

## EDITOR'S NOTE

The four articles tackle substantial issues, encompassing health and health care, the feminization of poverty and the survival of a once thriving industry. They revolve around poverty and how government's efforts to deal with it are obstructed by various causes, resulting in less than desired and desirable results.

The lead article by Ofreneo and Acosta highlights women's greater vulnerability to poverty, citing lack of access to economic resources and social capital as well as limited control over assets. They argue that gender must be recognized as a theme cutting across development issues and decry government response via micro-financing for women as more trouble than help, given the amount and red tape involved. Antipoverty programs and projects can be effective only, they claim, by recognizing gender disparity, moving from being gender neutral to gender specific and finally, to being gender transformative.

Two papers conclude that health is not a priority issue for government. Bautista's paper discusses primary health care as an approach and principle, and traces its development from 1978 through its devolution to LGUs in 1991 to the present. She laments the decrease in health expenditures by national govt while noting an increase in local expenditures and more worrying for the public, in out-of-pocket expenses for health care, declining numbers of providers relative to population and infant mortality and life expectancy rates, which while impressive in themselves, pale beside those of our Asian neighbors.

Simbulan-Pimentel blames the current crisis in health on onerous policy conditionalities to government's loans from the IMF-WB, impacting negatively on national health policies and on the more efficient delivery of health services. She documents the dramatic declines in budget outlays for health vis-à-vis increasing demand, inflation and rising costs in health goods and services, in turn exacerbated by a misallocation of available funds. Like Bautista, she concludes that health has increasingly become the privilege of a very few.

Finally, Maglambayan makes an impassioned plea for a fair hearing for the endangered minerals industry, its negative image fostered by media and environmental NGOs and aided by the passive stance of the industry in the face of such attacks. The situation thus undermines the government's active courtship of foreign investments. He therefore urges a clearer interface between the Philippine Mining Act and related laws like the IPRA and rallies the industry to take a more proactive stance in presenting an accurate and fair portrayal of the industry.

