

Women's Assembly 2023

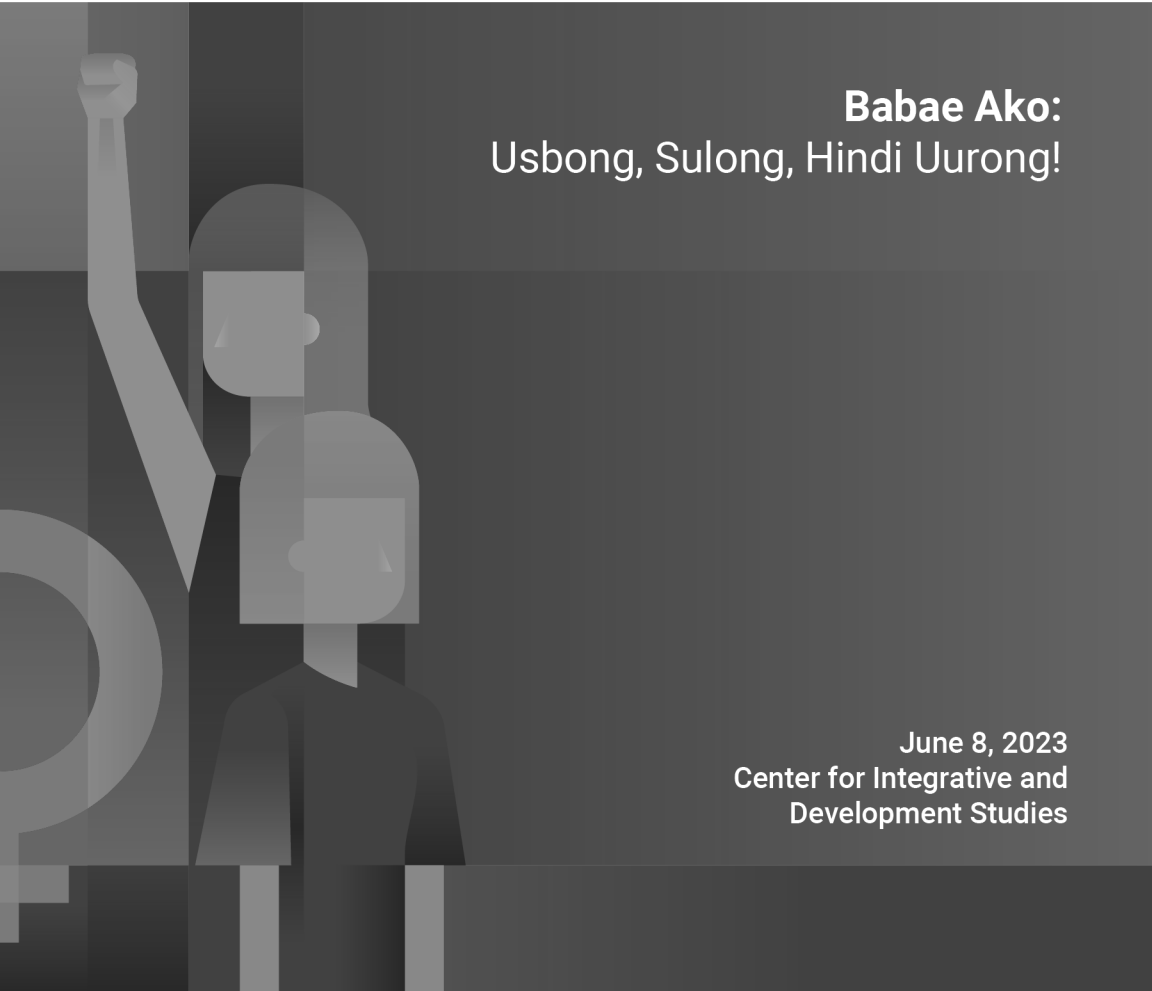
Babae Ako:
Usbong, Sulong, Hindi Urong!

June 8, 2023
Center for Integrative and
Development Studies

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8 June 2023

Center for Integrative and Development Studies

*Nazareth A. Del Pilar¹, Maria Anabel A. Julian², and
Djoannalyn B. Janier³*

Story of every Filipina under the multiple crises: A situationer

The country at present is faring under multiple crises: social, political, economic, and climate-related. The glaring inflation rate in January 2023 was marked at 8.7%—the highest recorded in the last 14 years. This reality serves to further underscore the unfavorable conditions of marginalized sectors, especially women who are already burdened with inequalities.

