

**Asia/ Philippines****Women in Fisheries, Policy**

*Palihan, A Policy Journal on Gender Issues and Women in the Philippines Fisheries Sector, Volume I, 2006, published by NGOs for Fisheries Reform in partnership with Foundation for the Philippine Environment*

**This review of the first article in this volume is by Neena Koshy, Programme Associate, ICSF**

*Palihan*, the journal of NGOs for Fisheries Reform (NFR) in the Philippines, aims to provide relevant policy research, in aid of legislation, that can assist local and national policy institutions in developing a more responsive Fisheries Code in the country. Volume 1, 2006 of the journal focuses on “Gender Issues and Women in the Fisheries Sector in the Philippines”.

There are six papers in this volume. The first, titled “Looking for Women in Fisheries Policies and Programmes: A Review of Literature on Women in the Fisheries Sector in the Philippines”, by Amelia Marie Dasig-Salazar and Shiela Marie Dasig, is reviewed here. This paper is a contribution towards the mandatory review of the Philippines Fisheries Code of 1998 (Republic Act (RA) 8550). The Fisheries Code is the national legislation that provides for the development, management and conservation of fisheries and aquatic resources. Considered a landmark piece of legislation for fisherfolk, it has not, however, provided enough space for women to raise their particular issues and assert their claims to the benefits that the law has to offer.

The review is in three parts: (i) policies and literature pertaining to women in general; (ii) policies and plans related to fisheries and how gender is incorporated in them; and (iii) local development plans and gender plans in the service municipalities of the Community Empowerment and Resource Development (CERD) Inc., in the island municipality of Almagro and Tinambacan District in Western Samar.

The paper concludes with recommendations on how policies and programmes can better take into account the interests of women in the fisheries sector.

The paper notes that the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), 1979, and the Beijing Declaration can be used as a basis for crafting laws that address gender-specific concerns. The Philippines, as early as 1975, responded to international calls to uphold women’s rights through the establishment of the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (NCRFW). The Philippine Constitution, which integrated the principles of gender equality, was enacted in 1987. The Constitution states: “The State recognizes the role of women in nation-building, and shall ensure the fundamental equality before the law of men and women”.

Soon after, the Republic Act 7192 (RA 7192), known as the Women in Development and Nation-building Act of 1992, was enacted. This landmark legislation strengthened women’s position as full and equal partners of men in development and nation-building. RA 7192, among other things, gives the National Economic Development Authority (NEDA), with the assistance of NCRFW, the mandate to ensure that the different government departments and agencies formulate and implement development programmes for women, and ensure their participation in the entire programme development process.

Executive Order 273 approved and adopted the Philippine Plan for Gender-responsive Development (PPGD) for 1995-2025. This is the government’s perspective framework for pursuing full equality and development, and the primary reference for integrating gender dimensions in the long-term development plan. It is also notable that the Gender and Development (GAD) Budget Policy requires agencies or local government units (LGUs) to set aside a minimum of five per cent of their annual appropriation to be used for priority programmes, projects and activities designed to address gender issues and women’s concerns, in accordance with RA 7192.

Given the strong legal basis, nationally and internationally, the paper explores whether, in reality, issues and concerns of women have been addressed in different policies and programmes in the fisheries sector. The papers notes that the two most important

national laws for fisheries, the Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization Act (AFMA) (RA 8435) and the Philippine Fisheries Code (RA 8550), which became effective in 1998, lacked a clear gender perspective. For example, only a few of the Administrative Orders issued under the above laws included provisions on women in their formulation. AFMA, in particular, lacks a gender perspective, and women are mentioned only in passing, even though the Act is said to be the cornerstone of the government policy for poverty alleviation in the agriculture and fisheries sector. The role women perform in the whole production process is not recognized. There is no consideration of the importance of their participation in policy formulation, or even the need to consult them in matters that directly affect them, such as credit policies, marketing and training programmes.

As compared to AFMA, the Fisheries Code, the paper notes, has a more appropriate gender perspective, in that there are efforts to provide for more participation of women in the fisheries, particularly in the Fisheries and Resource Management Councils (FARMCs). However, several provisions still need to be revised to ensure gender fairness, such as to provide for women's representation in higher bodies, for example, at the national level NFARMC.

The paper concludes with some recommendations to ensure gender fairness in the fisheries sector, particularly in policy formulation. There is need to advocate for changes in fisheries law and for frameworks for making development plans gender-sensitive.

Copies of the journal can be ordered through the NFR website, [www.nfrphil.org](http://www.nfrphil.org)

*Neena can be contacted at [icsf@icsf.net](mailto:icsf@icsf.net)*