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INTERDISCIPLINARY DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVES

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Georgi Engelbrecht

UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES
CENTER FOR INTEGRATIVE AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Philippine Journal of Public Policy:

Interdisciplinary Development Perspectives

COVER IMAGE

Planting rice in Batad's rice terraces

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ARTICLE

The International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) as an International Agricultural Research Center (IARC):

From the Cold War to One CGIAR

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Abstract

This paper takes a modest step in sketching the history of the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) from its Cold War origins to the present. Consolidating different sources to tell this narrative, this paper aims to fill in some gaps in the narrative of IRRI's development, offer some additional details thereto, and extend it to cover IRRI under One CGIAR. The geopolitical rivalry between the United States of America (thereafter US) and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (thereafter the Soviet Union) during the Cold War helped establish IRRI in the Philippines in 1960. This ushered the Green Revolution. Formed in the crucible of Cold War geopolitics, IRRI then underwent changes after 1991, such as: (1) formal recognition of IRRI as an International Agricultural Research Center (IARC); (2) stability, increase, and eventual decline of public spending in agriculture research post-2014 (Beintema and Echeverria 2020); (3) the post-Cold War involvement of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) in IRRI's activities (Medina 2020); and (4) the expansion of BMGF's corporate involvement, which was facilitated through the centralization of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) under One CGIAR. This paper offers some insights on the implications of post-Cold War develpments in IRRI for global food security,

arguing what states, scholars, and/or members of civil society can and should do in light of these developments.

Keywords: Food Security, Cold War, IRRI, CGIAR, BMGF

Introduction

Since its establishment in 1960, the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) has played a significant role in global agriculture. So influential has it been that farmers now find it difficult to revert "to traditional ways of farming" (Maenen 2016, 43). Its mandate and research towards increasing rice productivity helped usher the Green Revolution (Anderson 1991; Chandler 1992; Cullather 2004, 2010), and the subsequent introduction of agricultural technologies that continue to be used today. Understanding IRRI and its history is important because its activities affect the global agricultural system and individual states' food security. As such, any knowledge about IRRI offers a glimpse of the agriculture-related challenge/s facing farmers and states, among others.

This paper aims to sketch broadly the history of IRRI from the Cold War to the present. There are multiple angles from which to tell this narrative, but in recognition of the existing literature, this paper incorporates and generally takes the arc traversed by Anderson (1991), Chandler (1992), Cullather (2004, 2010), Tolentino (2019), Beintema and Echeverria (2020), and Medina (2020), as well as the criticisms of IRRI (Ofreneo 2004; Kilusang Mambubukid ng Pilipinas[1] 2007; MASIPAG National Office 2023). Anderson (1991), Chandler (1992), and Cullather (2004; 2010) identify the Cold War origins of IRRI; Beintema and Echeverria (2020) focus on CGIAR funding from 1981 to 2010; Tolentino (2019) deals with IRRI funding until the 2010s, while Medina (2020) has chronicled the involvement of IRRI with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation up until the later 2010s. These works generally focus on IRRI's international context (i.e. developments outside the Philippines, excluding IRRI's default overseas activities, with a focus on a global political context such as the Cold War and the rise of neoliberalism). It is within such a context that the present paper tells its story.

1 "Kilusang Mambubukid ng Pilipinas" translates to "Peasant Movement of the Philippines"; thereafter KMP.

In light of this framing, it must be noted that the paper's discussion will not focus on, but by no means discount, IRRI's internal operations (Chandler 1992), the impact of IRRI's activities on farmers (KMP 2007), or its entanglement in Philippines' domestic politics such as the Golden Rice project (Kupferschmidt 2013; Medina 2020), as well as IRRI's threat to the Philippines' food security (MASIPAG National Office 2023). Furthermore, the paper will not focus on year-by-year events, but will highlight and elaborate on certain developments, though some are elaborated elsewhere, including IRRI's detailed Annual Reports. As such, this paper by no means claims to be an exhaustive, definitive account. But in tying together the literature on IRRI, it aims to serve as a composite of such literature, which serves to initiate modestly as a step towards building a more comprehensive look at the institution.

Methodology

To sketch IRRI's history from a global context, this paper incorporates and builds on the secondary literature on the institution, and then draws on selected primary sources to refine and extend the narrative. Primary publication materials from IRRI and CGIAR, such as the former's Annual Reports are utilized. Additionally, the One CGIAR database is used to tabulate the share of IRRI's budget since the inception of One CGIAR in 2020. For secondary data sources, this paper draws on journal articles, book chapters, and books. Included here is the involvement of corporations, as well as philanthropic organizations like the BMGF, in IRRI's research activities, and the criticism and impact of such involvement.

This paper is divided into three sections. The first part covers the methodology. The succeeding section proceeds to sketch IRRI's history from the Cold War onwards. And lastly, the last section offers some policy recommendations that emerge from this narrative, particularly concerning more recent developments. These include prospects for further research on IRRI, the need for pro-farmer movements to understand IRRI, and the importance of state funding for agriculture.

IRRI During the Cold War: Geopolitics

The early literature on IRRI discusses the significance of the Cold War period for its establishment (Anderson 1991; Chandler 1992; Cullather 2004, 2010). Anderson (1991) highlighted the impact of US foreign policy on the creation of IRRI as the IARC for rice. Meanwhile, Chandler (1992) discussed insider

information behind its establishment. Lastly, Cullather's works (2004, 2010) draw attention to the security dimensions of US foreign policy, especially with respect to the US campaign against Communism.

Following the arguments raised by George Kennan, a US diplomat who originally published the essay, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," using "X" as his byline (1947), the United States saw the Soviet Union as a threat during the Cold War. As a result, the former focused its attention on the issue of development within and outside Europe, primarily through the European Recovery Plan (Perkins 1998), and the Point Four Program of the Truman administration (Macekura 2013). Nelson Rockefeller (1951)—who was appointed chair of the International Development Advisory Board of the Truman administration, and was eventually selected and confirmed by the US Congress as Vice President under the Ford administration—opined that the US must seriously address the issue of underdevelopment in Third World Countries. One way to do this was to improve food production (Rockefeller 1951). In agriculture, the US had already developed technologies to raise corn production in Mexico and China through a project initiated by the Rockefeller Foundation (Cullather 2010). This experience in biotechnology, plus the need to help resolve poverty in Asia, propelled the Rockefeller Foundation to pursue the establishment of an institution catering to rice research (Rockefeller Foundation 1951). In 1960, the Rockefeller Foundation, together with the Ford Foundation, formally established IRRI in the Philippines (Anderson 1991; Chandler 1992).

Food aid was instrumental to securing food during the Cold War (Charlton 1997). As part of the broader struggle against the spread and threat of communism in the Global South, the Green Revolution took off in 1968, seeking to improve agricultural productivity through genetic engineering. IRRI played a significant role therein[2] (International Food Policy Research Institute 2002; thereafter IFPRI). One genetic rice variety, IR-8, was developed from the Dee-Geo-Woo-Gen and Peta rice varieties from Taiwan and Indonesia, respectively (Peng and Khush 2003). The IR-8 rice variety eventually became widespread in the Philippines, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, and India (Cullather 2004; 2010).

2 The Green Revolution was a term coined by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) director, William S. Gaud, in 1968 (International Food Policy Research Institute 2002).

The Green Revolution came with various adverse issues. For instance, the IR-8 rice variety was noted to produce more chalk and starch content than traditional rice varieties (Anderson 1991; Chandler 1992). In addition, there was the loss of such varieties (Stone and Glover 2016 as cited in Candelaria 2022), as well as the impact of toxic chemicals (Carson 1994; Conway 2000; IFPRI 2002; Layosa 2007; Patel 2013 as cited in Candelaria 2022). Additionally, IRRI's research during the Green Revolution affected the domestic politics of several Asian nations (Cullather 2004, 2010). The Green Revolution ended in the late 1970s. However, since then, IRRI has continued its research, improving rice varieties such as the IR64 and hybrid rice, which in the 1990s was eventually commercialized in Asian countries (Peng and Khush 2003).

IRRI After the Cold War

Despite the improvement in global food technology in the 1980s and 1990s, issues such as malnutrition, hunger, and poverty persisted (Conway 2000). The post-Cold War world recognized the need "to review the world food situation and to chart a future direction for attaining world security" (Charlton 1997, 440). In 1996, the World Food Summit led to a more holistic conceptualization of food security. It was no longer simply defined based on food availability alone, but also on global factors such as energy demand through biofuels, volatile markets, and climate change (Kuntjoro et. al. 2013). For its part, IRRI (1991) recognized that urbanization and a rapid population growth would negatively affect rice production, necessitating further research on how to increase rice productivity. To help address this, IRRI (1991, p. 1) set the following vision in the statement called "IRRI toward 2000 and beyond:"

> The goal: improved well-being of present and future generations of rice farmers and consumers, particularly those with low incomes.
>
> The objectives: to generate and disseminate rice-related knowledge and technology of shot- and long-term environmental, social, and economic benefit and to help enhance national rice research systems.
>
> The strategy: to increase rice production efficiency and sustainability in all rice-growing environments through interdisciplinary research and to ensure the relevance of IRRI research and the complementarity of international and national research efforts through close collaboration with national programs.

As with all institutions, the end of the Cold War marked a transition in the evolution of IRRI. In this respect, some key developments are worth noting.

IRRI's Changing Recognition as an IARC: From Tacit to Explicit

As an IARC, IRRI has always had international engagements. With the exception of its involvement in the Green Revolution, much of IRRI's impact overseas were on the following areas: (1) participation of scientists from different countries in Southeast Asia in IRRI's training programs (Castillo 2017); and (2) assistance with the creation of national agricultural research centers in Thailand (IRRI 2020b), Indonesia and Vietnam (Brennan and Malabayabas 2011). Despite the extent of its global involvement, when IRRI was established in the Philippines in 1960, its relationship with other states, except the Philippines, was tacit.[3] States were not compelled to engage its services, though they certainly did so. For example, IRRI-Thailand relations begun in 1960, when a Thai prince was formally invited as a member of IRRI's board (IRRI 2020b). Indonesia-IRRI relations, meanwhile, began in 1974 (IRRI 2001a).

Starting in the 1980s, IRRI received more funding from other nations besides the US, as shown below. As such, it was perhaps only a matter of time, if not a formality, that international recognition of IRRI became explicit in 1995. That year, the agreement Recognizing the International Legal Personality of the International Rice Research Institute was signed by twenty signatory countries (Table 1).

3 The situation for the Philippines was different. IRRI's initial relationship with the Philippines was defined by the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Philippines and the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations in 1959 (Chandler 1992). As IRRI was formally established a year after, the Philippine Congress also formally legislated Republic Act (RA) No. 2707 s. 1960, which gave tax exemptions to IRRI (Chandler 1992). Recognition of IRRI under Philippine laws changed when Presidential Decree (PD) No. 1620 was enacted in 1979. Apart from formal recognition as an international organization under Philippine laws, the law provided IRRI the rights normally accorded to international institutions such as diplomatic and legal immunity as well as tax exemptions (Official Gazette 1979).

Table 1. States that Signed the International Agreement Recognizingthe International Legal Personality of IRRI

STATE	DATE OF SIGNATURE
Republic of the Philippines	May 19, 1995
People's Republic of Bangladesh	
Kingdom of Bhutan	
Republic of Cuba	
Kingdom of Denmark	
Republic of Indonesia	
Republic of Iraq	
Lao People's Democratic Republic	
Russian Federation	
Socialist Republic of Vietnam	
Government of Papua New Guinea	
Islamic Republic of Iran	June 14, 1995
Swiss Confederation	
The Republic of the Union of Myanmar	July 12, 1995
India	September 12, 1995
Brazil	October 20, 1995
Australia	March 29, 1996
Italy	April 12, 1996
Republic of Korea	May 17, 1996
Romania	

Source: Agreement Recognizing the International Legal Personality of the International Rice Research Institute 1995, as cited in Candelaria (2022, 93).

The 1995 agreement arguably reflected the multilateral turn in international relations, with the collapse of the bipolar world order and the emergence of multiple actors in the global stage. But it also represented the formalization of long-standing recognition of IRRI. At any rate, the 1995 Agreement gave IRRI a juridical personality. It provided mechanisms for other countries and/or international organizations willing to formally recognize, through accession, their relations with the institution. Lastly, the 1995 agreement provided a framework for other countries to grant privileges and/or immunities to IRRI.

The Philippines and IRRI signed another agreement in 2006. The Headquarters Agreement Between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and

the International Rice Research Institute not only protects IRRI's rights to maintain its headquarters in the country, but also enjoins IRRI to "cooperate at all times with the appropriate authorities of the (Philippine) Government to facilitate the proper administration of justice and secure the observance of the laws of the Republic of the Philippines." The 2006 Agreement was formally ratified by the Senate of the Republic of the Philippines in 2008 (Palec 2008).

IRRI Funding Before and After the Cold War

There is already scholarly literature on IRRI's funding (Tolentino 2019; Beintema and Echeverria 2020), which I will summarize and update. In 1960, IRRI's funding mainly came from the Ford Foundation (IRRI 1962). By 1970, financing came not just from Ford but also from the Rockefeller Foundation and the USAID (IRRI 1971), all of which were equal partners of the research center.

Funding Figures: 1991 to 2022

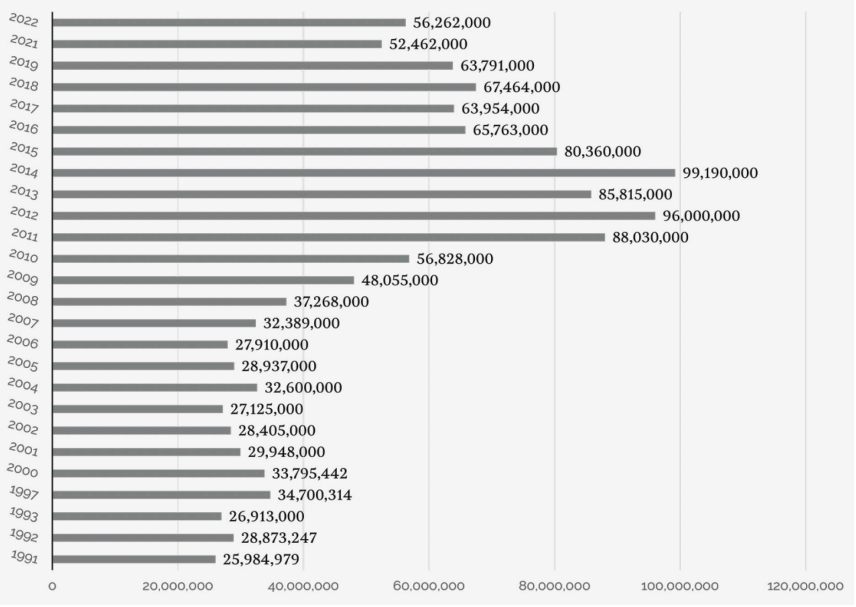
Tolentino (2019, 76) charted IRRI's funding from 1960 to 2017, noting in particular that "ODA for agriculture generally and for IRRI specifically fell in the 1990s as the development community slipped into complacency about food security and continuing agricultural growth" (Tolentino 2019, 75), remaining stable in the decade or so after the Cold War (Figure 1). Tolentino then shows that research funding for IRRI increased due to the Global Financial Crisis of 2008,[4] reaching its peak in 2014 and falling anew afterwards (Tolentino 2019). This peak was also observed, not only within IRRI, but also with other CGIAR institutions (Beintema and Echeverria 2020).

For my part, I combed through IRRI's Annual Reports from 1991 to 2022, which updates Tolentino's (2019) account and utilizes different metrics. Figure 1 below (my own) uses the reported amounts received from all funders, both public and private, while Tolentino used the real US dollar price. Using the reported amounts from IRRI's Annual Reports shows the nominal value of funding that IRRI received from different funders. I utilized the nominal value reported in the Annual Reports, instead of updating Tolentino's account, since the latter did not discuss the constant price used in the reporting of

4 As Brinkman et. al. (2010) explained, the Global Financial Crisis caused food prices to increase, thereby affecting one's capability to secure nutritious food.

IRRI's funding. In Figure 1, data for 1994, 1995, and 1998 are omitted because the 1994-1995, 1995-1996, and 1998-1999 IRRI Annual Reports are not available online. Data for 1996 is not included because the copy of the 1996-1997 Annual Report is unclear. Data for 1999 is also omitted because of the missing financial data in the 1999-2000 Annual Report, as is Data for 2020 because of the unavailability of the 2020 IRRI Annual Report.