Further, the phenomenon of *unpaid care work*, prevalent even prior to the pandemic, has only been exacerbated upon the onset of the global health emergency. In unpaid care work, women stay at home to fulfill gendered expectations of keeping the household up and running amidst

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 - 2 Maria Anabel Julian is the current Deputy Secretary General of FDC.
 - 3 Djoannalyn Janier is one of the Vice Presidents of FDC and the Co-Head of its Women's Committee.

the soaring prices of goods and services, including caring for the young, the sick and elderly members of the family and extended family.

Unequal work opportunities are also affecting women even more as the government fails to mandate a minimum wage increase. There is a marked disparity in participation of women in the formal economy as opposed to men. On the other hand, women in the informal sector have to contend with limited options to eke out a living.

During the Covid-19 health crisis, the site of struggles of women and girls was deemed to be their homes, where they experienced physical, sexual, and other forms of abuse and harassment mostly perpetuated by their own family members. During times of disaster, man-made or natural, given the ongoing climate emergency, women are propelled as first responders—often ill-prepared for this role in the community.

For the longest time, women resist the systemic inequalities and a gender-biased regime that cuts across their everyday lives. In the Philippines, they often encounter phrases like “*Kababae mong tao...*” (You are a woman and yet...), which is mostly followed by a sexist remark or two. On the other hand, we see the Philippines ranking 16th out of 146 countries in the Global Gender Gap Report 2023 of the World Economic Forum. Such a gap between survey result and reality shows that there is much that the Philippine government needs to do in terms of policies and program implementation to close the gap.

Notwithstanding these trends, women have their unique ways in showcasing their strength, wit, and resilience to push forward in today’s society.

Every statement of the iconic line, “*Babae Ako!*” (I am a woman!) serves as an antithesis to the discriminatory phrase, “*Kababae mong tao...*” (You are a woman and yet...). The persistence of these issues and the harsh conditions against women will contribute in building a strong front against it. The historical militancy of every Filipina needs to be awakened, and spurred towards collective action to finally end the systemic and historical inequalities on the basis of gender.

About the Women's Assembly 2023

For the first time after the COVID-19 pandemic, the Freedom from Debt Coalition (FDC) Women's Committee hosted this year's Women's Assembly with the theme, "*Babae Ako: Usbong, Sulong, Hindi Uurong!*" (Prosper/Flourish, Forge Ahead, Will never be defeated!). It was conducted on a hybrid platform hosted by the University of the Philippines Center of Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS) Program on Alternative Development. The physical setup was at the UPCIDS Main Hall and the online was via Zoom. Representatives from 36 women organizations and individual members of FDC Women's Committee took part in the Assembly.

The program highlighted various stories of *women's survival, resistance, and resilience* with the ever-changing tides confronting the women's sector at present.

This year, the Women's Assembly served as a consolidating activity among FDC members and networks. It 1) tackled the crucial issues of our time, especially the impacts of the pandemic to women; 2) strengthened the capacities of the members from different backgrounds; 3) opened a platform and initiated collective action to advance the agenda of people's survival, recovery, and sustainability of the Coalition. The Women Assembly was also a major activity in celebration of FDC's 36th Founding Anniversary.

The Women Assembly was divided into three (3) important sessions:

1. The Learning Session

Women leaders of FDC graced insightful discussions on key discourses including a) the invisible crisis of Filipino Women vis-a-vis public debt and public services, b) the burden of unpaid care work, c) women and climate crisis, and d) women in People's Economy.

2. The Workshop

Participants from different sectors and backgrounds were divided into four (4) workshop groups: a) debt and tax, b) unpaid care work and public services, c) women, climate change, and gender just transition, and d) people's economy. The goal was to have an in-depth understanding of these issues in their contexts and consolidate them in their ways forward.

3. Basic SOGIESC Orientation

The special session on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sexual Characteristics (SOGIESC) is part of the Committee's efforts in integrating the said dynamic discourse on its program of building alternatives.

The Assembly is also made possible with the support from the Asian Peoples' Movement on Debt and Development (APMDD), Philippine Movement for Climate Justice (PM CJ), Integrated Rural Development Foundation (IRDF), 11.11.11 Coalition of the Flemish North-South Movement, and Dreikönigsaktion - Hilfswerk der Katholischen Jungschar (DKA) Austria.

