of the Annual General Meeting of the Asian Development Bank where the women concluded in their workshop on the economic crisis, that we must resist the crisis. In the plenary report a question was raised regarding the appropriateness of the call of resistance when crisis is an objective reality. They explained that the crisis is the result of the totality of oppression and exploitation of imperialism against the people, which in the end the women suffer. The people must respond by resisting the crisis and the efforts by imperialism to pass on the burden of the crisis and intensify its effects on the people, especially the women.

Although women have mostly been at the receiving end of the negative impacts of neoliberal globalization and war, the reality is that women have faced these challenges in active survival - through time have been going through various cycles of coping and adapting to the onslaught of the multiple crises. They have used the largely exploitative spaces opening up for them to find means of survival and support for themselves and their families. They have reached out to embrace new means of livelihood and formed new bonds to evade, as well as to confront patriarchal norms. Ranging from the precarious livelihood mechanisms to migrant domestic labor in urban and international settings; women have used their existing skills to survive in new spaces, at the same time learning new skills despite many being alien and difficult to overcome given the limitations in education available to women.

Women have utilized various mechanisms for taking control over their lives, ranging from simple coping mechanisms – such as finding new spaces for social and economic survival- to true liberation. Some have been carried out as lone individual survival mechanisms, others as community organizations and even more so as political organizations joining hands with other progressive forces. Women's organized resistance has ranged from peace-building efforts

to civil disobedience to joining hands with organized armed resistance. Similarly, we know that most wars are supreme acts of oppression and exploitation by the elite, and thus these should also be resisted not simply as advocates for peace but genuinely ending war through popular resistance against the source of war.

This conference on **‘Women Resisting Crisis and War’** focuses on the impacts and women’s responses to the economic and climate crises and war and will investigate on the following areas of study:

- (a) What are the specific dislocations, i.e. social, physical, emotional, cultural, psychological suffered by women due to economic and ecological disasters?
- (b) What are the specific manifestations of the war on women?
- (c) What are the specific survival mechanisms used by women against the crisis and war? Survival mechanisms refer to both (technology, unions, collectives, spontaneous organized action).
- (d) What are the effective forms of resistance?

Through this conference we hope to provide scholarly and activist space:

- (a) for understanding the synergistic impacts of war, climate change and neoliberal policies which have been forced on women through the unity of global dominant forces as well as the elite at the national and local levels;
- (b) to deliberate and learn the various forms of resistances that women’s individual and collective efforts movement has put forward to address the neoliberal and militaristic agenda of these dominant global forces; and
- (c) to learn and develop new learning and strategies for resisting and overcoming neoliberal and neo-colonial militaristic onslaught which are being forced on women and people to further control our lands and resources.

Women have an exalted history of resistance to crisis and war and we hope that this conference will be able to celebrate that, to be able to bring it out, so that we can further advance it.



*Participants engaged in different activities during the conference: plenary discussions, cultural activity, solidarity night, press conference and exposure trip to a community in Itogon which is negatively impacted by large-scale mining operations.*





## Women Resisting Crisis and War

The APRN Biennial Conference 2010  
Summary and Highlights

To commemorate the centenary of the International Toiling Women's Day, the Asia Pacific Research Network (APRN) initiated the "**Women Resisting Crisis and War**: a conference on the impacts and women's responses to the economic and climate crisis and war", a three-day conference held on July 19-21, 2010 in Baguio City, Philippines. The conference, co-organized with GABRIELA, the Asian Rural Women's Coalition (ARWC), the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD) in partnership with Innabuyog, the Primates World Relief and Development Fund (PWRDF), Karibu Foundation, Global Fund for Women and Plan, provided space to civil society organizations, including grassroots movements, the academe, and other stakeholders to understand the synergistic impacts of war, climate change and neoliberal policies which have been forced on women, to deliberate and learn the various forms of resistances that women's individual and collective efforts have put forward, and to learn and develop new learning and strategies for resisting and overcoming neoliberal and neo-colonial militaristic onslaught. Although a majority of participants were women from the Asia Pacific region and from other global regions, the conference also drew in the widest participation from men who recognize the cause for women's rights and equality and liberation. The conference had plenary sessions, panel discussions, simultaneous workshops, as well as spaces for creative presentations.

The event opened with welcome and opening remarks from Mr. Antonio Tujan Jr., the International Director of IBON International and Chairperson of the Asia Pacific Research Network. The first keynote speech was given by Ms. Liza Maza of GABRIELA who discussed the overview of the current crisis and its impacts on women. The discussion then proceeded with a presentation regarding imperialism as war presented by Professor Shoma Sen of the Committee Against Violence on Women in India. Ms. Herminia De Deus, of the East Timor Development Agency, also spoke of her personal account and experiences of resistance in Timor Leste.

The first day of the conference consisted of panel discussions on the impacts of the economic and climate crises on women, and how women survive and resist the crises. Workshops for Day 1 focused on the theme: *Surviving the Crisis* and had presentations on surviving climate disasters, hunger, and development aggression. The second day's panel discussions focused on the impacts of war and how women resist war. Workshops for Day 2 revolved around the *Impacts and Resistance to War and Militarism*, and had presentations on: (a) the impacts of war and militarism, (b) community resistance to war's displacement; and (c) popular resistance to war and militarism. On Day 3, a workshop and a panel discussion on the strategies for effective campaign and advocacy work, and the challenges for organized women's resistance respectively were held. There was a Speak Out, as well as deliberations and approval of the conference declaration.

### Conference Highlights

#### *The Impacts of the Economic and Climate Crises*

Starting from a girl's perspective, Janice Tapil of the Visayas Coalition of Children's Association in the Philippines shared some stories and experiences of girl children who were forced to work and who ended up as victims of child trafficking in the midst of the worsening economic crisis. The four stories she imparted showed how girl children cope with the effects of the economic crisis.

Ms. Ngo Phuong, the Director of Sustainable Community Development (SCODE) in Vietnam gave broad strokes of Vietnam's situation and experience in relation to the severe economic and social problems resulting from the 2007-2008 global financial imbalances. In her sharing, Ms. Phuong focused on the gender dimensions of the global economic crisis in Vietnam by discussing how women are affected by the crisis and why the crisis affects the employment of people and their incomes.

A paper prepared by Ms. Eni Lestari, Chairperson of International Migrants Alliance, was presented by Ms. Pamela Pangilinan highlighting the impacts of the economic crisis on women migrants. Women migrants comprise almost half, or 49%, of the total number of migrants in the world. They work mainly in labor-intensive industries or in the service sector as domestic workers, caregivers, nurses, waitresses or entertainers. Hundreds of thousands of women also become migrants by way of marriage such as in

Taiwan, South Korea, Japan, USA, Canada, and in a number of countries in Europe. The massive migration of women resulted in the worsening exploitation of women in their home countries. Women, especially of worker and peasant origin, are continuously displaced from their jobs and their lands and are forced to seek employment abroad regardless of the type of job available, and how indebted they can become in the process of migration and however vulnerable they are to different abuses.

On a more personal note, Ms. Lyn Nieves Mendrez of AMIHAN talked about the impacts of climate change on the women peasants in the Philippines. According to her, the vast and abrupt changes in climate results in the further impoverishment of the Filipino farmers. The particular calendar of planting-and-harvesting that the farmers used to practice has not been followed because of the random and drastic changes in the succession of climate conditions. When seedlings do not grow because of an unpredicted drought, women farmers resort to alternative means of livelihood (i.e. working as housemaids, doing laundry, etc.).

Still on the issue of climate change, Dr. Meeta Singh of the Centre for Community Economics and Development Consultation Society (CECOEDECON) presented the situation in Rajasthan, India. Ms. Singh highlighted the fact that the burden of climate change falls disproportionately on the poor, especially the rural women. Climate change has impacted food and livelihood security, led to greater labor inputs and lower wages, greater indebtedness and increased migration.

Ms. Ariel Salleh of Aid Watch in Australia presented a paper which pinned down the notion that global warming causes, effects, and solutions are "sex/gendered." According to her, in building a path to the commons, it is important to keep in mind that preconscious gender assumptions will affect how the movement for "another globalization" theories itself and what strategies it chooses for getting beyond modernization.

The impact of the economic and climate crises was summarized in the paper presented by Ms. Rhea Veda delos Santos-Padilla of IBON Foundation. She discussed the general overview of the causes and effects of both the economic and climate crisis. The paper also enumerated several impacts of the crises such as greater unemployment, poorer quality work and lower earnings, loss of already grossly inadequate public health, education and housing services, and steeply increased poverty. In underdeveloped countries, around

60-80% of the population are generally engaged in small-scale agriculture and live in rural areas where a natural resource economy is dominant. High percentages of coastal populations and forest people live in such countries. Of the 15 million people working in coastal areas, 90% are small-scale fishers. Ninety percent of the world's 1.1 billion poor derive a portion of their income from forests, while over 600 million keep livestock, a critical cash asset for many.

To strengthen the claims, the paper cited particular case samples of displacement from Ethiopia, Kenya, and Bangladesh.



### *Survival and Resisting the Crisis*

Ms. Nere Guerrero of SAMAKANA began her sharing for Panel 2 by stating her personal experiences. She referred to the typhoon Ondoy (international code name Ketsana) which ravaged the Philippines in September 2009 as an example. As a result of the typhoon, families were taken to evacuation centers where social services were scarce and from which their sources of livelihood were far. One great challenge faced by women is displacement. Amidst disasters, progressive groups like GABRIELA and SAMAKANA provided services needed by women and children victims of the typhoon. As a result, women were somehow empowered not just by helping themselves but by

helping others as well. They were involved in educating people regarding disaster preparedness in the community.

Ms. Appakutti Magimai of Tamil Nadu Dalit Women's Movement shared a very moving story about her personal experience in surviving and resisting the crisis. Despite oppression and exploitation, Dalit women like her transform their initial nervousness and fear into bravery. According to her, their political commitment towards attaining a society free from oppression is strengthened further by the very violence they go through. These experiences prove why Dalit women strive harder and continue the struggle towards social justice.

Bringing the Indonesian context in, Ms. Puspa Dewy of Solidaritas Perempuan supplied a synopsis of the impacts of the ecological crisis in Indonesia and what the coping and survival mechanisms of women are. The wrong model of development which is premised on the exploitation of natural resources and labor, foreign investment and foreign debt are the major causes of ecological demise. These ecological problems inevitably resulted to gender injustices of which women are greatly affected. Women use different mechanisms to survive the crises. Puspa Dewy stated that women resistance starts from individual consciousness – which in turn should and would transform into a consciousness of collective resistance.

A paper on the impact of global economic shocks on girls and young women by Sarah Hendricks was discussed by Ms. Lydia Domingo of Plan International. Adolescent girls are increasingly vulnerable to trafficking, domestic violence and sexual exploitation within the context of economic shocks. Evidence from the Asian financial crisis in 1997 showed that many young women were forced into the sex trade –as sex workers, escorts and karaoke singers – after they lost their jobs. In Jakarta (Indonesia) alone it is estimated that two to four times more women became sex workers in the year immediately after the crisis. Sexual exploitation in the workplace also is likely to increase. The presentation provided the backdrop of Plan's "Because I am a girl" campaign as a campaign of investing in girls' economic empowerment which should be at the heart of poverty reduction agenda and efforts to restore global economic stability.

Ms. Mary Joan Guan of the Center for Women's Resources (CWR) presented a paper entitled "Women in Asia: Surviving and Resisting the Crisis." Women in the Asian region faced numerous challenges during the past couple

of years. Disaster after disaster caused by climate change attacked the region that made women and children more vulnerable. On top of all these, political repression and gender discrimination victimized hundreds of militant and activist women in the region. Yet, women persist.

Women in the region, particularly in Southeast Asia, have common response mechanisms to the crisis. Women reduce their own and their family's consumption on food, reduce the number of meals and buy non-nutritious food. They also resort to borrowing from loan sharks. Many of them have multiple jobs or have been confined to informal employment. Some of the mechanisms opted by women are, in the long run, detrimental rather than beneficial to them (i.e. drug dealing and prostitution). On the other hand, constructive strategies have also been worked out by women (i.e. maximization of the spirit of sharing and collectivism.) Through mobilizing, women show their collective power to make clear demands, strategizing each move. They have taken different strategies, from simple to sophisticated approaches in redressing their grievances.

#### *Impacts of War on Women*

The discussion on the impacts of war on women began with a paper presented by Ms. Suria Rajini Poguri, executive director of SAHANIVASA, on behalf of Ms. Azra Talat Sayeed of Roots for Equity. The speech says that by no means have women remained only victims of imperialist violence. From the time of colonization to neo-colonization, women have been part of the front lines, resisting brutalities. In the era of globalization, imperialist forces have resorted to many new methods and devices of violence. The free market has pushed women into extreme degrading poverty, forcing them to scavenge a livelihood based on hunger wages, unable to provide a life of dignity for themselves, their children or their communities. In short, the omnipotent presence of market-military imperialist forces has unleashed vicious forces, leading to many new forms of violence against women. The speech ended with a call to action: women need to strengthen their efforts to oppose market-military imperialism to achieve just and lasting peace.

Ms. Logeswary Ponniah, program coordinator of Human Development Organization (HDO) in Sri Lanka, talked about the situation of the workers in their country, particularly those working in the tea plantations. The people in Sri Lanka are fighting for a higher wage and demanding the government to provide

the people, especially the workers, a better life. However, in spite of these pleas and demands, the parliament remains not concerned about the people and women's rights despite the fact that women workers in Sri Lanka contribute much to the economy.

Ms. Grace Shatsang of the Naga Women's Union in India shared a historical account of the Nagaland's experience of war. Discrimination and violence in Nagaland is unbridled, beginning with the resistance against the British occupation. The struggle continues to date at the indigenous people of Naga are fighting against discrimination and oppression in India. As response to war's impacts, women started to take arms and got more attached to their movement.

Ms. Hanaa Edwar of the Iraqi Al-Amal Association spoke about the experiences of Iraqi women in times of wars. According to her, Iraqi women have been victims of armed conflicts. People were forcibly detained in the Iranian border in the reign of Hussein. Hussein's war against the Kurdish people resulted to the imprisonment, deportation and detention of the latter. Since 2003, women have been increasingly caught in the crossfire, and vulnerable to different forms of sexual assault. And with the absence of security and weak build up of the new security apparatus, the clans and tribes had been used by the Americans and the national government to fight Al-Qaeda and the terrorist groups. In addition to the wave of Islamist fundamentalism in the region, all of these forces have impacted negatively on women: the wars resulted to mass evacuation and immigration, early marriages of women, and the miseducation of women in Iraq. There are also other indirect effects of war on women: increasing domestic violence, environmental pollution, and so on.

Deriving from the Philippine experiences on wars, Ms. Mary Joan Guan of the Center for Women's Resources presented a paper entitled '*As War and Militarism Escalate: The Long Road to Women's Empowerment.*' The paper asserts that the war in the region is an imperialist US-led war of which the Philippines is considered the first front in Asia. The past nine years saw the worsening of gender violence. Military operations cause displacement, sexual abuses, disruption of domestic tasks and livelihood, mental and emotional trauma among women, generates widows and orphans, desecrated, continuous denial of their rights, and military prostitution. Over 873,482 people have been forced to flee their homes. As internally displaced persons, women and children are extremely vulnerable to sexual violence and harassment. There have been 270 women harassed and intimidated and at least 31 women recorded raped and sexually exploited by government soldiers.

As part of war strategy, the military uses rape and sexual assault to destroy the disposition of women activists or in some cases, “dishonor” men of the enemy group.

#### *Women Resisting War*

Professor Judy Taguiwalo introduced her speech by showing an audio-visual presentation entitled “*Ang Babae sa Panabon ng Ligalig*”. She stressed that women’s vulnerability to violence is not a new phenomenon, but rather a salient feature under the regime of neoliberal globalization, the US-led “war on terror” and the general climate of impunity under authoritarian governments, and that the violence perpetrated against women has intensified and has taken on new forms. Professor Taguiwalo emphasized that resistance cannot but be a collective undertaking because the roots of oppression, the roots of war and the roots of violence that the people experience are systemic and structural. Hence, these have to be confronted in a systemic and organized manner. Individual acts of oppositions are indicative of the possibility of ending victimization and of taking action to change an oppressive situation. Resistance, she highlighted means a collective undertaking to oppose inequality and oppression and to bring about changes in the power relations between the oppressed and the oppressor.



The continuing struggle for human rights and self determination of the Moro women under US and Philippine militarism was discussed by Ms. Amirah Lidasan of Suara Bangsa Moro. The presence of US troops in Mindanao has aggravated the deplorable situation of the Moro people, with Moro women suffering the most. State oppression and discrimination against the Moro people was made worse with the US and Philippine government tagging Muslim communities in Mindanao as havens of terrorists such as the Abu Sayyaf group.

As the government heightens its oppressive and discriminatory policies against the Bangsamoro people, more and more Moro women come marching forward. Moro women are encouraged to lead organizations, both strictly women and mixed sex organizations. The Moro women’s fight for emancipation against the oppression and tyranny is part and parcel of the Moro people’s struggle for the right to self-determination.

Ms. Debayani Bose of the Institute for Motivating Self Employment (IMSE) in India imparted a paper on women peasants fighting for their land rights. According to a report published by IMSE, 367 women were sexually harassed and 174 villagers were killed during the eleven months of long conflict at Nandigram. Women who were molested and raped in the Nandigram carnage bear testimony to the brutality that was inflicted upon them by the Communist regime in West Bengal. The psychological and physical scars left behind on women have destroyed the social fabric of Nandigram paralyzing many households run by the womenfolk. Their subjugation not only signified their indignation but also the loss of vital workforce in rural households which is mainly run by the women. In this context, the problem of women resisting war and militarization becomes all the more pertinent requiring global actors to voice their opinion against this human carnage.

#### *Challenges for Organized Women’s Resistance*

An overview of the current strategies in facing the challenges of the organized women’s resistance was provided by Ms. Vernie Yocogan-Diano of Innabuyog. Various experiences as women organizations of peasants, workers, urban poor, fisherfolks, indigenous peoples, Dalits, migrants, professionals, and support institutions or networks to women’s organizations and movements, show that through history, women contributed in resisting economic and political-military aggression in various forms and levels. In the Philippines, a decade of arousing, organizing and mobilizing women is a proven effective

strategy in building strong women and peoples' resistance and movements. Collectivism is realized in an organization. Building women's organizations is a basic strategy for movement building. It is through organizations that women's confidence and courage are developed. Establishing linkage or networks with other women and people's organizations is equally an important strategy in building the strength of women. It is through linkages and network-building that solidarity among women's organizations is established, and experiences and resources are shared. This can be done at the local, national and international levels. In the Asia-Pacific region, women's organizations were able to consolidate their actions through networks which they themselves have formed.



Ms. Burnad Fathima Natesan, founder of the Society for Rural Education (SRED) in India, shared the challenges met by organized women in India. According to her, women are powerless in India. As a matter of fact, no women- particularly the Dalits- are allowed to have resources in their hands. Despite these misfortunes, women in India continuously believe in political activism. Women join election to challenge inequality and patriarchy.

The continuing challenge according to Ms. Lana Linaban, Secretary General of GABRIELA is for organized women to increase their ranks. There is an increasing number of women needed to be organized as a result of the global crisis. Primarily, women of the toiling classes must be organized in their communities and their workplaces and be united in the common cause to fight for their immediate interests. Their particular struggles must be raised to and linked with political issues and state policies that cause these problems.

Ms. Nita Gonzaga of the Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU) spelled out several challenges brought about by the global economic crisis on the Filipino women workers. There have been massive retrenchment, intensified flexible labor schemes and cuts on wages and benefits, and restriction of union activities and union-busting. Aside from those, workers also endure violence such as dispersals of protest actions, threats and harassments, fabricated murder charges and even extra-judicial killings. Despite these, women continue to struggle and stay firm.

Representative Luz Ilagan of GABRIELA Women's Party delivered a speech regarding the challenges to women parliamentarians. Just as women are being attacked in different fronts, women are also fighting on various planes and venues, from forming themselves into clubs, organizations or cooperatives to becoming active members of armed revolutionary groups. More and more women see the need to take part in collective action, to be heard in governance and to participate in legislation and policy making. According to her, progressive parliamentarians, like those of GABRIELA Women's Party, have been working in two arenas, namely inside and outside the halls of Congress. The tasks at hand and the challenges are numerous, varied and urgent. Parliamentarians and leaders of grassroots organizations must remain steadfast and relentless, united and strong to face these attacks.

### Summaries of the Workshops

Thematic workshops were held every day. The analyses presented during the panel discussions and plenary inputs were further substantiated during the workshops as participants shared perspectives and experiences in their own countries and communities. The sharing enhanced the discussions and enabled the participants to draw ideas for specific actions, unified campaigns and overarching lens or framework to be utilized in studying and understanding the problems at hand.

## *Surviving the Crisis*

### a. Surviving Climate Disasters

The workshop with the theme surviving climate disasters was facilitated by Ms. Glenis Balangue of IBON Foundation. The group had a conceptual clarification on the notions of adaptation and survival. The conference was conceived with the concept of survival (on a very individualized level) as the very first line of resistance. The fact that women are still here means women managed to adapt, to cope – which may already be considered an individual act of resistance. However, in this conference, there is a need to raise discussions from individual acts – and into organized resistance.



Glenis Balangue

The group enumerated specific impacts of climate change/disasters, as well as various coping mechanisms.

#### Impact of Climate Change/Disasters

- Impact on water supply – for safe, sufficient, potable drinking water; irrigation, health and sanitation.
- Displacement of indigenous peoples.
- Impact on agricultural production (declining productivity and quality of crops, fishkill, extinction of seed/herb varieties, cattle and livestock affected) resulting to food insecurity.

- Flash floods – destruction of lives and property with deforestation caused by illegal logging
- Increasing Rural-urban migration phenomenon (with another set of problems such as low wages, etc.).
- Health mobility among women (lesser income, lesser food intake, life-long ill health).
- Girls dropping out of schools with mothers going to work.
- Desertification because of mining activities and tourism promotion using excessive water (rivers, wells, ground water) – results to water shortages.
- High carbon footprint lifestyle (modern gadgets, modern technology, mega-infrastructure projects) especially affecting indigenous peoples.

#### Coping Mechanisms

- Rural-urban migration.
- Going back to traditional farming, lifestyles.
- Through organizations, engage (dialogue, actions) with government: emergency assistance during disasters, seeds.
- Women's collectives have a large role to play – grain banks, fodder banks, seed banks.
- Formation of self-help group – community saving .
- Raising awareness in the community.
- Revival of mangroves done by fisherfolks – civil society action.
- Come up with a new agricultural calendar.
- Establish cooperatives – for disaster preparedness (initiative that did not come from the state).
- Develop strong movements against mining companies, movements to protect rivers, etc. to pressure governments to change laws, do pro-active actions.
- School-based campaigns to regenerate mangroves, foster environmental awareness, etc.
- Water systems run by women –e.g. set up rain catchers, do organic farming.

- Training on basic health skills, income generating projects
- Advocacy work at local, national and international levels – Peoples’ Protocol on Climate Change.
- Policy advocacy – CSO working group on climate change and development – engaging government on Climate Change Act; Creation of Multi-stakeholder advisory committee – recommend additional legislation, policies in addition to climate change ordinance; formulate school curriculum.

Since poor people have a low carbon imprint while the corporations’ carbon imprint is high, the group called for the conference to bring out statement ‘climate justice for people of the South’. The workshop group also planned a common campaign.



#### b. Surviving Hunger

The workshop on surviving hunger was facilitated by Ms. Joan Salvador of Gabriela Philippines. The group was comprised of different individuals from six countries: Sri Lanka, Pakistan, India, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Philippines. The group described the context and nature of hunger. They defined the economic dimension of hunger as something that results from policies of

globalization and gravely affects impoverished communities. On the other hand, the political dimension of hunger is important to consider since hunger intensifies in a repressive situation, or via policies and actions of a fascist or undemocratic government. Another important consideration is the cultural dimension where hunger is said to be exacerbated by conditions of fundamentalism, or whenever ethnic or religious discrimination is practiced systematically.

The group also came up with a list of women’s coping mechanisms to survive hunger.

- “Making do” and belt-tightening tactics: changing diet and nutrition patterns, veering away from community/indigenous food practices and traditions.
- Finding alternative sources of income within the community: informal work, selling body parts, microfinance, gambling, mortgaging ration cards, trade (through livelihood programs).
- Migration (internal and transnational).
- Prostitution, signing up as migrant brides.

Based on the discussions, organizing and collective action are key to surviving and resisting hunger. This includes action within organized women’s organizations; together with other members of the community; working in solidarity with organizations beyond the community level, at the national level or even internationally.

Collective action ranges from public information, creative forms of action, engaging in legal battle, applying pressure on governments, actual confrontation with state institutions and private big corporations, to armed resistance.

#### c. Surviving Development Aggression

The workshop made a distinction between development aggression and genuine development. The group described the latter as something that is sustainable and from the people, while the former is development forced upon people. Development aggression is due to globalization wherein the state backs the neoliberal policies which are not pro-people.



When confronted by development aggression, the resistance should be collective. The group claimed that the resistance strategy to development aggression is to claim the right to participate in decision making and other procedural rights, and establish mechanisms for people to monitor the implementation of laws.



### *Impacts of and Resistance to War and Militarism*

#### a. Impacts of War and Militarism (VAW as a tool of war)

The workshop on the impacts of war and militarism focusing on the violence against women as a tool of war was facilitated by Ms. Kathy Panguban of GABRIELA and Ms. Shiela Ferrer of ILAW. The workshop group was attended by individuals from various countries which include Vietnam, Indonesia, Pakistan, China, India, Hong Kong, and Philippines. They began the workshop by pinpointing specific examples of violence against women.

#### Violence Against Women

- Sexual harassment
- Rape
- Extrajudicial killings
- Physical harm

#### Effects of VAW

- Sows fear and anxiety
- Loss of lives
- Health problems

The inputs and sharing prompted the group to note that if there is an increase in militarism, there is also a corresponding increase in cases of violence against women ranging from economic rights violations, to political rights, sexual abuses to violations of reproductive rights. As the budgetary allocation for militarization increases, this turn lessens the budget for basic social services such as health, education, and housing. It becomes a gender issue as women have specific needs that the state is supposed to address.

#### b. Community Resistance to War's Displacement

Among the participants of the workshop for community resistance to war's displacement include individuals from various countries: Sri Lanka, India, Indonesia, Iraq and Philippines. Land grabbing/land conversion, militarization/Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) exercises, and development aggression were the common issues raised during the discussion. The group identified several forms of community resistance.

#### Forms of Community Resistance

- Community organizing (arouse, organize and mobilize)
- Alliance-building with other NGOs/sectors
- Dialogues/Representation
- Education/inputs on human rights
- Maximization of media – video, publications, radio guestings, etc
- Pickets, march rallies
- Wall writings (Operation Pinta)
- Signature campaign

Aside from the above-mentioned forms of community resistance, the workshop group also classified some creative forms of resistance. In Kalinga, Apayao and Indonesia: naked women faced the army due to cultural belief that armies will not harm the organs that gave them life. In Danao City, Cebu,

women poured boiling water over the military men who intruded into their community. In Talaingod, Davao, indigenous groups declared tribal war against the company and government that planned to grab their ancestral land. In India, people built temporary huts on the contested land.