Figure 1. Funding Grants Received by IRRI (1991-2022) in US Dollars



Source: IRRI Annual Reports 1992-1993 to 2022, data processed by author

Sources of Funding: During and After the Cold War

Tolentino also noted the evolution of the number of funders of IRRI. During the Cold War, IRRI was funded almost exclusively by the Ford Foundation and the United States government (Tolentino 2019, 76). Things changed when IRRI's funding sources diversified starting in 1980 (pp. 76–77). Apart from the US, the Rockefeller Foundation and USAID (IRRI 1981), IRRI received financing from Japan, Canada, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Kingdom, the European Economic Community (now the European Union), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Germany, Australia, World Bank, Belgium, Austria, Denmark, the Philippines, Switzerland, Sweden, Kenya, South Korea, Mexico, and other funding sources

(Tolentino 2019, 76). Since then, IRRI has always had multiple funders (p. 77). By 2016, other countries, such as China, India, and the Philippines, as well as international philanthropic organizations like the BMGF, became significant funders (p. 77).

From 2020 to the present, a period which Tolentino does not cover, I provide more recent data from the One CGIAR Funder analysis webpage, which is part of the One CGIAR website (IRRI is a member of One CGIAR; see below). The same states continue to be IRRI's biggest funders: India, the Philippines, US, China, Germany, Japan, Switzerland, United Kingdom, Republic of Korea, Australia, Taiwan, and Bangladesh (CGIAR n.d.c.). It also includes funding from entities such as the European Commission, UNEP, and the Global Crop Diversity Trust, as well as private organizations such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Syngenta Foundation (CGIAR n.d.c.). Table 2 shows IRRI's top fifteen funders from 2018 to 2022.

Table 2. Top 15 Funders of IRRI in Million USD (2018-2022)

FUNDER	AMOUNT IN MILLION USD				
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
CGIAR Trust Fund	12	11.22	9.11	11.98	19.95
Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation	11.64	15.16	12.91	12.14	13.4
India	11.47	8.82	4.48	4.63	6.14
The Philippines	3.88	3.68	2.67	2.34	1.59
United States of America	2.02	2.49	2.83	4.31	2.46
China	1.85	0.96	0.83	0.38	0.52
Germany	1.52	1.65	0.84	0.53	0.41
Global Crop Diversity Trust	1.36	1.41	1.41	1.41	1.32
Japan	1.13	0.62	0.33	0.31	0.16
World Bank	1.09	2.75	2.46	1.88	1.95
Switzerland	1.07	1.27	1.21	0.94	0.75
United Kingdom	0.69	0.69	-	-	-
Republic of Korea	0.65	0.68	0.67	0.98	2.46
Syngenta Foundation	0.55	-	-	-	-
European Commission	0.45	-	-	-	-
Australia	-	0.85	0.85	0.78	-
UNEP	-	0.59	-	-	0.15

FUNDER	AMOUNT IN MILLION USD				
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Taiwan	-	-	0.5	0.5	0.5
Bangladesh	-	-	0.31	0.45	0.41

Source: CGIAR n.d.c. Data processed by author. Original data available at: https://www.cgiar.org/food-security-impact/finance-reports/dashboard/funderanalysis/. Data for 2023 are still unavailable as the time of this writing.

From Geopolitics to Neoliberalism: IRRI and the Bill and Melinda Gates' Foundation (BMGF)

Table 2 shows, among other things, that funding from BMGF has overshadowed the contributions of each individual state. The growing role of a private entity like BMGF marks the culmination of a transition that occurred after the Cold War. If the Cold War era featured corporations in the broader fight against communism, corporations in the post-Cold War period have seen the expansion of capitalist imperatives in the agricultural sector. Scholars have spoken of a neoliberal turn in agriculture after 1991, especially with the formation of the World Trade Organization in 1995 (Maenen 2016). This has largely meant privatization and deregulation, which has had well-documented deleterious effects. Certainly, corporate involvement in agriculture did not start with the BMGF. The Green Revolution showcased as much, with, among other things, the promotion of hybrid rice using patented technologies from agricultural TNCs, thereby negatively affecting farmers (Cullather 2004; Ofreneo 2004; KMP 2007). This increased corporations' profits (Sharma 2010) and created new markets for TNCs such as "fertilizer, chemicals, agricultural machinery and irrigation pumps" (Ofreneo 2004, as cited in Candelaria 2022, 119). This development marked IRRI as it approached the twentieth and early twenty-first century. By then, IRRI served as an "intermediary" role, linking up with corporations.

> ....Rosegrant and Hazell wrote on the need to strengthen the new role of IRRI "to serve as an important intermediary between multinational companies, developed-country research centers, and the needs and capacities of national agricultural research systems in Asia". There the cat is out. The agribusiness TNCs, which monopolize the world's R & D on biotechnology, shall play the pivotal role of providing research outputs to the so-called research centers of both developed and developing countries, not the other way. And the role of the IRRI is nothing but that of an intermediary. (Ofreneo 2004, 7)

As the KMP (2007, 28) argues,

> IRRI thus, is an instrument that facilitated and helped to perpetrate the dire and adverse impact on poor farmers of Asia, is guilty and should bear the weight of its offense. IRRI could not hide behind its 'public research institution' cloak, and should be made to answer to the indictment of continually serving the interests of hegemonic powers and of the corporate interests that created it.

Also, the growth of private funding for CGIAR coincides with a relative decline of public financing thereof, at least collectively speaking. The Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research or CGIAR (now only known as One CGIAR) is a consortium of 15 international agricultural research centers (IARCs) established in 1971 at the height of the Green Revolution. IRRI is one of its original members (Renkow and Byerlee 2010). Historically speaking, IARCs like IRRI have always been funded largely by and through governments, but while each country's contributions varied over time, Beintema and Echeverria (2020, 10) note that "support from key funders—such as the World Bank, Canada, and Japan—declined" in the 2010s (Table 3).

Table 3. Share of Funders in CGIAR from 1980s to 2010s

DONOR	SHARE (%)			
	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010s
Australia	2	2	2	5
Canada	6	5	6	1
European Commission	4	5	7	3
Germany	5	6	3	3
Japan	7	11	4	1
Netherlands	2	4	4	5
Switzerland	4	6	4	3
United Kingdom	4	4	8	8
United States	26	15	13	17
Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation	0	0	1	10
World Bank	12	13	11	5

Source: Beintema and Echeverria (2020, 10)

Adding to the existing literature (Tolentino 2019) on BMGF's involvement with IRRI, Table 4 below shows the fifteen biggest funders of CGIAR for 2018 to

2022, with the BMGF as one of the biggest contributors. On average, the BMGF has provided CGIAR funding amounting to USD 92.12 million per annum starting from 2018 until 2022. This nearly equals that which is provided by the US, averaging USD 93.34 million per year. In 2020 and 2022, the BMGF surpassed the US government in terms of the funding to One CGIAR.

Table 4. Top 15 Funders of CGIAR in Million USD (2018–2022)

FUNDER	AMOUNT IN MILLION USD				
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
CGIAR Trust Fund	161.97	163.53	151.56	219.58	236.28
USA	100.62	94.46	84.52	97.98	89.12
BMGF	91.55	92.39	85.71	86.13	104.81
Germany	23.79	20.86	23.38	33.37	33.69
Mexico	22.9	11.39	8.2	-	-
United Kingdom	20.92	26.95	19.99	10.36	8.7
India	18.56	17.75	12.47	11.68	14.86
IFAD	14	15.26	10.98	12.02	9.91
Australia	13.55	6.78	5.54	4.85	-
African Development Bank	10.36	16.19	7.1	7.28	4.88
European Commission	9.25	6.12	7.95	11.7	13.87
Cornell University	8.29	8.71	-	-	-
Global Crop Diversity Fund	8.06	9.8	9.96	8.53	5.56
Norway	3.16	6.18	7.94	7.85	8.48
Netherlands	1.53	-	-	-	-
FAO	-	5.89	4.88	3.69	6.68
Switzerland	-	-	5.86	-	-
World Bank	-	-	-	12.61	52.25
PICAGL	-	-	-	5.67	-
Nigeria	-	-	-	-	6.27
Canada	-	-	-	-	4.78

Source: CGIAR (n.d.c.)

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) has exemplified the emergence of what has been called elsewhere as “philanthrocapitalism,” (Thompson 2018), which is defined as “the integration of market motifs, motives and methods with philanthropy” (Haydon, Jung, and Russell 2021,

367). Philanthrocapitalism has the following tenets: 1) "financial wealth equals expertise" 2) "the explicit confusion of the billionaire's private interests with collective interests or even the collective good," and 3) "promote and enshrine expertise over democracy." (Thompson 2018, 53–55). The BMGF has been able not only to sustain, but also to increase its budgetary allocation to agricultural research, not only with IRRI, but also with other IARCs through One CGIAR (Beintema and Echeverria 2020) in the 2010s.

As a private institution, the BMGF (2011, 1) claims that its goal "is to reduce hunger and poverty for millions of poor farm families in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia." It is focused on the following areas: 1) research and development, 2) agricultural policies, and 3) access and market systems (BMGF 2011, 4). BMGF's involvement in the agriculture sector began in 2006 when it worked with the Rockefeller Foundation to establish the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) (Toenniesen et al. 2008; Cullather 2010; Morvaridi 2012).

Seeking to replicate the Green Revolution, AGRA sought to do the following for African small-scale farmers: to develop resilient crops against climate change, as well as diseases and pests; improve soil and water management systems; improve markets, and improve delivery systems technology (Toenniesen et al. 2008). Within a few years of the launch of AGRA, BMGF dedicated funding amounting to almost USD 2 billion to support the initiative (Morvaridi 2012; Pingali 2012).

BMGF has also worked with IRRI. Medina (2020) provides a list of BMGF-funded IRRI projects from 2007 to 2019, along with a brief description of each purpose, duration, and amount of funding per project. Table 5 is adopted from Medina (2020), but the present paper then adds new data from the BMGF Committed Grants Data, as of 15 December 2023, covering 2022 to the end of 2023 (Table 6).

Table 5. List and Cost of BMGF-Funded IRRI Research (2007–2019)

STATE	DATE OF SIGNATURE	
RIPE Program (Realizing Increased Photosynthetic Efficiency)[5]	2008 (to 2012)	11,017,675
	2012 (to 2016)	8,375,747
Golden Rice Project	2010 (to 2017)	10,287,784
	2017 (to 2022)	8,375,747
STRASA (Stress Tolerant Rice for Africa and South Asia Project)	2011 (to 2014)	20,000,000
	2014 (to 2019)	32,770,000
TRB Project (Transforming Rice Breeding)	2013 (to 2018)	12,500,000
Other Project Grants	2008	22,128,658
	2009	96,869
	2010	600,000
	2013	690,327
	2014	3,359,914
	2016	880,000
	2019	954,527

Source: Medina (2020, 28–29)

5 The total amount given to the project was USD 32,648,857, which also includes BMGF funding for the Shanghai Institute of Biological Sciences (USD 481,388) in 2010, and the University of Oxford (USD 7,149,794) in 2015, and funding from the UK Government and IRRI amounting to USD 5,624,253 (Bairagi and Mohanty 2017, 87).

Table 6. List and Cost of BMGF-Funded IRRI Research (2022–2023)

PROJECT OBJECTIVE	DURATION	AMOUNT IN USD
Develop rice varieties for India that are adapted to dry direct seeding and reduced flooding, thereby reducing water use and methane emissions from rice cropping systems	October 2022 – October 2027 (60 months)	8,000,000
Support the mission of seed without borders in taking the next steps and building a regional consensus on diversification of seed varieties and capacity building of countries on seed certification	November 2022 – December 2022 (1 month)	50,027
Deliver high rates of genetic gain and rapid climate adaptation in rice to farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia through the application of innovative, genomicsdriven population improvement approaches.	October 2023 – February 2025 (16 months)	8,000,000
Develop technical and enablement tools, through the CGIAR Genome Editing Initiative, necessary for the development of genome edited crops	November 2023 – September 2025 (22 months)	500,000

Source: BMGF (2023)

The information from the BMGF does not, however, capture the full extent of its involvement with IRRI. Data from the One CGIAR website reveals the broader picture of its involvement with the institute (Table 7).

Table 7. BMGF Funding to IRRI, 2018–2022 (In USD Millions)

YEAR	AMOUNT
2022	13.4
2021	12.4
2020	12.91
2019	15.16
2018	11.64

Source: CGIAR (n.d.c.)

It is clear how much BMGF has poured into IRRI over the last few years. In 2022, for instance, IRRI received a total of USD 34.85 million for "genetic innovation," and BMGF accounted for USD 12.02 million. This dovetails with the thrust of BMGF-funded projects of IRRI, as Table 6 above reveals: the focus on the development of rice varieties through genetic engineering. Certainly, looking at BMGF funding does not do full justice to the nature of IRRI financing today, which can only be understood better by looking at One CGIAR.

IRRI from CGIAR to One CGIAR

One of the significant global developments that has affected IRRI's history is its longstanding involvement with the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research or CGIAR (now known as One CGIAR), a consortium of 15 international agricultural research centers (IARCs) including: the Africa Rice Center, Bioversity International, International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT), International Potato Center (CIP), International Center for Agricultural research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), Interational Water Management Institute (IWMI), World Agroforestry Center (ICRAF), and the WorldFish Center (Renkow and Byerlee 2010; Tolentino 2019).

CGIAR "have been conducting applied research and development (R&D) to serve the world's food poor for more than half a century" (Alston et al. 2021, 502). As one of CGIAR's original members in 1971 (Renkow and Byerlee 2010), IRRI has always worked with the consortium in projects such as the Global Rice Science Program (GRiSP), where it sought to streamline CGIAR's research on rice (CGIAR 2011). Under the GRiSP, IRRI was tasked with the leadership of CGIAR's research activities on rice in Asia (CGIAR 2011). GRiPS lasted from 2010 to 2016, and was replaced by the CGIAR Research Program on Rice Agrifood Systems (RICE), which ran from 2017 to 2022, wherein IRRI was designated as the lead institute, together with the Africa Rice Center, the International Center for Tropical Agriculture, the Centre de Cooperation lnternationale en Recherche Agronomique pour le Développement[6] (Cirad), L'lnstitut de Recherche pour le Développement[7] (IRD), and the Japan International Research Center for Agricultural Sciences (JIRCAS) as members of the consortium (CGIAR 2018).

6 Centre de Cooperation lnternationale en Recherche Agronomique pour le Développement translates to "Center for International Cooperation in Agricultural Research for Development."

7 L'lnstitut de Recherche pour le Développement translates to "The Institute of Research for Development."

IRRI is presently the lead center for CGIAR Research Program on Rice (Rice CRP) (IRRI n.d.). It is also a member of CGIAR Research Program on maize, CGIAR Research program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS), and CGIAR Research Program on Policies, Institutions, and Markets (IRRI n.d.). Certainly, there are other projects, but during the Thirteenth Meeting of the CGIAR System Council 9-10 June 2021, IRRI's operations were said to focus broadly on the following areas: genetic innovation, systems transformation, and resilient agri-food systems, together with six regional initiatives in the following areas: West and Central Africa, East and Southern Africa, Central and West Asia and Northern Africa, Southeast Asia and the Pacific, South Asia, and lastly, Latin America and the Caribbean (CGIAR 2021).

In 2019, CGIAR transitioned to the One CGIAR movement, which "was born of a recognition that the evolving, interconnected global challenges facing our food systems require a unified and integrated response from the world's largest publicly[-]funded agricultural research network" (CGIAR n.d.d.). This meant, among other things, that CGIAR centers' once-independent boards became centralized under the One CGIAR framework (CGIAR n.d.d.; Rübel 2020).[8] Major decisions are longer made at the level of IARCs such as IRRI, but at the level of the CGIAR board itself (CGIAR n.d.d). According to the CGIAR (n.d.a.),

> The CGIAR System Board ('System Board'), comprising eight Voting members, two Ex-Officio Non-Voting members and six Active observers, is responsible for providing dynamic leadership and governance for CGIAR in the delivery of its mission, and for appointing and overseeing the Executive Management Team.

Even so, the CGIAR claims that One CGIAR "is not a legal merger of CGIAR's Research Centers" (CGIAR n.d.d., 3), so the operations of each individual member remain as is. At any rate, One CGIAR has continued implementing partnership programs across its members, and developed a plan called the CGIAR 2030 Research and Innovation Strategy to address current issues affecting global food security (Meinke et al. 2023).

What has One CGIAR meant? McIntire and Dobermann (2023, 4) argue that the centralization of CGIAR resulted in "a ONE CGIAR with less selectivity,

8 CGIAR member-organizations collaborated due to its plan to centralize. This was set as early as 2009.

less science and even more bureaucracy," since this created another layer of decision-making, instead of relying on the expertise of individual IARCs to determine its own research agenda.