PRESENTATIONS

On Unpaid Care and Domestic Work

Amparo "Ampy" Miciano

Secretary General, Pambansang Koalisyon ng Kababaihan sa Kanayunan (PKKK)

Amparo Miciano, in her discussion, highlighted one of the biggest burdens of Filipino women —unpaid *care* and *domestic work*.

In this session, care work was mainly attributed to the concept of 'care', which involves maintaining and sustaining the space where people live to survive. As a universal need, care work is seen as fundamental; the economy and society cannot function without it. However, many factors (i.e., culture, gender roles and stereotypes) have led to consigning care and domestic work to women and young girls. They always bear the brunt of gender-based asymmetry, and are mostly unpaid and undervalued. Unpaid care work and domestic work also limit their exercise of human rights, their access to opportunities, and their time for recreational and paid activities.

Miciano also provided glaring figures on the inequalities and multiple burdens that women are struggling with. A total of 16.4 billion hours is spent on unpaid care work every day, which is equivalent to 2 billion people working 8 hours per day. For women, the unpaid care work totals to 4 hours and 32 minutes per day. Miciano also mentioned that women dedicate 3.2 times more time on unpaid care work than men, which is more than $\frac{3}{4}$ or 76.4 percent of the total amount of unpaid care work.⁴

4 United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), "COVID-19 and the Unpaid Care Economy in Asia and the Pacific," 13 September, 2021, <https://www.unescap.org/kp/2021/covid-19-and-unpaid-care-economy-asia-and-pacific>

Outlining recommendations, Miciano highlighted the importance of upholding basic human rights as the standard of treatment to all persons and eliminating all kinds of inequalities including gender norms, which leads to excessive and harmful levels of unpaid care and domestic work.

In addition, she raised that there should be a greater push for the Care Economy to further address the women's unpaid care and domestic work, and maintain equitable sharing of responsibility with emphasis on the important role of the household, community, the State and the private sector.

Aside from integrating the unpaid care work in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) share, Miciano pointed out the importance of observing the 5Rs in this campaign. It would start with the **Recognition** of the unpaid and poorly paid care done primarily by women. Second is the **Reduction** of the total hours of unpaid care tasks, through providing better access to affordable, quality, and time-saving devices and infrastructure. It is also important to facilitate fair **Redistribution** of unpaid care work within the household, simultaneously shifting the burden to the State and private sector. **Representation** shall come from the most marginalized caregivers to amplify their voices in the key policy decision-making and systems that directly affect their lives. Finally, to **Reward** decent work opportunities for care workers.

The Fight for Climate Justice

Lidy Nacpil

Coordinator, Asian People's Movement on Debt and Development (APMDD)

Lidy Nacpil discussed the context of the dire situation brought about by the globally experienced climate crisis. In the state of emergency, she expounded that the destabilization of the climate has already brought devastating and dramatic effects that are currently felt and seen. This includes the slow onset of the impact on food, water, and agriculture, and on extreme weather disturbances. At present, the average global temperature has risen to nearly 1 degree Celsius since

pre-industrial level and is still increasing at a much faster rate. She expressed that the world has already reached the climate emergency situation. People must sound the alarm to act immediately from its irreversible effects.

Nacpil further explained that global warming is the major culprit of this climate crisis. It is caused by the excessive and continuous increase of greenhouse gases (GHG) levels in the atmosphere, exacerbated by the heavy reliance on fossil fuels of highly developed countries that are mainly driven by reaping profits rather than by preserving life. preservation of life. Moreover, she highlighted the excessive energy consumption of elite corporations on a global scale. This not only causes vulnerable countries to suffer more from climate change consequences but also destroys the natural carbon sinks such as oceans and forests. Nacpil also pointed out that the government's programs and systems have perpetuated such catastrophic situations.

Amidst the fight against the global climate crisis, Nacpil underscored its effects on women, who have been disproportionately affected. After all, women traditionally have a dominant share in the social reproduction and care work. They have been marginalized for so long due to contending social and cultural norms.

The foregoing circumstances bring major challenges to the government, especially in addressing climate-related issues that additionally burden women. Paramount is their acknowledgement of their failure to (1) provide basic services and programs to build climate resilience and address the effects of climate change to their citizens, and (2) to undertake urgent climate action, together with the corporate and elites, in combating the climate crisis. Nacpil also stressed the need to heed the call for a rapid, just, and equitable energy transition and alternative renewable energy sources, and to veer away from the profit-oriented ventures of the corporate and elites. It is imperative for the governments and corporations to put an end to fossil fuel and gas investments.