### c. Popular Resistance to War and Militarism

The workshop on popular resistance to war and militarism was comprised of representatives from India (West Bengal, Tamil Nadu), Sri Lanka, East Timor, Malaysia, and Philippines.

The group identified different contexts of resistance such as land struggles- land grabbing, land appropriation by government to large companies, development aggression; conversion of agricultural lands into industrial estates and special economic zones; struggles against logging concessionaires, mining companies, geothermal projects and dam construction; neoliberal economic policies enforced by heavy militarization; military occupation of farming communities; sexual assault, rape and sexual violence against women and children; struggles for decent living wages and recognition of trade unions; political repression, militarization in protesting communities; use of paramilitary forces against communities; gross violations of human rights such as enforced disappearances, politically motivated litigation, internal displacement, harassment and extra judicial killings; ethnic, class, caste, gender conflicts and discrimination; internal armed conflicts; struggles for indigenous, plantation, peasant women's rights to land and food sovereignty, safe farming practices and traditional knowledge and systems of food production; struggles for transitional justice for victims of war and repression.

#### Workshop Recommendations

- Strengthen international solidarity / alliances / coalition building.
- Strengthen the politicisation of the grassroots masses.
- Take local-level resistances to international level and vice-versa.
- Our conference statement should include a demand for the de-militarization of the countryside.

### *Strategies for Effective Campaign and Advocacy Work*

#### a. On Economic Crisis

As global economic crisis intensifies, wealthy countries/TNCs/IFIs pass the burden on poor countries. This results to more economic vulnerabilities, more unjust employment schemes, landlessness and land grabbing, migration, and worsening social costs, deepening poverty, and food crisis.

The workshop for strategies for effective campaign and advocacy work on economic crisis was facilitated and comprised of participants from various countries which include India, Sri Lanka, Mongolia, Thailand, Timor Leste, Indonesia, Pakistan, Malaysia, Nepal, China, and Philippines. The group came up with different forms of campaign or advocacy as response to the worsening economic crisis.

#### Strategies

- Capacity building to move and mobilize people on roots of economic crisis: including effective data gathering & reporting.
- Campaign for land, land reform & development + national industrialization as solutions to crisis.
- Studying the dimensions and extent of crisis.
- Campaign using the economic, social & cultural rights framework (local & int'l).
  - Comprehensive social protection, access to public resources, social services
  - Jobs and justice
  - Right to land
- UN engagement & other international mechanisms like UPR, UN women, etc., creation of shadow reports to counter country reports.
- Lobbying local governments.
- Local and international solidarity: linking with grassroots groups.
  - Creating a venue for sharing and campaigning among local, international groups.
- Maximizing multi-media as channel for propaganda & campaign: on-line/internet, video, mainstream media, etc.
- Continuing with creative, community-level and indigenous forms of resistance.

## b. On Climate Change

The workshop on strategies for effective campaign on climate change was constituted of participants from Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand, India and Philippines. The issue discussed by the group includes the ongoing campaigns at different levels with regards to climate justice. The existing people's protocol on climate change is identified to be effective if it will be incorporated in local and regional campaigns and struggles to be visible on the international agenda. During the discussion and sharing of perspectives, the cluster agreed on the themes which they can unite on such as the idea that climate change is a result of the massive drive for profits of the capitalist system of production.

### Strategies

- Education/awareness-raising (parliamentarians, school children, opinion makers).
  - Structural roots of the crisis: role and accountability of Northern countries and their corporations and the Third world governments that collude with them.
  - Role of sectors in addressing the climate crisis.
  - Help women understand the issue by giving women environmental situationers in communities.
  - Sharing exposure trips to communities.
  - Direct action.
- Documentation/research on impacts.
  - Stories on individual actions, underscore their own role in giving their voices, some doables.
  - Success stories of survival.
  - Impacts of climate disasters and climate change as experienced by the people.
- Media orientation.
- Learn and apply popular ways to campaign e.g. how to cut down the costs at the individual or household level on how to contribute to resource management.
- Conducting environmental investigative missions: expose corporations.
- Capacity building of people's organizations and CSOs.
- Fund allocation.

The group identified the skills needed to effectively implement the components of the campaign. These include skills on lobbying, inter-cultural synthesis, documentation, dialogues, and creative means of communications. Other inputs of the workshop on climate change are slogan suggestions i.e. W.O.W. (**W**omen **O**f the **W**orld) and Act for Climate Justice Now!

## c. On War and Militarism

The workshop on the strategies for effective campaign and advocacy work on war and militarism was facilitated by Ms. Lana Linaban of GABRIELA. Countries represented in the cluster were Philippines, Pakistan, Indonesia, Nagaland, and Sri Lanka.

The workshop group identified particular issues and their root causes. The presence of war and militarism in every country is backed by specific government policies that legitimize militarization and deployment of military troops. Aside from that, external interventions (i.e. US in the Philippines and Iraq) are also seen as one of the main causes which therefore create concrete manifestations of conflict.

### Strategies

- Information campaign/ awareness campaign.
  - Use of media, social networking sites, websites.
  - Speaking tour.
  - Sharing of experiences through forums, conferences.
  - Sharing exposure trips to communities.
  - Direct action.
- Propaganda actions.
  - Internationally coordinated actions.
  - Solidarity actions in support of local and national issues.
- Formation of alliance
  - Local, national, regional international level.
- Particular recommendation on forming an alliance of organization that are anti imperialist and assert for right to self determination.

Capacity-building skill, in general, was identified by the workshop group as the major skill to be developed and improved. This includes documentation skills of cases of human rights violations, information campaign, propaganda actions, formation of alliance, and in exhaustion of remedies from local to international arena.



## Women Resisting Crisis and War

### Conference Declaration

We, 130 women and men from 15 countries and regions from Australia, Bangladesh, China and Hongkong SAR, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor Leste, and Vietnam, and representing peasant, agricultural workers, church groups, Dalit women, fisherfolk, indigenous women, migrants, minorities, workers, urban poor, girls, youth, academe and support NGOs and networks met for the **Women Resisting Crisis and War: A conference on the impacts and women's responses to the economic and climate crisis and war** from July 19-21, 2010 in Baguio City, Philippines.

In this conference, we have reached unity in the analysis that imperialist globalization spawned the multi-faceted, yet interconnected crises encompassing the economic, political and ecological spheres and is causing unparalleled suffering all over the world. Worst afflicted of these crises are people from poor countries, most especially women and children.

Measures formulated and utilized by the imperialists regarding the global financial meltdown compounded by the insatiable greed for profit only aim to save itself from the inherent crisis of capitalism and therefore only passes the burden on to the poor and further aggravates hunger and poverty.

This imperialist crisis further propels profit-driven and unsustainable industrial development that cause irreversible damage to the world's environment leading to longer periods of drought, flash floods, crop failures, and clean and safe water scarcity, among others. This crisis results in the global climate meltdown, the depletion of natural resources and the destruction of lives and livelihoods, especially of ecologically-sensitive indigenous and traditional livelihood systems.

Avaricious intents to gain more access and control over sources of raw materials and cheap labour propel imperialist countries led by the United States of America to intensify wars of aggression and sponsor autocratic and military leadership in many states. These imperialist-led and instigated wars and militarization have led to various forms of human rights violations with impunity

particularly targeting activists and other human rights defenders. Ethnic, religious, and sectarian conflicts and civil wars are causing harassment, detention, forced displacement including internally displaced peoples, killings and enforced disappearances. Caste and communal atrocities and aggression are resulting in massive violence against Dalits and minority women. Rape and other forms of sexual abuse of women and girls are being used as a tool of war and suppression of communities.

Imperialism historically has sustained patriarchy. These global crises which are the result of imperialism further perpetuate patriarchy, making women more vulnerable to exploitation, oppression and multiple forms of discrimination and violence.

Women's rights as human rights are continually violated. Women face the greatest burden of displacement, dislocation, trafficking, hunger and gender violence as the world economic, ecological and political crisis deepens.

Yet, women through time have shown extreme resilience with the spiralling multiple crises. Women have utilized various mechanisms for taking control over their lives, from simple and individual acts of survival to collective organized actions to assert their economic, social, cultural and political rights. Women have shown that the most effective form of survival and resistance are through organized and militant struggles, employing different tactics and strategies ranging from organizing, forming of alliances, parliamentary struggles and direct actions including armed resistance.

We now re-affirm the need for women and peoples' movements from different countries and regions to unite, intensify and strengthen our defense and resistance against imperialism and its worsening attacks.

We are gathered to strengthen and consolidate our movements to achieve genuine peace, social justice, democracy and sovereignty. Towards this, we commit ourselves:

- a. To resist corporate monopoly, development aggression and to assert food sovereignty. We affirm our commitment to reclaiming our fundamental rights to land, water and other productive resources.
- b. To stop the profit-driven exploitation and destruction of natural resources and put an end to the imperialist destruction of global climate!

We will confront climate crisis by building community resistance and resilience. Climate Justice Now!

- c. To resist wars of aggression that cause unending violence to women, children, and their communities. We will act to condemn religious fundamentalism, acts of terrorism and sectarianism that are unleashing violence on societies and in intensifying the oppression of women.
- d. To end all forms of exploitation, discrimination and violence against women and children.
- e. To call on national governments and international parties to find political and negotiated solutions to address the root causes of crises and wars.

And as we commemorate the centenary of the International Working Women's Day, we will work for the strengthening of international solidarity and build on the gains of women's and peoples' movements throughout history to remove all impediments to realize a better world for humankind.

Aidwatch, Australia  
AMIHAN, Philippines  
APIT Women's Work, Philippines  
Asia Monitor Resource Center, (AMRC)  
Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD)  
Asian Rural Women's Coalition (ARWC)  
Asia Pacific Mission for Migrants (APMM)  
Asia Pacific Research Network (APRN)  
BICOLANA, Philippines  
Binnadang-Innabuyog, Philippines  
Bluestar Workers' Union, Philippines  
Center for Women's Resources (CWR), Philippines  
Centre for Community Economics and Development Consultation Society (CECOEDECON), India  
Centre for Human Rights and Development (CHRD), Mongolia  
Centre for Sustainable Rural Development (SRD), Vietnam  
China Association for NGO Cooperation (CANGO), China  
Coastal Development Partnership (CDP), Bangladesh

Committee for Asian Women (CAW), Thailand  
Committee Against Violence on Women (CAVW), India  
Cordillera Human Rights Alliance (CHRA), Philippines  
Cordillera People's Alliance (CPA), Philippines  
Cordillera Women's Education Action  
Research Center (CWEARC), Philippines  
DESAPARICIDOS, Philippines  
East Timor Development Agency, Timor Leste  
Ecumenical Institute for Labor Education and Research, Inc.  
(EILER), Philippines  
Equitable Tourism Options (EQUATIONS), India  
GABRIELA-Cebu, Philippines  
GABRIELA-National Capital Region, Philippines  
GABRIELA-Panay, Philippines  
GABRIELA-University of the Philippines Diliman  
Green Movement of Sri Lanka (GMSL)  
Human Development Organization, Sri Lanka  
HUSTISYA, Philippines  
IBON Foundation, Philippines  
ILAW, Philippines  
Initiatives for Peace in Mindanao (Inpeace), Philippines  
Innabuyog, Philippines  
Institute for Global Justice (IGJ), Indonesia  
Institute for Motivating Self-Employment (IMSE), India  
Institute for National and Democratic Studies (INDIES), Indonesia  
International NGO Forum for Indonesian Development (INFID)  
Iraqi Al-Amal Association  
Jobs Creating Development Society, Pakistan  
Kalumaran-Bai, Philippines  
KARAPATAN, Philippines  
Kilusang Mayo Uno, Philippines  
LILA FILIPINA, Philippines  
MIGRANTE, Philippines  
Naga Women's Union, Manipur  
NAKASA BAI, Philippines  
Nepal Policy Institute (NPI)  
Pakistan Institute for Labor Education and Research (PILER)  
PCPR Pangasinan, Philippines

Peace for Life, Philippines  
Pesticide Action Network Asia Pacific (PAN AP)  
Plan International  
SAHANIVASA, India  
SAMAKANA, Philippines  
Save the Appayao People's Organization, Philippines  
Society for Rural Education and Development (SRED), India  
Solidaritas Perempuan, Indonesia  
Sustainable Community Development (S-CODE), Vietnam  
Tamil Nadu Dalit Women's Movement, India  
Third World Network (TWN)  
Triumph Workers' Union, Philippines  
UBINIG, Bangladesh  
United Luisita Workers' Union-UMA, Philippines  
University of San Carlos, Philippines  
University of the Philippines Diliman  
Vikas Adhayayan Kendra (VAK), India  
Women's Development Center-Bohol, Philippines  
Yarn Venture Union, Philippines



# CRISIS AND WAR



*Liza Maza is a former representative of the GABRIELA Women's Party to the House of Representatives. She authored the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003 and co-authored the Anti-Violence in Women and Children, and the Juvenile Justice Act among others. She has been working on the issues of urban poor and working women since her days as a student activist in the University of the Philippines. She is currently the Chairperson of the International Women's Alliance.*

## Studies and Stories of Women Resisting Crisis and War

Liza Maza

We are gathered here today in a very important chapter in our collective history as women. We face two conditions that have an immense impact on the lives not only of women but of the peoples of the world: the centennial of the declaration of March 8 as International Working Women's Day and the multitude of crises – from poverty to hunger, from joblessness and landlessness to food shortage, from the effects of wars of aggression to the impacts of climate disasters.

One hundred years of toiling women's internationalized struggle teaches us the value of heightening our collective resistance and of creating new strategies to advance women's militant struggle. Peoples of the world, especially women and children, are in the direst of situations as we face what could be the worst economic crisis the capitalist system has ever sired to date. What sets the current global economic crisis apart from these two great crises of capitalism is the scale of global economic speculation and indebtedness involved.

Economic crises have placed a greater burden on women. Women are more likely than men to be in vulnerable jobs, to be underemployed or jobless, to lack not job security but also social protection, and to have limited access to and control over economic and financial resources. The most instantaneous impact of the current economic crisis in women of developing economies has been through employment. In South and Southeast Asia, for example, female unemployment rate is at 6% compared to 5% for jobs experienced more exploitative working arrangements. The worldwide recession has also resulted in the declining orders and contracts and reduced incomes for women in the informal sector.

The global economic crisis has also led to intensified trade liberalization, further reduction in subsidy to farmers and increases in prices of farm inputs, and has subjected the prices of agricultural products to intensified market instability due to speculation in primary commodities like rice.



It has heightened the feudal and patriarchal oppression of women. What is even more striking is the fact that not a few economic pundits have put a wager on the claim that the current global crisis is bound to continue for quite longer and go quite deep.

In fact the food crisis in 2008, characterized by food shortages and volatile prices, is already an evidence of the deepening crisis, underlining as it were the negative impact of development aggression through corporate interventions by big transnational corporations in the agriculture sector. As the United Nations World Food Program reported in 2009, nearly one billion people suffer from hunger, mostly women and children, and quite ironically, a great number of them are from agricultural regions such as Asia.

### Capitalism and the New “Climate Change” Buzzword

Indeed what can no longer be hidden is that the crisis of capitalism has always been a bomb just waiting to explode. Because capitalism is a system in which the endless accumulation of profit is the *raison d’être*, it did not and will never take the improvement of people’s lives and livelihoods as its battle-cry. With or without a situation of grave economic depression, capitalism and its insatiable drive for profit has always led to the intensification of the marginalization and exploitation of peoples, especially women.

Yet what stares us straight in the face now more than ever is that profit-driven industrialization has resulted in many irreversible damages to the environment. The past years bear witness to a variety of climate disasters that are not only becoming more numerous but also getting worse in their effects. We remember ecological disasters such as the killer earthquake in Haiti, typhoon Ketsana (*Ondoy*) in the Philippines, the Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami in 2004, Hurricane Mitch in Nicaragua and Honduras, and the blowout and oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico; and we remember the many women, children, and men whose lives were devastated and of those who are still to be devastated by the effects of capitalism’s greed and the looming inability of official inter-governmental processes to resolutely address climate crisis.

What has become clear is that the sources of livelihood and in fact even the lives of peoples and women most especially in developing countries will experience further destruction for as long as capitalism and profit-driven industrialization continues to be the menace that looms over the toiling women and peoples of the world.

In fact, even political crises such as wars of aggression and the rise of undemocratic and fascist regimes are the fuel that keeps the cogs of capitalism moving. There must exist some kind of relative world order, a world where hegemonic power is concentrated in the hands of a few that control the majority for capitalist profit to flourish. There is now a heightened state of war and militarism all throughout the world as the imperialist powers led by the US intensify their efforts to retain and expand their control over productive resources and markets. The rapacious intent to gain more access and control over lands, mines, forests, seas and other sources of raw materials and cheap labor has constantly displaced many peoples and exposed women to worsening forms of violence and exploitation.

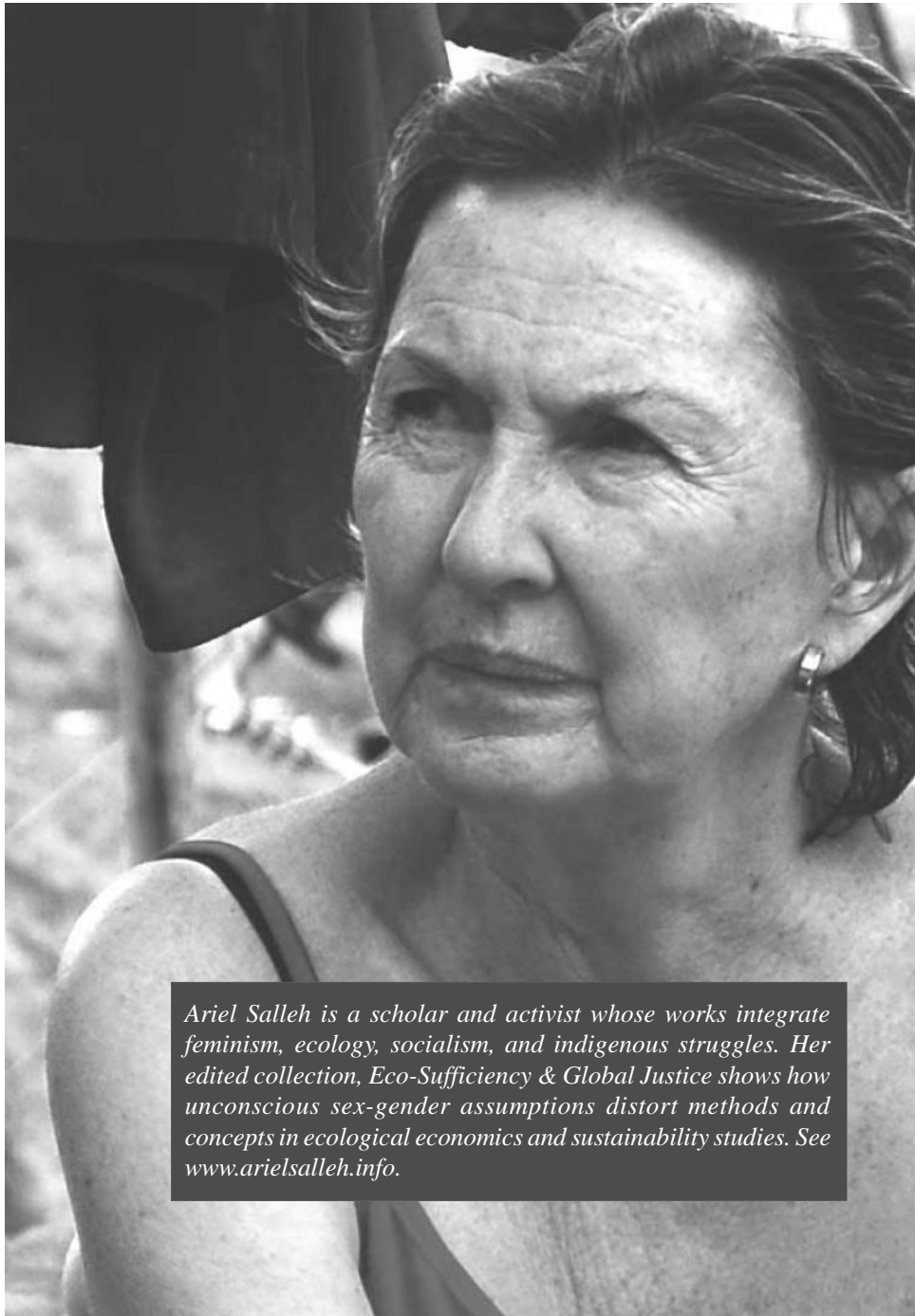
### The Imperative of Women’s Organized Resistance

Indeed we are faced with a crisis so immense and far-reaching in its impact on our people’s lives. And that crisis is capitalism. The multitude of economic, ecological and political crises that we are experiencing today is interconnected effects of capitalism. If we want to hit the core of the compounding effects of these crises on women, we need to identify effective strategies of resistance. We need not just cope with crises in a cyclical manner - we need to empower ourselves, find our collective spaces of resistance, and engage the crisis.

Indeed we must run like the plague from any sense that the current crisis will be resolved by mere corporate morality and institutional compassion. Our collective history as women in struggle shows us that positive and meaningful change can only occur when we unite and resist. As the current crisis of capitalism intensifies, it becomes even more imperative for us women of the world to unite and take active part in the struggle for the empowerment and liberation of oppressed peoples all over the world. We must bite where it hurts and be united in resisting the multifarious facets of the current capitalist crisis.

Such is the fire of women’s unity and resolve to resist and triumph that women the world over has kept aflame. Such is women’s persistence, our courage to fight despite an avalanche of attacks on our lives and livelihoods. Such is the fire that will sustain our struggle, which will bring it to even greater heights, and bring us nearer to victory.

Sisters, we dare to struggle and we dare to win!



*Ariel Salleh is a scholar and activist whose works integrate feminism, ecology, socialism, and indigenous struggles. Her edited collection, *Eco-Sufficiency & Global Justice* shows how unconscious sex-gender assumptions distort methods and concepts in ecological economics and sustainability studies. See [www.arielsalleh.info](http://www.arielsalleh.info).*

## Climate Change—and the 'Other Footprint'

Ariel Salleh<sup>1</sup>

When governments, corporate think tanks, and multilateral agencies deliberate on strategies for combating climate change, you can be sure they will bypass one highly salient variable. Global warming causes, effects, and solutions are “sex/gendered.” Why, for example, is women’s ecological footprint negligible in comparison with men’s? Why are women and children in every region the main victims of global warming? Why are women under-represented in climate negotiations at local, national, and international levels? Political elites and their media are complicit with this. Even activists tend to reinforce it since the conventional labeling of social movements disguises the fact that half of all worker, peasant, and indigenous populations around the world are women.<sup>2</sup> This is not only a problem for achieving a coherent international climate policy. In building a path to the commons, it is important to keep in mind that preconscious gender assumptions will affect how the movement for “another globalization” theorizes itself and what strategies it chooses for getting beyond modernization.<sup>3</sup>

### **Modernity, Energy, Sex-gender**

Looking at the here and now, the gender differential (whereby boys and girls across every culture are trained into different adult behavior models) is a big determinant of resource consumption patterns. While it is true that individual attitudes vary by class, age, and ethnicity, social norms for “masculinity and femininity” have especially marked structural impacts on energy use in everyday life and in policy formulation, for instance, under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The claim is well supported in surveys undertaken by the Women’s Environment Network (WEN) in London and by the German government funded women’s non-government organization GENANET led by Ulrike Roehr.<sup>4</sup> Another way to illustrate this systematic gender difference is through the ecological footprint measure.<sup>5</sup> As ecological feminists point out, there was a time in Africa, when women farmers provided 80 per cent of the continent’s food with minimal resource inputs and pollution outputs. Today, in parts of the global South where common land holdings are untouched

by war, by neoliberal trade deals, and by technology transfers, many women still practice ecologically sound and self-reliant models of subsistence economics.<sup>6</sup>

It is often assumed that the capitalist division of labor emancipates women. But in fact, high-tech economies reveal a more marked distinction between men's and women's time use and access to resources than subsistence economies do. A Swedish Government report shows that class notwithstanding, men's ecological footprint in that nation is remarkably larger than women's.<sup>7</sup> To repeat, there are always individual variations, but on average, Swedish men as a social category, are found to be big consumers of energy-expensive manufactures and durable assets like houses, cars, and computers; while Swedish women are mainly purchasing weekly domestic consumption items—nature's perishables. Women's ecological footprint is actually smaller again, if adjusted for the fact that most are shopping for two or more other household members besides themselves.

Energy use in the transport sector also reflects the way in which modern societies are structured by gender. Air travel between cities is predominantly used by men, but the pattern of intra-urban mobility is perhaps even more telling. A 2006 report commissioned by the European Parliament from a transnational consortium of academics, including the University of East London and Wuppertal Institute, points out that men in EU states tend to make trips by car for a single purpose and over longer distances than women do.<sup>8</sup> A high sense of individualism and low awareness or concern for the environmental costs of private transport is inferred. Conversely, the EU statistics show that it is mainly women who travel by public transport or on foot. When women do use private cars, it is for multiple short journeys meeting several purposes on the one outing. The reason for women's complex activity pattern is that even among those in the waged workforce, most undertake reproductive or domestic labor for husbands, children, or elderly parents - the double shift, as feminists call it.

Meike Spitzner, an author of the European Parliament report, observes that women's days are given over to multi-tasking and so their transport needs are characterized by "spatio-temporal scatter." Moreover, the time spent by women moving from one labor activity to another - say from office to kindergarten to supermarket - adds to their economic exploitation under capitalism as unpaid household care providers. This "spatio-temporal scatter" characterizes reproductive labor carried out by women in both developed and "developing" regions. As sociologists say, women are socialized for contingency.

It is important, however, not to over generalize sex-gender differences. Around the world, the number of child-free career women is increasing, which in turn means that, environmentally speaking, their transport footprint may become more like that of men in the waged productive sector. Even so, these "liberated" women remain a statistical minority. Generally, the pattern in industrialized economies is that men have determinate job hours and simpler schedules than working women. For this reason, men could more easily make good use of public transport options; but they don't—at least in Europe.

Again, this choice is a gendered one, having to do with structural differences in earning capacity. As socialist eco-feminists have argued over many decades now, capitalist and patriarchal systems are interlocked and mutually reinforcing.<sup>9</sup> And gender bias remains so entrenched in the international economy that women tend to be concentrated in either unpaid or lower salaried work, and even when professional women perform the same jobs as men, their wages are lower. Thus, it is mainly men who have money available for purchasing big status cars, as well as time available for leisure pursuits. Here—in so-called developed and "developing" worlds alike—men are seeking high-energy consumption recreations involving motorbikes, golf courses, speedboats, or computerized entertainments. Under capitalism, speed, technology, and war are associated with the psychology of masculine prowess, to such an extent that one might say that the oil crisis is sex-gender driven as much as class interests driven. Mainstream environmentalist Jeffrey Sachs inadvertently illustrates this imbalance in gender priorities when he notes that the "US government funding for renewable energy technologies (solar, wind, geothermal, ocean, and bio-energy) totaled a meager \$239 million or just three hours of defense spending."<sup>10</sup> But as we shall see, even when renewables do appear on the agenda, the focus on technological solutions is itself a gendered phenomenon.