More germane to our purposes is criticism against the BMGF, which has had a huge impact on CGIAR's operations, and operated for its own interests, often without accountability (Medina 2020, 24). In 2009, it obtained CGIAR membership (Sharma 2010) and eventually became "the only private/non-governmental voting member in the CGIAR System Council" (Medina 2020, 24), the primary decision-making body of the organization. It also managed to force IARCs to support the CGIAR Centralization plan (Sharma 2010). In addition, employees and members of the Gates Foundation have occupied positions in the CGIAR board (Mushita and Thompson 2019). In this capacity, it acquired influence on IARCs (cf: Sharma 2010). At any rate, as an ardent supporter of One CGIAR, and as a testament to continuously growing private involvement in agricultural research, BMGF has provided CGIAR funding amounting to USD 95.65 million. Table 8 shows the specific CGIAR projects funded by BMGF.

Table 8. BMGF-Funded CGIAR Projects (2019–2023)

PURPOSE	DURATION	AMOUNT IN USD
To support the implementation of organizational changes to position CGIAR, a major foundation partner, in providing leadership in agricultural research required to transform agriculture and respond to changing climate	October 2019 – November 2021 (25 months)	9,905,878
For a program of education and advocacy	April 2020 – January 2021 (9 months)	45,000
To support a CGIAR Gender Research Platform that will catalyze targeted research on gender equality in agriculture and climate-resilient food systems	October 2020 – January 2023 (27 months)	4,900,000
To stimulate demand for healthy, sustainable diets and ensure delivery of nutritious, safe, affordable, and sustainably produced foods, while improving livelihoods, gender equity, and social inclusiveness in all subsectors of food systems	May 2022 – December 2024 (31 months)	5,000,000
To develop and deploy analytical tools and metrics for informing the prioritization of policies and public investments for achieving outcomes relating to inclusive agricultural transformation and climate adaptation	May 2022 – December 2024 (31 Months)	7,000,000

PURPOSE	DURATION	AMOUNT IN USD
To support livestock research for genetics, gender, and policy in partnership with the CGIAR experts at ILRI	June 2022 – December 2024 (30 months)	15,000,000
To support the development of functional seed systems that enable small scale producers to access, and plant improved varieties of staple food crops in the developing world	August 2022 – December 2024 (28 months)	4,500,000
To implement an international agronomy research alliance towards improving the productivity and profitability of crops, increasing climate resilience, and rehabilitating soil health for sustainable intensification in the Global South	August 2022 – December 2024 (28 Months)	28,000,000
To increase fruit and vegetable intake and improve diet quality, while also improving farmer and market actor livelihoods, empowering womennand youth, and mitigating negative environmental impacts	August 2022 – December 2024 (28 Months)	2,500,000
To support the One CGIAR research initiative called HER+ that will focus on identifying what innovations can overcome restrictive social norms to promote women's roles in climate resilient food systems	August 2022 – December 2024 (28 Months)	3,600,000
To support evidence generation on market innovations for sustainable agriculture transformation	November 2022 – January 2025 (26 months)	2,000,000
To support dedicated NARIS & CG partnerships to drive impact outcomes in-country	November 2022 – December 2024 (25 months)	4,749,084
To support 2023 corporate service implementation for One CGIAR	July 2023 – January 2024 (6 months)	2,500,000
To support One CG genebanks specifically dryland cereals and grain legumes	October 2023 – May 2024 (7 months)	500,000
To strengthen CGAIR and partner innovation portfolio management and capacity to deliver outcomes and impact along the CGIAR 2030 Research and Innovation Strategy and its 2022-24 business cycle	October 2023 – October 2024 (12 months)	550,000
To support the One CGIAR's Gender Platform to serve as a global source of research, evidence, and synthesis on the gender issues in climate adaptive agriculture and food systems	October 2023 – December 2027 (50 months)	4,900,000

Source: BMGF (2023)

Moving Forward

Given its significant influence in global agriculture, IRRI can "easily quash any suggestion for alternative and genuine pro-Filipino rice technologies" (MASIPAG National Office 2023).[9] Meanwhile, two decades into the twenty-first century, the neoliberalization of agriculture continues unabated.

> Today, only four agrochemical corporations namely Syngenta-Chemchina, Bayer-Monsanto, BASF, and Corteva dominate the global agriculture market. Spearheading the dominant yet failing industrialized food and agriculture that we know today, these five agrochemical corporations would not be able to forward their corporate agenda without the aid of IRRI. For 63 years, IRRI has been criminally legitimizing and masking these agrochemical corporations as the messiahs for food insecurity by being their research and development arms. (MASIPAG National Office 2023)

The ever-present influence of corporations in agriculture raises the spectre, if not a reality, of a repeat of the well-documented failure of the Green Revolution (Sharma 2010). The Green Revolution changed, through chemical inputs, how agriculture is done (IFPRI 2002), which made the cultivation of traditional rice varieties more difficult (Maenen 2016). Corporate involvement has also meant corporate determination of the agricultural research agenda (Mushita and Thompson 2019), and the development of related technologies (Ofreneo 2004; Morvaridi 2012), which are input-expensive (Morvaridi 2012) and costly to farmers (Medina 2020). Also, the inadequacies of "technical fixes, such as GM crops, do not adequately address the complex challenges of social relations in agriculture that often exacerbate social and environmental harm" (Morvaridi 2012, 1199). Other issues include: lack of consultations with farmers on particular plans (Holt-Gimenez et al. 2006); loss of biodiversity to genetic modification of IRRI projects (Mushita and Thompson 2019; Stone and Glover 2016; Medina 2020); the lack of accountability (Medina 2020); and pollution and health issues arising from the use of toxic chemicals developed by multinational corporations in the agricultural sector (Carson 1994; Conway 2000; IFPRI 2002; Layosa 2007; Patel 2013 as cited in Candelaria 2022).

The dominance of neoliberal policies in agriculture is clear; however, even as private funding for IRRI and One CGIAR increased, collective funding from

9 MASIPAG has documented the effects of corporate involvement in agriculture in its own publications such as GM Corn in the Philippines (2013).

"high-income countries" still dwarfs those from foundations (Beintema and Echeverria 2020, 10). This observation is also reflected in the reporting of the CGIAR's sources of funding, through the CGIAR Funder Analysis, with the BMGF being recognized as the largest private funding source for CGIAR. The CGIAR Funder Analysis indicates that financing for IARCs like IRRI come in three "Windows" and through Bilateral funding, i.e. it goes directly to an IARC (see Table 9 for IRRI's funding according to Window type). The differences of these funding sources are explained below:

> Investments in CGIAR may be delivered through the multi-Funder CGIAR Trust Fund and/or directly to specific projects at CGIAR Research Centers (outside the Fund), which is called Bilateral Funding. Funding for the CGIAR Trust Fund is channeled through three Windows, at increasing levels of Funder collective action:
>
> **Window 3 (W3)** – Project investments: funding allocated by Funders individually to projects that are defined by the Funders themselves (with partners) and that are aligned with system-wide investments.
>
> **Window 2 (W2)** – Program investments: funding allocated by Funders individually to any component (CGIAR Research Program [CRP], Platform, or Initiative) of the system-wide portfolio as prioritized, defined, and approved by the Funders collectively through the System Council; and
>
> **Window 1 (W1)** – Portfolio investments: funding allocated to the entire CGIAR Portfolio of approved system-wide investments prioritized and allocated by Funders collectively through the System Council — supporting CGIAR as a whole. (CGIAR n.d.b)

Table 9. IRRI's Funding According to Window Type (in USD Millions)

YEAR	WINDOWS 1 AND 2 (CGIAR TRUST FUND)	WINDOW 3	BILATERAL	TOTAL
2022	19.95	15.87	20.33	56.15
2021	11.98	15.40	20.98	48.36
2020	9.11	15.52	21.27	45.90
2019	11.22	17.50	30.48	59.20
2018	12	14.90	34.11	61.01

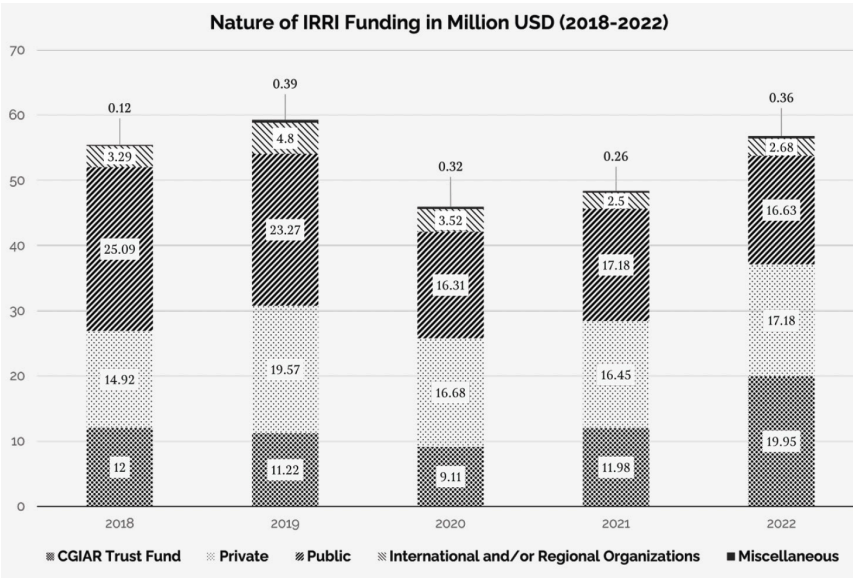
Source: CGIAR (n.d.c.)

In terms of IRRI's funding per Window, the disaggregated reporting of the CGIAR Funder Analysis does not distinguish between private and public

funding. It just simply lists all funders. For instance, IRRI's Window 1 and 2 funding are reported under the CGIAR Trust Fund, while IRRI's Window 3 and bilateral funding are both sourced from public funders such as states, and private funders like the BMGF, other private foundations, corporations, and private universities.

For this paper, I processed the data from the One CGIAR website based on where it came from, i.e., public and private institutions, as well as international and regional organizations, and others (classified under "miscellaneous"), and the results appear in Figure 2. It reveals the more recent picture of IRRI's funding sources, which covers its budget from 2018 to 2022, as well as the public and private nature of such sources.

Figure 2. The Public and Private Sources of IRRI's Funding (2018–2022)[10]



Source: CGIAR n.d.c. Data processed by author. Original data available at: https://www.cgiar.org/food-security-impact/finance-reports/dashboard/funder-analysis/

10 Only the fiscal years 2018 to 2022 for IRRI's budget are retrievable from the CGIAR Funder Analysis website. The data was processed by the author by aggregating the sources of IRRI's funding into these categories.

At any rate, the data do show that the share from public funds for IRRI decreased from USD 25.09 million in 2018 to USD 16.63 million in 2022. Meanwhile, funding from private sources varied. It nevertheless increased from USD 14.92 million in 2018 to USD 17.18 million in 2022, with the peak in 2019 at USD 19.57 million, and USD 17.18 million by 2022. Both trends confirm what has been discussed above, but what this graph also reveals is that while overall public funding did decline in 2022, public funds for IRRI en masse is still on par with private funding.[11] This much is clearer if we separate Window 3 and bilateral funding altogether.

Such significant bilateral funds arguably present a rather narrow opening that offers an equally tight window for action. For starters, future research must be done on the extent and role of public funding in the operations of IARCs such as IRRI, notwithstanding One CGIAR centralization. As we have seen, much of the literature criticizing IRRI has focused on the growing involvement of private entities like the BMGF (Medina 2020). While such an alarming trend rightly deserves focus, it must not be forgotten that IRRI and other IARCs still receive a significant share of public funding (Figure 2 and Table 9). Even if one concedes the involvement of the BMGF in IRRI as a case of philanthrocapitalism, the extent of bilateral funds suggests at the very least the theoretical possibility of tempering such philanthrocapitalism. Despite, and perhaps even because of, the neoliberalization of agriculture, there is a need to see if, how, and to what extent IRRI's public funds can still be leveraged as a potential check on corporate involvement. Certainly, this of course assumes that states themselves do not subscribe to a neoliberalizing ethos.

There is more work to be done in this regard. In the face of privatization, there is a need to bring back the role of the state in helping provide public goods. Indeed, public funds (should) serve public interest, which dovetails with what, say, peasant movements have long advocated. For La Via Campesina, the state must not only secure food for its people (Patel 2009 as cited in Candelaria 2022; Candelaria 2020). But more than simply regaining their role or funding scientific research, as pointed out by Raquiza (2012 as cited in Candelaria 2022), state-led development is critical to a country's agricultural sector, primarily through the implementation of a proper land reform system. But since individual states by themselves cannot match the financial contributions

11 However, the picture may get more complicated if we take into account private/public funding from the CGIAR Trust Fund.

of the BMGF, they must and could first band together and rally under an advocacy that promotes a certain form of state-led agricultural development, and then demand that IRRI do the same. This would essentially mean placing the control of the One CGIAR Council in the hands of governments. At the very least, they should have a substantial say on its operations.

In the meantime, there are a lot of facets of IRRI's history that need to be told, but it is hoped that the present paper has set up the stage, as it were, for such an endeavor. Future research can uncover a comparison between private funders like the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations of the Cold War period and the TNCs of today. We can determine exactly if, how and to what extent has private funding changed and affected IRRI's operations, as can more granular studies on the different funding mechanisms of IRRI (Windows 1, 2, and 3).

Another topic that can be pursued, albeit with significant difficulty, is the changes in, and comparison of the dynamics of, IRRI's decision-making from the IRRI board to that under One CGIAR board. This will contribute to existing analysis of, and recommendations for, One CGIAR moving forward (McIntire and Dobermann 2023; Meinke et al. 2023). In particular, the examination of BMGF's involvement with IRRI's activities should build on Medina (2020), the "Gates-Watchers," and MASIPAG's trenchant works. Since the BMGF is a significant donor to and partner of IRRI, there is an equal need to identify any developments between this collaboration.

In particular, it must be stressed that to look at IRRI and at One CGIAR is see agriculture from global perspective. This is important because food security is affected not only by domestic factors but also by international ones (Kuntjoro et al. 2013), particularly by transnational corporations. In this respect, this paper reiterates the earlier recommendations of other stakeholders. For instance, an awareness of international context must equally reckon with the initiative needed to revisit the idea of how food should be secured. Instead of relying on market forces to do so, as embodied in neoliberal agriculture, there is the need "to grow their own food" (Jehlička, Daněk, and Vávra 2018 as cited in Candelaria 2022, 20) and to consider independence from market forces through food sovereignty. Kahiluoto (2020, 853 as cited in Candelaria 2022, 20) points out that "dialogue, transparency and collective learning in food value chains and networks, sovereignty over resources, and built-in diversity in response to change" must happen to develop resilient food systems, but this needs a level of awareness of agriculture's global context. Even if one spurns transnational corporations, in many ways, the struggle

for pro-farmer agriculture is much a local as a global struggle. It is part of a broader resistance to neoliberalized agriculture.

Indeed, identifying how IRRI and One CGIAR works can help map out the terrain of struggle. Moreover, it can identify emerging and perennial actors, locales, and mechanisms, so that stakeholders, not least farmers, can craft the appropriate to confront and challenge the most recent forms of corporate involvement in agriculture. Such challenges aim to, then and now, lessen the dependence on corporations and to mobilize members of the civil society in developing resilient food systems by, among other things, addressing food waste issues (Bajželj et al. 2020 as cited in Candelaria 2022).

Summing Up

Building on both primary and secondary literature, this paper outlines the significant developments for IRRI from the Cold War to the present, covering the Cold War origins of IRRI, the 1995 Agreement, the nature of IRRI funding from the 1960s to the present, and the everpresent involvement of corporations in IRRI's operations from the Ford Foundation to the BMGF, and the emergence of One CGIAR. As organizations like the BMGF further consolidate their influence over IARCs, including IRRI, states and civil society must work together to challenge this development. The former should not depend on businesses to steer developments in terms of food security and must do their job of addressing socioeconomic issues that are beyond the scope of agricultural technology. Meanwhile, civil society, and states themselves, must develop and sustain its own efforts to counter the dominance of corporate interests in the global agriculture system.

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ARTICLE

Are Female Workers in the Informal Sector Benefiting from the Expanded Maternity Leave Law?: A Preliminary Investigation

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Abstract

The Philippines' Expanded Maternity Leave Law (EMLL), enacted in March 2019, expanded the maternity leave to a minimum of 105 days (from 60 days). It sought to provide female workers with significantly more time to regain their health and ensure that their babies are better taken care of. Seeking to help assess the implementation of the EMLL, the study interviewed key informants, using snowball sampling to identify a total of 37 women from all over the country, who got pregnant and/or gave birth between June 2019 and May 2022. Most work in the informal economy or have informal status even in formal settings, serving as food and clothing vendors, domestic helpers, and agricultural workers. Also interviewed were employees of government agencies that help implement the law. The study revealed that awareness of the EMLL and access to its benefits are uneven and limited, with variations depending on which setting the workers are in, whether formal or informal. This is due to the following: the lack of effective

information dissemination campaigns from the government; the difficulties of the online application process; the need of workers to prioritize their family's daily subsistence (instead of paying for SSS premiums), lack of documentary requirements to get a Social Security System (SSS) membership, language barriers, and, in some cases, non-compliance of employers to provide for EMLL benefits. Several policy recommendations are presented to address these and other related challenges.