Filipino Women and the Invisible Crisis

Mae Buenaventura

Debt Program Coordinator, Asian People's Movement on Debt and Development (APMDD)

In her presentation, Mae Buenaventura prefaced the gendered aspects of multiple crises in the context of debt and finance. The situation revealed that women are being affected disproportionately due to low capacities in absorbing the economic shocks at the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. Case in point, Buenaventura indicated that about 6.6 million Filipino women are working in the informal sector. They are subjected to juggling between surviving over a low income, reduced savings, and little to no safety nets. On the other hand, those in the formal sectors and micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) were gravely affected by partial to full business shutdowns during the pandemic.

Buenaventura emphasized that the country is now sitting in a huge debt of PHP 13.91 trillion, as of Quarter 1 of 2023, in tandem with the significant cuts in public spending for key social services. The pandemic also left structural problems in the economy that affected the most vulnerable sectors, including women. Buenaventura had raised that the burdensome debt and budget issues leave a chilling effect on every Filipino woman. Budget cuts pushed them to fill the gaps through unpaid care work. Income and time poverty also compelled women to make ends meet while budgeting household income. In fact, women tend to allocate more time to unpaid care work rather than to productive work. Women are also the hardest hit in terms of disproportionality in the opportunities to quality jobs in public employment.

As a way forward, Buenaventura re-echoed the integration of Feminist Economics in the campaigns of FDC, especially in carrying out alternative economic models towards a just, equitable, and sustainable economic policies.

More importantly, she reiterated that FDC should always go back to its mandate of including social reproduction in all its activities, campaigns, programs, and structures, and to push for a genuine economic development in all spheres to highlight the undervalued labor of women.

Engendering People's Solidarity Economy

Rosalinda Pineda Ofreneo, Ph.D.

UP Professor Emeritus and Convener, Homenet Philippines

Dr. Rosalinda Ofreneo opened the session by reiterating the alternative development blueprint introduced by the FDC—the People's Economy. Built on several pillars, the People's Economy aims to break away from the unjust, unsustainable, and unequal economy through strengthening industries and other sectors, de-carbonizing the economy through just transition, building a grassroots-based and women-led solidarity economy, and establish people-government partnerships in the policy and development environment.

The realities faced by women in the economy include the lack of empowerment, which constrain their capacities to engage in government policies, and build sustainable communities. They also lack resources. Therefore, there is a need for a strong movement to achieve a people-centered recovery and empower women and other vulnerable groups.

Dr. Ofreneo also outlined a set of recommendations to attain People's Solidarity Economy. First, FDC's campaign on the People's Economy, where a gender-responsive framework is integrated, must be advanced and sustained.

Second, Social Solidarity Economy (SSE), as the main tool in achieving a people-centered recovery, must be promoted. This will help establish a systems model as a genuine framework responsive to the problems and challenges faced by women to participate in such solidarity networks.

Third, community-based and participatory approaches must be promoted to strengthen capacities of women to be involved in the SSE supply chain.

Lastly, practical modes of financing including Family Banks, Village Savings and Loans Associations, Self-help Groups, and Membership-based microfinance models, must be promoted, alongside the integration of sustainable agriculture in these programs and activities.

WORKSHOP SESSION

For the workshop, the participants were grouped into four based on the topics they prefer to tackle. The following are the assigned themes for each group: Group 1: debt and tax; Group 2: unpaid care work and public services; Group 3: women, climate change, and gender just transition; and Group 4: people's economy. The groups were expected to follow the guide questions to further flesh out the pertinent issues at hand and create a deeper analysis.

For groups 1 to 3:

- A. *Paano naramdaman lalo na ng mga kababaihan ang isyu ng utang/serbisyo/krisis sa klima?* (How do the issues on debt/public services/climate crisis affect the women sector?)
- B. *Paano hinarap ang mga ito ng komunidad at ng mga kababaihan?* (How do the women sector and the communities confront these challenges?)
- C. *Meron ba/o walang patakaran ang gobyerno na nagbigay-daan sa sapat na tugon?* (Are there any programs/policies that directly address the foregoing?)
- D. *Paano natin mapatampok at ipaglaban sa ating mga kampanya ang kagalingan, karapatan at paglaya sa karahasan (socio-economic, VAW) ng mga kababaihan?* (How can we highlight in our campaigns the fight for women's rights and a violence-free society?)