### **Internalizing vs. Externalizing Responsibility**

By contrast, due to the time consuming double shift of work and home, women's leisure footprint is all but non-existent. Today, globalized economic scarcity and ecological stress extract more time than ever from women's lives. But under pressure, they are found to meet their reproductive tasks with fewer resources by using good organization and time management. This "internalized" response to environmental conditions contrasts with the accepted public political practice of "externalizing" or displacing problems on to less powerful sections of the community.<sup>11</sup> For example, governments routinely

locate waste disposal sites in poor neighborhoods or on indigenous land; or subsidize water use by factories, while taxing householders for it. Politicians in the economic North, externalize the costs of their high pollution lifestyle decisions on to countries in the South. There are many ways of doing this but one is to offer incentives for converting food-growing land across to biofuels.

Most neoliberal mitigation options are based on “externalization” and market-based solutions like carbon offsets and emissions trading simply serve private entrepreneurs. They shift costs by social means. But costs can also be displaced “materially” by technology. The EU men interviewed about solutions to environmental problems clearly preferred “end-of-pipe” approaches to countering global warming. However, given that every such engineered remedy requires yet other technologies to manufacture it, and consumes a cradle-to-grave chain of human and natural resources along the way, the end-of-pipe solution is ethically—and thermodynamically—another form of “deferred responsibility.”

As GENANET notes, while women readily adjust their own energy consumption habits, far too many men across the class divide accept humanly risky responses to climate change like nuclear power or ecologically untested solutions like ocean sequestration. This high-tech tunnel vision is encouraged by the fact that the impacts of industrial growth are often uncounted economic facts, which become “social”—as “externalities” for women to pick up. In the case of nuclear spills, for instance, it is women who cope with the biological and economic costs of nursing deformed babies or relatives with radiation-induced leukemia. Such experiences help to explain why women resist risky technologies and why they have been quick to recognize the urgency of global warming. As radical feminists have taught us: “personal is political!”

But women’s precautionary attitudes are not only focused on their families. A survey by the Women’s Environment Network reveals:

Eighty per cent of women are very concerned about climate change as an important issue and 75% are apprehensive that government action to tackle it will not be taken soon enough. Women are also very concerned about the effects of climate change on future generations (85%), the poor (81%), on plant, marine and animal life (81%), the impact of more flooding, drought and extreme weather (81%), water and food shortages (81%), and habitat destruction (80%).<sup>12</sup>

The asymmetry of learned gender norms and responsibilities and the skills and values that result from gendered labors, are found as much in the “developing” South as in the North. Whether housewives, peasants, or indigenous gatherers, women are profoundly concerned about ecological degradation. They have a long history of initiating neighborhood ecology campaigns.<sup>13</sup> Now, a global cohort of women is insisting that international policy planners and activists start thinking about gender justice and environmental sustainability together.

A modest liberal feminist start—based on getting an equal voice in the public sphere—has been made by women’s groups operating in parallel to UNFCCC meetings. At the Conference of Parties (COP) held in Milan, 2004, a Gender and Climate Change Network was formed with a view of drawing the UNFCCC and Kyoto Protocol in line with existing international agreements on women’s rights. Women expect politico-legal consistency on the part of governments and UN agencies, but this appears to be a tough call. An analysis of policy adopted at the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) displays a very androcentric arena indeed. Women are under-represented in all climate relevant decision-making bodies—local, national, and international. In fifteen years of climate negotiations, only one UNFCCC resolution has dealt with gender. And this was about committee participation procedure—not the nitty-gritty socio-economics of “agency”—how accepted “masculine and feminine” behavior trends are differently implicated in global warming.

### **Woman, Native, Other**

Beyond gender blindness, the androcentric orientation of UNFCCC decision-making is compounded by Euro-centrism. This means that women in the global South face double marginalization. And just as industrial civilizations of the North have been built on the labor and resources of colonized peoples at the periphery of its vision, now the North uses these same regions to mop up its own excessive waste emissions. Since by the Kyoto Protocol, ecosystems are accorded economic value for their photosynthetic capacity to absorb carbon dioxide and convert it back to life giving oxygen, a Third World nation can be readily induced to resolve foreign debt by trading on the ecological cleansing service of its forests.

The case of Costa Rica is telling—and should ring an alarm for climate and global justice activists. With encouragement from a solid masculine partnership of Canadian government agencies, international environmental NGOs, mining and logging industries, the Costa Rica Ministry of

Environment and Energy has enclosed 25% of the nation's territory as "conservation zones," which includes national parks, wetlands, biological reserves, and wildlife refuges. In the process, hundreds of indigenous and peasant families have been evicted from forested areas and lost their livelihoods. Peruvian eco-feminist researcher Ana Isla followed these displaced communities as they migrated to San Jose tourist areas in the hope of surviving by the cash economy. She found out that women and girls of these resource-stripped peoples have only their bodies as their sole remaining "asset", and it is they who have no choice now but to become family bread-winners by prostitution. While offering up conservation areas as carbon sinks results in debt cancellation and can be a national boon for foreign exchange through ecotourism, ecotourism slides into sex tourism and has actually made Costa Rica a thriving destination for pedophiles from the North. The Kyoto Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) is simply another typically masculinist "solution by deferral" on to the lives of others. And ultimately, what is expendable along the line of trade-offs is the material bodies of women - out of sight, out of mind.

Will the new round of European Environmental Protection Agreements (EPAs) be a party to such thoughtless neocolonialism in African states? What is likely to happen to grassroots communities as a result of the Australian Government's climate change diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific region?<sup>15</sup> The Clean Energy Investment Framework, a World Bank and Global Environment Facility (GEF) response to the 2005 G-8 Summit at Gleneagles, is pushing nuclear energy generation, coal-fired power, and large dam projects. This approach to "mitigation and adaptation" merely substitutes one kind of corporate driven ecosystem degradation for another and communities displaced by such mega-projects are likely to become environmental refugees. The wind power farm constructed on the land of the Wayuu people in Colombia is another case in point. There was no prior informed consent from the community for this "partnership." It trampled over sacred territory. Conflicts over the project resulted in deaths of many indigenous peoples. And ironically, this "renewables project" was introduced to Power Cerrejon, the world's biggest open coal mine.<sup>16</sup>

Ahmad Maryudi wrote in a recent issue of the Jakarta Post that the affluent consumer world's offshore carbon "trade and hedge" proposals make little scientific sense, since "most GHG emissions come from the use of fossil fuels in transportation, industry, domestic and commercial applications."<sup>17</sup>

In cultural, political, and ecological terms, market commodification of air and forests through schemes like Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD) contradict both the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD). An indigenous peoples' petition to the UN Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) points out that too many so-called mitigation schemes prevent access and threaten indigenous agriculture practices; destroy biodiversity, cultural diversity, traditional livelihoods and knowledge systems; and cause social conflicts. Under REDD, states and carbon traders will take more control over our forests.<sup>18</sup>

In March 2008, in the Qollasuyo district of La Paz, peoples of the Americas discussed deforestation, protection of bio-cultural diversity, and climate change. The Qollasuyo Declaration states clearly that the current ecological crisis is a result of the Western capitalist model of development and that solutions based on more of the same productivist reasoning will not succeed. From the indigenous point of view, "...chaotic climatic problems including prolonged rainfall, flooding and droughts, deglaciation, rising sea levels, the spread of endemic diseases, fires in the tropical rain forest, changes in the growing season ... are breaking the chain of life, threatening the survival of our peoples, and inducing high rates of extreme poverty. Indigenous women are particularly affected".<sup>19</sup>

The Bolivian statement addresses the impacts of neocolonial resource extraction on indigenous habitats and livelihood. The political marginalization of indigenous voices by governments, multilateral agencies, corporate interests, NGOs, and now, the World Bank-sponsored mitigation and adaptation solutions "outrageously assault our way of life."

### Getting from Here to There

It is not hard to see why indigenous peoples reject the World Bank's notion of "good partnership."<sup>20</sup> At the January 2008 UNFCCC COP 13 negotiations in Bali, indigenous speakers were barred. At meetings of the UN-CBD in February 2008, they were told they could only remain present if backed by another (that is, non-indigenous) party.<sup>21</sup> Again, Florina Lopez of the Indigenous Women's Biodiversity Network of Abya Yala reports that the UNPFII in April 2008 ignored grassroots objections to false climate change solutions like carbon trading, which operate in the service of business-as-usual but do nothing for peoples and environments.

If women North and South are “othered” in the deeply masculinist culture of international relations and now fight for a voice at climate change negotiations, so are indigenous communities who have no platform within the UNFCCC for making their views known. Victoria Tauli-Corpus, chair of the UNPFII confirms that the UNFCCC has not yet invited them to participate in its deliberations. However, indigenous peoples worldwide are mobilizing to oppose the gross excess of the neoliberal footprint and its self-serving political responses to global warming.

The Qollasuyo Declaration points to the traditional economic knowledge base achieved by indigenous peoples through sound local environmental management. This “other footprint” rests on the internalization of responsibility. Peoples with finely attuned ecological skills object to being treated as if they are “in transition” to an urban industrial economy; that is, as if their own tried and tested self-sufficient provisioning systems have no validity. In the culturally genocidal context of the World Bank and UNFCCC policies, the rhetoric of “indigenous stewardship” is invoked—and at the same time, emptied of all material meaning. It is thus imperative for collective struggles to turn the industrial juggernaut around for indigenous peoples to have full participation rights in the UNFCCC, consultation and informed consent, an expert committee drawn from indigenous ranks, and financing of projects that are culturally appropriate.

The discussion of alternatives would ground and bring consistency to the incoherent pragmatism of agencies like the CBD, UNESCO, FAO, UNICEF, GEF, and UNDP. And instruments do exist, which should legitimate the presence of the “other footprint” in the international climate change dialogue. These are the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention 169. In addition, a meeting in Jakarta in June 2008 has called on the UN establish a new convention covering Peasant Rights.<sup>22</sup> In parallel vein, women workers and householders demand a fresh reading of the historic Declaration of the Fourth UN World Conference on Women held in Beijing. As early as 1995, this Platform of Action invited governments and multilateral agencies to get their heads around the many structural links between sex-gender and environments to analyze programs for gender content and include women in decision-making.<sup>23</sup> But to facilitate this “coming out,” women in Europe, the Americas, Africa, Asia, and Oceania, will need funds to document gendered energy usage patterns, to travel, lobby, and negotiate as “partners.”<sup>24</sup>

In his famous address to the UN General Assembly in September 2007, Bolivian President Evo Morales said, “the indigenous peoples of Latin America and the world have been called upon by history to convert ourselves into the vanguard of the struggle to defend nature and life.”<sup>25</sup> Morales is close to the mark, but his angle of vision needs a small adjustment. At least half of all indigenous communities (like half of all non-indigenous worker, carer, and peasant communities) are women, materially skilled in eco-sufficient regenerative labors—biological, ecological, economic, and cultural—and morally committed to the maintenance of living processes. This means that as alter-globalization activists plan for social transformation, the revolutionary potential of women must be recognized as cutting across worker, peasant, indigenous, and domestic fractions of the movement.

Socially, women are a majority, penetrating every strand of the political spectrum. Ecologically, women’s internalizing labor on a global scale is what bridges the very metabolism of humanity and nature.

To assimilate the political relevance of these intercultural and sex/gendered rationalities is to take a first step towards the commons—a global future based on decentralization, autonomy, and cultural diversity. And in getting from here to there, demanding sociological coherence and justice in the UNFCCC process is time well spent in raising consciousness towards that historical move. It is critical that neoliberal governments everywhere disaggregate and discuss consumption statistics by gender and by culture. Unlike the class-based ecological footprint contained and constrained by capitalist patriarchal priorities, the “woman, native, other footprint” already models a just and sustainable alternative. But will the globalizing monoculture be deconstructed in time to save life on earth? The absence of “gender literacy” and “inter-cultural literacy” among many policy analysts, academic researchers, and even activists, indicates that urgent “capacity building” is wanted North and South. Without a grasp of basic structural notions like “difference” in relation to resource use, and without an understanding of the socio-political mechanisms of “othering”, it will be impossible to carry through any solutions to global warming, let alone clear a pathway to lasting change.

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<sup>1</sup> Ariel Salleh is in Political Economy at the University of Sydney and an editor of Capitalism Nature Socialism. See also [www.ArielSalleh.net](http://www.ArielSalleh.net).

- <sup>2</sup> In a typical example of this innocent oversight, Anne Peterman of the Global Justice Ecology Project writes: “Indigenous peoples and women are the traditional caretakers of the forest,” accessed June 15, 2008, [www.globalforestcoalition.org](http://www.globalforestcoalition.org).
- <sup>3</sup> Ariel Salleh, *Ecofeminism as Politics* (London: Zed Books, 1997).
- <sup>4</sup> “Women’s Manifesto on Climate Change,” Women’s Environment Network and National Federation of Women’s Institutes, accessed May 10, 2008, [www.wen.org.uk](http://www.wen.org.uk); GENANET—Focal Point on Gender Justice and Sustainability, [www.genanet.de](http://www.genanet.de), accessed September 1, 2007. Since the Bali IPCC, action has moved to the international site: Gendercc—Women for Climate Justice: [www.gendercc.net](http://www.gendercc.net), accessed May 10, 2008).
- <sup>5</sup> Mathias Wackernagel and William Rees, *Our Ecological Footprint: Reducing Human Impact on the Earth* (Gabriola Island, BC: New Society, 1996), accessed April 20, 2007, [www.footprintnetwork.org](http://www.footprintnetwork.org). This is not to suggest that advocates of the footprint indicator themselves are concerned with gender difference. When I wrote to Rethinking Progress about this in 2004, the reply was—good idea but not on our research agenda.
- <sup>6</sup> Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen and Maria Mies, *The Subsistence Perspective* (London: Zed Books, 1999).
- <sup>7</sup> Gerd Johnsson-Latham, *Initial Study of Lifestyles, Consumption Patterns, Sustainable Development and Gender* (Stockholm: Swedish Ministry of Sustainable Development, 2006).
- <sup>8</sup> “Women and Transport in Europe, 2006,” European Parliament, accessed January 10, 2008, [www.europarl.europa.eu/EST/download.do?file=9558](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/EST/download.do?file=9558).
- <sup>9</sup> Maria Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale* (London: Zed Books, 1986); Salleh, *Ecofeminism as Politics*, op. cit., pp. 69-85, 150-169; Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch* (New York: Autonomedia, 2004).
- <sup>10</sup> Jeffrey Sachs, “Reinventing Energy,” *The Guardian*, April 22, 2008, accessed May 10, 2008, [www.guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk).
- <sup>11</sup> For speculation on the deeper psychosexual dynamic of this “othering” or 1/0 logic in Western culture, see: Salleh, *Ecofeminism as Politics*, pp. 35-52.
- <sup>12</sup> WEN Manifesto cites UK public opinion polls by Emap Advertising in 2007; Ipsos MORI Climate Change Survey in 2006; and a Stockholm study “Putting the Environment in Perspective” in 2005, as demonstrating women’s greater concern.
- <sup>13</sup> Miriam Wyman, trans, *Sweeping the Earth* (Charlottetown, PEI: Gynergy Books, 1999); Salleh, *Ecofeminism as Politics*, pp. 17-32.
- <sup>14</sup> Ana Isla, *Who Pays for Kyoto Protocol?* in Ariel Salleh, ed., *Eco-Sufficiency and Global Justice*, (London and New York: Pluto Press, 2009).
- <sup>15</sup> The World Bank anticipates Kyoto mark II and Australia’s forges a new Forest Carbon Partnership with Indonesia by investing \$30 million in the logged swamps of Central Kalimantan. Belinda Lopez, “When Rudd Sticks,” *New Matilda*, June 17, 2008, accessed June 18, 2008, [www.newmatilda.com](http://www.newmatilda.com).
- <sup>16</sup> “Qollasuyo Declaration, La Paz, March 2008,” accessed March 30, 2008, [www.climateandcapitalism.com](http://www.climateandcapitalism.com).
- <sup>17</sup> Ahmad Maryudi, “Your Climate Change, Not Ours,” *Jakarta Post*, June 3, 2008.
- <sup>18</sup> “Petition to the 7th Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, April 2008,” accessed June 15, 2008, [www.risingtidenorthamerica.org](http://www.risingtidenorthamerica.org).
- <sup>19</sup> “Qollasuyo Declaration, La Paz, March 2008,” accessed March 30, 2008, [www.climateandcapitalism.com](http://www.climateandcapitalism.com).
- <sup>20</sup> “Indigenous People’s Protest Carbon Trading at UN,” Indigenous Environmental Network, last modified May 3, 2008, [www.risingtidenorthamerica.org](http://www.risingtidenorthamerica.org). Also; Victoria Tauli-Corpus, *Impact of Climate Change Mitigation Measures on Indigenous Peoples and on their Territories and Lands* (New York: UNFPII, E/C.19/2008/10).
- <sup>21</sup> “Report from Bali,” UK-Indonesia NGO, *Down to Earth*, No. 76-77, (2008), accessed June 18, 2008, [www.dte.gn.apc.org/76bcl.htm](http://www.dte.gn.apc.org/76bcl.htm); the CBD fiasco is described in the blog: [www.intercontinentalcry.org/indigenous](http://www.intercontinentalcry.org/indigenous), accessed June 18, 2008.
- <sup>22</sup> “Via Info En, Final declaration of International Conference on Peasants’ Rights, June 25, 2008.
- <sup>23</sup> UN, The Official Report of the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing Declaration and Platform, 1995: <[www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/index.html](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/index.html)> (accessed 10 May 2008).<sup>24</sup> For an update on women’s UNFCCC representation, see Minu Hemmati, “Gender Perspectives on Climate Change,” Emerging Issues Panel, United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, 52nd Session, March 2008. Gendercc—Women for Climate Justice: <[www.gendercc.net](http://www.gendercc.net)> (accessed 10 May 2008).
- <sup>25</sup> Indigenous Environmental Network, [www.risingtidenorthamerica.org](http://www.risingtidenorthamerica.org), accessed June 15, 2008.



*Shoma Sen is an Associate Professor of English at Nagpur University and a convener of the Committee Against Violence on Women. She was part of the radical student movement in India during the seventies. She is active in the women's rights and democratic rights movement.*

## War and Militarization: Imperialism as War

Shoma Sen

Today, we are meeting at a time when the world is ravaged by intense militarization, newer and more dangerous kinds of warfare, violent aggressions, coups, counter-insurgency operations, and state-backed ethnic conflagrations; at a time when there is a severe economic crisis, unemployment, hunger and poverty for millions of people. To understand this situation, we need to realize that war and militarization are intrinsic to imperialism.

Imperialism is traditionally defined as a system where a dominant power is able to control the natural resources, wealth, trade, labour, etc. of other peoples that existed through various periods of history. Marxist theory, on the other hand, identifies its onset with a certain stage in capitalist development. Lenin pointed out as some of its essential characteristics the dominance of monopolies and finance capital along with the growth of export of capital. He said that in this period, the world is being divided among international trusts and cartels and that this division of the world amongst the biggest capitalist powers had in fact already been completed. He also described how certain characteristics of capitalism had started changing into their opposites – such as the displacement of capitalist free competition by capitalist monopoly and the displacement of “liberty” with “domination” - which makes it “parasitic” or decaying capitalism. Importantly, he stated that imperialist wars are inevitable under such an economic system.

Repeatedly, wars have broken out or militarization has intensified due to the systemic crisis of capitalism and the compulsions of imperialism: the rush to make profits and super profits, the attempt to divide and re-divide the world, to quest for the cheapest labour overseas or through migration, the creation of artificial needs among people and therefore markets, and later, the provision of aid to create dependency and prevent the independent development of backward nations. At the political level, imperialism created rhetoric and “ideology” to justify its actions; influenced, set up, toppled governments to install lackeys or puppets; and encouraged the growth of a comprador ruling class that kept backwardness to facilitate imperialist interests. Where the attempts



through “peaceful” means failed, patterns of wars, proxy wars, backed insurgencies, and direct military aggression were and continue to be used.

We have generally understood the two World Wars to be the result of the contradictions between the older colonial powers and the rising imperialist powers to re-divide the world. During this stage the anti-colonial national revolutions that took place in Asia, parts of Europe, Latin America, and parts of Africa led to reordering of imperialism for its survival and thriving, that is, indirect rule or neo-colonial world system. The end of World War I also saw the emergence of the first socialist state, the USSR. After World War II, the people’s democracies led by Communist parties in East Europe came up. Though it was national liberation that the toiling people of the oppressed classes of the erstwhile colonies were fighting for in this process of decolonization, the end result in most cases was nominal independence, where imperialism continued to function in different ways.

The emergence of the People’s Republic of China in 1949 and the contributions of Mao Zedong to Marxist thought brought in new dimensions to the anti-imperialist struggle. Mao pointed out the characteristics of neo-colonial world order by stating that it is a continuation of colonial rule, though indirect, where imperialist powers rely on the agents that they have selected and trained. They control these countries by organizing military blocs, setting up military bases, establishing federations or ‘communities’, and fostering puppet regimes. “By means of economic ‘aid’ or other forms, they retain these countries as markets for their goods, sources of raw materials, and outlet of their export of capital; plunder the riches and suck the blood of the people of these countries. Moreover, they use the United Nations as an important tool for interfering in the internal affairs of such countries and for subjecting them to military, economic and cultural aggression. When they are unable to continue their rule over these countries by ‘peaceful’ means, they engineer military coups d’état, carry out subversion or even resort to direct armed intervention and aggression...” (The Great Debate, p. 146)

How true this is of war and militarization, in the context of imperialism, even today! In the period when Mao was writing, the coup in Chile and Iran, the escalation of violence in the area of the Suez Canal, and the setting up of Israel against Palestine were predominant examples. The changes in the Soviet Union, the restoration of capitalism there, its turning into an imperialist power, and its aggression of Afghanistan, were also significant military aggressions of

the Cold War periods. Fighting proxy wars and backing liberation movements in Africa, such as in Angola, to further imperialist interests were also occurring then. However, as soon as the collapse of the Soviet Union took place, US imperialism became the most dominant imperialist power. Subsequently, America invaded Afghanistan, set up a puppet government, and dubbed the very same forces that they had previously backed and created, the Taliban, as terrorist.

Iraq, of course, has been the most blatant example of how imperialist interests create havoc, destruction, and hegemony of all types in recent years. In 1989, American President George Bush invited senior nuclear engineers to the US for training. But when Saddam Hussein acted independently and invaded Kuwait, the US and its allies meted out severe ‘punishment’ by imposing economic sanctions that killed millions of children and people, and then by bombing in 1991, which destroyed power stations, sewage and water facilities, and civilian lives. The UN Security Council, as Herman and Peterson pointed out, raised the issue on the same day and supported the sanctions, but took no action on the 1991 US-backed Ugandan military invasion of Rwanda until 1993. The same Bush government had invaded Panama, killing several civilians in slums even *before* Iraq had invaded Kuwait.

One of the features of imperialism is its strategy of cooperation, collusion, and conflict among its own ranks. Globalization is another way of trying to reap more profits - with liberalization of investment, mergers and buy-offs, structural adjustments forced upon the under-developed countries, etc. There is also the dominance of the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and World Trade Organization to regulate economic processes, the onslaught of the multi-national corporations to capture the markets and rapaciously exploit the raw materials and labour, and the grabbing of lands and displacements of millions all over the world. The resulting food, agrarian, environmental, and financial crises are all linked to these processes, and in fact, a reaction of capitalism to the shrinking of markets, their attempts to lower costs, to find new sources, and strategies for profits and using technological revolutions for the purpose of accumulation. Aid has always been to keep the receiving countries in bondage and has also shifted according to imperialist interests. For instance, during the Cold War period, US aid was greater for the regimes of Latin America that ruthlessly crushed social movements; during the Clinton regime, aid shifted to Turkey where more than 10,000 Kurdish people were killed and about 3 million made refugees. Aid has come directly in the form of arms and fighter planes in the proxy wars and to crush rebellions.

To justify its actions and policies, different imperialist forces dole out different kinds of rhetoric and 'ideology'. Just as it is "War against Terror" now - where if you are with America, you are with civilization- so was it Nazism, national chauvinism or Fascism in the past. In the '60s, Nixon started a War on Poverty, Johnson had a War on Drugs; but today's anti-Islamic rhetoric is perhaps the crudest but also the most misleading. The highly capitalist-controlled media that collude with imperialist forces and governments and the role of highly paid academics and patronized intelligentsia have all gone to create the cultural climate to justify the present day imperialist wars. Just as Hitler had targeted the Jews, the US imperialism and its allies are targeting the Muslim people world over in the name of war against terror, highlighting the dangers of pan-Islamic fundamentalism, Islamic terrorism, etc. This has led to a social and cultural persecution of Muslims, not only by authorities as at airports or institutions, but down to the community level. The sexual harassment of Muslim prisoners at Abu Gharib by American soldiers is an example of how gross this attitude can be.

This kind of imperialist militarization has a deeply negative impact on the status of women as well. Apart from the direct impact of loss of lives and livelihoods, displacement, and economic hardship, women face sexual assault and exploitation, trafficking, prostitution, and emotional insecurity, among others. Women are seen as the reserve labor force, filling in and taking on the roles of men who may be in the battlefield, and then pushed back to their secondary role once the war is over. They face rape, used as a political weapon to teach a community a lesson, which goes unpunished and which ostracizes and causes great physical and psychological damage to its victims. Women also face prostitution which is justified during war as something necessary for soldiers away from home. But women are also getting politicized in this whole process and either within the framework of patriarchy, or even by challenging it, they are coming together to fight against imperialist exploitation and its manifestations.

It is in this background that we have to see the growing militarization in the world. Though the US military forces are the largest, those of others like Russia, European countries, and Japan are also contenders. The military forces of the erstwhile communist countries like Russia and China are strong and colossal. The rapid growth of technology and the race for nuclear arms has made the world the most dangerous place if a large-scale war were to break out. Chemical and biological warfare, genetic modification, etc. can be used dangerously by the rapacious forces. The military presence of the imperialist forces in the form of its bases and camps are spread all over the world. By forming political alliances, like NATO in the past and the Groups of 8 and 20, the imperialist powers try to control the relations between countries. The United

Nations, working completely in the hands of the top imperialist powers imposes sanctions and provides peace keeping forces to crush any anti-imperialist or nationality movements, as in Sri Lanka or Indonesia in the past.