Keywords: Maternity leave, employment, SSS, maternity benefit, informal sector, Expanded Maternity Leave Law

Introduction

After almost 11 years of advocacy from various women's groups, trade unions, medical professionals, academics, and many others, Republic Act (RA) No. 11210, or the Expanded Maternity Leave Law (EMLL), was enacted on 11 March 2019. Three government agencies—CSC (Civil Service Commission), DOLE (Department of Labor and Employment), and SSS—rolled out the law's implementing rules and regulations (IRR). The EMLL was widely hailed as a significant measure to improve working mothers' conditions. Before its enactment, the International Labour Organization (ILO) was already raising concerns over the Philippines' previous 60-day maternity leave policy (the Social Security Law of 1997 or RA No. 8282), emphasizing that this duration was fewer than the 14 weeks espoused in the 2000 ILO Maternity Protection Convention No. 183. Also, the Philippines had been lagging behind Asian countries in terms of providing maternity leave benefits (NTUCP 2013). In 2013, Norway had 46 weeks, or 10.5 months; six months in Vietnam; four months in Bangladesh, Singapore, and Mongolia; and three months in Afghanistan, Indonesia, Cambodia, China, Laos, and Thailand. Even European countries had already stipulated at least six months of paid maternity leave. Thus, in many ways, the EMLL is a landmark legislation that allows the Philippines to catch up with regional and global standards.

This paper examines how the EMLL fared three years since its implementation, focusing on women in the informal economy. Was the law's vaunted objective of providing material support to this hard-to-reach sector realized? What are the issues and challenges faced by the state and its stakeholders during implementation? What recommendations can be put forth to address these issues? To answer these questions, the paper identified key informant

interviewees, which include 37 women from the informal sector, and several government officials and NGO workers. The study asked the 37 informants ton discuss the following: their level of awareness and understanding of the law; success in applying for the benefits (including cash); the sufficiency thereof; and the difficulties which they encountered during the application process.

The interviewees' responses suggest several issues with the law's implementation, such as relatively poor information dissemination campaigns, and uneven awareness and limited understanding of EMLL provisions. They also reveal the need of workers to prioritize their family's daily subsistence (instead of paying for SSS premiums), lack of documents needed to get a Social Security System (SSS) membership, language barriers, and lack of access to the internet. Interviews with respondents from government agencies also reveal outdated and incomplete data for evidence-based planning, and a dearth of government inspectors that can enforce compliance among employers. The paper then offers several recommendations to address these issues.

The next sections of the paper cover the methodology and respondents' profiles, an overview of the basic provisions of the EMLL, and the experiences of the women in the informal sector in accessing the law's benefits. The recommendations section wraps up the discussion.

Methodology and Respondents' Profile

For the key informant interviews (KIIs), the authors employed snowball sampling to identify 37 respondents from both the private and public sector. The authors contacted their colleagues and friends (who were referred to as "focal points"), most of whom were from NGO (nongovernment organization) networks, to help find women who got pregnant and/or gave birth between June 2019 and 31 May 2022 (a window of two years and eleven months). In turn, these focal points were asked to identify women in different settings (to cover rural and urban areas) across provinces in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao, the three major islands of the Philippines. Most of the respondents worked either in the private sector or were self-employed in the informal sector, while two of them were contractual workers in state colleges and universities (SUCs). The respondents did not know each other. All belong to the informal sector, broadly defined (see below).

A copy of the questionnaire that was given to the respondents can be found in Annex 1. At the same time, the authors also interviewed a few informants

from relevant government agencies, namely, the Social Security System (SSS), the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), and the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW). Questions for each agency representative, which focus on implementation, are given in Annex 2. Lastly, Judy Miranda, Secretary-General of Partido Manggagawa (Workers' Party), was also interviewed. The questions posed to her are outlined in Annex 3. Meanwhile, below are the tables and figures profiling the 37 respondents.

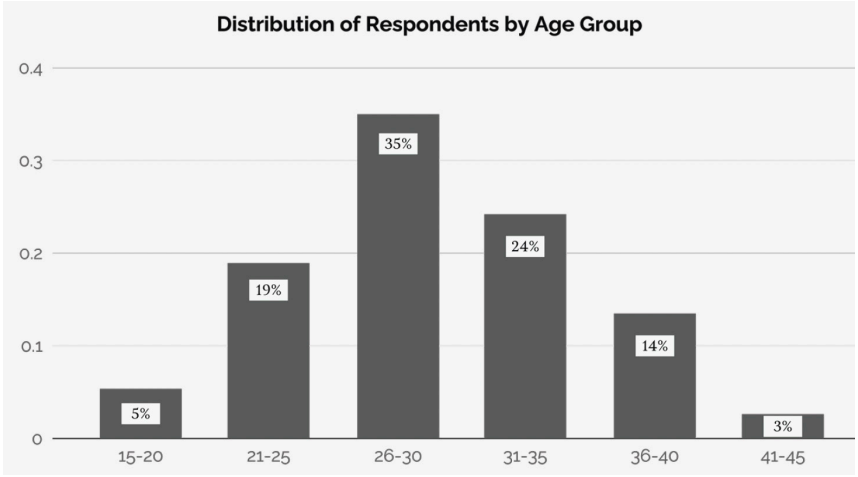
Table 1. Distribution of Respondents by Type of Work

TYPE OF WORKERS	TOTAL	%
Clothing Vendors	4	11%
Contractual White-Collar Workers	4	11%
Domestic Workers	6	16%
Farmers	4	11%
Food Vendors	12	32%
Odd/Seasonal Workers (Agriworker and hand washer; agriworker and sari-sari store owner; agriworker and food vendor; and agriworker and food vendor)	4	11%
Office Employee / NGO Worker	1	3%
Unemployed	2	5%
	37	**100%**

Table 2. Distribution of the Respondents by Location

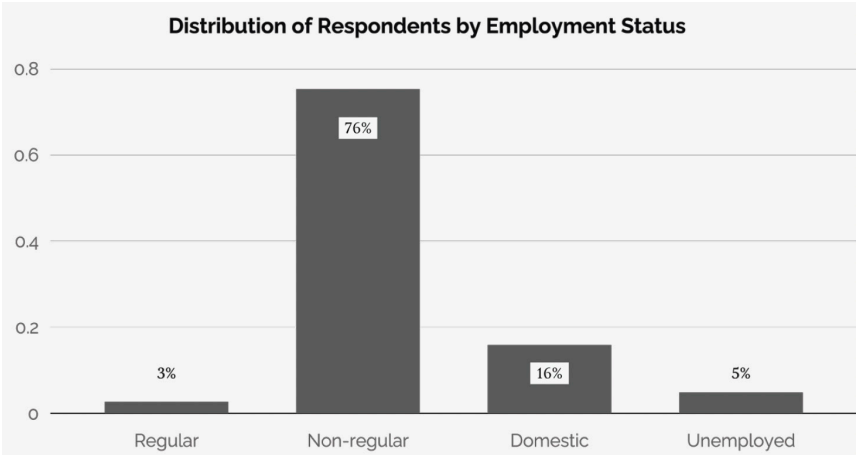
AREA	NCR		REGION III		REGION IV-A		REGION V		REGION VI		REGION VII		REGION VIII		REGION XII	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Urban	14	38%	0	0%	1	3%	2	5%	0	0%	1	3%	1	3%	0	0%
Rural	0	0%	6	16%	0	0%	7	19%	1	3%	1	3%	0	0%	3	8%
Total	14	38%	6	16%	1	3%	9	24%	1	3%	2	5%	1	3%	3	8%

Figure 1. Distribution of Respondents by Age Group



All responses were given in Taglish or Filipino, and translated to English. Only the English translation has been included here to maximize the space/word count.

Figure 2. Respondents' Employment Status



At first glance, 76 percent of the respondents belong to the informal sector. But this figure is based on a narrow version of informality, which only looks at workers outside formal employment settings, such as street vendors and

farmers, all of whom do not go to an "office." As we shall see below, a broader, and more accurate definition of informality—wherein informality is pervasive even *within* the formal sector—will entail an increase beyond 76 percent.

Limitations

Focusing on the experiences of women in the informal sector, this paper is by no means a definitive examination and evaluation of the implementation of the EMLL, since it only covers a very small number from the informal sector, and does not cover the experiences of those in the formal sector. Also, the bulk of the research for this study was done at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, the health crisis should be taken into consideration in assessing the extent of their experiences. That is, it is possible that COVID-19 made the application process more difficult than it was, and that it may be easier today, when there are fewer restrictions. Moreover, this assessment took place only two years and eleven months since the law had been implemented, making it too early to gauge its full effects, much less its impact, on working mothers, particularly in the informal sector. Even so, while the study is not intended to be a full evaluation of the law, its foregrounding of the experiences of female workers in the informal sector highlights the need to take into account their experiences in crafting and refining policies.

Informality and the Social Context of the EMLL

Ideally, infants must continue exclusive breastfeeding until they are two years old, if not beyond. Lactation offers plenty of health benefits; it increases children's resistance to infections and enhances neurological development for a higher IQ (NTUCP 2013). However, the Philippines' previous policy—60 days paid maternity leave—forced mothers to give up exclusive breastfeeding. The 2011 National Nutrition Results show that only 47 percent of babies zero to six months in the Philippines were exclusively breastfed, and only 45 percent of babies six to 23 months were breastfed and fed with safe, adequate, and nutritious complementary food. This also pushed mothers to resort to buying expensive infant formula, on which Filipino families spend PhP 21.5 billion (WHO 2013, 4). Also, insufficient maternity leave has been partly blamed for the high incidence of maternal deaths. Poverty and income loss forced many women to return to work too early after giving birth, giving them little recovery time. And those who returned were less likely to establish breastfeeding within the first month (Zialcita 2015; ILO 2010).

Given these issues, there was a pressing need to extend the length of a maternity leave, so that women could have a longer recovery period, and so that children could be better fed and taken care of. The EMLL also aims to prevent, or at least minimize, income loss for mothers as they temporarily cease to work. In this respect, the EMLL is very important in strengthening the country's human development.

Why the Informal Sector?

As of 2017, 40 percent of women and 36 percent of men in the Philippines are employed in the informal sector (Cabegin 2019). The official definition of the country's informal sector is "household unincorporated enterprises owned and operated by own account workers" (Cabegin 2018, 32). Going by this, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) estimates that about 15.758 million workers (43 percent) out of 40.998 million workers are employed informally. These include unpaid workers in family businesses. However, according to Cabegin (2018, 32), "these figures are underestimated as they do not include workers informally employed in the formal sector and in private households." Cabegin (2018) defines informal jobs as wage work without an employment contract or contracted only by verbal agreement; jobs that are outside the coverage of national labor legislation and social security regulation; or those that are in law or in practice not subject to income taxation. Moreover,

> Informal employment is not equated with employment in the informal sector since informality of employment can and has already permeated the formal sector comprising the organized private establishments and the government agencies. (Cabegin 2018, 34)

Using this classification, the incidence of informal workers dramatically rises: about 83 percent of Filipino workers aged 15–64 years old are informally employed. Following Cabegin's definition (2018) above, all 37 respondents for this study belong to the informal sector, even though some of them do work in formal settings.

By understanding how and to what extent women in the informal economy accessed (or otherwise) EMLL benefits, we can get some idea on how, and to what extent, the law has succeeded, and what else can and should be done. Informal sector workers are among the most vulnerable members of society, and the extent to which they receive benefits is one indicator of the effectiveness of the government's welfare programs. As mentioned, programs

like the EMLL are part of the need to improve human development in the Philippines, to say nothing of basic human rights.

The EMLL: Features and How It Works

General Provisions

The EMLL makes the number of maternity leaves in the Philippines somewhat at par with its ASEAN neighbors (The ASEAN Post 2020). Vietnam provides the highest at 180 days, followed by Singapore at 112, and the Philippines, Brunei, and Lao PDR, with 105, respectively. Myanmar provides 98 days, while Cambodia, Indonesia, and Thailand provide 90. This is the same under Article 84 of Indonesia's Manpower Law; Section 2b, Article 37 of Malaysia's Employment Act; and Thailand's Labor Protection Act and Social Protection Act (Oceanio 2022, 20–21). Similarly, Vietnam and Singapore also provide full payment of the beneficiary's salary for the duration of the leave, according to the Vietnam Labor Law and the Singaporean Employment Act, respectively (GIFA n.d.; Vu & Glewwe 2021, 3). The EMLL provides the following benefits for mothers delivering live births:

- Fully paid 105 days maternity leave regardless of delivery mode, i.e., Cesarean or normal, and of the number of deliveries;
- Solo parents receive an additional 15 days, for 120 days total, made available as provided under RA No. 8972, or the Solo Parents Welfare Act;
- Option to extend for additional 30 days without pay, and to allocate up to seven days of maternity leave to the baby's father or caregiver.
- A maximum of PhP 70,000 in cash, with the amount varying depending on the applicant's contributions to the Social Security System.

The SSS administers the leave benefits of female workers in the private sector (which also covers the informal sector), while DOLE promotes compliance among employeers, who must pay their female employees' salary differential. Female SSS members are entitled to a daily cash allowance equivalent to 100 percent of their average daily salary credit (ADSC) for the compensable periods of 105 days for live births, natural or Cesarean section; 120 days for solo parents; or 60 days for miscarriages, abortions, and stillbirths, depending on which are applicable.

Access to EMLL Benefits: The Private Sector Including Informal Sector

To qualify for SSS maternity benefits, private sector employees, including women in the informal sector, must meet the following requirements:

a. At least three monthly contributions out of the 12 months immediately preceding the semester of contingency;

b. Submission of duly accomplished SSS Maternity Notification Form, with an attached ultrasound report; SSS ID or UMID ID; and two other valid identification cards.

c. Duly registered My.SSS account in the SSS website and an enrolled disbursement account (enrolled with SSS) through its Disbursement Account Enrollment Module (DAEM). The SSS strictly prohibits manual, or face-to-face, filing of applications and only accepts online applications. These uploaded documents will then be reviewed by SSS.

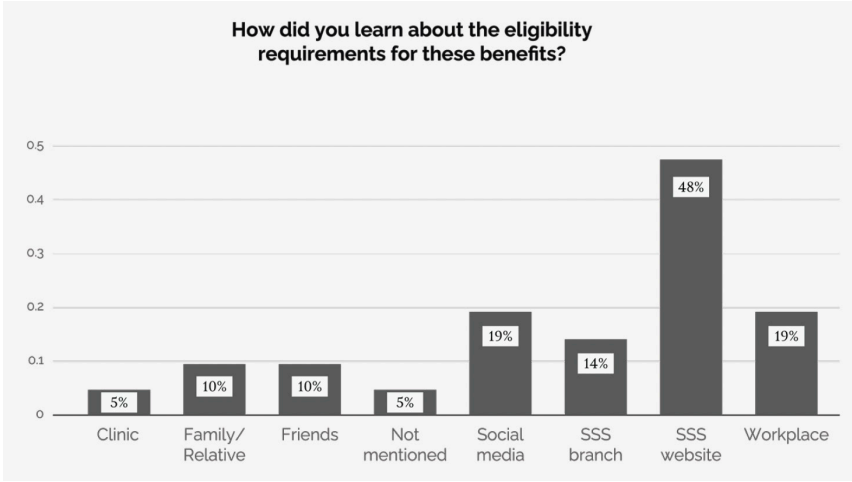
Naturally, women in the informal sector do not have an employer who can shoulder the salary differential, and will not have access to the 105 days of leave. These women are only entitled to the cash benefits. The amount will vary depending on their voluntary contributions to the SSS, but it is certain that not all women from the informal sector—whose salaries are generally lower, will not receive the maximum amount of PhP 70,000.

Experiences of Women from the Informal Sector in Accessing EMLL Benefits

Awareness of the Law

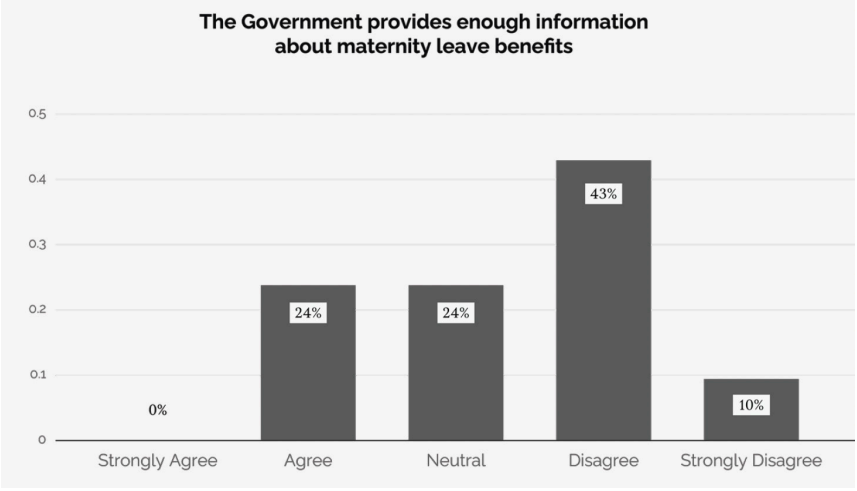
The SSS conducted various EMLL-related information campaigns. As the key informants from the agency affirmed, the agency organized ten sessions of in-house seminars from 22 May 2019 to August 2019, as well as 57 webinars and eight radio and television interviews in 2019. It maximized the Facebook pages of its national and regional offices, as well as those of its local branches. Figures 3 and 4, which indicate respondents' awareness of the law, point to some degree of success of the government's campaigns.