For group 4:

- A. *Sa tingin niyo, saang sektor ng ekonomiya napupunta ang karamihan ng mga kababaihan?* (In what sector does the majority of women belong to?)
- B. *Ano ang kalagayan sa sektor na iyon? (Halimbarwa: mababang sahod, walang katiyakan sa trabaho/ kontraktualisasyon, walang social benefits, iba't-ibang tipo ng harassment, atbp.)* (What is the status

of that sector where majority of the women belong to? For example: low salary, no security of tenure/contractualization, no social benefits, different types of harassment, etc.)

- C. *Paano mapasigla ang partisipasyon ng kababaihan sa buong ekonomiya? Anong mga pagbabago ang kailangan upang mabigyang daan ito?* (How will women's participation in the national economy be strengthened? What reforms are needed to achieve this?)

The organizers also encouraged the representatives of organizations and local chapters who were present online to participate in the workshop, which followed a workshop-report format.

The groups were given an hour to facilitate meaningful exchanges and ways forward on the identified issues and opportunities. Their outputs were presented after the discussion.

WORKSHOP RESULTS

Debt and Tax Group

Participants discussed the effects of policies on debt and tax. According to them, such policies have a huge impact on women, as these influence the soaring prices of basic goods. In terms of the National Government's outstanding debt, Filipinos are the ones paying through taxes that unevenly affect women with its added burden. Under these circumstances, women are forced to adjust by having additional jobs or activities that may increase household income, while carrying the burden of managing their measly household budget in order to sustain access to basic services such as water, electricity, and transportation costs, not to mention their daily sustenance.

Women should have an alternative income and take on precarious jobs to supplement their children's education and health (supplies and medicines at the barangay health centers may have been lacking or given to their alliances). To add to their expenses, most women have resorted to loaning from Micro Finance Institutions (MFIs), not one but three at the same time.

With low-paying jobs, and no social protection, women fall victim to contractualization, sweatshops and abusive employers. Afraid to be terminated, women workers do not complain and are afraid to join unions despite unfair labor practices. Meanwhile, organized farmers have transformed their agricultural practice into organic farming and agro-ecological farming to link with traders.

In terms of the government policies on debt and tax, it is not clear whether existing ones are actually addressing the real issues, since their effects are failing to manifest in Filipino women's lives at large. There is the lack of consultation mechanisms in obtaining new loans, while the people are suffering from debt repayments with regressive taxation schemes.

The participants recommended amplifying the voices of women as they fare across these multifaceted crises. There is also a need to raise awareness among Filipino citizens regarding the massive debt of the government and its effect on the public, especially on women as one of the vulnerable sectors. Further, educational discussions and discourses should be facilitated to strengthen the calls against illegitimate debts. In conclusion, the participants called for genuine unity and solidarity to uphold women's rights, continue the fight against gender-based abuse and violence, and pass a wealth tax.

Unpaid Care Work and Public Services Group

The participants emphasized various constraints that women are experiencing in attaining equal opportunities to quality and decent work and in accessing key public services. They echoed the earlier presentation of Miciano on unpaid care work, acknowledging that women are primarily carrying the added burden of care work within the household. Such scenario subjected women for the longest time to limited opportunities, both economically and health-wise, as they are entangled with care work.

In order to reduce expenses, women resort to austerity measures like the manual washing of clothes, instead of using a machine, and the non-use of electric fans and others. At times, women may only have 2 to 3 hours of rest and sleep. Meanwhile, it was mentioned during the workshop that the electricity cost in Mindanao (about P17/kwh) and Visayas (about P14.25/kwh) is far higher than that in Metro Manila (about P11/kwh). There are also areas in the Visayas and Mindanao that have no potable water. Thus, buying and fetching water have been added to their expenses. For working women, the pay is not really enough to sustain food, electricity, water, education, health and other needs.

Another struggle that they are confronted with is the lack of services and infrastructure that will cater to their needs (i.e., medical, mental, sexual and reproductive health). In an area in the Visayas, to

avail free medicines, from either a party list or DWSD, people have to wait in long lines. There are also areas that have no health facilities and personnel. On the other hand, home birthing is prohibited.

The participants also shared that women in the communities are coping with these pertinent issues through support groups, and alternative modes of financing in order to access public services such as health. Some of them are working part-time jobs to gain extra income. Further, the group argued that all these stemmed from the lack of adequate support—a lapse in the existing policies of the government.