The US accounts for about half of the world's military spending, twice more than its share of the world's output, points out John Bellamy Foster of Monthly Review. He elaborates on how, after 9/11, US foreign policy is talking about a war to secure a New American Century, where oppressed countries are viewed as "strategic assets". The number of US military bases has grown to about 140 now and in the last few years they have focused on Africa especially oil rich West Africa, a little shaken by China's rapid entry into areas there, like Angola, Congo and Nigeria. Militarization is blatant and naked now, a policy of "shock and awe" to flout all laws and use sheer force and violence to stun people psychologically into silence. Israel's bombardment of Lebanon and Gaza strip, irrespective of the fact that the Hezbollah and Hamas operate from amongst civilians and therefore bombing the civilian areas, are examples of this. (With this strategy, the number of millionaires in Israel has been constantly rising, reaching 8,409 recently!) In Syria, in 1982, then President Hafez el-Assad killed about 10,000 of his own countrymen to crush an uprising led by political Islamists in Hama. In other words, there are no rules of war or Geneva conventions to follow, no different sets of rules for fighting the armies of nation states and of non-state actors. Neither is there any concern for the death of large sections of the human race, through invisible structural violence and famine like conditions created by imperialism, or through direct acts of aggression and war.

In the desperate race for amassing wealth, the imperialist development model has led to a huge ecological crisis. Earth, the only known human habitat, is under grave threat of losing its basic conditions to enable the existence of life. Unbridled loot of mineral and natural resources, the creation of unwanted demands to forcibly sell products, rampant industrialization leading to the shrinking of water resources, global warming and climate change have placed environmental questions on the top of the agenda. This system that is totally unsustainable in itself also causes huge damages, losses and creates havoc when disasters like those of Chernobyl and Bhopal take place. We are aware of how Union Carbide has got away Scot free from the Bhopal Gas leak that maimed generations of people in India. The imperialist-backed model is continuously leading to growing internal militarization in areas where the local people, especially indigenous peoples, are resisting this kind of onslaught on the

resources and environment. For example, the Indian state is waging a war against its own people in Chhatisgarh, Jharkhand, Orissa and West Bengal where such resistance is going on, apart from the militarization of Kashmir and the Northeast. Memorandums of Understanding worth billions of dollars have been signed with innumerable multinational corporations to loot the iron ore, bauxite, coal, limestone, and even uranium in these areas, flouting all laws. And to quell the resistance, Operation Greenhunt has been launched against the Maoists, who have been named as terrorists, and 7300 crores have been allocated to militarize the area. Consequently, 3.5 lakh indigenous people have been displaced from about 650 villages, hundreds have been killed, women raped. In total, the Indian state is planning to use about a quarter of a million armed para-military forces in this “Operation” which is more than the number used by the US in Iraq.

But this desperate militarization is also a sign of weakness of the imperialist forces. Though, by using the tax payers’ money, American and European ruling classes are trying to bail out the companies facing a crisis, the facts show that the so-called recovery is only eyewash. In fact, the recession could be turning into depression, with rising joblessness and falling buying capacity. John Bellamy Foster also points out how the entire world economy is slowing. The economy of the US has gone down. In 1950, US accounted for about half of the world’s GDP, but in 2003, it was one fifth. In 1960, it accounted for about half of stock global foreign direct investment, but at the turn of the century, it was twenty per cent. When the financial crisis of 2008 had started, there was another heavy downslide as the rate of profits declined. Between January and October 2008, stock owners in US corporations had suffered about USD\$8 trillion in losses and those borne by other countries were about 40%. 81 US companies filed for bankruptcy in that period.

At the same time, late entrants into the foray like China are fast catching up. The formation of the European Union, the likelihood of cooperation between some European powers, Russia and China in central Asia, the challenge posed by Japan, are all contradictions that the US has to deal with. These nations’ powerful militaries along with the growth of nuclear and other technology used for warfare are a constant threat to the US, causing for example, confrontations with Iran as it objects to their uranium enrichment.

Besides, the nations and people have always fought back against imperialism. If Vietnam was the wonderful example of a small, agrarian country driving away the mighty strength of the US in the ‘70s, then the resistance of Iraq,

though very different from Vietnam, has been the victory story of this decade. Defeated in Iraq and almost so in Afghanistan, with Israel like a spoilt child in its hands, the US is certainly not headed to a bright future. The working people within the imperialist countries, faced with huge job losses, plagued by the problems of ecological crisis, appalled at the flouting of democratic norms by their governments and institutions, are also struggling against the system in diverse ways. Though today, the socialist forces are not well organized at an international level, the communist revolutionaries of various oppressed countries like Nepal, Philippines, India, Turkey, Peru, and Brazil are resisting imperialism, fighting the ruling classes in their own areas, and enriching the ideological questions of our time. The nationality movements of various oppressed nationalities and ethnic groups are also fighting for their rights. Political Islam is also giving a fight back to US imperialism.

If for imperialism there is no other option but militarization, death and destruction as the route to super-profits, for those resisting the injustice and believe in a future based on equality and true democracy, there is still hope. It is with this hope that thousands gathered in Toronto to protest at the G-20 meeting, risking arrests and violence. It is with this hope that hundreds are languishing in jails, chained by draconian laws or subjected to torture, rape and dispossession. It is with this hope that the poor and uneducated come out to fight against hunger, injustice and oppression, to make the world a better place.



IMPACTS ON  
WOMEN AND GIRLS



*Eni Lestari herself suffered abuses and exploitation as a migrant worker from Indonesia. She is now the Chairperson of the International Migrants Alliance.*



photo from  
<http://gfmd2010.wordpress.com>

## Impacts of the Economic Crisis on Women Migrants

Eni Lestari

Women comprise almost half or 49% of the total number of migrants in the world.<sup>1</sup> They work mainly in labor-intensive industries or in the service sector as domestic workers, caregivers, nurses, waitresses, or entertainers. Hundreds of thousands of women also become migrants by way of marriage such as in Taiwan, South Korea, Japan, USA, Canada, and in a number of countries in Europe.

While some may call this “feminization of migration”, IMA still prefers to call it forced labor migration. It is brought about by the worsening exploitation of women in their home countries where women, especially of worker and peasant origins, are continuously displaced from their jobs and lands and are thus forced to seek employment abroad - regardless of the type of job available, however indebted they can become in the process of migration, and however vulnerable to abuses they are made.

As part of imperialist strategies to curb the crisis it has itself created, migration is now being drumbeat as a way towards development. This framework is most apparent in the thrusts of the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD). A non-binding forum as it may be, it does not stop imperialists and their semi-colonies and colonies from using migration to push their neo-liberal concept of development. It does not address the root causes of forced migration and even further systematizes labor export. In fact, it is fast transforming governments of sending countries from being mere facilitators of human migration to direct seekers of job markets where the cheap labor of migrants can be exploited. Further commodification of migrants and the promotion of modern-day slavery is what GFMD will do. Clearly, exploitation of people is the only way for imperialists to curb the crisis and migrant workers – women migrant workers – are not spared.

One of the most immediate impacts of the economic crisis is the loss of livelihood of women migrants. Because of the crunch, many companies closed down or reduced their production. In the first few months alone after the crisis

erupted in 2008, there were reports of mass layoffs of migrant workers Taiwan, Malaysia, United Arab Emirates, and Macau. In Taiwan, more than 9,000 workers lost their jobs for the period of October to December 2008 alone. Some countries like the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and New Zealand even went out of their way to encourage companies that had to cut their work force to layoff foreign workers first. In these mass layoffs, migrant workers in the construction, manufacturing, and hotel and restaurant industries were some of the most heavily-affected. So is the situation even in countries like the United States, Ireland and Spain.

While thousands of migrant workers were terminated from their jobs, still many were maintained but with reduction to their wages and benefits. There were reductions in their working hours or the removal of free board and lodging as experienced by those under the Employment Permit System in South Korea. Meanwhile, workers in Australia under the 457 visa scheme that allowed companies to hire migrants for skills not readily available in Australia experienced a worsening of problems they were already suffering from such as unpaid wages, underpayment, higher wage deductions, and lesser benefits.

Restrictions in availability of jobs also became a norm in migrant-receiving states. Malaysia declared a ban on hiring foreign workers in factories, stores and restaurants while Macau disallowed giving supervisory positions to migrant workers in the gaming industry. These restrictions in the job market forced migrant workers to compete even for the most 3-D (dirty, dangerous and demeaning) of jobs. Many were forced to accept even the most inhumane conditions just so they could hold on to their jobs.

Social exclusion and discrimination against women migrants have also intensified. Xenophobia also became more rampant, as observed even by the International Labor Organization, with the mushrooming of discriminatory policies in host countries that aimed to further reduce the rights of migrant workers. In Hong Kong, for example, foreign domestic workers – mostly women and are live-in workers—were deliberately excluded by the government in a proposal for a statutory minimum wage (SMW) to the Legislative Council, thereby creating a subsector of the workers who do not enjoy one of the basic labor rights.<sup>1</sup> In Macau, there were attempts to implement two policies detrimental to migrant workers: the imposition of a levy on employers and the six-month re-entry ban for migrant workers who terminated their contracts. The campaign against these gained some concessions such as (1) the removal of penalties for migrant workers who terminated their contracts but were unable to report to

the authorities; and (2) the exemption of employers of foreign domestic workers from levy. However, the major anti-migrant and essentially discriminatory provisions of the policies remained.

Marriage migrants were not exempt from intensified discrimination and their problems have always been one of the most unattended. Policies for their protection are totally lacking even in countries where they constitute a big part of the married population. Stricter border control resulted to even stricter immigration rules that made the acquisition of permanent residency much more difficult for them.

Undocumented migrants are also facing the heat brought about by the crisis. Undocumented or irregular workers are again being made convenient scapegoats by a number of countries on the issue of rising unemployment and social problems among local workers. As such, crackdown operations again intensified in countries where they abound such as South Korea, Japan, and Malaysia. They were again projected as criminals who “steal” jobs and thus have to be arrested, detained under inhuman conditions, and summarily deported. In the first half of 2009 alone, 17,000 migrant workers were deported by the South Korean government.<sup>1</sup> In Europe, the European Union has approved for implementation the Return Directive that aims to deport hundreds of thousands of irregular workers, impose stiff penalties on the undocumented, detain arrested migrant workers, and pave the way to impose re-entry bans against migrants. Calls for amnesty or decriminalization are disregarded despite the fact that they still contribute hugely to their host countries’ economies and the fact that most of them were only forced to live and work as undocumented migrants by their abusive employers.

Migrant-sending countries whose economies are very much tied up and subservient to the interests of the imperialists are among the most severely affected by the economic crisis. Their economies are becoming even more unstable and the economic benefits they get from their nationals working abroad are also being threatened. Instead of re-evaluating the basic flaws in their social and economic structures and the adverse impacts of neo-liberal globalization, however, their governments opted to make their respective labor export programs more aggressive and systematic. Part of the further systematization was the drive to seek out more labor markets for their nationals either through bilateral labor agreements with migrant-receiving countries or by dishing out more incentives for bigger profits to private recruitment agencies. Both the

Philippine and Indonesian governments, for example, banned direct hiring to force migrants to go through private recruiters and placement agencies. This removes from their shoulders the responsibility of taking care of their nationals who encounter problems. Moreover, sending governments also institute income-generating schemes through new and more types of fees or hiking up the existing ones. With such fees, governments automatically earn millions of dollars both from current and new migrants.

For as long as the basic economic, political, and social setup of these countries remain, they will continuously rely on labor export to keep their economies afloat and put a stopper on the social volcano created by widespread and severe poverty and unemployment. For as long as all these exist, we, migrant workers, struggle.

The issues and concerns of women migrants are of topmost concerns of the International Migrants Alliance. Since our establishment, we made the women migrant's agenda among our major advocacy points.

In different countries, policies that further constrict the already limited rights of migrant workers are met by advocacy actions from the organized grassroots. Big rallies are held by migrants with many supported by local women's groups or trade unions, which includes the militant migrants movement of in Hong Kong fighting against exclusion to the SMW and other discriminatory policies and practices in Hong Kong; the campaign against unjust retrenchments by the united ranks of local workers in Taiwan, New Zealand and Australia; the fight against the immigration reform bill in Japan; and the unity of migrant workers in Europe against the EU Return Directive.

In the international field, the IMA co-organized the first and second International Assembly of Migrants and Refugees or IAMR as the grassroots-centered gathering to confront the GFMD. The GFMD, that will soon have its fourth run, is the current major arena for imperialists to dictate the design of migration and migrant workers. While giving lip service to the rights of migrants, its basic framework on development remains to be faithful to imperialist globalization and thus develops migration policies that do not only cover up the grave impacts of neoliberal policies on the people, but also actually perpetuate the structures where imperialist control and plunder can flourish. This year, the GFMD will be held in Mexico City and IMA, through the 3<sup>rd</sup> IAMR, will again be there to hold high the banner of the anti-imperialist movement of migrants and refugees.

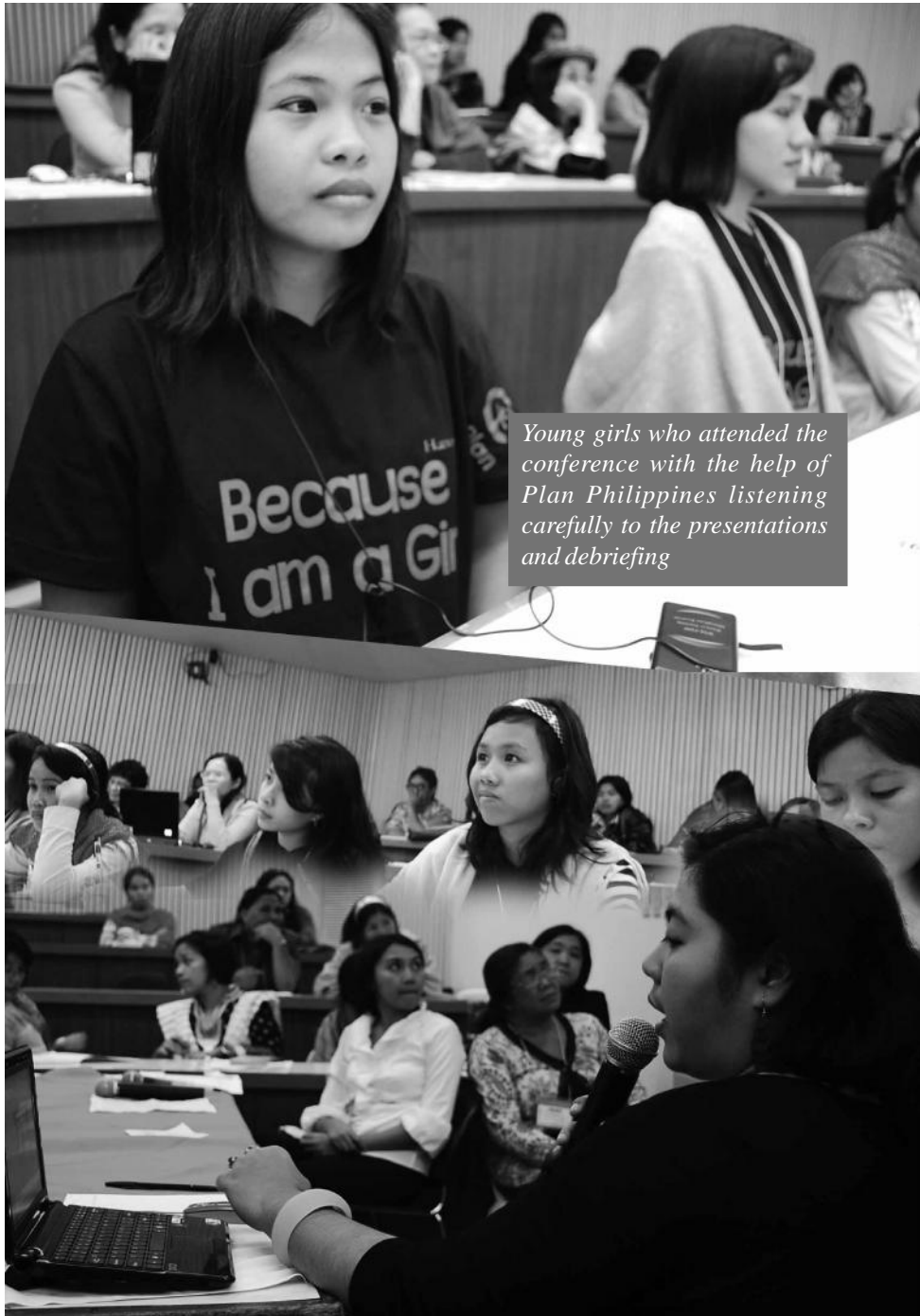
Aside from advocacy and education on the current situation impacting migrant workers, members of the IMA have also strengthened cooperation with service providers and advocates in order to respond to crisis situations of women migrants who were terminated from their jobs, have labor and immigration cases, have been victims of violence against women, or have no place to stay or mean to support themselves while in a foreign land.

To summarize and conclude the points, the economic crisis in the world today affects women migrants in two fronts. The first is as migrant workers in the countries where they are in and the second is as people of countries where they come from. In the host countries, migrants are made modern-day slaves. They are the disposable workers whose labor power is exploited and whose rights are arbitrarily withheld and violated through anti-worker and anti-migrants laws. In their home countries, they are nothing but mere commodities for sale. They are neglected in times of crisis and squeezed dry of their hard-earned money as long as they have the capacity to work abroad.

Indeed, women migrant workers have always been in crisis and the economic crunch has only made their situation worse. This is what we must confront and resist - together. For still, it is in our solidarity that our resistance can meet the onslaught of imperialists.

Long live the oppressed women of the world!

Long live international solidarity!



*Young girls who attended the conference with the help of Plan Philippines listening carefully to the presentations and debriefing*

## Because I am a Girl: The Impact of Global Economic Shocks on Girls and Young Women

Sarah Hendriks

Over the next decade, today's 600 million adolescent girls, the largest group in history, will make the transition to young adulthood and play critical economic roles in the households, communities, and labor markets of their countries. Currently, however, as Plan's research on the plight of girls and young women over the last three year shows, these cohort of girls are actually among the most vulnerable people in their communities. In most of the world's low income countries, they are likely to be less fed, less educated, less likely to own land or property, and less able to make a living than their brothers. The global community now faces the tremendous challenge of preparing the world's adolescent girls to take hold of economic opportunities and decent work so that they can emerge to young adulthood as *successful economic citizens* (ILO, 2006).

The current generation of girls has had more access to education than any other through concerted global efforts - with 83% of girls now in primary schools. This is certainly something to celebrate today on International Women's Day. But young women's share of employment and decent work has not kept pace. There is a stark disconnect in translating educational gains into gainful employment or decent work and, consequently, the gender gap in labor force participation far exceeds the gender gap in education (Lloyd, 2009; Buvinic et al., 2007).

The economic crisis has made this gap even more severe, propelling girls and young women to new and heightened realms of discrimination, vulnerability and risk. Through reliable, compelling case studies and the voices of girls themselves, Plan's annual report: *Because I am a Girl: Girls in the Global Economy* shows convincingly how girls and young women are being impacted by the vast changes in today's global economy. Economic shocks involve opportunity, costs, and trade-offs that are especially severe among those already discriminated against, including those already over-represented in informal, vulnerable, and casual employment: the world's girls and young women (Oxfam, 2010). Although the global economy is showing some tentative signs of recovery



from the financial crisis, many have predicted that we can expect economic crises with regional and global repercussions to become more common in the coming decades.

Emerging research on the intersection of age and gender coupled with evidence from past financial crises, paints a good picture of the economic, care economy and schooling, and gender-specific impacts on girls and young women.

### **Economic Impacts**

*“When the Asian financial crisis struck in 1997... there were massive job cuts. We are likely to see the same trend now, since this fresh crisis is global.” - Connie Bragas-Regalado, maid in Hong Kong for 13 years*

There is a significant danger that the gains made for young women in the labor market will reverse as a result of the global recession. In many developing countries, the current economic crisis is having a negative impact on young women just as they were beginning to make inroads into the labor market (Grown, 2010). Young women workers who are part of the so called flexible workforce were easily discarded during economic downturns. Those employed in export-related sectors are often the first to lose their jobs and the last to be re-hired. In the Philippines, it was found that 7 out of 10 workers being laid off due to the impact of the financial crisis in 2009 were women - most of them young women working in export processing zones (Sharma, 2009).

Evidence from previous financial crises has shown that there are different effects at different times on men and women, young and old. For example, during the Asian financial crisis in 1997, the International Labor Organization (ILO) said that women were more vulnerable to dismissal because male employers believed them to be secondary income earners and used this as a pretext for dismissing them first. Women were laid off and then sometimes rehired on a piecemeal basis. Many young female domestic workers lost their jobs and more than half of those sent home were women (Tauli-Corpuz, 1998). The crisis also had a negative impact on small-scale farmers in Asia, many of whom were women. They had to leave their jobs and find work where they had fewer rights. In addition, children, especially girls, had less to eat and were less likely to go to school. In Indonesia and Thailand, child labor increased, child wages fell, and more children were forced to become sex workers (Waddington, 2005).

Today, employment in all countries is not expected to return to pre-crisis levels until 2017—that is seven more years (Grown, 2010). Youth unemployment is already at the highest rate on record. It is estimated that 1.3 billion young people will enter the global labor force over the next decade – the largest cohort of job seekers in history (Plan, 2010). Youth already represent as much as 40% of the world’s total unemployed. If this trend continues, an estimated 95 million young people will be unemployed by the year 2015 (Plan, 2010). Because of the impact on young women, some have predicted that this could be the world’s ‘first fully feminized recession’.

And it is not just the formal labor force that is being affected: the financial crisis has pushed older adolescent girls working in small-scale enterprises or the informal economy further into poverty. Young women wanting to start their own business will likely face increasing difficulties if banks tighten their micro-lending requirements. While the informal economy tends to expand during a recession this does not mean that informal work is functioning in the best interest of young people. This is especially true for those girls and young women who work in domestic service—the least regulated and protected sectors. ILO estimates that there are more girls under 16 years old in domestic service than in any other type of work.

### **Care Economy and its Trade-offs for Girls**

*“Economic crisis is most threatening to girls’ rights because, as what I have observed in our community oftentimes, it is the girl who is asked to sacrifice her education when the family faces a financial problem” - 19-year old woman from the Philippines*

The consequences of global economic shocks are felt especially at home, where girls’ burden of unpaid care work has steadily increased. This has significant trade-offs in terms of their time, freedom, and schooling. Girls already spend between 33% and 85% more time than their brothers on unpaid care work that enables household economies to function, and entire national economies to thrive (Levine, 2008). If families are short of money during economic downturns, they are most likely to pull their daughters instead of their sons out of school to look after the household and take care of their younger siblings. A study on the effect of household income shocks on schooling in rural Uganda showed that girls who had left school rarely returned, and those that had been impacted by previous economic shocks to the household income performed worse than boys on tests, suggesting that economic shocks negatively affect not only the amount of time girls spend in school but the quality of their education (Bjorkman, 2007).

The issue of unpaid care work - hauling water, collecting firewood, taking care of siblings - is about the trade offs in girls' time and social networks which are critical assets girls need to become future economic actors. As girls transition to adolescence, their lives can become more and more focused on 'inside' household chores, which separates girls from the outside world of friendships and social outlets. The impact on girls carries legacies far into their adult years, especially in terms of girls' ability to develop relevant skills, build safe social networks, and acquire the capabilities they need to take hold of future market opportunities.

*There is a saying that goes: 'The youth is the hope of the nation.' How can we build a good and progressive nation if our children are forced to stop schooling because of work? How can we build a bright tomorrow if we are not given a bright today?" Analon, 16, Vice President, Cabuyagan Active Children's Association, the Philippines*

### Gender-specific Impacts

*"Most girls turn to sell their rights because of economic crises" - 19-year old woman from Cameroon).*

Adolescent girls are increasingly vulnerable to trafficking, domestic violence, and sexual exploitation in the context of economic shocks. Evidence from the 1997 Asian financial crisis showed that many young women were forced into the sex trade—as sex workers, escorts, and karaoke singers—after they lost their jobs. In Jakarta (Indonesia) alone it is estimated that two to four times more women became sex workers in the year immediately after the crisis. Sexual exploitation in the workplace also is likely to increase. A study by the Center for Women's Resources in the Philippines showed that women may be so desperate to keep their jobs that they are forced to tolerate the sexual advances of those who have the power to hire and fire.

### What Can be Done?

*"We keep on talking about the fact that 'crisis is opportunity'. Here is an opportunity in the policies we are undertaking for the crisis. Here is our chance to address the adolescent girl issue and make sure that girls do not lose the chance for education." (Mari Pangestu, Minister of Trade, Government of Indonesia).*

Plan's *Because I am a Girl* report provides an overarching rationale for why investing in girls' economic empowerment should be at the heart of the poverty reduction agenda and efforts to restore global economic stability. The

lack of concerted and strategic investment is not only a personal tragedy for each and every young woman, it has been called an 'irrational gap' and a financial disaster for struggling economies. Each year, these countries lose billions of dollars because of failing to invest strategically and specifically in girls and young women.

Invest in just one girl and we see income growth at the household level. Give girls the skills and opportunities they need in life and as a woman and they will pass them on to their children—and they will be more likely to survive and go to school.

Economic empowerment for girls and young women is about their capacity to make strategic life choices, for example, about going to school, getting a job, learning a skill, spending disposable income, investing their savings, purchasing assets, or starting a business. At each stage of a girl's life there *is* something we can do to safeguard her future and build the assets she needs as she makes the transition from her early years, through adolescence and to young womanhood. Fiscal stimulus packages need to ensure that young women and targets for gender equality do not become victims of the global recession.

Two areas where public expenditure is urgently needed are reducing the school-to-work transition gap and reducing the property asset gap for girls.

Adolescent girls need more than basic skills to participate in the global economy. They need business know-how, life skills, technology-based education, and other broad-based skills tied to real market opportunities. These skills must be built on a secure education base that equips girls with market-relevant skills. It is therefore necessary to:

- ✓ **Invest in expanding post-primary education for adolescent girls:** There is a need to bring renewed focus and international attention to quality and relevant post-primary (secondary) education for girls as this decade's key development priority. The transition to secondary school must become as natural and inevitable as entry into primary school. This requires girl-friendly learning environments and facilities that serve the needs of adolescent girls.
- ✓ **Strengthen opportunities for post-primary education for adolescent girls.** This is especially critical for the cohort of adolescent girls to make a successful transition to remunerative work. But it is not just a matter of getting adolescent girls into school—it is the kind and quality of education they receive which really makes the difference in

terms of school-to-work transitions. Girls should see their future economic possibilities both in the books they read and the career guidance they receive so that they are encouraged to learn skills in subjects that are more relevant to labor market opportunities, including ICTs.

- ✓ **Make schooling a place for girls to learn critical life and financial skills-to be confident, entrepreneurial, and resilient.** Girls need school curricula that build their financial literacy skills so they can learn about savings options, wise spending, managing money, legal rights, and other skills.
- ✓ **Ensure increased access and control over productive assets** Adolescent girls and young women need increased access and control over productive assets, especially in times of financial crisis. Assets like land or property have been shown to be more important than income in times of crisis for buffering the influence of economic shocks. We know that girls are almost never considered future economic actors and are not identified as inheritors of property or future owners of family land. We also know that girls' economic futures would be vastly different if they were able to secure equal rights to property and land ownership, helping them to access credit and invest in small businesses later on. In line with this, there is a need to **ensure that inheritance, land and property laws treat girls fairly** and are aligned with international human rights standards. We also need to invest in research and data collection on the gender differences in asset and land ownership for girls.