Figure 3. Source of Information about EMLL Requirements



However, the study found that only 57 percent of respondents (out of 37; 21 of them) had a general awareness of the EMLL, while the rest (43 percent, 16 respondents) had no knowledge whatsoever. Also, 43 percent also disagreed when asked whether the government provides enough information about maternity leave benefits (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Respondents' Rating on the Government's Information Dissemination regarding the EMLL



Sixteen respondents only found out about the EMLL because they were interviewed for this study. These respondents were generally based in agricultural areas and some in low-income urban areas. For example, Respondent 6 admitted a general unawareness due to a lack of access to the news, stating that "I am not aware of [the benefits] because I do not watch or listen to the news. I did not apply for any [social] benefit." The findings reveal that respondents who were employed in more formal environments were more likely to know more about the EMLL through their company's human resource unit and the internet. For instance, Respondent 29, an employee at an NGO, recounted that she knew of the EMLL "because of my NGO training where the law [such as the EMLL] is promoted." Respondent 36, a contractual employee, stated, [The law] was discussed by our Human Resources office. The benefits [for pregnant workers] and how much. As early as three months into pregnancy, they explained it to us."

Contrast this to the situation of many who work in the informal sector, where information on the EMLL tended to emanate from word of mouth from friends, family members and workmates, who were oftentimes also mothers themselves. Suffice it to say, much of the information passed around was incomplete or not accurate.

Beyond questions of awareness, the study also found a common theme among the respondents' answers: varying interpretations and extent of knowledge among different segments of the female workforce. In Figure 3, those who said they agreed that the government provided enough information about the EMLL gave conflicting information on their awareness or understanding of the law. Some respondents, who claimed that they were unable to apply for maternity benefits, noted that they misunderstood or were unaware of the EMLL, or that they were not informed by SSS personnel that solo parents can have an additional 15 days of paid maternity leave. Respondent 19, a self-employed clothing vendor, shared, "I did not know that it was possible and that I was also unaware that there was an additional 15 days for solo parents." Respondent 13, who is also self-employed, stated, "I did not know about the EMLL… The SSS did not mention it. I think the application form did not include questions asking whether you are a solo parent. I was also unable to mention that I am a solo parent."

As mentioned, while this article does not mean to offer a full evaluation of the EMLL and its implementation, and the success (or otherwise) of a law does not solely rest with the government, the situation seems to suggest a lack of effective information and education campaign for stakeholders.

For their part, key informants from the SSS shared that for the digitally challenged, many of the agency's branches nationwide do have e-Center facilities designed to accommodate and assist members with problems accessing the internet. Local branches also conducted seminars regarding SSS benefits and maternity benefits. In this context, the SSS posters, flyers, brochures translated into Filipino located in SSS offices at both national and local levels are helpful, but these are arguably of limited reach.

The lack of awareness of the respondents is not only a function of the effectiveness of information dissemination campaigns. It also has to do with their status as informal workers, which affects their ability to apply for the EMLL even if they do know about it. For instance, Respondent 7, a teacher, explained, "I was advised by the SSS personnel not to apply for my maternity benefits because there were no records of contributions under my name. It is because the SUC I worked for did not pay it on my behalf; they always invoked the "No Employer-Employee Relationship Clause." Respondent 1, a housewife, said, "I am not registered with [the] SSS or PhilHealth. I don't know anything about those things." In a few cases, the pandemic simply kept respondents from going out and inquiring about possible maternity benefits at SSS branches. Respondent 21, a self-employed fruit shake vendor, answered, "I did not face the challenge of applying for maternity benefits due to the pandemic. I was afraid to go out."

Rate of Acceptance and Sufficiency of Benefits

Of the 37 respondents, 21 said that they were aware of the EMLL. Of these, only 17 applied, fourteen of whom were approved and received their benefits. When asked whether the received cash benefits were enough to cover their needs, five respondents indicated "no," while nine answered "yes." Those who indicated that the cash was insufficient shared that they had hoped that the benefits would help defray expenses. Another respondent noted that while she received the maximum amount provided by the SSS, the benefits could not cover her total hospital bill, particularly since she was confined in a private hospital. For solo parents, the amount provided by the SSS was arguably inadequate, given that they are the sole and primary income earner. Respondent 8, a self-employed farmer and *sari-sari* store vendor (selling a variety of everyday goods), said,

> If I was confined in a public hospital, I think the PhP 70,000 I received would be enough. Unfortunately, I had to give birth through caesarian section as my baby was born premature. The costs doubled. I gave birth in

> a private hospital, so our bill was PhP 400,000 (PhP 240,000 for my medical expenses and PhP 180,000 for my baby, who was left in the hospital because he/she was premature). I was able to use my PhilHealth, and it was helpful, but they only approved PhP 19,000 for my delivery.

Setting aside the sufficiency of the cash benefits, the respondents did note some positive impact of the EMLL. Most said that the cash were used for their family's daily needs; pay debts accumulated due to pregnancy and childbirth; pay for their newborn child's medical expenses; and prop up their businesses. For instance, Respondent 4, a contractual employee and consultant, said, "It helped address the needs of my family. But obviously it was a small amount, which is why it was not so significant." Respondent 8, a sari-sari (retail) store owner and farmer, said

> The cash benefits I received were a big help. I had already given birth when I applied. I borrowed and sought assistance from the government (mayor, councilors, DSWD [Department of Social Work and Development], relatives, and friends). So I was able to pay these debts.

Respondent 24, a hamburger vendor, echoed these sentiments, "It helped a lot. I had already given birth when I received [the benefits]. I used it to pay for my debts because I borrowed money during my pregnancy and delivery." Respondent 14, a domestic helper, stated, "It unburdened me of my financial needs when giving birth…" Respondent 21, likewise a domestic helper, said, "It was a great help in ensuring that there was a reserve fund for childbirth and for me and my baby's expenses for medical check-ups."

Different Experiences in Access

Difficulties

Fourteen respondents whose applications were accepted by the SSS indicated that they encountered difficulties in the application process. As mentioned, they had no employers who could process their applications on their behalf, or they lived in rural areas far from urban centers. They also raised technical issues concerning the mandatory online submissions of applications, and lacked resources necessary to apply. Some still had to physically visit an SSS branch to submit the requirements. This is due to (a) multiple rejections of their online submissions, (b) documentary requirements forced them to seek face-to-face clarification from SSS personnel, or (c) some did not possess the knowledge to navigate or operate the online platform. For one respondent, the SSS website broke down altogether.

> An added difficulty was when [SSS] began requiring online submissions [of maternity benefit applications].... Now that employees are required to register online beforehand, it is possible that the employee was already registered but forgot her password so she has to go to the branch.... But to be honest, what is happening is not ideal. Imagine that the SSS portal is nationwide and aside from the provincial offices, which are connected to this system, every member-employee or every SSS member also gets connected there. That's why most of the time when I access their system, there is a sad face. Because literally, there is a sad face in the system... because the system has snapped, it has broken down.

Respondent 4, a contractual worker, said, "The online application was challenging because it was conflicting. I was required to send two e-mails, which is why I requested the assistance of the [security] guard to process the requirements. It was time-consuming." Respondent 19, an apparel vendor, similarly stated, "[There were] many hassles. The queue was long, replies from online [applications and follow-ups] were slow, [and] the weather was hot. It took three months before I received the cash benefits."

Respondents noted that the long waiting time and the delays were the most difficult part of the process. A respondent, who resided on an island, needed to travel to the mainland via boat to process and claim her maternity benefits. In some cases, respondents had to travel far even when they were pregnant.

Success Stories

The application process seems to have been easier for respondents who managed to augment their incomes by combining multiple kinds of work, and were therefore able to pay the minimum premiums, with only two of them finding the process difficult. One said that she was able to apply for the EMLL because her previous employer enabled her to register and pay for SSS membership. Another noted that she was able to balance multiple jobs and even register, and to make regular social security contributions. Other respondents noted that when they applied for EMLL benefits, they were already SSS members, making their application relatively easier, despite juggling multiple jobs.

Respondent 4 shared, "Yes, the SSS staff who was also my husband's friend and the security guard at the SSS [branch] told us that applications must be done online." Respondent 11, a self-employed housewife, described difficulties in physically reaching the SSS office. "My husband accompanied me in applying [for maternity benefits]. It was very difficult for us because the SSS office was

very far. We had to cross the sea by boat. At the SSS office, the staff assisted us." Respondent 26, a vegetable vendor, reported, "My friend helped me. She accompanied me in applying [for benefits] and submitting the requirements. Respondent 27, a self-employed housewife, remarked, "My previous agency processed my SSS membership, but I was the one who applied for my maternity benefits in 2019, and was assisted by the agency [in the application process]."

It appears that those working in the formal sector and who have had more education might have generally benefited from the mandatory online application because they possessed the digital and functional literacy and necessary resources, such as ICT facilities in their workplaces. Key informants from the SSS affirmed just as much, stating that stakeholders who had online access were reached most effectively. The same could not be said for the other respondents.

Unequal Online Access

Mandating online applications had the unintended effect of deepening unequal access to the internet. As mentioned, some respondents had difficulties accessing and using the required technology because they resided in locations lacking ICT (Information and Communication Technology) infrastructure, or lacked technological savvy and resources (e.g., to use, let alone own, gadgets, such as smartphones or laptops). According to a 2019 National ICT Household Survey of the Department of Information and Communication Technology (DICT), only 1 of 5 (18 percent) of households in the Philippines have internet access. Also, a majority of households—52.5 percent—who indicated that they did not have internet access noted the high cost of internet subscription, while 33.8 percent remarked that expensive equipment are barriers to access (PIDS 2021, 81). The survey also revealed that more than 20 percent of households in Regions I, II, VII, VIII, IX, X, XI, XII and the BARMM (Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao) reported not knowing how to use the internet, while more than 10 percent of households in Regions II, VIII, XI, and BARMM shared they did not know what the internet is (PIDS 2021, 80).

The Challenges of Informality

In principle, female informal workers can still avail of social security benefits, including maternity leaves, if they personally shoulder all the premiums involved (they are voluntary members, as the SSS calls them). Indeed, many

respondents recognize the importance of enrolling for SSS membership and regularly paying for their premiums to qualify for maternity benefits. Eleven respondents said that had they been properly informed of the salient features of the EMLL, they would have saved a portion of their income to pay for the minimum SSS monthly contribution and therefore qualify for maternity benefits. However, payment for premiums largely depends on their financial status which, in turn, is influenced by the seasonality or irregularity of their work and the size of their pay. Their reluctance to apply is affected by their limited incomes, which are prioritized for their families' daily needs. Also, some respondents claimed they do not have the necessary documents to register for SSS membership. This is particularly true among survey respondents residing in far-flung rural areas.

Broader Issues with Implementation

A key informant interviewee from the DOLE reported a number of cases where some employers do "not want to implement the law." This took greater resonance when, in 2021, the Commission on Audit (COA) expressed alarm because some PhP 305 billion remained uncollected by the SSS from delinquent employers (CNN Philippines 2022). This jeopardizes the financial stability of the state's social security scheme. As Judy Miranda from Partido Manggagawa (PM) noted, a number of factories and companies have been remiss in (a) paying social benefits contributions for their employees; and in (b) providing female employees' salary differentials for their maternity benefits, for which female workers thus became ineligible. Furthermore, according to Miranda, many companies and factories do not proactively inform employees or workers about the EMLL. This has resulted in workers' lack of awareness about this vital benefit, especially among the non-unionized. She also noted cases where qualified female workers were deliberately misinformed by their respective companies.

There are about 1,109,684 enterprises (PSA 2022), which vary in employee size and asset base in the country. A key informant from the DOLE's Bureau of Workers' Special Concerns (BWSC) revealed that the agency surveys only about ten percent of the total number of companies in the country. This is due to the lack of inspectors who can monitor and enforce compliance, which in turn arises from a small budget provided by the national government.

Recommendations

Support the Enactment of the Maternity Benefit for Women in the Informal Economy Act of 2021, or Senate Bill No. 2175

Senate Bill No. 2175, or the Maternity Benefit for Women in the Informal Economy Act of 2021, aims to complement and upgrade the EMLL; it requires the government via the DSWD to give a direct maternity cash aid for all pregnant workers in the informal sector (Senate of the Philippines 2021). The amount of cash aid will be equivalent to the prevailing minimum wage in the worker's region multiplied by 22 days (ibid.). As of July 2024, the bill remains pending in Congress and increased lobbying is needed by women's groups, by those in the medical profession, and by other stakeholders so that the bill can be enacted into law.

Make Manual Application an Option and Increase Its Accessibility

Though COVID-19-related restrictions have virtually disappeared, online application is still mandatory. However, as mentioned, many workers are not digitally savvy, they do not have the gadgets and suffer from unreliable internet infrastructure. Thus, there should be the option of manual application for EMLL benefits. This is certainly more feasible in a post-COVID-19 landscape. Furthermore, the SSS's outreach approach, where it reaches out to various LGUs, community-based organizations, and the like, must be stepped up, so that information about the EMLL can be more widely shared in more grassroots communities.

Moreover, online applications can be enhanced. A nationwide platform—which hosts the transactions of millions of its members, hundreds of its offices and branches—must be regularly updated and improved to prevent it from malfunctioning. Doing so would also minimize, if not eliminate, backlogs and delayed releases of applications, thereby improving and truly expediting the delivery of services.

Similarly, there is an urgent need to improve ICT infrastructure in the country, especially in rural and far-flung areas where informal workers are concentrated. This will widen the coverage of information drives, and reaching hitherto uncovered areas. It will improve the capacity of digitally marginalized sectors to access information and comply with mandatory online filing of application/claims.

Finally, RA No. 11055, or the "Philippine Identification System Act," intends to provide national ID cards to all Filipino citizens. During the research, however, when concerned government agencies were preparing to roll out the EMLL, the national ID system had yet to be implemented. And now it has, though with some significant delays in the delivery of IDs. At any rate, a regularly updated national ID system can allow concerned national government agencies (NGAs) to rapidly reach out to every Filipino citizen. Together with integrated government databases, it could also reduce errors and delays in EMLL implementation (and for other laws as well).

Intensify the Wholesale/Outreach Approach of SSS

As mentioned, SSS membership among informal sector workers is extremely limited vis-à-vis the total number of informal sector workers, whether by PSA's definition thereof or Cabegin's. While there is merit to utilizing online platforms for outreach, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, these have limitations. As previously discussed, poor households, including workers in the informal sector, are generally digitally challenged and/or live and work in areas with slow internet connections, if there is any at all. Until and unless the ICT infrastructure improves, the government must disseminate information on the EMLL using traditional media, particularly radio and television.

Furthermore, respondents recommended that raising public awareness at the LGU level (e.g., municipality, city, and barangay) is useful. The SSS's department for extending its services to informal sector workers, including its "wholesale" approach for reaching out to cooperatives, LGUs, and other local communities, can be tapped for this initiative. This is critical in light of the many respondents who stated that in spite of their limited incomes, they would have paid for minimum SSS contributions had they known about the EMLL. Also, a strengthened partnership between SSS and workers' organizations and CSOs is important, since the latter can reach out to many informal sector workers and can provide them with information and technical support.

Additionally, information drives must explain in simpler terms the different eligibility and documentary requirements. Currently, complex explanations and technical terms used by the SSS, such as "semester of contingency," "payment and contribution scheme," "salary credits," "salary differential," to name a few, can obscure rather than promote understanding of the EMLL, especially among low-income groups and those in the informal sector who have limited formal education and/or have little time to undertake a (prolonged) study of SSS processes.

Finally, the SSS must also follow through on its aim of intensifying its information campaign that shows maternity benefits as part of a comprehensive package of benefits for SSS members. This will also encourage more from the informal sector to register and qualify for such benefits.

Strengthen the Database for EMLL

The last government survey of the informal sector took place in 2008. Accordingly, the Philippine Statistics Authority should conduct an updated and comprehensive survey on the number of informal sector workers, and monitor their working conditions on a regular basis. Furthermore, the data must be gender-disaggregated so that the circumstances of female workers are identified. This will guide policymakers in (re)designing programs so that they are more sensitive to the needs of Filipino women. Most importantly, not only should the PSA update the information, it should explore adopting a broader definition of informality to get a more accurate picture of the phenomenon. All these would need adequate budgetary support from the GAA (General Appropriations Act).