Though there are government policies that may address social protection issues, women workers had to fight for them. These include the Expanded Maternity Leave of 105 Days., Anti-Hospital Deposit Law, Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4P's), and the Expanded Solo Parents Welfare Act. But with the poor implementation of laws, women struggle to allocate budget for family planning.

Women also observed that the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (RA No. 6657) has not been fully implemented. This has been highlighted considering that FDC has members among the peasant sector in various regions and where women farmers take a huge role in the implementation of agrarian reform.

The Gender and Development (GAD) Budget, which is 5% of total annual budgets for gender programs/activities, may not have been enjoyed by women.

The group recommended conducting educational discussions and capacity-building simultaneously with community organizing. One may create organized group access from NGOs (like Likhaan for reproductive health issues), or become a member of community self-help groups (like “kalipay ug kasakit” where one can access sickness and death benefits). There are also women’s groups that train Reproductive Health sentinels. One can become a Barangay Health Worker too.

It is also important to engage in policy advocacy lobbying, such as the strong implementation of laws like the Magna Carta of Women,

Safe Spaces Act, and city housing (e.g. the case of Typhoon Yolanda survivors), among others.

The participants also mentioned the Pay Equity Principle, and reiterated the campaign on the 5Rs of unpaid care work. Lastly, there should be a greater push for solidarity networks and strengthening the capabilities of women.

Women, Climate Justice, and Gender-Just Transition Group

Major challenges brought about by climate change are food security crisis, livelihood and resettlement issues, and safety issues. With the impending food crisis, the livelihood of women market vendors could be compromised, potentially leaving them with huge debt burdens if the pattern continues. The forum participants also sounded the alarm with its unprecedented impacts to women, interwoven with the policy-solution mismatches of the government on both local and national levels.

The climate crisis has also brought about extreme weather conditions, super typhoons, floods, and other calamities, resulting in the destruction of properties and the loss of lives. During these times, there were no jobs, and no income for those working (as per no work, no pay policy). At times, families have to stay at evacuation centers where they are susceptible to acquiring diseases, and harassment. Furthermore, women were at the forefront in accessing relief goods (*ayuda*), seeking resources to rehabilitate their farms, and taking care of their family.

In terms of adapting to this phenomenon, the participants recalled that most of them were “*nagtitipid*” (saving for rainy days) as the situation deemed fit. Some of them have already started urban gardening in their respective communities.

As for the market vendors, they were forcibly evicted from their stalls by some law enforcers. However, the vendors still continued to sell goods to make ends meet.

The participants also mentioned that there are existing laws and policies on food security and climate change. However, these laws are vague, not intended for the masses (*hindi para sa masa*), and not fully implemented, especially for violators involved in quarrying, illegal logging, waste management, and others. This was attributed to the inadequate outreach to the public for them to easily understand these laws and regulations. Transparency issues were also a concern.

The participants also underscored the necessity of awareness-building, community organizing, and mobilization, which are reinforcing mechanisms to strengthen the women sector amidst the effects of climate change. Dialogue with the government is also identified as a key strategy in lobbying their concerns. To achieve climate justice, they recommended going back to the basic practices of the 3Rs (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle), and to plant trees in proper areas. In the case of the resettlement issues experienced by the vendors, they called for a permanent, safe, and affordable marketplace, without the fear of being displaced and losing their livelihoods.

People's Economy Group

In the discussion, it was mentioned that the state of women in the national economy demonstrates that, while one-third ($\frac{1}{3}$) of employees in the manufacturing and services industry are women, two-thirds ($\frac{2}{3}$) are excluded from the labor sector in general.

Most women can be found in the food industry, working as care givers and domestic helpers, networking products, moonlighting, providing home services like manicure and pedicure, washing clothes, and undertaking other freelancing tasks. Women are also employed in salons, sweatshop productions, and as Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs).

Women in public employment are usually Barangay Health workers, teachers, and those involved in health care. Meanwhile, those in the private sector can be found in all sorts of factories—for garments, electronics, micro-chips, malls, restaurants, hotels and resorts.

Moreover, contractualization is still rampant. As “contractuals,” they have low-paying jobs (can be below minimum wage), cheated of mandatory benefits, and have little to no social protection and reproductive benefits. They may have experienced gender-based violence due to their status of employment, or due to their lay-down or lay-off situation. Despite the numbers and contribution of women in the economy, there is little to no recognition of women in the informal sector.

Because of low income, women are forced to seek loan sharks (including online), where they are charged with a very high interest rate (at times 200 percent per month). They experience public shaming and harassment that caused psychological trauma.

