

EDITOR'S NOTE

This issue features three articles on public policy at the grassroots level in the Philippines.

“A Study of the Public Education Domain of the Philippine Mental Health Association (1996-2002),” describes and assesses the prevention education services conducted by PMHA, a non-government organization considered a major stakeholder in the mental health system of the country. The bases for assessment is the Monitoring Instrument for Mental Health Systems and Services: Pilot Trial Version, December 2003 of the WHO, Western Pacific Regional Office. The study notes the nationwide reach of the PMHA’s public education program but recommends a systematic review and feedback mechanism to monitor efficient use of resources and delivery of services. Such mechanism could give policymakers a firm hold on the core issues on mental health in the country and provide the bases for a sustainable program benefiting specific populations in specific areas.

“How Community-Based Research Influences National Policy on Water Management in the Philippines,” documents the process by which community-based research on water management in Lantapan, Bukidnon, south of the Philippines, can “spiral” towards national policy. Local researchers bring up research results to partners in national agencies to help shape a national policy built on three key components: *the diminishing water resources in rural areas*, the assessment of water quality and trends, and a water management approach based on proper watershed planning. The authors argue that the impacts of their efforts are not immediately visible, so it is premature to claim success. They note as significant, however, how the Lantapan case reflects the broadening of the “sphere” of public policy influence to include not just policy analysts but the private sector and the civil society as well.

“Development-Induced Displacement, Resettlement Experiences and Impoverishment and Marginalization in Pagbilao, Quezon and San Manuel, Pangasinan” demonstrates the high costs of industrialization to the quality of life. Two large companies provide energy to industry and build complimentary infrastructure such as roads and classrooms. The government, through the National Power Corporation, subsequently undertakes a resettlement program but this is

done in the absence of democratic consultations. It is unable thus to set up a sustainable livelihood program suitable to the needs and skills of the displacees, provide them with capital, and consider social differences such as age and gender. The net effect is the perpetuation of poverty and further marginalization of the resettlers. The study recommends conjoined action of national and international groups to pressure the government into implementing holistic resettlement programs.

The three studies suggest that public policy must be sited in a communal space occupied jointly by the state and the public (to recall Barthes). The vision of social transformation is inevitably a political project but it is one in which various stakeholders seek to be heard above the din in the halls of politicians.

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