Similarly, academic institutions can be encouraged to emphasize research on the informal economy and access to social security, including the EMLL. Also to be promoted are critical scholarship promoting women's rights and gender equality, and combating heteronormative policy mindsets that oftentimes inform certain assumptions (i.e. the relationship between a man and woman as the "normal" standard) in policy formulation and design.

All these are essential in order to further equip the SSS, CSC, and other institutions so that they can have a deeper understanding of the realities surrounding female workers, especially the poor and low-income earners in the informal sector. This will help improve the design of social security programs.

Enhance Regulatory and Enforcement Capacity of DOLE

To ensure that employers and companies comply with the mandates under the EMLL, the DOLE must significantly increase the number of inspectors, who can monitor and enforce compliance with the law. Their skills must be upgraded as well to increase their effectiveness and impact. Strengthening DOLE's regulatory and enforcement capacity is critical to promoting accountability among private sector employers, and protecting the rights and well-being of female workers. All these require increased and sustained

budgetary support for the agency. Furthermore, as the research has shown, workers organized in trade unions and political organizations are more aware of their rights and are thus better positioned to claim them. As such, workers' unions should be encouraged and strengthened; they can complement the work of DOLE in monitoring the compliance of companies in providing social security benefits to its workers.

Government to Provide EMLL for Female Workers in Exempted Companies

A number of private sector companies are legally exempt from implementing the EMLL for a variety of reasons, including the small size of their employee base. However, it is precisely female workers in these micro-companies who need the EMLL the most. The government must consider stepping in to provide this social security benefit, even as female workers pay for their counterpart social security contributions (possibly through automatic salary deductions). Another policy option, however, is to pass the Maternity Benefit for Women in the Informal Economy Act or Senate Bill No. 148, so they can avail of cash assistance.

Promoting Labor Rights

Many contractual workers, both in the public and private sector, have worked for a number of years in the same institution or company and have consistently received positive ratings from their employers. Yet, as widely practiced, the shared provision for social security between them and their employers is not reflected in their contracts. Oftentimes, manpower agencies hire these workers, not by the institution or company these employees work for. These workers have no "employer-employee" relationship with the institution or company they work in. As such, one recommendation from a DOLE informant, and affirmed by this study, is that the provision of social security benefits should be included in the computation of workers' salaries and be explicitly reflected in their contracts.

From a longer and broader view, there is a need for a more strategic solution to the problem of labor informality, as many others have long echoed. More institutional pathways are needed to transition informal sector workers to the formal sector, such as regularization, which includes security of tenure, especially if the positions are permanent in nature and the workers' performance is satisfactory. Both national and local governments must set aside adequate budgetary support from the GAA (General Appropriations

Act) and local funds, respectively, to support this endeavor. Furthermore, significantly reducing informality in the labor force will require a multiplicity of measures that will address both supply and demand. For the former, the Philippines must enhance the health and education profiles of the labor force, both as a right and as a way to increase productivity and innovation. For the latter, it must improve the quality of existing occupations and the need to create new, good quality jobs. For female workers who continue to carry the main responsibility of reproductive/household work, they need support systems, such as adequately resourced public daycare systems. There also should be more education and public awareness programs both in the formal and informal arenas that promote equal sharing of responsibility of household chores between parents, including childcare. Traditional and social media platforms must be tapped in this regard since these also shape mindsets and public opinion.

Conclusion

This study has shown that the progressive potential of the EMLL is far from being realized in light of many issues and challenges in its implementation. These issues cover procedural and informational gaps, and difficulties in the application process since many informal sector workers do not have sufficient information on the EMLL, or the gadgets and know-how to access the online application process. This challenge is exacerbated in low-income and rural settings marked by poor ICT infrastructure.

The study identifies ways to address these challenges, including 1) intensifying and broadening SSS's information dissemination campaigns in grassroots communities through the use of traditional and social media; 2) tapping municipal and barangay level DSWD and health workers and by strengthening partnerships with workers' organizations and CSOs; 3) making manual application for EMLL an option; 4) enhancing the regulatory capacity of DOLE so it can better enforce compliance of private companies to implement the EMLL; 5) public provisioning of EMLL for female workers in private companies which are legally exempt from implementing this law; 6) updating government statistics on the informal sector with genderdisaggregation; and 7) supporting a bill that would provide maternity cash benefits for new mothers in the informal sector.

Nevertheless, the paper also reiterates longer-lasting solutions, such as the need to transition female informal workers to the formal sector and

regularizing high-performing contractual workers so that they can enjoy security of tenure, higher wages, and better working conditions. In both these instances—hiring additional workers in the formal sector, including the regularization of contractual workers—will mean generating more social security premiums. This will help social security agencies become more financially stable and better able to fulfill their mandates. In such a scenario, the progressive potential of the law will more likely be fully realized.

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Annex 1

Questions for beneficiaries

1. Email*:
2. Name (optional):
3. Address (municipality/city and province)*:
4. Age:
5. Occupation Status:

	Regular Employee
	Running own business
	Helping in family business
	House work (housewife / doing chores at home)
	Consultant/Contractual
	Other:

6. Occupation or nature of business / consultancy
7. Work arrangement

	Full-time, office/factory-based
	Part-time
	Full-time, but with work from home arrangements

8. Do you have multiple jobs?

	Yes
	No

9. Have you had multiple types of job contracts, either consecutively or simultaneously?

	Yes
	No

10. Do you have multiple children?

	Yes
	No

11. Do you have multiple jobs?

	Yes
	No

12. Did you have the same job type(s) as your current job when you applied for the maternity leave?

	Yes
	No

13. If the answer is NO, please share your reason for not applying for a maternity leave pay (please choose all that apply)

	I do not have SSS contributions and I was not aware that there are benefits of maternity leave pay.
	I have SSS contributions, but I was not aware of the maternity leave benefit.
	I have SSS contributions and aware of maternity leave benefits, but I think the application is too complicated.
	I have SSS contributions and aware of maternity leave benefits, but i have no time to apply for the maternity leave benefit.
	I have SSS contributions and aware of maternity leave benefits, but I do not have internet for the online application process.
	I have SSS contributions and aware of maternity leave benefits, but no one could accompany me to apply and submit requirements.
	I have SSS contributions and aware of maternity leave benefits, but I do not have the complete requirements.
	I have SSS contributions and aware of maternity leave benefits, but it is the pandemic times and I do not want to go out of the house.

	I have SSS contributions and aware of maternity leave benefits, but I have no money to go to the SSS office

14. If your answer is YES, please share your reason for availing of Maternity Leave.

	Birth
	Termination of pregnancy (miscarriage, etc.)

15. Month and Year that I applied for maternity leave:

16. Month and Year that I received my maternity leave pay:

17. If you had multiple children and you did not have access to this benefit with previous children/pregnancies, how has having the benefit this time impacted you compared to previous children/pregnancies?

18. Raising baby with partner?*

	Yes
	No (Solo parent)

19. In your household, does anyone else work for pay? If so, who? What type of contract does that person have? Do they have access to benefits?

20. How many days did you actually take a maternity leave from work after giving birth or after termination of pregnancy?

21. For SOLO Parents, did you apply for the additional 15 days paid maternity leave for solo parents?

	Yes
	No (Solo parent)

22. If you are a SOLO parent who DID NOT apply for the additional 15-day paid maternity leave, please kindly share your reason for not applying for the additional paid leave.

23. I was already aware that there is an Expanded Maternity Leave Law in the Philippines even before I got pregnant.

	Yes
	No

24. In what year did I learn of the Expanded Maternity Benefit Law?

25. Please tell me what you know about the laws that provide the maternity leave benefits.

26. How did you first learn of the 105-Day Maternity Leave benefits?

	Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Vlog, etc)
	Websites (Google, government websites, etc)
	Traditional media (television, radio, newspaper, magazines)
	Workplace
	Friends
	Family/relatives
	My organization (religious organization, solo parent organization, etc.)
	Seminar
	Posters, flyers, leaflets from government
	My OB Gyne/Doctor
	Other:

27. How did you learn about the eligibility requirements for these benefits?

28. Did you know where to go to get answers to your questions?

	Yes
	No

29. Who provided you with the information on these laws and their benefits to workers like you?

30. Do you know other mothers who have accessed these leave benefits? If so, did they provide information or encourage you to apply for these benefits?

31. Was there any assistance available in applying for the benefit? If so, who provided that assistance?

32. For self-employed workers, how did you register in order to receive benefits?

33. For domestic and agricultural workers, what role did your employer play in helping you access benefits, if any?

34. For workers combining various forms of work (e.g., part-time wage work and self-employment), is registration and application feasible for workers who shift between or combine various forms of work?

35. How do I rate my knowledge and understanding of the 105-Day Expanded Materrnity Leave Law of the Philippines?

Excellent	Very good	Good	Needs improvement	No knowledge about it
○	○	○	○	○

36. Please explain your answer for the above rating.

37. What do I appreciate about the 105-Day Expanded Maternity Leave benefits?

38. What is missing (or should be added) in the Expanded Maternity Leave benefits?

39. Is there something confusing about the law or the application process for the 105-Day Expanded Maternity Leave benefits? What is it and why is it confusing?

40. In relation to the above question, what is your suggestion to avoid confusion?

41. What were the documents that you had to acquire and submit to avail of the 105-Day Maternity Leave benefits?

42. Was it easy for you to complete the required documents? Why or why not?

43. Do you need to voluntarily register for this benefit or was registration obligatory? Please tell us about the registration process.

44. Who primarily facilitated your application for the 105-Day Maternity Leave pay?

	Myself
	My office
	Friends
	Family/relatives
	My partner (married or not)
	Other:

45. How easy was it to apply and avail of the 105-Day Maternity Leave benefits?

Very easy	Easy	Just right	A bit difficult	Very difficult
○	○	○	○	○

46. Please kindly explain your answer to the above question.

47. How many hours did you spend for the entire application process, including follow up and claiming the full payment for the maternity leave?

	Less than 5 hours
	5–10 hours
	11–15 hours
	16–20 hours
	More than 20 hours
	Other:

48. How many days of processing and waiting before you were actually able to receive your maternity leave pay?

49. How much of your own money did you have to spend in the process of applying for the maternity leave benefits (transportation, cellphone load, photocopying, food, etc.)

	Less than ₱1,000
	₱1,000 – ₱2,500
	₱2,500 – ₱5,000
	₱5,000 – ₱7,500
	₱7,500 – ₱10,000
	Other:

50. What was the greatest challenge that you faced when you were trying to avail of your 105-Day Maternity Leave pay?

51. If you received your maternity leave pay, was the amount correct or the same as you expected?

	Yes
	No

52. Please kindly explain your answer above.

53. Do you think that the amount you received for your maternity leave pay is enough?

	Yes
	No

54. Please kindly explain your answer above.
55. If you were ever unable to receive your benefit at the expected time, how long did it take to finally receive it?
56. How did you receive the benefit? Who gave it to you and in what way?
57. What was the easiest part of receiving the benefit?
58. Why do you think you were successful in accessing the benefits?
59. What was the most difficult part of receiving the benefit?
60. Did accessing these benefits impact or change your ability to access other benefits? Did you lose access to any other benefits you would normally receive?
61. How did you use the money that you receive as your maternity leave pay?

	Just for personal/family expenses
	I set up a small business
	I used it for both personal/family expenses and to set up a small business

62. Please kindly share with us your story in relation to the above question.
63. Are there any changes in your situation as a (category of workers) that changed after you started receiving the benefits? Please explain.
64. Did this leave affect your work or your return to work? If so, in what way?

65. What did it mean economically for you and your household to have the leave benefit?

66. Did you take the full leave time available to you? If not, did you want to do so? If you wanted to do so but did not, why not?

67. If your maternity leave pay was NOT approved or released, who informed you that it was not approved?

	SSS personnel
	office personnel

68. Do you know where to go if benefits and rights guaranteed by the law are not honored by your employer? If so, where is that?

69. If your maternity leave pay was NOT approved/released, what was the explanation of your office or of the SSS personnel?

70. Do you feel that their reason above was acceptable? Why or why not?

71. If you were missing documents, why were you not able to access those documents?

72. Did not receiving the benefit impact your employment after?

73. How did not receiving the benefit affect you and your family economically?

74. How did you attempt to meet your care needs without this benefit?

75. The government ensures that the women are aware of the 105-Day Expanded Maternity Leave benefits.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
○	○	○	○	○

76. Please kindly explain your answer above.

77. The government provides enough information about maternity leave benefits.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
○	○	○	○	○

78. Please kindly explain your answer above.

79. In your own opinion, what else should Government do in order to make more women aware of and understand the 105-Day Maternity Leave benefits for women?

80. My office/employer provides enough information about maternity leave benefits.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
○	○	○	○	○

81. Please kindly explain your answer above.

82. In your own opinion, what else should employers do in order to make more women aware of and understand the 105-Day Maternity Leave benefits for women?

83. Most mothers are aware of 105-day Maternity Leave Law.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
○	○	○	○	○

84. Please kindly explain your answer above.

85. I would encourage other mothers to avail of the 105-Day Maternity Leave benefits.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
○	○	○	○	○

86. Please kindly explain your answer above.

87. In your own opinion, what are the ways that mothers share information and encourage other women to avail of the 105-Day Maternity leave?

88. I fully understand my rights and obligations in relation to the 105-Day Maternity Leave Law.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
○	○	○	○	○

89. Please kindly explain your answer above.

90. In your own opinion, what are the obligations of women in relation to the 105-Day Expanded Maternity Leave Law?

91. 105 days maternity leave for mothers is sufficient.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
○	○	○	○	○

92. Please kindly explain your answer above.

93. What do you believe should be the actual number of days of paid leave that should be given to mothers?

94. Mothers should transfer some of their days for maternity leave to the father/relatives/partner helping take care of the baby.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
○	○	○	○	○

95. Please kindly explain your answer above.

96. Were you able to transfer benefit time to the father of your child? (or to a relative/partner for solo parents)

	Yes
	No

97. If so, how many days did you transfer and why?

98. What did it mean for you and your family to share leave benefit with the father of your child? (or partner/relative for solo parents)

99. What else should be done to really make the Expanded Maternity Leave Benefit law work for women

100. What lessons did you learn in the process? What worked well? What were the challenges?

101. Other comments/suggestions:

Annex 2

Questions for relevant government agencies

1. Socio-Demographic Profile

   Name of Respondent _____ Age _____ Sex _____

   Barangay _____ City _____ Birthday (mm/dd/yyyy) _____

2. Educational Attainment

   Please identify your highest educational attainment (or the interviewer reads the items provided below before the respondent identifies any of the items relevant or corresponding to their educational background).

Elementary Undergraduate		Elementary Graduate	
Highschool Undergraduate		Highschool Graduate	
College Undergraduate		College Graduate	
Master's Degree Undergraduate		Master's Degree Graduate	
Doctorate or Doctor of Philosophy Undergraduate		Doctorate or Doctor of Philosophy Graduate	
Technical/Vocational		Others (pls. specify)	

Questions for Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE)

1. What is the role of DOLE in the implementation of the EMLL?
2. Does DOLE communicate the availability of and eligibility for benefits to prospective recipients? Please elaborate specifically on which government department/agency/sector specifically does this.
3. What is the role of your organization in this communication?
4. What role does your agency or organization play in ensuring that workers understand their rights to leave?

5. Please describe overall communication efforts informing prospective recipients of their potential benefits and eligibility. What mechanisms, groups, and media do these efforts use?
6. Would you say these communications efforts are effective? Why or why not? How is this measured?
7. What groups of workers do these communications reach most effectively? Why?
8. What groups of workers do these communications reach least effectively? Why? What is being done to improve communications with these groups?
9. Do employers comply with the payment of their female employees' salary differential? Kindly provide the statistics of compliance of employers, including contractual employers.
10. How do you monitor and enforce compliance among employers in the payment of salary differential to their employees?
11. What do you think are the costs associated with your agency's implementation of EMLL?
12. What do you think are the weaknesses of your institution/ agency in the implementation of the EML?
13. What do you think are the challenges encountered by your organization in the implementation of the EMLL?

    Probe: How do you think these challenges could be best addressed?

14. What recommendations can you give to improve the implementation of EMLL?
15. How do you assure the compliance of international companies?

Questions for the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW)

1. As an advocate for the passage of the EMLL, please answer the following:
    a. Who were the key players for and against? Why were they for the bill? Why were they against the bill?
    b. What were the factors that facilitated the enactment of the law?
    c. Were there compromises that had to be made to get the law enacted? If so, what were these?
    d. Did the IRR adequately capture the spirit of the law?
    e. What challenges did you foresee for the implementation stage?
2. What is your organization's involvement in the implementation of EMLL – or support for their implementation?
3. Does your organization closely monitor the implementation of the EMLL? Why?
4. Does your organization assess the efforts of concerned agencies in implementing the RA 11210 or EMLL?
    a. Why do you assess these efforts?
    b. How do you assess these efforts?
5. Have you identified any important issue that affects the effective implementation of the EMLL?
    a. If so, what are these? Please explain.