Hoping to improve their economic condition, women also take risks in working abroad as OFWs. However, they are forced to set aside thoughts of abuse and other misfortunes. With regards to the working conditions in the service sector, decent and livable work is limited. In turn, women are pushed into *informalization*⁵—getting into work opportunities for those who doesn’t have work security, and social security.

5 *Informalization* or informal labor is the condition wherein the employment is not covered or bound by any legal or labor protection and with no security of tenure.

With the gendered economy of the country, the group sets out concrete recommendations in campaigning for a gender lens in labor and the economy. Participants recommended the following:

1. Carry on with the policy advocacy work to lobby for a wealth tax, social protection, universal basic income (UBI) for all, and a wage hike.
2. Organize a strong movement (especially at the grassroots level) to gain political recognition of women in the economy. There should be regular meetings for all issues and campaigns in order to keep track of new developments, and to synergize the strategies of the network.
3. Promote social solidarity economy.
4. Create an FDC Manifesto on Women's Role in the Philippine Economy, which will serve as a living document of the solidarity and continuing fight of women and its allies towards a just and equitable access of women to socio-economic opportunities.
5. Review, adopt, and maintain microeconomic policies and development strategies that address the needs and effort of women in poverty.
6. Provide women with access to savings and credit mechanism institutions.
7. Increase the level of engagement and participation of women from national down to the barangay level.
8. Push for living wages.
9. Generate more jobs for women and develop their skills. Provide trainings with allowance.
10. Provide Social protection for informal labor, and develop industries to shift from informal to formal labor
11. Address unpaid care work. The government should provide services for whole-day daycare for working mothers.

12. Launch a public laundry system, a community soup kitchen for children, improved mother/infant/children health care services, and rolling stores for affordable goods; provide free internet, fund Reproductive Health (RH) services, family planning, maternity and child care, and launch comprehensive sexuality education.
13. Implement the Magna Carta, the RH Law, and other pro-women laws, and provide safe spaces. Women must have access to work, non-discriminatory policies in hiring, livelihood grants, and health care benefits.
14. Provide maternity benefits for workers in the informal economy, and pass the divorce bill.
15. Allow more women in decision-making roles.
16. Dismantle colonial and patriarchal systems.

SPECIAL SESSION ON SOGIESC

Zeena Bernadette Manglinong

Board of Trustees member, Freedom from Debt Coalition and Tambuyog Development Center

Zeena Manglinong facilitated the special session on basic Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sexual Characteristics (SOGIESC). The orientation aimed to provide key concepts and dynamics on gender and development.

Manglinong highlighted the importance of human rights, intersectionality and diversity on gender-related topics and issues. Her discussion was interactive, seeking insights from the participants regarding their knowledge about SOGIESC. Some said that it was their first time to encounter the term, while others were already familiar with it. Other engaging questions, like “*Sino sa inyo ang may SOGIE?*” (Who among you has a SOGIE?), were asked to level off the understanding of everyone about the topic.

Jumping off with the discussion, Manglinong explained the difference between sex and gender. According to her, the former refers to the biological nature of a person assigned from birth, specifically determined by their genitalia, sex organ, chromosomal make-up, and qualities of hormones. Sex is usually a binary concept described by the biological difference between male and female. She also discussed intersex, which refers to a person, born with physical or biological characteristics that falls outside the typical definition of male or female. On the other hand, Manglinong defined the concept of gender as characteristics that are socially constructed. While sex is strictly determined by biological factors, gender goes beyond “what’s in between the legs”; it is perceived through body (biological nature), identity (concept of non-binary and non-conforming), and social factors (roles, expectation, norms, etc.). Manglinong elaborated that the way someone

communicates their gender may also change over time, depending on the culture or society one belongs to.

Furthermore, sex and gender roles were also defined. On the one hand, sex roles are assumed based on the basic anatomical or physiological difference between male and female. Meanwhile, gender roles are determined by what is often considered appropriate and acceptable for boys or girls, and men or women. It is society's evaluation of behavior as masculine or feminine. On top of this, Manglinong outlined the gender division of labor, specifically the productive and reproductive roles assigned to men and women. The division is vastly influenced and perpetuated by social institutions (e.g., family, market, church, media, workplace, educational institution, state, etc.) which facilitate the socialization processes through the mechanism of social control.