To conclude, unlocking the economic potential of the 600 million adolescent girls and young women is a real opportunity to unleash their capabilities and make a major dent in global poverty. As Queen Rania of Jordan has said, "*Put simply, changing the trajectory for girls can change the course of the future.*"

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*Vernie Yocogan-Diano is the executive director of Cordillera Women's Education Action Research Center, a non-governmental organization engaged in organizing, education, and services among indigenous women in the Cordillera Region, Philippines.*

## The Indigenous Women's Experience in Cordillera

Vernie Yocogan-Diano

This study done in 2002 by the Cordillera Women's Education Action Research Center (CWEARC) and Innabuyog, alliance of indigenous women's organizations in the Cordillera region, is about the impact of militarization on indigenous women and children in Cordillera. It started in 1999 when the Innabuyog chapter in Kalinga began their documentation of women and children abandoned by government soldiers, through the encouragement of Mr. Eddie Daguitan of the Cordillera Peoples' Alliance-Kalinga and the Montanosa Research and Development Center (MRDC). It was published in February 2003 in CWEARC's bi-annual publication, Chaneg.

The study covered the period 1986 to 2002, after the Marcos dictatorship and the three regimes that followed, all of whom had their respective counter-insurgency programs through a military operation plan or OPLAN:

- a. The Corazon Aquino regime (1986 to 1992, while internationally known as the government that installed democracy in the Philippines after the dark years of Martial Rule, actually executed a total war policy with the launching statement, "when it becomes necessary to take out the sword of war...I want a string of honorable victories". The announcement came after the collapse of the peace talks between the Government of the Philippines and the National Democratic Front during the annual commencement exercises of the Philippine Military Academy on March 23, 1987.
- b. The Fidel V. Ramos regime (1992 to 1997), having served as the Secretary of National Defense during the Aquino regime and being a psychological warfare expert, shifted to the use of "soft approach" or a combination of civic-military operations to win people's hearts and minds. The shift was urged by the massive human rights campaign at local and national levels during the Aquino regime to stop militarization. Indigenous peoples' organizations particularly cited the ethnocidal effects of militarization on indigenous communities.

- c. The Estrada regime (1997 to 2001) went back to the hard approach of launching an all-out war policy. It was during this time that Cordillera soldiers and officers were consciously brought back to their own towns or villages, especially to areas perceived as “rebel strongholds”, to become “agents of peace”. It adopted and sustained the tactics used by the Ramos regime which made use of literacy, sports development for the youth, infrastructure, living with families and rebel returnees program among others.
- d. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo (2001 to 2010) has just commenced its deadly Operation Plan Freedom Watch at the time of the research.

The 16 years of militarization by these four regimes showed various forms of violations of individual and collective rights. Impact on women and children were far worse as indicated by the table below of 178 different cases of human rights violations against women and children, affecting 17,114 individuals and 3,564 other families, in 765 areas or groups. (see table 1)

Though there were adjustments in the approaches and strategies of these regimes in their counter-insurgency campaigns, there is no essential difference on the nature and objective of such operations and their impact on the people. Operations were jointly carried out by the military and police along with para-military units and their intelligence networks. From all accounts, the indigenous villagers’ militarization experience in the Cordillera is agonizing. The harrowing ordeal has undoubtedly struck on the minds of the victims and may hound them for the rest of their lives.

Whereas in the Cordillera indigenous culture women and children are guaranteed protection in times of conflict (in the days of tribal wars, it was a rule not to include women and children as targets, hence among the Kalinga and Bontoc women, they sported tattoos to tell they are women), they are defenseless open targets during military offensives. Indigenous women suffer particular effects of militarization and suffer specific forms of abuses because they are women. Children comprise another disadvantaged group. There were operations when the young people were used as human shields or even as guides by operating soldiers. Forms of sexual opportunism and abuse such as sexual harassment and rape have been used as part of the systematic attack against indigenous women and their villages.

**Table 1.**  
**Documented Cases of Human Rights Violations Committed Against Women and Children in the Cordillera region, 1986 to 2002**

Type of Violations	Total Number of Cases	Number of Affected	
		Individuals	Area/Group affected with no indicated number of individuals affected
1. Harassment	18	19 (and 149 members of 2 groups)	4
2. Illegal Arrest and Detention and Search	11	20	
3. Physical injuries	8	10	1
4. Extra-judicial killings	13	14	
5. Massacre		8	
6. Frustrated massacre		6	
7. Use as human shield	5	29	1
8. Indiscriminate firing/shelling, bombing	31	4,348 individuals and 715 other families	32
9. Evacuation/dislocation	21	9,119 and 1,064 other families	10
10. Hamletting	2	37	1
11. Destruction/divestment of properties	25	2,038 and 203 other families	24
12. Illegal detachment			1
13. Forced labor			1
14. Psychological stress/trauma/warshock	4 (24)	18 (1,200 individuals and 1,582 families)	20
15. Reproductive health complications	8	8	
16. Death of children (evacuation/bombing)	4	91	
<b>Total Number</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>17,114 individuals and 3,564 other families</b>	<b>765 groups/areas</b>

**Table 2. Abandoned Women and Children by Government Soldiers According to Period in the Research Areas in Kalinga, Abra and Mountain Province, Cordillera Region**

Year	Abandoned Women		Abandoned Children	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Pre-1986	47	47.96	52	44.07
1986-1992	14	14.29	22	18.65
1993-1998	16	16.32	15	12.72
1999-2000	5	5.1	9	7.64
2001-2002	2	2.04	1	0.9
Undetermined	14	14.29	20	16.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 3. Abandoned Women and Children by Government Soldiers According to Province**

Area	Abandoned Women		Abandoned Children	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Abra	31	31.64	40	33.9
Kalinga	58	59.18	72	60.16
Mt. Province	9	9.18	7	5.94
<b>Total</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>100</b>

### Use of Women by the Military to Entrench in Communities

Through the tactic of winning people’s hearts and minds, the military used women to embed themselves in communities. Establishing sexual relationship and eventually marriage with local women was a way for them to get acceptance and protection in the communities. Particularly in Lacub in the province of Abra, food such as noodles and chocolates were dangled by the military in the early 1990s, taking advantage of the economic crisis at that time, to lure young women.

The study documented cases of 98 women and 119 children abandoned by 103 soldiers stationed in communities of the Cordillera, particularly in the provinces of Abra, Mountain Province, and Kalinga, where prolonged military presence occurred from 1986 to 2002. Soldiers consciously built relationships with local women, eventually impregnating or marrying them.

While some of the soldiers married the women either through indigenous custom or through mainstream legal procedures, many among them just made arrangements with the families of the women to become live-in partners. Many were short-lived relationships, with soldiers leaving their women partners and children once they are transferred to another destination.

There was even a case where 3 soldiers had a simultaneous affair with one woman, all of them left her just the same. Some of the soldiers sired as many as three to four children. The earliest recorded case was in 1979 and the latest documented case in this study was in 2002. Some of the women found out later in their relationship that the soldiers were either previously married or had affairs with other women elsewhere. They also found out that these soldiers had children with other women besides those born by them.

**Table 4. Documented Cases of Sexual Opportunism Against Women and Children in the Cordillera region 1986-2002**

Types of Violation	Total Number of Cases	Total Number of Affected	
		Individual	Group
1. Sexual Opportunism**	25		
a. Gang rape		2	
b. Rape		7	
c. attempted rape		3	
d. sexual harassment		11	1
e. made as “comfort women”		1	
2. Abandoned by Government Soldiers	221*		
a. Women		98	
b. Children		119	
<b>Total</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>1</b>

\*A total of 98 women were abandoned by 103 soldiers; there were 2 cases where 2 women were abandoned twice involving 2 soldiers and a case of a woman abandoned by 3 different soldiers. The total number of cases of abandoned women and children is 221.

\*\* Sexual opportunism - a collective term to denote the different forms of behavior or acts that are sexual in nature which are committed to women such as rape and sexual harassment with the intention to coerce, intimidate or terrorize the women. This also includes building relationship with women and eventually abandoning them along with the children they sired.

Women who tried to report their cases to military superiors were not successful in their efforts to demand justice and compensation from the soldiers involved. Only a few actually provided support, and in these few cases, the monthly support was not enough to cover even just the food expense of their children. Soldiers who were said to have been meted disciplinary action were only actually transferred to another unit or location. There were only two cases of soldiers reported dismissed from the service because the women and their families pursued their cases against them.

The military institution condoned these acts, justifying that their men deserve a little enjoyment, having to bear the loneliness of being away from their families for long periods and of sacrificing their lives for the sake of the country. In reaction to the study, military officers challenged the women victims to file formal complaints.

### **Rape as a Tool of War**

In the same study, CWEARC documented 25 cases of various forms of sexual opportunism from 1986 to 2002, which includes 7 cases of rape, 2 cases of gang rape, 3 cases of attempted rape, 12 cases of sexual harassment, and 1 case of “comfort women”.

The experience in the Cordillera shows how rape is used as an instrument in humiliating and impressing on the powerlessness of women and their communities. Gang rape is a characteristic of military rape where most perpetrators are acquitted if the case is ever lodged in court (which indicates the low sensitivity of the Philippine judiciary system to women) or blame is even put on the victim. Such conditions would rather keep the women victims silent and make their families vulnerable to settlements which are usually not on just terms, just to avoid further humiliation.

### **Usefulness of the Research**

The study, having been widely used in the advocacy and campaigns of the indigenous women’s movement in the Cordillera through Innabuyog, forced military officers assigned in the region at that time to give their reaction. Their response was for these women victims to submit their complaints to the “proper bodies”. The report was also presented to the Philippine Mission of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of Indigenous Peoples Dr. Rodolfo Stavenhagen in December 2002,

who then put forth the following recommendations to the Philippine Government:

- that the Philippine Government carries out a prompt and effective investigation of the numerous human rights violations committed against indigenous peoples that have been documented by human rights organizations and special fact-finding missions; and
- that the government takes all necessary measures to prevent a recurrence of human rights violations and take maximum caution to protect indigenous peoples’ rights during its military operations in accordance with international humanitarian standards;

The study was a valuable material in community-based women’s rights trainings and activities and served as a big lesson and caution for women living in militarized areas. The study was shared and presented in various forums on women and human rights at the local, national, and international events.

It is definite, however, that the military will not quit using women in their wars against movements for social justice and change. We are challenged ever more to frustrate such military tactic and pursue in a tireless work of arousing, organizing, and mobilizing the women and our communities against militarization and aggressive wars.



# SURVIVAL AND RESISTANCE







*Mary Joan Guan is an activist working on human rights for two decades. She is a writer and also a film maker on women and children's issues. She is currently the executive director of the Center for Women's Resources.*

## Women in Asia: Surviving and Resisting the Crisis

Mary Joan Guan

Women in Asia faced several challenges during the past couple of years, particularly during the 2007 global economic and financial crises. Economically, they were one of the hardest hit by the mass retrenchment in industries that hire women. They suffered even more with the successive climate disasters, on top of the prevailing political repression and gender discrimination in the region.

Yet, women survive, persist, and resist. Amidst this multicultural region, they display commonalities are discovering the merit of collective effort to change their situation.

### **Triple Threat**

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) stated that countries in Asia and the Pacific are hit hardest with a triple whammy of food and fuel price increase, climate change, and the global economic crisis.<sup>1</sup>

The triple threat can be traced to imperialist globalization that perpetually haunts Asia and the rest of the world. Women, together with children, receive severe blows because of their status as among the most marginalized sectors in society. The International Labor Organization calculated an increase of 50-120 million in the number of Asians living below poverty line from 2007 to 2009.<sup>2</sup> Approximately, 70% of those who live on less than a dollar each day are women.<sup>3</sup>

The triple threat exacerbates the vulnerability of women, as shown by the following impacts:

#### *1. Increased unemployment especially among those working in export-oriented countries*

As workers, women in the region barely have resources to recover from the crisis because of gender-specific inequalities in the labor markets. They have limited economic buffer because they are regarded as “flexible reserve”,<sup>4</sup> to be hired massively during upturns and first to be expelled during downturns.

In an uneven playing field of globalization, the rules of the game are imposed by the highly industrialized countries with which developing countries have no choice but to comply. Free trade and absence of barriers and safety nets become the mantra of the global market, which, of course, includes the emerging Asian economies.

Inevitably, when the 2007 economic crisis exploded, the Asian economies were harshly hit and felt the effect of the downturn in 2009. Table 1 shows that most of the reported growth rate of developing economies in the region such as Pakistan, Philippines, and Indonesia could not keep up with the increasing inflation and unemployment rate.

**Table 1. Growth, Inflation, and Unemployment Rates  
Performance of Selected Asian Economies,  
First Quarter period, 2008 – 2010, (in percentage)**

COUNTRY	GROWTHRATE			INFLATIONRATE			UNEMPLOYMENTRATE		
	'08	'09	'10	'08	'09	'10	'08	'09	'10
Japan	1.20	(15.80)	5.00	0.80	(0.10)	(1.20)	3.98	5.00	5.10
Indonesia	2.40	1.68	1.90	10.38	6.04	4.16	8.45	8.40	7.41
China	10.60	6.20	11.9	7.70	(1.40)	3.10	4.00	4.30	4.20
India	8.50	5.80	8.60	7.81	8.70	13.33	7.20	6.80	7.32
Thailand	1.60	(1.60)	3.80	7.60	(3.30)	3.50	1.52	1.89	0.96
Malaysia	(1.50)	(7.80)	(2.60)	3.80	2.40	1.60	3.60	4.00	3.70
Hongkong	1.50	(4.30)	2.40	5.70	0.00	2.50	3.30	5.30	4.60
Singapore	17.60	(11.00)	38.60	7.50	0.20	3.20	1.90	3.20	2.20
Pakistan	4.10	2.00	2.00	19.27	14.39	13.07	5.30	5.20	5.50
Vietnam	8.50	6.20	5.30	(8.30)	24.40	6.90	4.30	4.70	2.90
Cambodia	10.10	5.00	(1.50)	5.90	19.70	(1.00)	2.50	3.50	3.50
Philippines	10.60	7.70	7.30	6.40	6.40	4.40	8.00	7.50	8.00

Sources: AJISS, [www.tradingeconomics.com](http://www.tradingeconomics.com), CIA World Factbook, [www.indexmundi.com](http://www.indexmundi.com), Philippine NSO and BLES, 1Q 2010

As workers comprising 60-80% of the population in the hardest hit industries of export manufacturing, garments, electronics, and services, women were the first ones to lose their jobs. According to the Asian Development Bank, job losses in these industries hit 80% of women compared to 20% of men.<sup>5</sup>

## 2. Aggravating exploitation in the workplace

Companies took advantage of the global economic and financial crisis to exploit more by imposing lower wages, longer work hours, and unhealthy working environment. In West Java, Indonesia, women who have worked in a factory for 8 to 14 years had been dismissed, citing the crisis as the reason. It turned out that the factory subsequently hired younger workers who agreed to work on flexible, lower-pay arrangements including short term contracts or internships.<sup>6</sup> In Cambodia, women workers can have access to overtime work only five days a month compared to 20-25 days per month before the 2007 economic downturn.<sup>7</sup>

Since jobs are so scarce and women wish to be retained in their work, some employers use this leverage to abuse and sexually harass their workers, just like what happened to the Filipino women workers of Bleustar Manufacturing & Marketing Corporation, maker of Advan shoes and boots.<sup>8</sup> Aside from giving low wages and banning the union, the shoe company's owner made sexual advances to the female workers. Almost 90% of the female employees experienced being kissed or fondled by the owner. Eventually, the workers staged a strike in August 2008 and after a month, they won the case and their victory resulted in the recognition of their union, the reinstatement of illegally dismissed workers, and the formation of the Committee of Decorum and Investigation in their workplace.<sup>9</sup>

## 3. Lower remittances to their families

Women's role in Asian societies continues to be defined primarily within the household, whether she is working or not. Women are known as care providers. They are traditionally expected to safeguard their families, which sometimes could even be extended to their parents-in-law or other relatives. Most importantly, women's incomes in poorer households are very important for augmenting the meager family budget and their contributions are allotted for the family's subsistence, almost leaving nothing for their personal needs.

Thus, many women migrate to urban centers in their countries or go abroad to send money to their families back home. With the crisis, there have been internal and external reductions in demand for migrant workers resulting in the decline of remittances and consequently affecting their families who are dependent on these.

A survey of garment workers in Cambodia revealed that women earned 18% less in real terms between May 2008 and May 2009 and their remittances to families in rural areas fell by 6%.<sup>10</sup> The Philippines, a country largely dependent on foreign remittances, saw a decline of 6.67% in remittances from the migrant workers in the United Arab Emirates, the second largest remitter from the Middle East.<sup>11</sup>

Many migrant workers – in-country and abroad – were forced to return home without any employment opportunity, resulting in less money available for food, education, maternal health and childcare, among other family needs.

#### *4. Insecurity on food and other resources*

More so, women make up a larger proportion of the agricultural workforce, comprising 65% in Asia.<sup>12</sup>

They are the principal producers of primary staple foods (rice, wheat, and maize), which account for 60-80% of foods in most less developed countries.<sup>13</sup> But because of the economic downturn plus the devastating floods and droughts in the region, food production is under threat. And as land is converted into commercial centers and water sources being dried up by climate change, women and girls have to look for other means to survive.

#### *5. Increased vulnerability to sex trafficking and prostitution*

Exploiters and human traffickers thrive in crisis victimizing many women and girls who migrate to urban centers, local or abroad, in search for jobs. Women are deceived into situations of forced labor or commercial sexual exploitation. In Thailand, there was a remarkable 20% increase (from 10,507 cases to 12,562) in cases of prostitution between the first quarter of 2008 and the first quarter of 2009.<sup>14</sup> Indonesian migrant workers, who were retrenched and became undocumented, were trapped into prostitution.<sup>15</sup>

#### *6. Lesser access to education, health, and other social services*

As women are responsible for providing daily essentials such as food and water, their workload increases when disaster strikes and they tend to miss out on opportunities. In dire straits, families do not have enough income for education and health as every member of the family should work – even school-age children – to supplement scarce household incomes. In India, for example, women born during a drought or a flood in the 1970s were 19% likely to ever attend primary school.<sup>16</sup>

## **Coping Strategies**

Crisis magnifies existing inequalities and makes access to basic needs and services a challenge. As part of the marginalized sectors, women make an effort to look for means of survival, always taking into consideration the wellbeing of their families. Such consideration puts a lot of pressure on women.

Women in the region, particularly in Southeast Asia, have common mechanisms in responding to the crisis. As shown in Table 2, women reduce their own and their families' food consumption and even resort to buying cheaper, non-nutritious food. They also resort to borrowing from loan sharks, well-off relatives and friends, and finance institutions. Many of them take on multiple jobs or stick to informal employment.

Some of the mechanisms they opt are, in the long run, detrimental rather than beneficial to them. Table 2 also shows that some even resort to anti-social strategies such as drug dealing and prostitution, just like in Thailand. Women especially belonging to the lowest income bracket could not afford to be unemployed for they have no savings and no social security to fall back on. Especially when the crisis intensifies and the cost of living rises, women pursue to work even more and accept any work available, regardless of the conditions and consequences.

On the other hand, they also work out constructive strategies. One significant example is that by Vietnamese women, who maximized the spirit of sharing and collectivism. They think not only of themselves when jobs are available but instead, share it with others, bearing in mind that each of them needs to give remittances to their families. In this way, the insecurity and depression of the workers are lessened.

Support from others enables women to cope even with the most depressing situation. The social cost of the crisis includes increased breakdown in family relationships. In Indonesia, women who lost their jobs have faced divorce and domestic violence<sup>17</sup> but were able to survive through the social networks that supported them through money loans as well as food and child care provision.<sup>18</sup>

Prostitution, although articulated only in Thailand and Indonesia as a last recourse for survival, has been a long standing issue in each of the countries in the region. It is indicative of a feudal patriarchal society that considers women as commodities and sex objects. Women who have fewer opportunities to get jobs become more vulnerable to become victims of prostitution. In the

Philippines where climate change has caused a reduction in income from farming and fishing, there have been reports of some women that being driven into prostitution. Small brothels have reportedly appeared near the coastal areas where women are hired by transient seafarers for sexual favors and are often ferried to bigger ships by their pimps.<sup>19</sup>

**Table 2. Coping Strategies of Selected Southeast Asian Countries**

Source: Oxfam Research Report 2010, CWR Survey on Poverty and Coping Mechanisms 2009

COUNTRY	COPING STRATEGIES
<b>Cambodia</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reducing expenditure on essential commodities</li> <li>▪ Consuming less than before especially on food</li> <li>▪ Borrowing from friends, relatives; taking out loans</li> <li>▪ Sharing rented accommodation or staying with relatives</li> <li>▪ Migration to Phnom Penh and other urban areas to work</li> <li>▪ Purchasing food on credit</li> <li>▪ Eliminating expenditure on health</li> <li>▪ Pulling children out of school</li> </ul>
<b>Indonesia</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Working in the informal sector: selling fried food or local workshop, collecting plastic glasses, trading school uniforms</li> <li>▪ (those who have regular work) Taking up additional/ multiple jobs</li> <li>▪ In the interior, trying to find other work through outsourcing or contract work in factories</li> <li>▪ Singing in small bars/ working as entertainer</li> <li>▪ Engaging in prostitution</li> <li>▪ Limiting food intake</li> <li>▪ Borrowing money</li> <li>▪ (for mothers) substituting formula milk with tea or water with sugar</li> <li>▪ Selling assets</li> <li>▪ Internal and external migration</li> </ul>
<b>Thailand</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Going back to the provinces and trying to start a small business</li> <li>▪ Decreasing health expenditures and taking self-medication</li> <li>▪ Slashing budget: children dropping out of school, transferring children from private to public schools; keeping track of household expenses; reducing recreational activities; refraining from buying clothes or cosmetics</li> </ul>

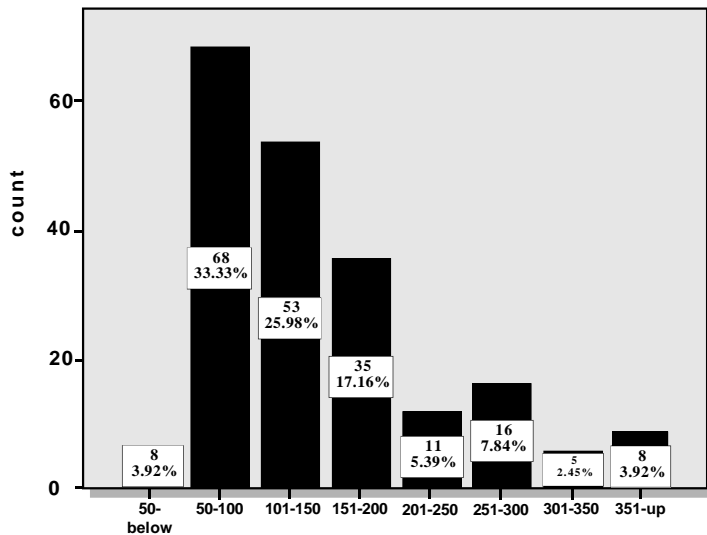
COUNTRY	COPING STRATEGIES
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Purchasing goods in second-hand outlets (especially on outfits)</li> <li>▪ Sharing responsibilities with siblings in supporting the elderly or parents; Decreasing personal expenses to continue supporting parents</li> <li>▪ Getting loans from loan sharks</li> <li>▪ Entering prostitution and other anti-social acts like drug dealing</li> <li>▪ Walking instead of commuting; taking free public buses</li> </ul>
<b>Vietnam</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Job sharing among day laborers in Hanoi (even for less income)</li> <li>▪ Borrowing money from each other during lean/ idle days</li> <li>▪ Social networking and accessing community-based assistance: providing job information and sharing mobile phones</li> <li>▪ Going back to the rural provinces</li> <li>▪ Accepting supplementary, low-paid and less productive jobs: garbage picking or any odd jobs on the street</li> <li>▪ Working part time (due to reduced work hours and overtime payment) or “on call” basis as temporary employees</li> <li>▪ Studying/ enrolling in a training course</li> <li>▪ Migrating</li> </ul>
<b>Philippines</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Changing food consumption patterns: Skipping meals, lessening food intake, buying cheaper, non-nutritious food (eg. Instant noodles,); eating mostly porridge; using with condiments (soy sauce, salt, fish paste) as viand; buying ready-to-eat meals on a per piece basis; recycling used or eaten food (“pagpag”, “ukay-ukay”)</li> <li>▪ Saving on utilities: Opting to have no electricity and less consumption of water; preferring wood and charcoal instead of LPG in cooking</li> <li>▪ Slashing budget for food, utilities, education, health, clothing, recreation</li> <li>▪ Taking on odd jobs through the informal sector: selling merchandise or food, accepting laundry work, putting up mini-retail stores (sari-sari stores)</li> <li>▪ Taking on extra work or sub-contract work</li> <li>▪ Asking support from more affluent relatives</li> <li>▪ Borrowing from friends or applying for loans from lending institutions, microfinance programs, loan sharks; or making ATM (automated teller machine) cards as collaterals</li> <li>▪ Joining reality TV game shows</li> </ul>

## Coping: The Filipina Way

The Center for Women's Resources (CWR) conducted a poverty and coping mechanism survey in the Philippines in 2009.<sup>20</sup> The survey covered the most impoverished urban poor communities in Metro Manila, Davao City, Butuan City, Bacolod City, and General Santos City, and other selected rural poor communities in the provinces such as Nueva Vizcaya, Sorsogon, and Aurora.

The latest record for the living wage or daily-cost-of-living for a family of six in the Philippines is US\$19<sup>21</sup> while the nominal minimum wage (including emergency cost of living allowance or COLA) is only US\$8 in the National Capital Region (NCR) alone, translating to a wage gap of US\$11. This also means that the nominal minimum wage is only 42 percent of the living wage. Real minimum wage is at US\$5 in NCR with 2000 as the baseline year. The amount is lower in the country's provinces.