EMLL Impact

6. What do you think are the positive impacts of the EMLL on the maternal health of Filipino women? Please explain.
7. Do you think pregnant women from all walks of life can access these beneficial aspects of the EMLL? Why or why not?
8. Do you think the current means or strategies used to implement the EMLL are effective? Is it sustainable? Is it efficient? Why?
9. What do you think are the strengths and admirable features of the law? Can you discuss these?
10. What do you think are the weaknesses of the law? Can you discuss these?
11. What do you think are the ways that these weaknesses can be best addressed?
12. What do you think could still be improved with regards to thebimplementation of the EMLL?
13. Would you recommend legislative amendments to the law if necessary?
    a. Why do you assess these efforts?
    b. How do you assess these efforts?
14. In your assessment, what do you think could still be improved in the EMLL in terms of:
    a. Documentary requirements
    b. Application process
    c. Online Application Facility
    d. Number of Paid Days of Leave
    e. Information Dissemination (With Focus on Far-Flung Areas)

Questions for Social Security System (SSS)

Administrative

1. Aside from SSS, are there other administrative organizations involved in implementing RA 11210 or EML? What agencies or organizations are these?
2. Are employers, civil society organizations, worker organizations, medical and prenatal care providers, or others involved in implementation? If so, how?
3. What are your organization's responsibilities in the implementation, promotion, and support of these laws – or support for their implementation?

   Probe: Does your office have an assessment of the EMLL program, which answers the question: to what extent has the EMLL helped—or not—women who have gotten pregnant and given birth in the last three years? If so, may we know of the assessment? This question is focused on the impact of the program and on development outcomes (while noting that the program is only three years old).

4. What are your organization's responsibilities in the implementation, promotion, and support of these laws – or support for their implementation?

   Probe: Does your office have an assessment of the EMLL program, which answers the question: to what extent has the EMLL helped—or not—women who have gotten pregnant and given birth in the last three years? If so, may we know of the assessment? This question is focused on the impact of the program and on development outcomes (while noting that the program is only three years old).

Communicating Maternity Leave Benefits to Prospective Beneficiaries

1. Does SSS communicate the availability of and eligibility for benefits to prospective recipients? Please elaborate specifically on which government department/agency/sector specifically does this.
2. What is the role of your organization in this communication?

3. What role does your agency or organization play in ensuring that workers understand their rights to leave?
4. Please describe overall communication efforts informing prospective recipients of their potential benefits and eligibility. What mechanisms, groups, and media do these efforts use?
5. Would you say these communications efforts are effective? Why or why not? How is this measured?
6. What groups of workers do these communications reach most effectively? Why?
7. What groups of workers do these communications reach least effectively? Why? What is being done to improve communications with these groups?

Availment of Benefits

1. Please explain how online filing of maternity benefit applications works.

   Probes: is it centralized? How are the applications submitted online assigned/processed by your personnel/staff?

   Do you think that it is an efficient platform for applicants, regardless of their educational or economic backgrounds? Why or why not?

   Are there any technical issues that must be addressed on this online application platform?

2. The Expanded Maternity Leave Law (EMLL) was enacted in March 2019. May we know how many have since availed of the program on a yearly basis (2019, 2020, 2021, and the first half of 2022)?
3. Do you have an idea of availment rates in percentages (e.g., for 2019, this would be about 38 percent of the eligible female population—meaning those who got pregnant during this period)?
4. May we have a demographic profile of those who have availed of the EMLL (e.g., age, educational attainment, formally employed/informal/no work, place of residence)?

5. It must be a challenge to reach out to women in the informal sector.

   Probe: What is your estimate of how many or what percentage of women in the informal sector are being reached by this program?

   Can you describe the difficulties in reaching out to these women?

   What can be done to overcome these difficulties?

Finances and Costing of Benefits

1. What do you think is the total cost of these benefits, if known?
2. Does SSS have enough funds to cover the cost of maternity benefits claims?
3. How are these benefits financed? By whom?
4. What would you say are the main administrative costs to the government for implementing these laws? Please elaborate.
5. What would you say are the direct costs to individuals and businesses? Please elaborate.

   Probe: How are these costs assessed?

6. Do employers get support from the government? If so, what is the process of getting that support?

Distribution of Benefits

1. How are benefits distributed to recipients?

   Probe: What are the procedures that recipients need to do to receive their benefits?

2. Do recipients receive their benefits in a timely manner? If not, what are the factors that affect the delay in the distribution of their benefits?

Challenges and General Recommendations for Improving EMLL

1. What do you think are the weaknesses of your institution/ agency in the implementation of RA 11210?
2. How has COVID-19 affected program implementation at both national and local levels?
3. Does the law (or IRR) need to be amended? If so, how?
5. Are SSS administrative systems and technical capacities of staff facilitative of EMLL program implementation at both national and local levels?
6. What can be done to strengthen the institutional capacity of SSS to improve EMLL implementation at national and local levels?

Annex 3

Questions for Partido Manggagawa

1. Socio-Demographic Profile

Name of Respondent _____ Age _____ Sex _____

Barangay _____ City _____ Birthday (mm/dd/yyyy) _____

2. Educational Attainment

Please identify your highest educational attainment (or the interviewer reads the items provided below before the respondent identifies any of the items relevant or corresponding to their educational background).

Elementary Undergraduate		Elementary Graduate	
Highschool Undergraduate		Highschool Graduate	
College Undergraduate		College Graduate	
Master's Degree Undergraduate		Master's Degree Graduate	
Doctorate or Doctor of Philosophy Undergraduate		Doctorate or Doctor of Philosophy Graduate	
Technical/Vocational		Others (pls. specify)	

Questions for Partido Manggagawa

1. As an advocate for the passage of the EMLL, please answer the following:

   a. Who were the key players for and against? Why were they for the bill? Why were they against the bill?

   b. What were the factors that facilitated the enactment of the law?

   c. Were there compromises that had to be made to get the law enacted? If so, what were these?

   d. Did the IRR adequately capture the spirit of the law?

e. What challenges did you foresee for the implementation stage?

2. What is your organization's involvement in the implementation of EMLL – or support for their implementation?
3. Does your organization closely monitor the implementation of the EMLL? Why?
4. Does your organization assess the efforts of concerned agencies in implementing RA 11210 or EMLL?
   a. Why do you assess these efforts?
   b. b. How do you assess these efforts?
5. Have you identified any important issue that affects the effective implementation of the EMLL?
   a. If so, what are these? Please explain.

EMLL Impact

6. What do you think are the positive impacts of the EMLL on the maternal health of Filipino women? Please explain.
7. Do you think pregnant women from all walks of life can access these beneficial aspects of the EMLL? Why or why not?
8. Do you think the current means or strategies used to implement the EMLL are effective? Is it sustainable? Is it efficient? Why?
9. What do you think are the strengths and admirable features of the law? Can you discuss these?
10. What do you think are the weaknesses of the law? Can you discuss these?
11. What do you think are the ways that these weaknesses can be best addressed?

12. What do you think could still be improved with regard to the implementation of the EMLL?
13. Would you recommend legislative amendments to the law if necessary?
    a. If so, what are these? Please explain.
    b. What provisions should be added to the law? Why?
14. In your assessment, what do you think could still be improved in the EMLL in terms of:
    a. Documentary requirements
    b. Application process
    c. Online Application Facility
    d. Number of Paid Days of Leave
    e. Information Dissemination (With Focus on Far-Flung Areas)

POLICY INSIGHT

What Good Books Could Do

Ma. Karina A. Bolasco[1]

Today, the Filipino literary and publishing landscape is vibrant with book launches, readings and signings, writing workshops, literary contests and book awards, fairs and festivals. Indie presses are making a mark for themselves and winning awards and prizes for their books. Regional indie presses, like Savage Mind, Kasing-Kasing Press, and Aklat Alamid are now established entities in their localities. They publish in their local languages and more of them are emerging. In 2023, the number of new books released was 10, 297 titles, the highest ever in the last ten years.

Production is across genres: children's books, crime fiction, romance (English & Filipino), graphic novels and comics, academic and scholarly, biographies and memoirs, poetry and fiction.

Overall sales, as reported by publishers to the Book Board, went up to PhP 11.1 billion in 2023.

There is a robust network of distribution and purchase points making sure books reach readers. The biggest boost that came with the pandemic was online stores, like Shopee and Lazada, that included books in their product range. Without the huge commission brick-and-mortar stores ask for, some publishers doubled, even tripled their sales.

After more than four decades in book publishing, we have been able to substantively secure a market share in what once was dominated by imported books from the US and the UK. And create new niche markets in other

1 Ma. Karina A. Bolasco is a Philippine publishing icon. She was awarded the National Book Development Board Lifetime Achievement Award for her years of service to the Philippine book and publishing industry. She is the former Publishing Manager of Anvil Publishing, Inc. and the former Director of the Ateneo de Manila University Press, both of which won countless Publisher of the Year Awards and National Book Awards under her leadership.

languages especially in Filipino, where printruns far outnumber those in English.

But what the book industry and the nation have not achieved is a synergy that otherwise could have long mutually and greatly benefited both. The disconnections are so glaring just as the solutions are so obvious—areas which have to be seriously looked into and dealt with urgently to massively improve our education, political maturity, and economic stability.

First, as we are still largely a poor country, with more than half of the population not able to afford books or even the time to read them, an efficiently functioning nationwide library network has long been needed. Books do not have to be individually purchased to be read. All types of books for all types of people should be available in a town or city library. There will always be the argument that there are other more important nationwide infrastructures like health centers and transportation, which is valid, but the sooner we realize how vital to a nation books and reading are, the sooner we will find the resolve and the means to critically improve our local and national situation. Book reading, when done well with quality books, increases knowledge and language use, improves memory and empathy, and sharpens critical thinking. The sooner we are critical of what are alleged as givens, the sooner we elect true public servants who put the citizenry's well-being first.

Second, our textbook publishers, while now serving only the private sector, are the top earners among Philippine publishers. This is because the textbook market is captive: once schools select their textbook programs, all their students in basic education must buy those books, and for at least three years, which is the typical lifespan of a textbook adoption. These textbooks have endured and evolved in the many years they have been in use in most of our leading private schools. Why these same textbooks cannot also serve the public schools is beyond logic and comprehension as it definitely is one way of leveling the gap between private and public education. Use of the same textbooks will eventually erode the perception that children in the public school system, who certainly are not a homogeneous group, will not be able to cope with the high vocabulary or readability levels (whether in English or in Filipino) of textbooks developed for the private sector. It will also expedite the evaluation and purchase of textbooks for public schools as the extreme unnecessary delays of making new ones are horribly disenfranchising our kids in the public school system. Closing that gap through use of the same textbook programs will address the low reading levels of our children compared to those in other Southeast Asian countries, as well as our very low

rank in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) world rating.

It was not until 2001, when Dr. Isagani Cruz, then Undersecretary of Education, required that every child in the public school system read at least one story book. Imagine that degree of deprivation, not until the 21st century! This started the Department of Education's (DepEd) procurement of children's books and other supplementary learning resources to reinforce their reading and writing curricula. For as the good old adage says: the only way to really teach reading is to encourage and allow children to read good and engaging books. Let them find the books they love.

And the way to also teach them to write is to develop programs which will make them consistently read very good books. The DepEd though has been erratic in their purchase and advocacy of these materials and in distributing them nationwide, more so integrating them in the children's regular classes. Such programs are set in motion only when the country scores low in world education rankings. There is no constant and consistent build-up of these important thinking skills through book reading. A previous administration's "one storybook per child" or Library Hub program—books on plastic boxes with wheels, arranged thematically per box, and moved around to different public schools in one vicinity—is short-lived. It is often abandoned by the next administration for a new program that either simulates it or goes in another direction. There are just too many imaginative programs which are never sustained, often aborted at the whim of new officers.

Third, our embassies do not even have a small Filipiniana library in their offices or centers. How small a budget is required to provide them such collections, yet how significant the yield is when Filipinos abroad, whether expats or domestic helpers, are able to read of home while separated from their loved ones. Their offspring will learn of their culture and arts, their estranged nation's legacy. This certainly will contribute to the shaping of their national identity, or a notion of home, even as they are oceans away from their homeland.

Fourth, our trade attaches never include books in the product range they push commercially as a trade. Neither do the Department of Trade or Tourism trade fairs (be it arts and crafts, food, furniture, agricultural produce like abaca and banana, or energy) include books, which organically complement the products they showcase. For at this stage, it can be confidently said that our books, in the last 100 years, cover almost every aspect of our culture.

They are great complements in providing more comprehensive information on the history and background of the industry, more so than labels and commentaries can. Even cultural exhibitions of our ancestors' gold jewelry or body tattoos, for example, will not be complete without books on display for purchase or reading, so that the exhibition is appreciated in its complete context.

National Artist for film, Kidlat Tahimik, mounted this huge exhibition in Madrid, Spain titled, "Magellan, Marilyn, Mickey, and Padre Damaso: 500 Years of Conquistador Rock Stars." It was a series of massive installations depicting the cultural struggles and aspirations of the Filipino people over the last 500 years and featured larger-than-life sculptures, all showcasing Filipino craftsmanship. It was so successful that 700,000 people saw it in Museo Nacional Centro de Reina Sofía, at the Palacio de Cristal (Glass Palace) in the UNESCO Heritage Site, El Retiro Park, Madrid. But many foreigners did not fully comprehend or appreciate it. If there were books on our mythology, on our anti-colonial resistance, on our ancestral beliefs and epics, the exhibition would have been truly compleat. Such book showcases in our world fairs and exhibitions also expose our untold, unrecovered stories of the past, sublimated or suppressed by colonial intent. They are economic products as well, meant for rights sales to interested foreign markets.

Good books hold in them significant and quality content. They are written from diverse perspectives, and absolutely enrich our experiences.

They improve young people's knowledge and intellect, open them up emotionally and empathetically, help teach them analytical skills, and illustrate leadership aptitudes.

What good books could do is erect a formidable reading and education infrastructure and assemble an ecosystem that will raise a generation that will know how to think critically and imaginatively, teaching them to be politically mature, showing them how to respect their past and preserve their heritage, all while working towards economic stability.

POLICY INSIGHT

Science and Technology Policy Making in the Philippines

A Review of Accomplishments and Needs

Fortunato T. de la Peña[1]

The crafting and issuance of policies in science and technology (S&T) in any country is essential for its socioeconomic development and growth. In the case of the Philippines, while institutions that contribute to development through science and technology have existed for a long time, the crafting of policies in this area can arguably be traced only to the adoption of the Philippine Constitution in 1935, as well as its subsequent versions in 1971 and 1987. The provisions of the 1987 Constitution reflect the state policy on prioritizing science and technology in areas such as human resource development, research and development, invention, innovation and their utilization, the provision of incentives for private participation, the protection of intellectual property, as well as the adaptation of technology.

S&T policies can be seen embodied in laws, presidential decrees (PDs) or executive orders (EOs). They are also evident in the adoption of national programs that deal with science and technology in general, or in specific sectors where S&T plays an important role. Moreover, they are apparent in administrative orders which are internal to specific departments like the Department of Science and Technology (DOST).

There are policies that are sectoral or functional in nature, which can also be categorized based on objectives they aim to achieve. As a whole it can be observed that S&T policy making in the Philippines has grown in terms of quantity, quality, and functionality over the last six decades. This growth began with the enactment of the Republic Act (RA) No. 2067, or the "Science

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Act of 1958," which had the goal of integrating, coordinating, and intensifying scientific and technological research and development, fostering invention, and provide funding for these efforts.

These were three important S&T laws passed in the 1960s: RA No. 3661 of 1963 or "An Act to Establish the Philippine Science High School"; RA No. 3850 of 1964 "An Act to Create a Philippine Inventors Commission, Define Powers, Functions and Duties, and for Other Purposes that Will Promote and Encourage Philippine Inventions and Their Manufacture"; and RA No. 5448 of 1968 or "An Act Imposing a Tax on Privately Owned Passenger Automobiles, Motorcycles and Scooters, Science Stamp Tax, to Constitute a Special Science Fund, Defining the Programs, Projects and Activities of Science Agencies to be Financed Therefrom and for Other Purposes."

In the 1970s and 1980s, there were also issuances of PDs and EOs which carried the force of law. These were during the martial law years and the early years before the enactment of the 1987 Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines. Policies reflecting support for S&T were implemented and exemplified by the PDs that established the Biotech Center of the University of the Philippines in Los Baños, the University of the Philippines National Engineering Center, and the National Science and Technology Authority (NSTA). The NSTA, created through EO No. 784, elevated the National Science Development Board (NSDB) into an authority with expanded functions in the executive branch.