Manglinong also expressed the different stereotypes and prejudices associated with gender. Predominantly, patriarchy remains the system that has historically situated women under male domination in all spheres of society. She also explained the faces of inequalities on the basis of gender, including social exclusion, discrimination, and overgeneralization of characteristics based on gender.

Notably, Manglinong emphasized the importance of understanding the basic concepts of SOGIESC in the advancement of Feminist Economics. Gender issues have always been a dynamic concept, evolving with the changing times. On the other hand, Manglinong also highlighted that everyone has SOGIESC, not only the members of the LGBTQIA+ community. Therefore, gender justice demands that everyone in society be given equal opportunities to achieve a full and satisfying life. Moving forward, embracing diversity and inclusion is necessary in moving towards a gender just society and economy.

SYNTHESIS AND CLOSING REMARKS

Before the program formally closed, Myrna “Meth” Jimenez, the Secretary General of Sarilaya, provided a synthesis of all the key discussions, entry points for campaigns and advocacies, and a comprehensive line of recommendations from all the sessions. She also expressed her gratitude to all the facilitators, sponsors, and organizers for successfully initiating this year’s Women’s Assembly.

For the closing remarks, Flora Santos, President of Oriang and Co-Head of FDC Women’s Committee, graced the body with a strong message of solidarity to all the strong women of the Coalition. With the multiple faces of inequalities confronting women, Santos reminded everyone to continue and expand the fight for equality, better access to food and basic services, and decent lives for all.

POETRY READING

The program formally ended with the collective reading of a poem penned by Myrna Jimenez entitled, *“Tuloy lang, Mga Kabaro”* (Keep going, Comrades). It features the stories of resilience of women and their fight towards an equitable and gender-just society.



Poetry reading at the closing of the Women's Assembly 2023

Source: Nazareth Del Pilar, FDC

ANNEX

Annex 1. Tuloy Lang Mga Kabaro by Myrna Jimenez

Nakikiramdam, nagmamasid
Sa kaayusang di-mawari;
Nakikinig, nanginginig
Sa kaganapang unos na di-maayos.
Nangangamba, nag-aalala
Sa baklas ng pagkilos.
Nagmimithi, naniniguro
Sa tatahaking pagbabago.
Kabaro, kabaro balikan natin ang tanong ni ate

Kung paano wawakasan ang pang-aabuso,
Maging ang nagugulumihanang isip ni nanay
sa patuloy na kaapihang dinaranas;
Kabaro, kabaro gunitain natin
ang makasaysayang panahon
sa buhay nina Tandang Sora
ang tapang ni Manang Gabriela
at mapangahas na pagtatangkang paglaban ni Tiya Oriang.

Tuloy lang mga kabaro
dulo mang daan ay panganib;
Tuloy lang mga kabaro
sa bahaginang gawaing patas;
Tuloy lang mga kabaro
sa pagkalinga at pagmamahal sa mga kapatid sa uri;
Tuloy lang mga kabaro
sa pagpunpundar ng makatarungang lipunan para sa atin.

Pakakatandaan gintong peministang aral:
Anuman ang lambong ng dilim ng karahasan,
Sya ding dahilan upang maaninag liwanag ng mithiin;

Anuman ang hina ng hikbi nang pighati at lumbay,
kaya pa ding lumakas sa nagkakaisang pagtutol.
Anuman ang kulang ng bawa't isang nakikisangkot,
kaya pa ding punan upang makabuo ng mapagpalayang bukas.

Annex 2. Important Links for Further Reading/Viewing

- **Photo Album:**
https://drive.google.com/file/d/184eFQ_0vRWqz2gihAIOOPTDGy1WpqdXI/view?usp=sharing
- **Presentations of the Speakers**
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/13akZDaS4elwDJxtgocJDYTzcsal5rQV0?usp=share_link
- **Workshop results:**
<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1GORTESkDcy03QzasE01-5aPUKeixUwqL?usp=sharing>
- **Photos from the Women's Assembly 2023**
<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1FcHI-C-sYJSfAbykBJiuhbTlxAKNAU0?usp=sharing>

Annex 3. Poster of the Assembly

WOMEN'S ASSEMBLY

**BABAE AKO:
SULONG, USBONG,
HINDI UURONG!**

(Women's Survival, Resistance, and Resilience)

UP CIDS, Ground floor, UP Bahay Ng Alumni
Diliman, Quezon City

June 08 | 8:30 AM
2023 | 5:00 PM

Logos: APMDD, PMCI, upcids, FREEDOM FROM DEBT COALITION

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