**Graph 1.**  
Food Expenditure of Respondents



The living condition of the respondents is way below the abovementioned living wage. On a daily basis, 32.22% of the respondents spend US\$2 or less, 25.98% spend US\$4 or less, while 17.16% spend US\$5 or less. Majority of the respondents said that a large chunk of the family's income is spent on food and most often, their food expenditure exceeds the family's daily income. Some respondents articulated that there is no room for cutting the budget because there is nothing more to slash. (See Graph 1)

A great majority or 78.43% of the female respondents admitted that their income could hardly cover all the expenses and that they live on a daily basis with no savings at all. "*Tipid na tipid na, wala nang titipirin pa*" (there is nothing more to save, our resources are depleted), stated one of the respondents. To survive, women resort to different mechanisms, such as the following:

### 1. Doing odd jobs or getting multiple low-skilled jobs

A greater percentage of 77.61 look for other sources of income to augment the family's meager budget. They get extra employment or sub-contract work. Some apply as service workers such as street sweepers, community workers or daycare teachers. Others apply as cleaners, laundrywomen, speed sewers, housekeepers, massage attendants or waitresses. A small portion has micro businesses, such as *sari-sari stores* (retail stores), laundry shops, or billiards sites. Others work as vendors of different merchandise such as food, fruits, vegetables, fish, face towels or *pranela*, cigarettes, and hats. Some join the group of garbage collectors or scavengers, bet collectors, or offer their homes as place for bingo games.

### 2. Joining TV game shows or reality shows

In Metro Manila, some mothers join competitions or contests on televisions, hoping to win and bring home the prize. They also bring along their children to get freebies, especially lunches distributed in the studio.

### 3. Adjustment on food consumption

The budget for food of most respondents is flexible and highly-dependent on the income for the day since most of the respondents belong to the informal sector. A large number, 46.92%, said that they cut the budget for food while 19.23% said that they buy cheap – but not necessarily nutritious – food. They buy mostly noodles and *tuyo* (dried fish). Some eat rice with soy sauce, salt, or *bagoong* (fish

paste), among others. Some mothers find it cheaper to buy ready-to-eat food sometimes.

*Altanghap* - one meal combining *almusal* (breakfast), *tanghalian* (lunch) and *hapunan* (dinner) is becoming a norm among families. This means they eat just once a day instead of the usual Filipino norm of eating three meals and morning and afternoon snacks a day.

Most importantly, the standard for food has declined considerably. In some Metro Manila urban poor areas like Vitas, Tondo, a number of families resort to recycling scrap food called locally as *pagpag*, *batchoy*, or *ukay-ukay*. It is called *pagpag* (to jiggle) because the scrap food is literally jiggled to get the dirt off. *Ukay-ukay* (to dig out) means the food has been found by digging through the trash. In another light, some residents, particularly in Veterans and Payatas of Quezon City, have taken to scavenging for “SM food” or expired frozen meat, fish and vegetables from supermarket stores like SM sometimes with price tags still attached to them.

#### 4. Borrowing or applying for loans, making ATM cards as collaterals

When the family budget is short, women resort to borrowing food items from neighbors, *sari-sari* stores, or *carinderia* (small food stores). They also cope by getting cash loans from lending institutions with micro-finance programs or from loan sharks who charge them with 20% interest. To get a loan faster, some women workers offer their ATM (automated teller machine) cards, if any, as collateral.

#### 5. Cost-cutting on utilities and other important concerns

Women slash budget on utilities, education, and other expenditures. Most of the respondents' children who are studying go to public elementary and high schools, and so the expenses mentioned in this research translate to daily allowances for transportation or snacks. The average education expenses for most respondents ranged from US\$9 to US\$13 monthly. There are 36.45% of the respondents who do not have education expenses, possibly with children who have dropped out of school or who have children still too young to go to school.

As the price of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) or fuel for cooking increases, mothers could no longer afford to buy a minimum of US\$14-worth of LPG tank for their household use. Majority use wood and charcoal as substitute since they can also buy these items at a retail price of USD 0.20 daily. Mothers buy a small pack of charcoal or wood twice a day, consuming US\$ 0.40/day or US\$ 12.50 / month.

In addition to the increasing number of households in urban communities who switch to wood for cooking, a staggering 16.67% of the respondents now prefer not to have electric connections at all, after being disconnected due to non-payment of bills.

While most have access to water, the facility of getting water varies depending on the areas. In Vitas, Manila where access to water is a perennial problem, the cost of water is relatively higher than in the other areas surveyed. The lowest water consumption in the said area is US\$6.25 and could reach as high as US\$ 28.13 monthly. Thus, most of the households opt to get water from deep wells in the neighborhood.

The mechanisms mentioned by women in the survey only reveal short-term results. This displays their individual capacity to cope. Little, if at all, did they mention any support from the Philippine government.

### Responses from Asian Governments

Asian states responded with almost similar frameworks (see Table 3). Their stimulus packages, although wrapped with different jargons, have a similar substance: palliative measures. Many civil society groups and political analysts have assessed critically the measures as wanting. Economic activities could hardly be stimulated. In fact, these measures could only expand the budget deficit of the governments.

The cash transfer program of 2000-baht in Thailand or the US\$1-per day subsidy in Cambodia could not subsidize the needs of women and their families.<sup>22</sup> The firms that borrowed funds from the government, like in Thailand, have simply used the funds to pay off existing debt, instead of using these as working-capital as the government hoped.<sup>23</sup> In a similar light, the micro-credit program aimed at starting a business was inevitably used by women for their daily subsistence since there are no other means to provide for their family expenditure. Thus, the offered loans just resulted in more debts for women.

The stop-gap measures did not necessarily reflect the demands of the broad community. The skills training did not result in new jobs or businesses as what happened in Thailand, Cambodia, and the Philippines. Organizations in each country question the transparency of the governments and their ability to spread the funds effectively, and if these have reached the vulnerable groups in need. Further, the stimulus packages lacked particular new measures with gender-sensitive programming, overlooking women's specific vulnerability as workers and as migrants.

Instead of developing national industries and relying on internal resources to survive, Asian states still depend on neo-liberal schemes suggested by donor countries and international financial institutions. The stimulus packages loaned from donor countries and international financial institutions, however, only result to more foreign debts.

The Philippines foreign debt particularly has reached \$53.1 billion (Php 2,477,645,991,897.58),<sup>24</sup> which translates to a debt of Php 26,930.93 for each of the 92 million Filipinos. As a policy, debt servicing gets the lion's share of the national budget, which, this year reached US\$5.17 billion or 16% higher than the US\$4.34 billion in 2009.<sup>25</sup> On top of these are the “unregistered foreign borrowings” of some \$12.23 million last September 2009 as monitored by the Central Bank.<sup>26</sup> Needless to say, more debts shall lead to more hardships for the Filipinos.

The Philippines government has also used the crisis to acquire more funds. The government has received huge support from international agencies and generous individuals during disasters, but relief and rehabilitation remained wanting. Although the country has been considered a disaster-prone archipelago, the government – through its National Disaster Coordinating Council – has only reactive tasks when disaster strikes.

To demonstrate, many displaced and stranded victims of typhoons Ondoy and Pepeng have waited in vain for relief and rehabilitation despite the massive support from other countries and concerned individuals. The government received Php600 million from the European Union<sup>27</sup> plus the available Php2 billion calamity fund. However, the Arroyo government emphasized that the provision for rehabilitation could only add up to the country's deficit, which apparently reached Php10 billion.<sup>28</sup> As Table 4 shows, with the initial donation of Php3.3 billion, the 276,000 victims could have rebuilt their houses or classrooms or have obtained support for food and medicines.

To date, however, the victims of the typhoons are still waiting for the full implementation of the rehabilitation program as announced by the Arroyo government.

### Building strength through organizations and movements

UNESCAP warned that the condition of escalating prices, climate change, and economic crisis can be a factor for political instability and social unrest.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, these conditions foment people into action to ensure their

**Table 3. Government Policy Responses to the Crisis in Selected Asian Countries**

Government response	Indonesia	Cambodia	Philippines	Thailand	Vietnam	Bangladesh	India	Pakistan	Sri Lanka
<b>Trade policies:</b>									
Reduction of import tariffs			✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
Export bans							✓	✓	
Tax breaks for corporations and individuals with business			✓		✓				
Increasing liquidity for enterprises				✓					
Soft loan packages for SMEs					✓				
<b>Marketing policies:</b>						✓	✓		✓
Building of food reserves									
<b>Foreign Policies</b>									
Loan facilities for state expenditure	✓		✓						
Swap arrangements between and among neighbor states	✓								
Labor Export Policy			✓						
Infrastructure development			✓						
<b>Agricultural policies</b>									
<b>Input subsidies</b>							✓	✓	✓
Minimum price support to farmers						✓	✓	✓	
<b>Back-to-rural scheme</b>		✓	✓						
Safety Net program/ Stimulus package program									
Cash transfer program	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Credit and savings program	✓	✓	✓	✓					
Health program/ scheme	✓		✓		✓				
Rice provided at subsidized prices	✓		✓			✓	✓		
School feeding program			✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
School operational assistance program	✓				✓				
Rural employment guarantee scheme			✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Re-training for laid-off Workers</b>		✓	✓	✓					
Creation of jobs: emergency or temporary job placement			✓	✓	✓				
Program for human rights					✓				

Sources: Yada Praparapun, Oxfam Research Report, February 2010  
Gender Report, Center for Womens Resources, 2009

**Table 4. List of Initial Donations for the Typhoon Victims and the Possible Allotted Services(funds as of Oct 2009)<sup>29</sup>**

Amount	Donor	
P 2, 000, 000, 000.00	Gov't calamity fund	Could have provided any of the following :
P 500, 000, 000.00	European Union	
P 1, 200, 000.00	Initial donations from individuals	
P 663, 606, 729.99 (\$ 14, 222, 176)	UN Office for the coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, contributed by the following member-states: European Comm- \$4.8M Spain-\$1.5M Switzerland-\$954, 436 Australia-\$2.5M Germany-\$746, 633 US-\$404, 496 US Red Cross-\$500,000 Private orgs-\$357, 389 Korea-\$300,000 Japan-\$220,000 Sweden-\$147, 849 Luxembourg-\$845, 349 Italy-\$700,000 Singapore-\$50,000	
EST. TOTAL: 3.3B		8, 250 housing projects  or  4, 947 classrooms  or  276,000 families provided with Php 11,956 initial fund for food and medicines

Sources:

Oplan Sagip Bayan, Office of the President, October 6, 2009

Inquirer.net Nov 2009

Senate of the Philippine, 14<sup>th</sup> Congress, Pag-ibig News Release

survival. Resistance occurs when the social and economic burdens become unbearable.

As the crisis intensifies and the responses of the states remain wanting, women realize that they have only themselves to rely on. As they observe their surroundings and relate it to their own experiences, they become conscious of the correlation between their lives and their milieu. They begin to be dissatisfied; to be provoked. This is the stage of their awakening.

As women become aware, they want to get involved. They begin to appreciate the power of collectivism. They realize that their personal sufferings are just part of a wider oppression; that their individual issues can be consolidated to draw a whole and common picture that affects everyone. This is the step for their alignment and engagement. This is the moment they join organizations.

There are several types of women's organizations:

1. Multi-sectoral organization: this is composed of women from the different sectors and classes carrying general and specific women's issues.
2. Class-based organization: this is the type of organization composed of women from just one class or group such as organization of urban poor women and association of religious women, among others.
3. Women Committee: this is a special group formed within an organization that has a wider objective than gender concerns.
4. Women Institution: this is an organization that fills in women who carry out the needs and programs of other women. Their skills are maximized in carrying out services, education, and advocacy work for women.
5. Alliance: this is the networking of women composed of different organizations that aim to reach the widest range of women's interests and issues.
6. Liberation or Resistance Movement: usually labeled as subversive and a threat to the state, such movements are formed underground. Women who join these movements perform clandestinely and with arms since part of their call is radical change of the system.

These different types of organizations exist and their membership depends on the level of women's awareness, political perspectives, and personal interests. For instance, the organization of urban poor women in the Philippines, SAMAKANA (*Samahan ng Maralitang Kababaihang Nagkakaisa*), a member of a bigger organization of women called GABRIELA, has shared that many women in the urban poor communities of Metro Manila joined their organization after typhoon  *Ondoy*  (international name: Ketsana) hit the city in September 25, 2009. Many women in the affected communities have realized the importance of an organization as their support group.

Most of the urban poor communities were submerged in muddy water. Many were drowned. Almost all of the houses were destroyed. Families had no food to eat. SAMAKANA-GABRIELA immediately conducted relief operations. The  *bayanihan*  (collective) spirit in the communities made the rebuilding of their houses and the cleaning of their streets much easier.

Being surrounded by a group of supportive people helps a person get through stressful times. As mentioned earlier, a significant source of strength for the Vietnamese women is their support for each other during the lean times. It adds comfort by knowing that there are others who care.



This is the reason that organizations in local communities play a vital role in looking for and creating solutions that impact a large number of people. Forming an organization in the locality is a long-term approach to the mission of stimulating collective power and strength. This is the point when women are mobilized into action.

### **Employing Different Tactics and Strategies**

Through mobilizing, women show their collective power to make clear demands and strategize each move. They take different kinds of strategies, from simple to sophisticated approaches, in redressing their grievances. Women, for example, send simple petition letters from the concerned stakeholders to decision-makers or state officials, such as is often done in the Philippines.

Mass demonstrations, assembly, or rally occur to make clear their demands. An organization in Sri Lanka, the Praja Abhilasha Network, set up a people's tribunal in July 2010 to compel the government to act for people displaced by war and tsunami. Reportedly, the government has done nothing for the 450 families displaced by the civil war and for the 17,000 people stuck in refugee camps after being displaced by tsunami.<sup>31</sup>

For the workers, it can come in the form of a strike, especially when management is not receptive to workers' demands during negotiations. It can be any collective protest action with the aim of getting the message across especially if the target audience refuses to listen. Inspired by the successful strikes in some factories owned by Honda and Toyota that resulted in 20-30% wage increases,<sup>32</sup> for instance, the 3,000 Chinese workers in a Japanese-owned electronics factory went on strike to demand wage increase. It was the latest in a series of protests by the Chinese labor movement to demand better working conditions and wage increases.

As women's involvement for social change progresses, they realize that their experiences should be consolidated through service, immersion, and education. In this way, one can learn the more appropriate solutions for the community's problems. It can also be the means to organize communities. In the Philippines, SAMAKANA always requests CWR to conduct education and training activities, as part of their membership consolidation work. Through these activities, their members get to see the correlation of their plight to the country's existing policies. These activities likewise facilitate their coming up with a plan of action.

Women's resistance can also be in the form of parliamentary struggle or participation in the legislative arena to design laws that will be advantageous to women. For instance, Filipino women's active participation in the elections for nine years now have enabled them to field sectoral representatives through the Gabriela Women's Partylist (GWP) in Congress. GWP promotes the politics of change, which deviates from the patronage style of traditional politicians. This painstaking struggle of Filipino women saw the passage of laws such as the Anti-Rape Law or Republic Act 8353, the Anti-Violence against Women and Children Act or Republic Act 9262, the Anti-trafficking in Persons Act or Republic Act 9208, among others.

Writing about realities is also a form of resistance. It can be a powerful tool to arouse the sentiments of the target audience that writers who stir debate get harassed or worse, killed. The Philippines was dubbed as the deadliest country for journalists in 2009 by the Newseum, a museum of news history located in Washington, counting 33 journalists killed in service for the year 2009 alone.<sup>33</sup>

While some use the pen, others take up arms. Liberation movements in Asia have made the region a threat to the global powers especially the United States that its former president George Bush even called the southeastern part of the region as the second front of terror. The US' cry for a "global war on terror" has served as a political leverage for Asian authoritarian governments to adopt repressive programs, curtail civil liberties, and violate human rights. Despite these, revolutionary movements in the Philippines, India, and Nepal persevere because of the continuing impoverishment.

Whatever form of resistance women in a collective action take, it still shakes the status quo. This is because organizations and movements change the balance of power and create new power bases. Organizations serve as pressures to change the way things are. They get the attention of the populace, shape the terms of decision-making processes, and frame issues in terms of the desired solution.

### **Commitment as Ingredient**

For a women's movement to last, the zeal to carry out the basic precepts of their organization is the ingredient for success. Commitment means to pledge to a certain purpose and to practice the beliefs consistently. It stirs action.

It was the commitment of our toiling foremothers a century ago that started to uplift the condition of women. Yet, ensuring the welfare of women has still a long way to go. It is now the duty of the contemporary generation to continue the struggle.

The road may not always be easy. Resistance invites repression. Yet throughout history, women have had to unite in order to build a stronger shield against oppression and crisis. This time, women can see the crisis as a challenge and an opportunity to address systemic imbalances and to cultivate a gender-sensitive culture that nurtures women, children, and men.

- <sup>1</sup> Amelia Gentleman, Global Financial Crisis Hits World's Poorest Hardest, *The Guardian*, 27 March 2009.
- <sup>2</sup> Yada Praparpun, Women Paying the Price: The impact of the global financial crisis on women in Southeast Asia, Oxfam Research Report, February 2010.
- <sup>3</sup> Training Manual on Gender and Climate Change, IUCN, UNDP, and GGCA, March 2009.
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- <sup>5</sup> Praparpun, loc. cit.
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- <sup>9</sup> Women's Group Lauds Victorious Shoe Factory Workers, [www.bulatlat.com](http://www.bulatlat.com), 23 September 2008
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- <sup>11</sup> Remittances from UAE Filipino workers to fall by 6% in 2009, MENAFN-Khaleej Times, [www.menafn.com](http://www.menafn.com), 20 July 2009.
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- <sup>13</sup> Resource Guide on Gender and Climate Change, United Nations Development Programme, 2009.
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- <sup>15</sup> Miller-Dawkins, Irwansyah, and Abimanyu, loc. cit.

- <sup>16</sup> UNDP-India, [www.undp.org.in](http://www.undp.org.in).
- <sup>17</sup> Miller-Dawkins, Irwansyah, and Abimanyu, loc. cit.
- <sup>18</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>19</sup> Joseph Holandes Ubalde, GMA News.TV, [www.gmanews.tv](http://www.gmanews.tv), 19 November 2009.
- <sup>20</sup> The whole section will discuss and reprint the highlights of the conducted study, which can be found in CWR's publication, "Survey on the Economic and Living Conditions of Urban and Rural Poor Women", Center for Women's Resources, Philippines, October 2009.
- <sup>21</sup> This is according to the September 2008 computation of the National Wages and Productivity Commission (NWPC).
- <sup>22</sup> Praparpun, loc. cit.
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>24</sup> Lee Chipongian, "\$5.17B set for 2010 foreign debt service", Manila Bulletin, [www.mb.com.ph](http://www.mb.com.ph), 26 January 2010.
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>26</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>27</sup> Inquirer.net, 19 November 2009.
- <sup>28</sup> Mia Gonzales, "Ondoy rehab fund to swell deficit", Business Mirror, 2 October 2009.
- <sup>29</sup> Agenda for Change: Women's Call for Election 2010, Ulat Lila publications, Center for Women's Resources, March 2010.
- <sup>30</sup> Gentleman, loc. cit.
- <sup>31</sup> Melani Manel Perera, A people's tribunal for people displaced by war and tsunami, [www.asianews.it](http://www.asianews.it), 3 July 2010.
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## As war and militarism escalate: The Long Road to Women's Empowerment

Mary Joan Guan

Every civilized society in the world today calls for gender equality and women's empowerment. Yet, women still have a long way to go especially with so many obstacles such as war and militarism.

Militarism is a dangerous mindset pervading the global society. It advocates the idea of "might is right". It carries the imperialist dogma of control over "the other" with the military as its force to protect those in power. The United States, being the biggest military power in the world, portrays such control, with the basic tenet of "power over the other". Militarism encourages a dichotomous sense of looking at things. Former US President George Bush's statement "*If you are not with us, you are against us*" best illustrates a militaristic standpoint on "terrorism". The incumbent US President Barack Obama has the same code of belief that is why the "war on terror" continues to haunt countries in the third world. Alarmingly, with the declaration of war against terrorism, the US described Asia, specifically Southeast Asia, as the second front of terror, linking Osama bin Laden's Al-Qaeda network with various "terrorist" organizations in the sub-region.

Such Asian terrorism scare has intensified the horror experienced by women. War has displayed the patriarchal modes of abuse such as rape and other forms of sexual exploitation, enforced service to the military in combat, displacement, and so on. Significantly, Asian states have pledged to observe the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which emphasizes their accountability to women's welfare and to the implementation of the Millennium Development Goal 3 on the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time, however, Asian states welcome the US campaign against terrorism, especially that it brings in arms and aid money that will serve as leverage to their own interests. This is, of course, advantageous to the US government, as its war has opened the way to have greater control on the resource-rich Asia for its military intervention. The US-led war on terror has

legitimized the infringement of an imperialist power on the sovereignty of countries in Southeast Asia like the Philippines, which, strategically located in Southeast Asia and ruled by a subservient government, is considered of strategic importance to and the closest ally of the United States in the region.

### **War and Militarism: The Philippine Experience**

Militarism in the Philippines did not leave in 1986 with the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos. Rather, it has thrived with the succeeding presidents. Each head of state has considered the pervasiveness of internal war as a major problem that should be solved with an iron fist, believing that not doing so would leave the national security at stake.

The issue of militarism in the Philippines deserves critical attention. It dominates our culture. It destroys the real essence of freedom because it develops a mindset that reduces every criticism against the state as a threat to national security or anyone who demands for change as a communist, ergo, an enemy of the state. Militarism glorifies the use of despotic methods to defend or promote “national interests”.

As it seeps into the method of governance, militarism results in impunity, corruption, and diversion of resources away from the needs of the people to support militarization. In effect, many women and children endure the trauma of military operation. Often, their fundamental rights are violated and they are just counted as “collateral damage” of war.

### **The Failed Operations**

The internal war in the Philippines has been a long-standing issue in the country. For decades now, the government has been engaged in a protracted war with various groups: the Communist Party of the Philippines and its armed wing, the New People’s Army (CPP-NPA); and the two Moro secessionist groups, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). An additional concern of the government is the terrorist/bandit group Abu Sayyaf, which is also based in Mindanao.

Each president has publicized the war waged by the communist guerillas and Islamic rebels as the root of political instability that results in economic underdevelopment – instead of acknowledging that armed conflict exists in the country because of the unequal distribution of resources that results in the

irreconcilable class differences; that political instability prevails because of the abuse of power where corruption permeates; that economic underdevelopment continues because of the neoliberal policies that provides no safety nets for the local industry.

Insisting to protect national security, every president has created his or her own *modus operandi* to curb dissent and opposition (see Table 1). Each one of them has believed that it is only through force that the long-standing issue of war and rebellion will be solved. With a short-sighted and militaristic analysis of the situation, the approach that is designed is short-lived as well.

Every anti-insurgency program has been an off-shoot of the preceding failed program, with a more sophisticated and comprehensive plan. However, despite hundreds of thousands of casualties, the insurgencies have continued. As Table 1 shows, no military operational plan has succeeded to crush the rebellion for the past 40 years. The more glaring effect is the massive victims of human rights violations.

The failure of the government’s OPLANs to curb rebellion indicates that the programs designed by the government do not hit the nail right on its head. In order to eradicate rebellion, the people’s call for “jobs and justice, food and freedom” should be genuinely answered.<sup>2</sup>

As it is, the government has pursued the neoliberal policies that further pushed women and their families to impoverishment. The National Statistics and Census Board (NSCB) declared that the poverty incidence increased to 26.9% (2006) from 24.4% (2003).<sup>3</sup> Women are recorded as the most impoverished sector in the country.

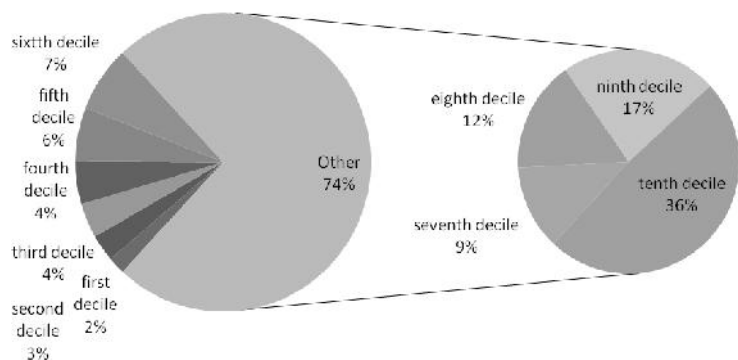
The gap between the rich and the poor remains wide, as shown in the National Statistics Office (NSO) family income and expenditure survey (see Figure 1). The family income and expenditure survey, a nationwide survey conducted by NSO every three years, reveals the level of consumption by item of incomes, expenditures, and savings. The total income of high-income households expanded at a faster rate compared to their low-income counterparts. Figure 1 shows that the upper decile gets 74% of the share of the total family income, with the 10<sup>th</sup> decile or the richest 10 percent getting 36%, estimated at 1.08 trillion pesos. On the other hand, the majority comprising the first up to the sixth deciles only gets less than ten percent of the share of the total income. This also means that the total family income of the 10% richest families is about 19 times of the poorest families.

**Table 1. Counter-insurgency Operational Plans (OPLAN) of the government, from Marcos to Arroyo (1970 – 2010)**

ADMINISTRATION	PROGRAM	NATURE & GOAL	EFFECT	CRUSHED REBELLION?
<b>Ferdinand Marcos (1966 – 1986)</b>	OPLAN Bagong Buhay (est. 1970s)	Five-year phase strategy of offensive operation against MNLF, CPP-NPA	50,000 deaths; 2 million refugees; 200,000 houses burned; 535 mosques and 200 schools demolished; 35 cities and towns destroyed	No
	OPLAN Katatagan (est. 1981)	Operation to crush the communist insurgency, implemented in four stages of clearing, holding, consolidation, and development of areas recovered/ civic action; involvement of paramilitary forces through Civilian Home Defense Forces (CHDF) and other local government agencies	At least 12,000 cases of human rights violations recorded; in 1991, Marcos was declared by the US Court Federal System as guilty of “crimes against humanity”, committing hundreds of cases of torture, forced disappearances, and summary executions;	No
<b>Corazon Aquino (1986 – 1992)</b>	OPLAN Mamamayan (est. 1986)	To continue the counter-insurgency program through the establishment of Special Operations Teams (SOT) undertaking psychological, security, and “stay behind” operations; creation of Civilian Armed Forces Geographical Units (CAFGU)	For the two OPLANs: 1.2 million victims of dislocations due to military operations, 135 cases of massacres, 1,064 victims of summary executions, and 20,523 victims of illegal arrest and detention, 816 disappeared	No
	OPLAN Lambat Bitag 1&2 (est. 1988)	The immediate aim was to end the insurgency particularly the CPP-NPA, to “slash its growth through military means”, which results to “unsheathing the sword of war”; prioritizing and destroying guerilla fronts through a simultaneous military offensive nationwide		No

ADMINISTRATION	PROGRAM	NATURE & GOAL	EFFECT	CRUSHED REBELLION?
<b>Fidel Ramos (1992 – 1998)</b>	OPLAN Lambat Bitag 3&4	A continuation of Aquino’s program but more comprehensive with the Social Reform Agenda to defeat the revolutionary left and the Moro separatists; launched the Balik-Baril program for rebel returnees; established Southern Phil. Council for Peace and Devpt. for Misuari’s group; offered governorship of ARMM to Misuari	144 victims of massacre; 100 incidents of evacuations; 11 food and economic blockades; 65,000 civilians displaced in Mindanao; 808 incidents of arrest involving 1,754 individuals; 166 political prisoners; 15 cases of forced disappearances	No
<b>Joseph Estrada (1998 – 2001)</b>	OPLAN Makabayan	Aim to defeat the CPP-NPA; took advantage of the internal conflict within the left, talked peace with the faction opposing CPP-NDF group	During the first five months in office, human rights violations such as forced disappearances, bombings, summary executions occurred; Peace talks failed due to Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA); 139 political prisoners	No
	OPLAN Balangai (est. 2000)	Mailed fist policy to defeat Moro secessionists; declared all-out war against MILF	War in Mindanao that caused the displacement of thousands of residents, especially women and children; mosques were destroyed	No
<b>Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo (2001 -2010)</b>	OPLAN Bantay Laya 1&2 (est. 2002)	Originally, a five-year counter-insurgency program but was extended to three years, with the goal to decisively defeat the Abu Sayyaf Group, stop the growth of the CPP-NPA, and contain the MILF, Misuari Breakaway Group, MNLF. Its operational principle is to: clear, hold, and support methodology	1,118 victims of extra judicial killings; 204 cases of forced disappearances; 1,026 tortured victims; 1,946 illegally arrested; 255 political prisoners; 536,517 victims of indiscriminate firing; 873,431 victims of forced evacuation and displacement; 84,626 victims of food and economic blockade; 38,616 victims of hamletting; most recent cases (Nov. 2009 - 2010) massacre in Ampatuan killing 57 individuals, mass arrest of 43 health workers; by year-end 2009 the trend was to target families and relatives and families of the NPA members	No
Sources: Karapatan reports 2008-2009; PIDS 2006; Bulatlat.com 2009				

**Figure 1. Family Income and Expenditure Survey, 2006**



Source: NSO, January 2008

The conditions of the families have aggravated in 2007 during the global economic downturn. Many women workers – especially those working in export processing zones and abroad – have lost their jobs. Women, as the primary caregivers in their families could not afford to be unemployed. They will always look for means to earn for their families. More so, privatization has increased the costs of basic services and utilities. With falling incomes and unemployment, women find it harder to have access to basic social services such as basic health care, education, and utilities such as water and sanitation, and electricity.