EO No. 784 had clearly defined provisions which supported human resource development in S&T, a stronger national research and development (R&D) system, inclusive development in S&T, and the strategy for excellence in specific foundation areas of science. More specifically, the establishment of the Scientific Career System; the creation of R&D councils for industry, energy, and health (in addition to the existing one for agriculture); the organization of regional S&T offices; and the conversion of academic departments at the University of the Philippines into national institutes were also embodied in EO No. 784.

The issuance of policies during this period culminated in the establishment of the DOST as a cabinet-level department through EO No. 128, highlighting the government's commitment to advancing S&T in the Philippines.

The 1990s, up to 2022, were very productive years in terms of S&T state policy legislation. Key highlights from this period include the enactment of RA No. 7687, also known as the Science and Technology Scholarship Act of 1994; RA No. 8439 of 1997 known as the "Magna Carta for Scientists, Engineers, Researchers, and other S&T Personnel in the Government"; RA No. 8496 or the Philippine Science High School (PSHS) System Act of 1997; RA No. 9107, also known as the Philippine Science Heritage Center Act of 2001; RA No. 9236 or the National Metrology Act of 2003; RA No. 10055 of the Philippine Technology Transfer Act of 2009; RA No. 10532 or the Philippine National Health Research System Act of 2013; RA No. 10535 or the Philippine Standard Time Act of 2013; RA 10692 or the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) Modernization Act of 2015; RA No. 10844 or the Department of Information and Communications Act of 2015; RA No. 11035 or the Balik-Scientist Act of 2018; RA No. 11337 or the Innovative Start Up Act of 2019; RA No. 11293 or the National Innovation Act 2019; and RA No. 11914 or the Provincial Science and Technology Office Act of 2022.

Additionally, there were also sector specific legislation which were S&Tbased that were approved during the 2000s. These include RA No. 9288 or the Newborn Screening Act of 2004; RA No. 11223 or the Universal Health Care Act of 2019; and RA No. 11363 or the Philippine Space Act of 2019.

S&T policies are also officially adopted by government agencies. The DOST issues administrative orders and memorandum circulars to establish programs or provide guidelines for their implementation and accessibility. While there is a long list of S&T policies and guidelines governing programs, a few notable examples are cited here. These include Administrative Orders (AOs) and Memorandum Circulars (MCs) issued between 2015 and 2023.

In 2003, the Technology Innovation for Commercialization Program (TECHNICOM) was launched to provide development support to commercially viable innovations. In 2022, DOST AO No. 007 was issued to formalize the Revised Policy Framework and Implementation Guidelines for TECHNICOM.

In 2015, following the implementation of the Technology Transfer Act of 2009, DOST Memorandum Circular No. 03 was issued to provide the Guidelines on the Constitution of the Fairness Opinion Board (FOB) and the Issuance of the Fairness Opinion Report under the Technology Transfer Act of 2009.

Another set of DOST guidelines was issued in 2021 for the Implementation of the Technology Super Highway Program. MC 2002 and 2021, to fasttrack the filing of potential intellectual property (IP) applications at Intellectual Property Office of the Philippines (IPOPHIL).

In 2016, the DOST Science for Change Program (S4CP) was conceptualized and launched. It covered four components, all designed to significantly accelerate Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI) in the country through massive increase in investment on S&T HRD and R&D. Its four components focused on an accelerated R&D Program Capacity Building of R&D Institutions and in increasing industrial competitiveness. The four programs were: (1) Niche Centers in the Regions for R&D (NICER); (2) R&D Leadership (RD Lead); (3) Collaborative R&D to Leverage the Economy (CRADLE); and (4) Business Innovation through S&T for Industry (BIST).

From 2017 to 2019, implementation was guided by the DOST Grants-in-Aid Policy Guidelines. However, in 2020, DOST AO No. 18 was issued to institutionalize the implementation of the Science for Change Program. In 2023, DOST AO No. 11, titled "Guidelines on the Implementation of the DOST S&T Fellows Program" was issued. This program aims to enhance and strengthen human resource development of the DOST R&D Groups through a pool of researchers, scientists, engineers, and specialists referred to as "S&T Fellows."

It is, however, important to cite DOST AO No. 04 of 2021 because of its impact on Philippine diplomacy policy. The AO, titled "Guidelines in Forging S&T Agreements with International Partners" was issued to ensure coordination and consistency in the process of forming institutional S&T agreements. The DOST's policy of establishing and maintaining strategic bilateral and multilateral linkages to create broader opportunities in S&T and innovation has inspired the Department of Foreign Affairs to include science diplomacy in their strategies.

It can be observed that S&T laws, administrative issuances, and programs convey important state directions and strategies for using S&T in development. These aim to regulate, motivate, prioritize resource allocation, foster collaboration, and advocate for STI.

However, there remains urgent needs for policy issuances and adoption, particularly through legislation and executive orders. Among these are policies

that will elevate regional niche research centers into national research and development centers, policies that will enhance publicprivate partnerships in S&T, and the adoption of a national program of action to achieve the goals of PAGTANAW 2050—a foresight document on S&T. This program of action needs to be integrated into national planning documents. In fact, all new S&T policies should be consistent with PAGTANAW 2050 and should look at the long term horizon.

State policies are also needed to ensure that useful, feasible, and sustainable technologies developed locally are prioritized in government spending and procurement. The same prioritization should be clearly expressed to support local enterprises established using locally developed technologies and innovations. In support of this policies that will enhance the effectiveness of technology transfer, including creative and responsive ways for universities to merge their intellectual properties are needed. There should also be policies that will help locally developed innovations to transition from small scale implementation to widespread national and international adaptation.

These should be accompanied by reforms that will streamline the processes involved in awarding R&D grants, in procurement for R&D and S&T services purposes, as well as in the accounting and liquidation procedures. These are to be geared towards improvement, efficiency, and accountability.

Looking at the future policy landscape, there has been significant progress in the official declaration and issuance of policies in the area of S&T. However, the focus should shift toward strengthening national S&T governance, ensuring R&D funding sustainability, accelerating technology transfer, and integrating industry.

Institutionalizing PAGTANAW 2050 as a national S&T roadmap should also be prioritized. It lays out the means and ways to achieve the Filipino people's aspirations "as expressed in the 1987 Philippine Constitution, the various Philippine Development Plans, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Department of Science and Technology Harmonized National Research and Development Agenda, and the National Economic Development Authority's vision for the Filipino people, AmBisyon Natin 2040" (NEDA 2016 cited in NAST 2021).

As the Philippines continues to evolve its S&T landscape, it is crucial that the momentum generated by past policies is sustained and expanded. The integration of PAGTANAW 2050 into national planning will serve as a beacon,

guiding the country toward innovative solutions that foster national progress and contribute to global scientific advancements. The next crucial step is to align existing policies with the long-term vision laid out in PAGTANAW 2050. With focused and strategic actions, the Philippines can harness the full potential of S&T to drive sustainable development, address critical challenges, and secure a brighter future for generations to come.

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BOOK REVIEW

Conflict's Long Game: A Decade of Violence in the Bangsamoro

Edited by Francisco J. Lara Jr. and Nikki Philline C. de la Rosa

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Review by Georgi Engelbrecht[1]

The peace process between the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) formally concluded with the signing of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) in 2014. During the administration of President Rodrigo Duterte, the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL), also known as Republic Act No. 11054, was finally ratified by Congress in 2018 and paved the way for the creation of a new political authority in the southern Philippines in 2019. President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. further supported the region by appointing a new set of interim officials. The peace project in the Bangsamoro has been consistent as the national government firmly committed to a negotiated settlement with the largest Moro rebel group, the MILF. Yet, more than a decade after the accord, challenges remain. Arguably the most evident proof of a long road to peace are the recurring episodes of conflict and violence in the region.

The book *Conflict's Long Game: A Decade of Violence in the Bangsamoro* thoroughly examines enduring post-conflict violence in the Bangsamoro. Edited by Franisco J. Lara, Jr. and Nikki Phillline C. de la Rosa, experienced

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scholar-practitioners, its focus lies particularly on various drivers of violence and an assessment of the potential for long-lasting peace in the region. The different essays combine quantitative and qualitative approaches to grasp the intersection of land conflicts, identity, clan politics, and militancy affecting present conflicts in the Bangsamoro. At the same time, the authors give ample space to political, economic, and social factors that have affected conflict until the present. This line mirrors many conflict scholars who highlight that the study of violence is, by default, a mixed-method undertaking. This interdisciplinary approach, often with the help of data and statistics, helps shape the academic discussion of a peace process that needs to be addressed in scholarship and should influence policy, both on a national level and towards the international support side. The book was also nominated for the 42nd National Book Awards.

A key message conveyed in the book is that, despite numerous peace agreements and interventions, the implementation of these accords requires greater consistent and effectiveness. The challenge is evident in both the Final Peace Agreement of 1996 and the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in the Bangsamoro of 2014. The former peace pact did not prevent massive all-out-wars in the 2000s, as it was applicable only to the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), which has since become an amalgam of several political factions equipped with firepower. For instance, in the province of Sulu—which recently has been excluded from the Bangsamoro region following a Supreme Court decision—these dynamics remain evident. It is one of the more peaceful provinces in the southern Philippines at the moment, yet the MNLF was never officially disarmed. The CAB, with its detailed provisions, safeguards, and hybrid mechanisms, remains a highly sophisticated agreement but faces significant practical obstacles.

The Bangsamoro peace process is at a vital stage since the formal end of the political transition draws nearer. But much more remains to be done to guarantee genuine peace in the region. The normalizsation process is a case in point. Decommissioning the remaining 14,000 MILF fighters and more than 2,000 weapons, the most important stage according to both parties, is unlikely to conclude very soon. The transformation of MILF camps into productive communities, along with efforts in transitional justice, is also behind schedule. The possible extension of the transition period and the rescheduling of elections are thus efforts to allow more time for stakeholders to deliver on key promises of the agreement.

What makes conflict trajectories in Bangsamoro unique is the interrelationship between political families and various rebellions that happened in Mindanao since the 1960s. The peace agreement by default could not resolve long-standing societal issues that remain drivers of the fragile post-conflict piece. The role of local elites is something that distinguishes the local context in the Southern Philippines from other settings such as Aceh in Indonesia or Patani in Thailand. Simmering local conflict in pockets of the Bangsamoro remains a challenge. This is indeed perplexing, but it also highlights how peace transitions are often irregular, contingent, and sometimes marked by violence. Thus, one of the overarching questions of the book is: Why does violence in Mindanao continue despite and after the peace accords?

The chapters of the book follow and elaborate on International Alert's terminology of horizontal violence. The reader is introduced to this notion early on. Horizontal conflicts in the Bangsamoro refers to conflicts and violence that occur within communities rather than between the state and insurgent groups. This form of violence is a significant challenge to peace and stability, as it disrupts social cohesion and can lead to cycles of retaliation and further conflict. Feuding, for example, becomes complicated when members of a family or clan belong to an armed group. In such a case, reinforcements to a conflict party occur due to collective self-defense or other forms of loyalty and following. Outside the Moro political fronts, different groups, such as insurgent remnants, criminal syndicates, and local elites, exploit the current instability for their gain. The proliferation of small arms further exacerbates the conflicts. These factors lurk between the lines of several chapters in the book. Mindanao is not as lawless as it was decades ago. But residual risks are certainly real.

The book comprises ten chapters, each focusing on different aspects of violence and dimensions of conflict, often zooming in on specific questions, themes, and motifs. The collection of essays displays the full power of data. Here, International Alert's Conflict Data has been a vital dataset.

The first three chapters are a prelude, with an editor's introduction, a general view on shifting conflict dynamics, and an overview of human development factors in BARMM. The chapters discuss, for instance, the role of the Marawi siege as a pivotal event in the region, tied up to the activities of jihadist militants in Mindanao. They further discuss the multi-causality inherent in many conflict incidents in the region, the surge in land conflicts, and economic development prospects. Around the time of publication, poverty indicators slightly improved in the region but remain far from certain to hold

in the future. The reader realizes that policymakers and supporters of the Bangsamoro transition need to avoid a conflict trap.

The fourth chapter grasps with a fundamental concern: the potential recurrence of violence given the so-called "conflict strings" in the genesis of local disputes across the region. Numerous case studies underline how vendetta dynamics and multiple causes of clan feuds complicate resolution. Noteworthy and reinforcing other research, hybrid arrangements emerge as possible mitigation mechanisms. Blood money or compensation alone is hardly suited to solving the problem, even though it is an easy and convenient approach, often used by those who have the wealth to act as pacifiers.

The fifth chapter deals with the so-called Violence Intensity Index, measuring the intensity of conflict, that tries to disaggregate data on skirmishes and hostilities. The sixth chapter is a fascinating comparative look explaining variations in violence in borderland areas in and near BARMM. This case study compares the Upi cluster in Maguindanao with the Lanao del Sur towns of Wao/Amai Manabilang. The author employs a historical frame to explain divergent conflict dynamics and warns against simplifying analysis. Not surprisingly, with the book's theme and past work by International Alert, the role of illicit economies is critical. It also reflects the strengths of the comparative method both in social science and in the Bangsamoro setting.

The next chapter focuses on the indigenous peoples. The authors highlight the current complications and tensions between ancestral domain claims concepts and the current Bangsamoro governance initiatives. It does not focus much on the specificities of violence but rightly points out cleavages that are influencing dynamics in some municipalities of Maguindanao del Sur and del Norte. Legislation on indigenous peoples is still pending at the level of the Bangsamoro interim government. In Central Mindanao, the Teduray-Lambangian struggle the most amidst decades of oppression, ongoing violence against community leaders, and an uncertain future within the autonomous region.

The penultimate essays cover cross-cutting issues of women in conflict and social media (including the issue of "othering"). Regarding the former, two chapters provide a nuanced view of the gendered dynamics of conflict and highlight the essential element of local context.Peacebuilding needs in Central Mindanao, the Lanao provinces, and the Sulu Archipelago are not identical, and interventions should strengthen existing frameworks in the respective territories rather than duplicate them. Interestingly, one chapter

finds that female-headed poor households were more vulnerable to militancy and recruitment.

An essay on Moro voices during pivotal events rounds up the book's thematic reach. It drives back the point that the power of narratives has always been strong in Mindanao and that the online dimension is just another layer thereof. The chapter mirrors recent findings about increasing polarization in the digital domain.

The concluding chapter, written by James Putzel from the London School of Economics, wraps up key messages and contextualizes the transition period within a spectrum of ideological, economic, and military power by national and local actors. Putzel leaves the question about the MILF's legitimacy in the open.

Conflict's Long Game is a comprehensive, persuasive, and insightful piece of scholarship. But it is not without some limitations. The language slips at times into academic jargon. Policy proposals, direly needed at this point, lack in some chapters. There are also only a few Moro contributors. This could easily be mitigated next time. Other chapters are strong on description but could benefit from more analysis. The strongest essays in the book focus clearly on key cross-cutting themes and a sharp discussion on evident data.

An important point is also the framing of the analysis. While clan dynamics have been rightly highlighted in several essays especially regarding their role in conflict, a more nuanced view on local violence could further enrich the arguments presented. Highlighting governance challenges of ex-rebels is necessary. But these deficiencies do not explain other drivers of violence. It is crucial to look at other factors.

The rules and roles of political clans are a case in point. In some cases, the clan rule is beneficial to stability but may often work as a stabilizer only for a limited time. Moreover, some clans that are entrenched in political dynasties have fewer incentives to take care of their communities beyond the voting cycle. This also corresponds to the traditional understanding of the datu. These strongmen or orang besar represented their communities, but often their main objective was power and control over constituencies. Clans are ready to enforce the laws of the state, rule over their constituencies (as in other parts of the Philippines) but also to protect their private interests against any competitors. Ampatuan rule in Maguindanao is a case in point. That being said, ex-rebels contribute as well to growing insecurity in Bangsamoro.

But alas, not only decommissioning of rebels, but also the disbandment of private armies—an integral part of the 2014 peace agreement—is hardly moving forward. The implications of these gaps are uncomfortable and would go again the groupthink of Bangsamoro as a pure success story. At present, there are some signs that the peace process is being overshadowed by the international attention given to the Philippines' geopolitical role. As the various stumbling blocks in Mindanao, at least vis-à-vis local violence, do not add up to a perceived challenge to national security, neither Manila nor the international community appear to push too hard to tackle those. A level of violence becomes implicitly accepted as a cost of the transition. Yet sometimes, neither parliamentarians nor policymakers feel these side-effects and burdens as deep as communities stuck in messy, cyclical conflict.

Overall, the book is a poignant contribution to scholarly literature and a relevant piece of research at a key time when the Bangsamoro faces several transitions. On a fundamental level, the book should make us think about violence and conflict and is also a valuable guide showing us what both terms mean and encompass. This matters especially as another extension of the transition is just across the horizon.