The worsening social and economic inequality has been aggravated by reports of rampant corruption in the Arroyo government, which amounted to at least Php 20.89 billion of the country's funds in 2008, based on the research by the Center for Women's Resources (CWR).<sup>4</sup>

This does not yet include the 2009 cases of fertilizer scam in the Department of Agriculture and the expensive dinner of Mrs. Arroyo and her cabinet officials in Le Cirque and Bobby Van's in the US that amounted to more or less \$35,000.00.

Inequality breeds contempt; poverty generates dissent. As many Filipino people, including women, have questioned Arroyo's credibility and have demanded for her ouster, Arroyo has used her executive power to restrict any opposition. She has regarded legitimate resistance as a threat to national security. In essence, she has equated national security with her own survival to the presidency.

### U.S. Backing

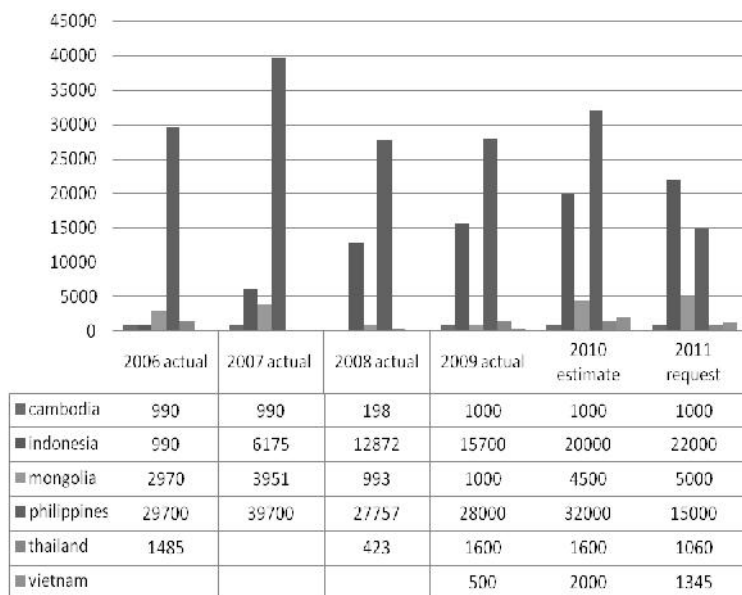
Arroyo could not have reigned for nine years amid strong protest if not with the backing the United States government, which has its own interest to protect. Its foreign military funding (FMF) is "*intended to promote US national security by contributing to regional and global stability... these grants enable allies and friends to improve their defense capabilities and foster closer military relationships between the US and recipient nations.*"<sup>5</sup>

The FMF provides grants for the acquisition of US defense equipment, services, and training. For its own end, the US government is also bent in curbing the strong cohesive resistance movement that could hinder its political and economic objectives in the country.

As shown in Figure 2, the Philippines has always gotten the biggest share in East Asia and the Pacific since 2006. Observably, after the Arroyo government has intensified its operation in 2006 especially against the activists and dissidents, military aid increased by 33% in 2007. Likewise, as the military declared that its OPLAN Bantay Laya, which supposedly ended in 2007, needs an extension up to 2010, military aid in 2009 has increased by 14% in 2010. Despite a lower funding release, the Philippines still get the biggest, 51% of the total FMF in 2010 (see Figure 3).

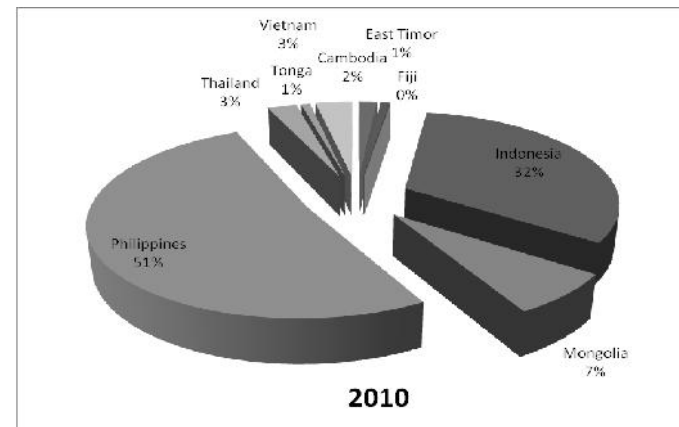
The cost of militarization affects everyone but it impinged upon women in specific ways. Priorities in the national budget favored spending on defense rather than on health care or social services. Women, traditionally the care providers in the family, are forced to adjust and look for other means when services are cut. As revealed in Table 2, the defense budget is higher than the health, agriculture, or social service budget.

**Figure 2. US FMF for selected countries in the East Asia and the Pacific, (in '000 dollars), as of June 2010**



Source: US Department of State, June 2010

**Figure 3. Share of FMF among countries in East Asia and the Pacific for 2010**



Source: US Department of State, June 2010

The budget for education is deceptively high since the department funding covers all the public schools and division offices nationwide. For instance, if we allot the total 2010 budget for education to the 22,311,383<sup>6</sup> elementary, high school, and college students combined, each student will just get Php8,327.95 for the whole year or roughly Php26.69 per school day. Not even enough to cover the fare and food allowance for the day.

**Table 2. Philippine Appropriated Budget, 2007 – 2010**

DEPARTMENT	2007		2008		2009		2010	
	AMOUNT	% to TOTAL	AMOUNT	% to TOTAL	AMOUNT	% to TOTAL	AMOUNT	% to TOTAL
Defense	54,341,721	4.45	55,927,127	5.25	61,483,128	5.25	62,670,254	4.8
Education	145,994,214	11.96	157,881,852	14.81	181,788,075	15.53	185,808,176	14.2
Agriculture	15,819,135	1.29	27,379,747	2.57	45,998,994	3.93	48,914,021	3.7
Agrarian Reform	12,150,932	0.99	2,323,717	0.22	13,173,128	1.13	20,767,776	1.5
Health	11,562,704	0.95	21,346,750	2.00	29,594,806	2.52	30,454,043	2.3
Social Work	3,557,116	0.29	4,848,513	0.45	10,623,500	0.91	15,314,440	1.17

Source: Department of Budget and Management, 2007 - 2010

Note: The education budget includes the budget for State Colleges and Universities and infrastructure projects in the region. The Agriculture and Agrarian Reform budgets include other projects and agencies related to the departments, e.g. National Food Authority, modernization program, among others. The defense budget includes the AFP modernization program.

### Real Reason for Repression

The culture of militarism exists because it gives leverage to the powers-that-be to maintain the status quo. As CWR has stated in a previous study, war and militarization are not about protecting the people but about owning and controlling the natural and mineral resources.<sup>7</sup> The paper further presented that there were roughly 50 wars and armed conflicts recorded globally in 2001 because of resource exploitation and political hegemony. As the imperialist powers, especially the United States, are now on the verge of economic depression, they have an urgent need to ensure the hegemonic control over resource-rich Asia. At the same time, national governments support imperialist intervention because they themselves are also gaining from it.

The US Department has acknowledged in particular the rich resources of the Philippines, articulating that most of these, especially the minerals, are still untapped and need to be maximized to prop up the economy:

*The Philippines is one of the world's most highly mineralized countries, with untapped mineral wealth estimated at more than \$840 billion. Philippine copper, gold, and chromite deposits are among the largest in the world. Other important minerals include nickel, silver, coal, gypsum, and sulfur. The Philippines also has significant deposits of clay, limestone, marble, silica, and phosphate. The discovery of natural gas reserves off Palawan has been brought on-line to generate electricity.*

*Despite its rich mineral deposits, the Philippine mining industry is just a fraction of what it was in the 1970s and 1980s when the country ranked among the ten leading gold and copper producers worldwide. Low metal prices, high production costs, and lack of investment in infrastructure have contributed to the industry's overall decline. A December 2004 Supreme Court decision upheld the constitutionality of the 1995 Mining Act, thereby allowing up to 100% foreign-owned companies to invest in large-scale exploration, development, and utilization of minerals, oil, and gas.<sup>8</sup>*

Thus, an imperialist power like the United States secures an ally's environment for domestic and foreign investors. It enters into different trade agreements with the Philippines such as the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and the Agricultural Cooperation, among others.<sup>9</sup> All these agreements should be in accordance with the World Trade Organization's (WTO) mechanism of procedures that should be done without further distortion and trade restriction. At the same time, military support has been provided by the US, as indicated above, to pave the way for easier access, utilization, and control of the Philippines.

With the maintenance of the RP-US Mutual Defense Treaty and the existence of the Mutual Logistics Support Agreement and the VFA, the US presence in the country is assured. The VFA opens the whole country to US troops where aircrafts, ships, and vessels can come and go without inspection. It also allows US troops to join "activities" of the Philippine armed forces as approved by the government through the "Balikatan" military exercises. The Balikatan activities are not defined and the duration is not specified.

The provision allowing the US total jurisdiction over crimes committed by US personnel while in the Philippines has already resulted in a case of violence against Filipino women. One glaring example was the rape of "Nicole" (not her real name) in Subic, Zambales. Her rapist, US soldier Corporal Daniel Smith, was initially convicted in 2006 but was later acquitted by the Court of Appeals. Because of the acquittal, other victims of rape by US troops, like "Vanessa" (not her real name), have refused to pursue their cases for fear of experiencing the same result as Nicole's.

### Nine Years of Impunity

The past nine years have been most significant for women and children because the government – despite having a female executive in the person of Gloria Macapagal Arroyo – has reportedly been at par with, if not worse than, the human rights violations committed by the 14-year despotic ruler Ferdinand Marcos during the martial law years in the '70s.

Mrs. Arroyo was put to presidency in 2001 because of the people's resistance, deposing from power the macho president Joseph Estrada. Ironically, it was Arroyo who would later on use her iron fist and curb dissent when demand for her ouster heightened because of claims of massive electoral fraud in 2004 and incessant human rights abuses committed with impunity by her soldiers.



Aside from Oplan Bantay Laya 1 and 2, she also issued Proclamation 1017 in 2006, declaring a state of national emergency after the Armed Forces of the Philippines reportedly uncovered a coup plot from some members of the military. This proclamation gave Mrs. Arroyo the power to prohibit peaceful assemblies, revoke rally permits, order warrantless arrests, suspend the writ of habeas corpus, and take over the mass media and public utilities. Despite the proclamation, various organizations did not hesitate to conduct protest actions which pressured and forced Mrs. Arroyo to lift the proclamation after two weeks.

It was also during Mrs. Arroyo’s term that the Philippine Anti-terrorism Law or the Human Security Act of 2007 was enacted. Signed in 2007, the law allows the security forces to detain terror suspects for up to three days without charge. It also allows the security forces to use wire taps to monitor suspects and do surveillance, freeze of bank accounts, seize of assets, and prevent travel, among others. Critics fear it will be used to quell legitimate political dissent and the vague definition of acts of “terrorism” abused by state authorities.

### Wreaking Havoc

The legacy of militarism permeates the country at so many levels, haunting anyone who shows dissent. It removes the distinction between unarmed opposition and armed resistance. What prevails is the simplistic polarization of pro- and anti-government groups, where the antis are the enemy that should be eliminated.

Immediately after the issuance of Proclamation 1017, alleged coup plotters led by General Danilo Lim were arrested. Soldiers trooped and raided newspapers and major television channels. The proclamation was also used to arrest congressional representatives from progressive party list groups. It incarcerated *Anakpawis* (Toiling Masses) Representative and trade union leader Crispin Beltran for years; and placed under house arrest Representatives Satur Ocampo, Teddy Casino, and Joel Virador of *Bayan Muna* (People First); Rafael Mariano of *Anakpawis*; and Liza Maza of Gabriela Women’s Partylist - all charged with rebellion.

For nine years, militarism exacerbated gender violence and injustice. The glaring cases have drawn the attention of international agencies especially that no violator has been put to jail. Waging war against its enemies, the government armed forces continuously committed extrajudicial executions, enforced disappearances, and other human rights violations with impunity resulting in almost two million victims of human rights violations since Ms. Arroyo became president.

**Table 3. Human Rights Violations against Women and Children, 2001 – 2009**

CASES	TOTAL	WOMEN	CHILDREN
Extra Judicial Killing	1,188	153	77 plus 12 unborn
Enforced Disappearance	205	31	4
Illegal Arrest	1,963	290	105
Political Prisoners	286	31	6

Source: Karapatan 2009 Report

Of the 1,188 victims of extra-judicial killings, 153 were women, 77 were children plus 12 unborn. Of the 205 persons abducted and remained missing, 31 of them were women. As of December 2009, 290 women and 105 children have been illegally arrested (see Table 3). The number of extrajudicial killings under the nine-year Arroyo administration is 79% of the reported 1,500 killings during the 14 years of Marcos’s martial law from 1972 to 1986.<sup>10</sup>

Furthermore, the continuing presence of political prisoners is a sign of a repressive government. To date, there are 286 political prisoners - where 31 are women and six are children – who remain locked up.

At the time of writing, the latest woman political detainee is peasant human rights advocate Myrna Cruz-Abraham. She was abducted in Cagayan Valley, a province in the northern part of Luzon region on March 22, 2010. Initially, her captors could not articulate the reason for her arrest, just telling her that she did something wrong against the government. Then the following day, she was accused of murdering a certain Johnny Belo eight years ago and of violation of the gun ban during the election period.<sup>11</sup> Although the court has found no probable cause in the case and ordered her release, the judge handling her case did not grant the release papers.

Military operations also cause displacement. Over 873,482 people have been forced to flee their homes. As internally displaced persons, women and children are extremely vulnerable to sexual violence and harassment. There have been 270 women harassed and intimidated and at least 31 women raped and sexually exploited by government soldiers. This is being done as part of war strategy to destroy the disposition of women activists or, in some cases, “dishonor” men of the enemy group. An example of this gross sexual abuse

is the case of 64-year old Angie Ipong, who was arrested and detained in March 8, 2005 during a workshop in Mindanao.<sup>12</sup> To diminish her self-worth, she was subjected to molestation and sexual abuse by her captors during interrogations. She was still in jail at the time of writing.

CWR has been part of a UNICEF-sponsored research in 2006 (initially published in 2007) on the effects of armed conflict among women and children. The study has proven that armed conflicts, as manifestation of a militaristic mindset, specifically and adversely affect women in the following ways: disruption of domestic tasks and livelihoods; hunger, disease, miscarriages and premature birthing; sexual violence; and mental and emotional traumas. The effects are most severe for displaced women and families. The study also highlighted the phenomenon of verbal, mental, and physical threats against women either as part of a community tagged supporters of the armed groups or as individuals with close family members suspected of being part of these armed groups.<sup>12</sup>

CWR documented human rights violations against women in another study<sup>14</sup> that corroborates the previous one, revealing additional grave impact especially among peasant women of military soldiers inhabiting the rural communities as part of the “clear-hold-stay” operation. In most cases, peasant women being harassed have no recourse but to leave farming, their major source of income. Those who could not leave would have less time working because they were prevented from going to their farms or were fearful of being outside their homes after dark. In effect, there were reduced farm outputs or wasted crops. An example is Mayette Corpuz, 42, secretary general of a local organization, *Samahan ng mga Katutubo sa Sierra Madre* (Organization of Indigenous Peoples in Sierra Madre), an organization that asserts preservation of their ancestral land. As a militant and assertive officer, she was threatened and intimidated by the military. She was forced to leave her house and a small parcel of land, which is the major source of income for her family.

Military operations have affected the performance of domestic tasks - women were unable to do their normal chores properly because they were distracted by or anxious about the safety of their husbands and children. They were afraid to go outside their homes even for fetching water and gathering food. Normal domestic duties, which could otherwise be done individually, had to be performed in bigger groups. Mothers kept watchful eyes on their daughters for fear that something might happen to them with government soldiers around. There was the added work for mothers of accompanying their children to and from school for fear of their children being accosted by government

soldiers. Their privacy was violated as soldiers would just barge inside their homes and ask the women to cook for them or consume goods without paying. Sometimes the government soldiers would use up their firewood, which women have gathered in the forest. There were cases when women would be accused of supporting the NPAs and would be constantly harassed, as that of Josie Panginen of Aurora province in Central Luzon. The military put up streamers and held local meetings where she was described as a “finance officer of the NPA”. Soldiers incessantly visited her house. She was unable to attend the high school graduation of her daughter because the soldiers were waiting for her in the school.

Militarism generates widows and orphans. When fathers and husbands are killed, abducted, or arrested, women become the sole providers for their children. When Arsenio dela Cruz died, he left seven minors where the youngest was only seven months old. His wife and eldest 15-year old child had to look for odd jobs to earn for sustenance. All the seven children were malnourished.

Women and children suffered psychological and emotional stress such as sorrow, anxiety, and fear. Soldiers intimidated them, pointing guns at them while asking about the whereabouts of the NPAs in their communities. At other times, soldiers forced women to “witness” against their husbands accused of being NPAs. The uncertainty and anxiety of what would happen to them forced women and their families to leave their homes and transfer to another community. Others hid temporarily in the forest to avoid government soldiers. Sometimes, the stress is unbearable that victims commit suicide. A couple in Pantabangan, Nueva Ecija – Librado and Martina Gallardo - took their own lives in October 2006 after being tortured by the government soldiers.

### **Latest Atrocities**

Cases of violence against women continue to pile up and, as CWR observed in 2008, the rate of violence averaged one woman victim perhour and three minutes. The implementation of the country’s 37 laws – including the latest Magna Carta of Women – that supposedly protect women still needs a lot to be desired.

The election-related massacre in Maguindanao on November 23, 2009 was a case in point. At least 21 women were found dead, two of whom were pregnant, along with 36 men in the outskirts of the Ampatuan town. Some of the women were reportedly raped and mutilated. The suspects, the Ampatuans,

were close allies of Mrs. Arroyo and reportedly helped her win in Mindanao during the contested 2007 presidential elections. Due to massive protests, main suspect Andal Ampatuan Jr. was detained but with special privileges where his relatives can visit any time and even his maids could come and go to clean his cell. Despite the damning evidence of heavy ammunitions and firearms collected both from the crime scene and from his mansions, he was accused only of “rebellion”, a political case.

The reversed treatment was experienced by the 43 health workers arrested in February 2010. Blinded by anti-communist hysteria and a deadline to end insurgency by 2010, government soldiers readily arrested them after getting a “tip” that rebels were attending a training in Morong, Rizal. They detained and accused the 43 as “bomb experts and rebels,” who actually are doctors, nurses, and community health workers. Twenty-six of the detainees are women. They were subjected to harsh interrogation, psychological and physical torture. They were held incommunicado during the first three days of their captivity and were denied visits from their relatives and lawyers. They were

continuously interrogated, threatened bodily harm or actually beaten while blindfolded and handcuffed for 36 hours. They suffered indignities like having their private parts washed by soldiers whenever they used the toilet. Even the Supreme Court ruling that the detainees be produced in court was initially ignored by the military. To justify their illegal arrest, the military accused all the 43 of being NPA members. Despite the accusation, the 43 were not charged with a political offense but with “illegal possession of firearms”, which is a criminal case.

Two of the women arrested, Carina Oliveros and Mercy Castro were pregnant and were expected to give birth in August and October 2010, respectively. A doctor who examined them warned that Oliveros was at risk of preeclampsia or hypertension in pregnancy that needs medical supervision during her delivery.<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, Castro had a previous caesarian operation that is why she also needed strict medical attention for her second delivery.<sup>16</sup> Another detainee, Jane Balleta, needed constant medical attention due to her epilepsy. She has suffered a series of seizure inside her cell. Doctors explained that her detention was triggering her constant attacks.<sup>17</sup>

The military treatment of the Morong 43 was a gross violation of the newly signed Republic Act 9745 or the Anti-Torture Law of 2009 and the Magna Carta of Women. And yet, the Arroyo government has remained mum about the case.\*\*

## Military Prostitution

“Where there are soldiers, there are women who exist for them.”<sup>18</sup> Historically in the Philippines, the areas with US bases such as Olongapo, Pampanga, and Cavite have been teemed with prostitution dens and “entertainment” establishments for the soldiers’ rest and recreation (R&R).

Now with the Balikatan exercises and the full implementation of the OPLAN Bantay Laya, women and their families are forced to flee their homes in the countryside, leaving behind their main source of living – farming. As families migrate to the urban centers, they suffer more distress since there are no job opportunities for them but low-skilled service work. Some women are forced into prostitution.

Talikala, a women’s organization helping prostituted women in Mindanao, has counted at least 2,000 women victims of prostitution in Zamboanga City alone. Zamboanga City is one of the areas of the US troops assigned in the country.

Whistleblower Lt. Senior Grade Nancy Gadian, a liaison officer for Balikatan 2002 affirmed that there are indeed women being used as part of the US troops’ R&R activities in the country. In her affidavit, she attested that there was a re-emergence of prostitution in Zamboanga City just for the American soldiers. To quote:

*“I saw an increase in the number of establishments in Zamboanga City catering to US servicemen, and many of these are obviously involved in prostitution. I witnessed how officers and enlisted personnel of the US military pick-up women prostitutes and how women prostitutes go to their hotel rooms. I also received reports of many “sexual activities” of US troops in all sorts of places during their “R&R”. The R&R (called “Liberty” by the Americans) of the US troops is included in the planning of the Balikatan exercises. In the Balikatan exercises where I was involved, the specific areas where they could go were pre-determined. This was not disclosed to the media. In 2002-1, the R&R places were Angeles, Subic and Cebu.”<sup>19</sup>*

The presence of prostitution in areas where the American GIs are billeted is a graphic illustration of the compromised sovereignty of the Philippine government in relationship with the US government. As a result, it also

compromises the rights and dignity of Filipino women. Since the 1970s, women organizations in the country have tirelessly struggled against the sexual exploitation caused by the R&R activities of the US troops. Their resistance has contributed to the dismantling of the bases in 1992.

### Finding Strength

Massive human rights violations cause extraordinary stress that can shatter every family member's sense of security, making everyone helpless and vulnerable. There were cases when women have felt overwhelmed and alone, making the trauma unbearable to them. Those who expressed helplessness were also those most traumatized.

Women have very limited opportunity to address their grievances. Their issues are most likely to be submerged by the general concerns. Such need has prompted CWR to conduct the project *Panagboy*, to document human rights violations against women as well as the venues for redress available for women and children.<sup>20</sup>

The study has established the importance of a support system to cope with traumatic experiences like militarization. Those who have friends and organizations to lean on have recovered faster from the traumatic event. The grieving process, while inherently painful, becomes easier.

Primarily, putting into the proper context the traumatic incidents in their lives make it easier for women to recover. When they understand that their experiences are interrelated to the overall situation in the country, they can decide what proper steps to pursue.

They appreciate in joining together and in forming their own support group. An example of this is the creation of HUSTISYA, an organization of victims and relatives of human rights violations. In such a support group, they speak out their grief and anxiety; they help each other in pursuing the case in court or protesting in the streets; they form discussion groups on issues and develop their skills; they set up outlets for their grief through drawings, writing poems, singing, or even speaking in forums and mobilizations.

As natural caregivers, women cope with grief and trauma through nurturing and reaching out to others. They find strength by giving support to each other. Though justice is still elusive, they find comfort in knowing that they are not alone in the fight. Their unity and vigilance provide a continuum until

they find justice for all the victims of human rights violations and eradicate the culture of militarism in their midst.

### A Signal to the New President

In 30 June 2010, the country proclaimed its newly elected president, Benigno Aquino III, the son of the 1986 President Corazon Aquino. While he pledged to be the exact opposite of his predecessor, Mrs. Arroyo, his running call "*daang matuwid*" (literally in English, righteous path, indicating an incorruptible administration) is being challenged by the day. Only four days after he was sworn in as president, one activist after the other has been reportedly killed.

Will he be different from the past five presidents? Will he not follow his mother's anti-insurgency program? Is the culture of US militarism not part of his system? These are questions that can be answered through a vigilant watch and a gender sensitive analysis.

As he is still teetering in managing his office, we should already start preparing a performance checklist of how he will handle the human rights situation in the country, among other things. The following immediate matters that women will keep a tab on President Aquino are:

1. the prosecution of Mrs. Arroyo and her minions for the gross violation of human rights and corruption;
2. the release of women and all political prisoners;
3. the offer of peace talks with the CPP-NPA and the MILF;
4. the repeal of the Mutual Defense Treaty so as to abolish the lopsided US-RP Visiting Forces Agreement;
5. the elimination of OPLANs and military deployment in the communities;
6. higher budget for social services vis-à-vis defense; and
7. more opportunities for women to develop her fullest potential.

As the growing number of women demand that the abovementioned points be put into action, hopefully the new administration be pushed to fulfill them. No matter what, women will untiringly thwart moves for the continuous US-influenced militarist form of governance that results in killing, maiming, and scarring children, women and men; destroying communities, separating families, with debilitating effects that persist for generations.

The varied and creative forms used by women in protesting militarism and violence will inspire other women to join the call for genuine freedom and empowerment. The road may be long but our foremothers had started to pave it a century ago. The new generation of women therefore will continue traversing and along the way, arousing and mobilizing people to collectively fight for a long-term systemic change.

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<sup>1</sup> Annex 3 of the Progress of the World's Women 2008/2009, Who Answers to Women? Gender and Accountability, UNIFEM, 2008.

<sup>2</sup> I borrowed Sen. J.W.Diokno's brilliant description in summing up what the Filipino people really need, as explained in his book, "A Nation for our Children", 1987.

<sup>3</sup> NSCB, "Poverty Worsens between 2003 and 2006", 7 March 2008.

<sup>4</sup> Center for Women's Resources, "Women in 2008: Defying Corruption, Demanding Change", *Ulat Lila*, March 2008.

<sup>5</sup> US Department of State, *Diplomacy in Action*, [www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov), 23 June 2010.

<sup>6</sup> Based on the latest DEPED data available, SY 2004-2005.

<sup>7</sup> I presented the paper "Militarization in Southeast Asia: the myth of terrorism; the reality of resource wars" in the APRN-sponsored workshop on Women and War, Hongkong, 17 June 2008.

<sup>8</sup> US Department of State, *Diplomacy in Action*, [www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov), 19 April 2010.

<sup>9</sup> [www.foreigntradeexchange.com](http://www.foreigntradeexchange.com).

<sup>10</sup> Benjie Oliveros, *Oplan Bantay Laya as Arroyo's Inhumane War*, [www.bulatlat.com](http://www.bulatlat.com), 2006.

<sup>11</sup> *Karapatan Factsheet*, March 26, 2010.

<sup>12</sup> Angie Ipong's case was also cited in my paper "Militarization in Southeast Asia: the myth of terrorism; the reality of resource wars" in the APRN-sponsored workshop on Women and War, Hongkong, 17 June 2008.

<sup>13</sup> *Uncounted Lives: Children, Women, and Conflict in the Philippines*, a needs assessment of children and women affected by armed conflict for UNICEF, Ibon Foundation, Children's Rehabilitation Center, and Center for Women's Resources, 2007.

<sup>14</sup> The report entitled "Panaghoy", with the support of Canada Fund for Local Initiatives, is still unpublished.

<sup>15</sup> Aquino urged to free "Morong 43", especially the pregnant and sick, [www.bulatlat.com](http://www.bulatlat.com), July 6, 2010.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> Katharine H.S. Moon, "Military Prostitution and the U.S. Military in Asia," *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, Vol. 3-6-09, January 17, 2009.

<sup>19</sup> Affidavit of Philippine Navy Lt. SG Nancy Gadian on the direct involvement of U.S. military forces in combat operations in Mindanao, August 26, 2009.

<sup>20</sup> Panaghoy, *loc. cit.*

\* Angie Ipong was released in February 2011 as the formal peace talks between GPH-NDFP resumed in Oslo, Norway.

\*\* The Morong 43 was released by the Aquino government in December 2010 due to pressure created by a widespread domestic and international protests.



*Rep. Luz Ilagan is an educator and a women's rights advocate. She is among the activists who openly fought the Marcos dictatorship. Rep. Ilagan is the representative of the GABRIELA Women's Party to the Congress of the House of Representatives. She also chaired other organizations such as Solidarity Action Group for Indigenous Peoples (SAGIP), TALIKALA Foundation, Purple Rose Committee, Media Mindanao News Service, and Development Educational Media Services.*

## **From Parliament to the Streets: Challenges to Women**

**Luz Ilagan**  
**Gabriela Women's Party Representative**

Women all over the world are under attack on several fronts. Over the recent years, more and more women, children and their families have become witnesses and victims to the ravages of imperialist incursion and globalization.

The onslaught of global crises is unprecedented. Despite imperialist countries' claim of being on the road to recovery, the continuing economic downturns, and the pockets of wars that have assumed international proportions prove that millions of women still suffer from loss of income, environmental damage and depleting resources, and ravages of militarization.

As fiscal woes plague governments worldwide, we see reduced spending for basic services such as health, housing, and education. Despite the growing need to address issues of landlessness, increase subsidies for farmers, and provide welfare assistance to retrenched and displaced workers in urban centers, more and more funds are poured onto the maintenance of military forces and equipment.

Worse, this government that has refused to increase spending for people's basic needs even attacks the people's rights. The lack of spending for the health sector, for example, is even coupled with attacks against health workers, the most recent and prominent case of which is that of the Morong 43. In the middle of their training in Morong, these forty-three health workers including 23 women were illegally arrested and detained, tortured, sexually molested, and denied access to lawyers. They were accused of being insurgents, just as the over 900 activists killed under the *Oplan Bantay Laya* (Operation-Plan Freedom Watch) or the military campaign under former president Arroyo to eliminate her critics and supposedly halt insurgency in the country.

The situation is quite similar in other countries affected by the crises, with governments resorting to militarism and authoritarianism - destroying picket lines of striking workers, and jailing and killing human rights defenders, media people, and activists - to quell dissent. At the same time, imperialist powers are increasing their military presence to protect their economic interests.

The social costs and impacts of these policies on women and children are enormous, leading them to resort to various means to survive. In the process, they become more vulnerable to trafficking, prostitution and domestic violence. The feminization of migrant work in the Philippines is proof of the additional burden women have taken on to help their families survive. At least 3,000 Filipinos, mostly women, leave everyday to seek employment abroad despite dire warnings and experiences of others who have been victimized by abusive employers. In many militarized communities, women are subjected to rape and various forms of harassment, and are forced to leave their homes and stay in cramped evacuation centers. To escape the difficulties of life in evacuation centers, many young girls are reportedly forced into early marriage. The list is long and the situation heart-rending.

But just as women are being attacked on different fronts, they are also fighting on various planes and venues. More and more women see the need to take part in collective action - from forming cooperatives, to participating in governance and policymaking, to joining revolutionary groups.

In terms of parliamentary struggle, the political victory of Gabriela Women's Party (GWP) is a case in point.

With its track record of militancy, consistent service to the people, and deep and broad grassroots base, GWP, despite rabid military attacks and harassment, was again propelled to victory - winning two more seats in the Parliament in the 2010 national elections. Its nine years of legislative action, from the time when former Rep. Liza Maza served as its lone representative to the present, has established the solid reputation of GWP as the women's party of the country.

Like other progressive parliamentarians, GABRIELA Women's Party, work both inside and outside the halls of Congress.

One of the things that we have been working as part of the inside work is to amend or repeal existing anti-people laws. For one, we are working for the repeal of the Mining Act of 1975, which, coupled with military involvement, has allowed multinational conglomerates to exploit the country's rich mineral resources and grab the lands of small farmers and indigenous tribes. The parliamentarians' demands to investigate the intrusion and consequent impact of mining on tribal communities have led to congressional hearings and on-site fact-finding mission, which in turn, have forced some foreign companies

to stop their operations. Much work remains to be done, however, since many more companies have sprung in different parts of the country and the Act remains in place. Other anti-people laws which repeal is being sought are the Expanded Value Added Tax law, the Automatic Appropriation for Debt Payments law, and the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform law.

GWP crafts and works for the passage of legislation for the protection of women and children and, in fact, has been a principal author of laws such as The Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act, the Anti Violence Against Women and their Children Act, the Juvenile Justice Act and, recently, the Magna Carta of Women. The passage of the Anti-Torture Law is a major victory of the militant parliamentarians and their allies in the midst of the Arroyo regime's enforced disappearances, illegal arrests, political killings, and other attacks against activists. Its implementation, however, needs to be strongly pushed and closely watched under the new administration, especially as it is already showing signs of following Arroyo's bloody footsteps.

GWP also supports and gathers support for other pro-people legislation. It has been a staunch supporter of such pro-people laws as the Genuine Agrarian Reform Bill put forth by Anakpawis (Toiling Masses) partylist. It also networks with other parliamentarians to gain support for this and other progressive legislation by identifying key members of the various congressional committees and getting their votes.

GWP's work is not confined within the halls of Congress. As representatives of marginalized sectors of society, GWP parliamentarians speak outdoors to ensure the articulation of its pro-people opinions and to help clarify and set the progressive ideological line of thought. It participates in mass actions to strengthen the linkage between the people's movement and legislative action. Progressive legislators, as true representatives of the basic sectors, must constantly assert identity with the toiling masses and must not make the mistake of disassociating themselves from the very people whose voices they must carry in Congress.

It also networks with both government and non-government organizations. There are occasions when maintaining formal and informal contact with government agencies help push for critical courses of action. Gabriela's networking with the former Chair of the Commission of Human Rights, for example, facilitated the conduct of a hearing on the abduction,

rape, and brutal killing of Rebelyn Pitao, daughter of a revolutionary commander in Mindanao.

It initiates and sustains solidarity actions and takes part in international campaigns on resistance to all forms of exploitation and oppression. Because the claws of imperialism and the destruction that it spreads are global in scope, it becomes imperative that parliamentarians establish linkages and find ways to work together to resist imperialism and its handmaid, militarization, inside and outside the halls of parliament.

The challenges that we face and the tasks at hand are numerous, varied, and urgent. Therefore, parliamentarians and leaders of grassroots organizations in our respective countries must remain steadfast and relentless, united and strong to face these attacks. For the pursuit of justice and equality will warrant the solidarity that we shall continue to build and nurture.



**WITH OUR ARMS JOINED TOGETHER**  
**Gelacio Guillermo**

*With our arms joined together, do you not fear?  
There are thousands and thousands of us answering  
To the calls of our sisters and brothers sworn to our great creed.  
Listen and shudder at the anger in our voice!*

*We come from all place where women and men still lead  
Downtrodden lives and die like famished dogs.  
We come from the streets and slums of towns  
And cities, from the factories that doom our days*

*To dull, mechanical labor, the whole of us silently  
Bearing our souls' anguish; our hearts seethe  
With revolt against all forces that drag our creative life  
Down the snare of death. We come from the den of rats.*

*You shall cringe as you watch us unfurl the banner  
Of our solidarity, mark the resolute ring in the army  
Of voices joined together in one song, the song  
Of the poor workers, the jobless, the starving,*

*The song also of women and men without homes and without land  
In the country of their birth. With us have come  
Our loved ones and our innocent children and the ghosts  
Of our fathers and mothers and the horde of the dead we have never known!*

*With our arms joined together, do you not fear?*



*Dr. Judy Taguiwalo is an Associate Professor at the Department of Women and Development Studies, College of Social Work and Community Development, University of the Philippines, Diliman. She has been fighting for women's rights since the 1970's and was among the female political prisoners during the Marcos dictatorship.*



## **Organizing and Mobilizing against Victimization and Neoliberal Globalization towards Freedom and Democracy**

***Judy M. Taguiwalo***

Let me start by sharing with you a poem by Joi Barrios, patriotic writer and poet and part of the people's movement for national sovereignty and democracy in the Philippines.

*TO BE A WOMAN IS TO LIVE AT A TIME OF WAR*

*To be a woman  
Is to live at a time of war.*

*I grew up  
with fear beside me,  
uncertain of a future,  
hinged to the men of my life;  
father, brother,  
husband, son.  
I was afraid to be alone.*

*To be a mother  
is to look at poverty at its face.  
For the cruelty of war  
lies not on heads that roll,  
but tables always empty.  
How does one look for food for the eldest  
as a baby sucks at one's breast?*

*No moment is without danger.  
In one's own home  
to speak, to defy  
is to challenge violence itself.*

*In the streets  
walking at nightfall  
is to invite a stranger's attack.  
In my country  
to fight against oppression  
is to lay down one's life for the struggle.  
  
I seek to know this war.  
To be a woman is a never ceasing battle  
to live and be free.*

Women live at a time of war. Joi Barrios' poem illustrates the various forms of violence women live with on a daily basis: the violence within the home for those who suffer from wife battering, the vulnerability to rape, the daily war against poverty for working class women especially mothers, and the actual violence perpetrated by reactionary states against those who fight oppression.

The United States-led "war on terror" and the general climate of impunity under authoritarian governments has intensified this as well as brought about new forms of violence perpetrated against women, especially poor, working class women. Neoliberal policies, which open up the economies of our countries, convert productive agricultural lands to industrial estates or to golf courses; replace indigenous farm production with chemical-based agriculture; have reduced or removed government support for social and agricultural services; have wrought havoc on the lives of our families, our communities; and have poisoned and destroyed our natural resources.

Let me cite some examples:

In Singur, West Bengal, India, peasant women suffered arrests and torture when they organized themselves into the "Save Agricultural Land Committee" and held collective actions against the expropriation of their land by the Indian government on behalf of Tata, an Indian-based multinational corporation with the Italian giant manufacturer Fiat as partner. A young woman activist, Tapashi Mallick, was raped and killed by hired goons inside the Tata car factory site.

In Indonesia, foreign investors have exploited the country's rich natural resources to the detriment of the people's livelihood. In Middle Sulawesi,

women's vegetable farming, fruit trees cultivation, and limited stone crushing have been destroyed by the entry of foreign stone companies which have grabbed communal and individual lands.

In the Philippines, an estimated 204 women were victims of extra judicial killings or of forced disappearances in the nine year rule of Macapagal-Arroyo administration. Filipino women which included journalists, human rights lawyers, the wives of opposition politicians were part of the 57 victims of the 2009 Maguindanao massacre in the southern part of the Philippines - they were reportedly raped and shot in the genitals and breasts. In another instance, 43 health workers in the Philippines, including 23 women, were illegally arrested while holding a training for community health workers. In the first 36 hours of their illegal detention, the health workers were blindfolded and handcuffed and were not allowed to consult with lawyers. Military personnel would remove their underwear whenever the detainees had to go to the bathroom and in some cases, it would be the female military escort who would clean the vagina of the women.

The US-led "war on terror", as Azra Sayeed stated in the 2008 Asian Rural Women's Coalition gathering in India, is a continuation of the economic imperialist global agenda. The basic issue is taking control of the resources that are present in the third world – be they oil, gas, mineral, water, or other resources which are present in our part of the world. In countries where there is no open declaration of war from the United States, authoritarian governments and even so-called democratic governments rely more and more on coercion and the use of armed force against the people and rural and urban poor communities to assure continuing control over resources and labor.

Resistance, however we call it, means to struggle, to fight, to oppose unjust and oppressive policies, programs and actions, to fight for social justice and for genuine equality and peace. There is, however, an alarming development in the literature of resistance that highlights the so called everyday acts of oppressed individuals against their masters as "resistance", what Filipino feminist Delia Aguilar critiques as "elevating simple survival strategies to the category of agency ostensibly to demonstrate this empowerment and to dispel the slightest suggestion that the oppressed may be passive victims". For example, Filipino nannies teaching Filipino games and culture to the children of the elite of the first world or a waitress' spitting into the soup of an arrogant customer before serving it are considered forms of resistance by those who hold the view that individual coping mechanisms of the oppressed are manifestations of their empowerment.

But those of us present here, leaders and members of various women's organizations or people's organizations in our countries know by experience that resistance cannot but be a collective undertaking because the roots of our oppression, the roots of war and the roots of violence that we experience are systemic and structural. Hence these have to be confronted in a systematic and organized manner. While individual acts of opposition are indicative of the possibility of ending victimization and of taking action to change an oppressive situation, these cannot lead to genuine empowerment as the unequal relationship and the oppressive situation remain basically unchanged. Resistance for us means a collective undertaking to oppose inequality and oppression and to bring about changes in the power relations between the oppressed and the oppressor.

A booklet of the Pesticide Action Network Asia Pacific (PAN AP) puts together a number of cases in our region of women's organized resistance to neo-liberal policies and attacks on women and the people's welfare. These cases and our own experiences teach us that successful women's and people's resistance involve:

1. examining the manifestation and history of our problems as poor women and as citizens of countries with the common history and situation of foreign domination;
2. connecting our individual, village and community issues with national and global policies and programs and analyzing the role of our governments in adopting, expanding, and enforcing these policies;
3. organizing, arousing, and mobilizing ourselves to confront these issues and the foreign masters, the local elite, and the state that implement and benefit from these programs and policies;
4. utilizing various arenas and strategies from petition, delegation, to militant marches, cultural forms and performances, general strikes, to lobbying and even fielding our own candidates in the legislative arena; and
5. forming alliances and networks locally, nationally, regionally, and globally to amplify our strength and to contribute to building our national movements and developing a strong international front against neo-liberal globalization and the US-led "war on terror".

Let me end in the same manner that I started this presentation, with a poem, this time from a Filipino patriotic male poet, whose poem captures the spirit and militancy of the people's resistance:

#### KUNG KAMI'Y MAGKAKAPIT-BISIG

Gelacio Guillermo

*Kung kami'y magkakatapat-bisig, hindi ka ba nangangamba?  
Libo-libo kami, milyon-milyon, tumutugon sa panawagan  
Ng mga kapatid naming anumpa sa isang dakilang simulain.  
Makinig ka't manginig sag alit na umaalinganngaw sa aming tinig!*

*Kami'y nagmula sa labat ng dakong ang tao'y nabubuhay  
Na niyuyurakan at namamatay na tila asong gutom.  
Kami'y nagmula sa mga kabye't barungbarong nga mga bayan  
At lunsod, nagmula sa mga mga pagbrikang nagtatakda*


*Na ang galaw ng bawat araw ay nakababagot, parang makina,  
Habang dala-dala nimm ang pnagigipuspos ng kaluluwa,  
Habang naghibimagsik ang puso laban sa lath ng pwersang  
Humibila sa amin sa hukay. Kami'y nagmula sa lungga ng daga.*

*Mangingilabot ka kapag nakita mong ininawagayway ang bandila  
Ng aming pagkakapatiran, kapag narinig mo ang taginting  
Sa mga tinig na pinagbuklod ng isang awit, ang awit  
Ng dukhang manggagawa, ng walang hanap-buhay, ng nagugutom,*

*Ang awit ng walang tabanan at walang sariling lupa  
Sa bayang sinilangan. Kasama naming ang mga kabiyak  
At walang-malay na anak, at ang mga multo ng aming mga ninuno  
At ng kasa-laksang nangamatay na kailanma'y hindi naming nakilala.*

*Kung kami'y magkakatapat bisig, hindi ka ba nangangamba?*

Maraming salamat. Thank you.



*Herminia de Deus is a recipient of the “Lorico Asuwain Medal (Brave Lorikies) in 2009. She joined the Timor Leste resistance for national freedom when she was 19. Today, de Deus is a Training Coordinator at East Timor Development Agency.*

## ***Timorese Women in the Resistance Movement: A Young Woman’s Story***

***Herminia de Deus***

*“When the women speak to me, they only say a little bit, some only say half the story, some speak about somebody else’s story; and often speak with tears in their eyes. Some stand in front of me trying to tell me something but to one point they cry instead of speak, they try to find words to speak but cannot find the words to express their sufferings”*

*-Bishop Basilio Nascimento, November 1998*

My name is Herminia de Deus and I am from East Timor, also known as Timor-Leste.

On 28 November 2009, Timor-Leste’s Independence Day, I received the “Lorico Asuwain” medal together with 240 men and women. This “Brave Lorikies” medal is awarded to Timorese youth for their contribution in the resistance movement against the Indonesian occupation of Timor-Leste. The chapter of our resistance life was finally put to rest. Accompanied by my husband, my four daughters and my mother, I walked up the aisle when my name was called out. As I approached the stage, I was greeted by our Secretary of State for Veterans Affairs, one of our former guerrillas. “Congratulations, Herminia” and he handed out the medal and pinned it on my chest. I thanked him with tears pouring down my face. As I went back to my seat, I could see that my mother was also in tears. She wiped her tears and smiled at me as I took my seat. She reached out and squeezed my hand hard, “I am proud of you, daughter” she whispered.

Hearing her words, my mind drifted back to 1989. I was 19 years old. I was from the district of Ermera. Like every Timorese family, ours was a large one – I had four sisters and three brothers. My father worked for the Indonesian Government and my mum ran a small construction business. After I completed junior high school, my parents sent me to Dili to attend the Senior High school at St. Joseph’s College, a school renowned for its scholastic excellence and run by priests from the SVD order.

It was during my second year at Senior High School that I first came in contact with the resistance. Our parish priest from Ermera invited me to accompany him to the districts as a church helper. During the school holidays, with my parents' permission, I would travel with a priest and two nuns to the sub-districts visiting various villages and hamlets. Often, my job was to help with the preparations for mass. However, after mass, the nuns who were also nurses would provide medical treatment to sick villagers. As we travelled to remote village after remote village, I started to notice the different types of sickness affecting the people, mainly TB and malnutrition. I also noticed the long absence of the priest.

One day, in one of the remote villages, the priest was called urgently to visit a hut. Because the nuns were occupied, the priest asked me to accompany him. When we approached the hut, someone quickly got us inside and whispered to the priest. This was when I first met the guerillas from the resistance. There were three people - two men and a woman. The woman was suffering from a lung disease and both men were heavily wounded from gun shots. While the priest rushed to treat the men, I approached the woman to see what I could do. When I spoke to her, she told me her story. She and her husband had been working as cooks for the resistance in the bush. One day, while her husband and children were looking for food, there was an ambush and she was separated from them. Since then, she has been searching for her family without success but she still continued to supply food to the resistance. Now her health was deteriorating and she needed treatment. The priest took her to the hospital and notified her family. I found out later on that the family took her home. As for the two men, they continued to receive treatment during our visits, until they were well again, and I found out that they went back to the bush.

After this incident, I started to notice the work that the priests and the nuns were doing. I began to notice why the nuns always carried more things than necessary, always carried a lot of medical equipment. And I began to notice that after mass, they would go further to more remote villages. Often we would stay for days, and this is because the people from the resistance would come down from the mountains to receive medical treatment. The incident happened in the village called Hatolia. It was when I first came in direct contact with the resistance that I began to understand my mother's work. My mother was multi-skilled; she had a variety of jobs, always volunteering to do many things. Apart from running her small business, she was also cook to the high military Indonesian officials in our town of Ermera. Throughout the years, she earned the trust of the Indonesian officials and they would give her transport to go to the capital city,

Dili, to buy their food supplies. Every time she came back from the city with supplies, she would do a detour and also drop off food supplies to the resistance. She had been doing this for a very long time and I never knew.

One day, when I had returned from one of the visits, I told my mum about my work activities, and to my surprise my mother was very angry. "I may be your mother, but this issue must remain a secret with you, do not talk to anyone about it. Talk only to the priests and to the people who the priests tell you to talk to. Do not trust anyone!"

I found out that my mother was a member of the popular women's organization before the invasion. During the war, she continued to be a member and became part of the passive resistance. Only much later did I come to find out that it was my mother who had recommended me to the priest. It was through her that I came to be involved in the resistance.

As I continued my studies, my visits to the districts during the holidays also continued, but this time, I became the recipient of vital information. The priest would receive information from the resistance, he would then give it to me and I would pass this information to the people who could be trusted. Messages were often in cassettes and tape recorders and were always messages from our leaders in the resistance.

This went on for three years, and I visited many districts and villages. The resistance was very strong. Often the sick people would stay in some old widow's hut who was brave enough to accept the resistance. She would approach the priest and take him to her house so that the priest could cure the sick. It was these women who would risk their lives, despite having already lost their husbands and children. They would still continue to resist in their own way. It was this type of passive resistance that is often not recognized and sometimes judged wrongly. In the case of my mother, people often accused her of collaborating with the enemy.

In 1990, I got accepted into the national university. I moved from living with the sisters to my family's house. At the university, I began to form groups where our main job was to distribute information. In 1991, a youth named Sebastião Gomes was killed in the church by the Indonesian army.

University students organized a demonstration on the 12<sup>th</sup> November where youths came out to the streets to protest against the Indonesian army. In front of the cemetery, the army opened fire. This incident was filmed by a

western journalist who happened to be there and overnight the world knew about this incident, which became known as the Santa Cruz massacre.

After the massacre, information was leaked that I was involved in the resistance. The Indonesian lecturers were not happy about my activities, and one day as I was going to class, a Timorese lecturer warned me that the Indonesian Intelligence was looking for me. I stopped going to school since then. The situation also started to affect my family. My younger brother was arrested in another town called Lospalos. I started helping the youth that were hurt at the Santa Cruz massacre. I took them to my house. I had a friend who worked in the Intelligence service (Korem) and who would warn me which suburbs the army would do their searches, so I always knew beforehand and would be ready to move the injured youth to other safe houses. They also had a list of the names of the people they wanted to kill, so when I got a hold of the list, I would contact the Bishop and he would warn and often help the person leave Timor-Leste, ironically to Indonesia. I continued to do this work for nine more years. Even when I got married in 1993, my commitment to the resistance never waned.

My husband was also involved in the resistance, which made it easier for me to carry on with my clandestine activities. In fact, it strengthened my work because I now had the support of my husband. My husband supported the resistance from the Eastern part of the island and I from the Western part. My house became the focal point for the resistance and I would receive visitors from the resistance clandestinely until 1999.

In 1998, following my mother's footsteps, I joined the women's organization which had changed its name to the Timorese Women's Organization in order to encompass a broader section of Timorese women, especially those who were not affiliated with a particular political party. The previous organization was founded by a political party and that restricted the participation of many women. I felt that by being a member of this organization, I could contribute more; I could take the voices of the women in the resistance to another level.

When you talk about women involved the resistance, you hear of the brave ones who actively participated on the frontline. They carried weapons and fought side by side with the men in the mountains. You hear about those who were arrested, imprisoned, tortured and violated; of those whose lives were sadly shortened but whose legacy remain. In Timor-Leste, you hear the names of Rosa Bonaparte (the founder of the Women's organization), who was killed at Dili harbor on the day of the Indonesian invasion; of Maria Tapo,

who fired against the enemy when her husband was taking a rest and who died on the spot; of Felismina Conceição dos Santos, who worked as an administrative officer for the high ranking Indonesian military, stole secret documents from the military and handed them to the resistance, and got subsequently caught in 1996, tortured and sent to jail; of Maria Goreti, a 17-year old who, before dying in jail, wrote with her blood on the wall: "I can die, but for those who will live, never forget Timor-Leste's independence."

On 30<sup>th</sup> August 1999, through the UN sponsored referendum, East Timor was finally given the opportunity to decide its own future. An overwhelming majority voted to break away from Indonesia, and today, ten years later, Timor-Leste is an independent nation. The war helped us women to become stronger. Our Parliament has a 29% representation of women; our vice-president of the National Parliament is a woman; three key ministries in our government – Finance, Justice, and Social Services are run by women. Recently, one of our women was elected to be a member of CEDAW Committee, representing Timor-Leste internationally.

As for me, I have gone back to university to complete my studies. I also work for a local organization, the East Timor Development Agency, which focuses on the development of Timorese Human Resources. As a Training Coordinator, I have the opportunity to prepare the youth, particularly the ones who were affected by the years of struggle to help them be a part of the development of this nation. I believe that each one of us has the potential to contribute and should be afforded every opportunity to realize this potential. As our Prime Minister and resistance hero Xanana Gusmão has often said, *"Only when we are developed, can we truly be free – free from poverty, from conflict, from fear"*.

After all, this was what we fought for - only then can we truly benefit from the sacrifices of our fallen brothers and sisters. Only then can we move forward and look to the future with confidence.

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