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# Manila Women's Forum

A Network of Women Professionals

May 2002

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## Basic Services at the Front-Line in War-Affected Mindanao

By Lori Severns

**F**or many of the women in the evacuation centers in war-affected Mindanao, agriculture had been their families' primary source of income. Now, in the centers, they have no way to earn a living and no safe place to call home. Food in the centers is often scarce as are mosquito nets and toilets. Many are struggling to deal with grief and feelings of helplessness. They tell stories of their houses being burned, grandchildren and siblings who died and fields going to waste. One woman talks of her husband's murder, another of her high-school age son who was killed, along with 16 of his friends, on the highway. She cries, "Why did they kill him? He had done nothing wrong."

These women have gone through more than any of us can imagine, yet they remain remarkably strong. They are some of the over 1,000,000 people who have been displaced by the

conflict in Mindanao. Although many have been able to return to their homes or settle elsewhere, many are still in the evacuation centers and long to return to a more stable, safe life. Despite all that they have gone through, they are hopeful that they can improve their futures and those of their children. They are looking for ways to change their circumstances and provide for their families.

Since early 2000, Community and Family Services International (CFSI), which was founded in 1981, has been working in the evacuation centers to provide basic services, including health care and counseling. In addition, they have several programs that grant or lend small amounts of money to groups of families to help them start earning a living.

At the last meeting of the Manila Women's Forum, Steven Muncy, the Executive Director of CFSI, and Vladimir Hernandez spoke of their work in Mindanao and shared a moving documentary, featuring the women in the centers speaking about their experiences and their hopes.

When CFSI started, they were working in 30 centers, assisting 3,140 families. Now, with more stability due to the ongoing peace talks and help from CFSI, 70 percent have left the harsh conditions in the evacuation centers, and the number of centers has dropped to 11. But there is still much work to be done. In addition to economic assistance, the people in the region need help in dealing with the trauma they have suffered.

According to CFSI's surveys,

- 40 % of those in the centers knew someone hurt in the conflict;
- 30 % had a family member hurt;
- 36 % knew someone who died; and
- 30 % had a family member who died.

CFSI's psycho-social orientation has led them to ask those with whom they are working how they feel about what has happened and to involve them in the planning. Through all of its work, from counseling and providing health care to education and loan programs, CFSI's goal is to empower those affected by showing that people are listening to them and their needs. In addition, CFSI is attempting to create an enabling environment for people to return home, through negotiations with the army and MILF to create safe spaces, UNHCR-inspired trauma counseling, grants, peace education, and training of locals as peacekeepers to help resolve intra-community conflicts.

Currently, CFSI is working to help 500 out-of-school children access basic education, starting in June 2002. The location of this special year-long initiative will be Barangay Inug-Ug in the municipality of Pagalungan in the

*(Continued on page 4)*

### Women and Armed Conflict

Throughout history, women and girls have been routinely assaulted and raped as a weapon of war.

Recently, "ethnic cleansing" and changing patterns of conflict that target civilians have made women and children even more vulnerable.

As a result, rape, forced pregnancy and sexual torture are now classified as war crimes and crimes against humanity. However, most displaced women still remain without access to reproductive health care, safe birthing conditions, contraceptive services or counseling.

### Next MWF Meeting

**When:** Monday, May 20, 2002, 6:30 p.m.

**Where:** Stephanie Bender-Kitz's home, 40 Tamarind Road, South Forbes Park, Makati

**What:** Karika Bridgers of Zambo Kids will speak about her work helping children and orphans in Zamboanga. Zambo Kids is an organization focused on improving the facilities and quality of life of children in the Southern Philippines and Sulu Archipelago.

**Bring :** A contribution to the potluck dinner.

**Next meeting:** June 17, 2002



## Voice of the Chair

# The Three Requirements for Promotions

By Lisa Kircher Lumbao

*The following is the transcript of Francis Kong's Business Matters radio show on February 6, 2002. In his series on motivation, he discussed three requirements for promotions as described by Robin Ryan in her article "Attitudes, Actions, Achievements: Lining up that Promotion" on the website womenCONNECT.com. Francis Kong's show can be heard on 98.7 DZFE (FM) at 8:30 a.m. and 6:30 p.m.*

Rose had spent over ten years working as an administrative department head in the science department at a major university. As a single mother, she had rejected the workaholic lifestyle of a research scientist and opted to use her hard-earned Ph.D. in a less demanding area.

It had been a difficult compromise for this talented woman, but she enjoyed her job and felt her daughter needed a mother in her life too. Rose came to see me when a unique position became available that would utilize both her scientific and educational teaching abilities. With no promotion opportunities at her current university job, she prepared for the interview and landed the new position.

But when we met to discuss the salary negotiations, I encountered a very tearful Rose, "These people I

"It's the action, not the fruit of the action that's important. You have to do the right thing... You may never know what results come from your action. But if you do nothing, there will be no results."

— Mohandas K. Gandhi

"Inaction breeds doubt and fear. Action breeds confidence and courage. If you want to conquer fear, do not sit home and think about it. Go out and get busy."

— Dale Carnegie

work with are like family," she said. "It hurts so much to think about leaving them." We discussed her feelings, and then we talked about her priorities and her daughter. The new job was a promotion and a significant raise — money she could use to repair the old house she's struggled to buy, she said. After the discussion, she took the job.

And that's not the only happy ending. Two years after Rose left the university, her old department created a prestigious new job and lured her back, offering quite a bit more than the employer she had moved to.

Today, the biggest raises and promotions often come from jumping ship and finding a new employer willing to pay what you're worth. In Rose's case, it was a management jump and significant salary increase.

After years of working with thousands of career counseling clients, and interviewing hundreds of employers, I've noticed that a new pattern for career success has developed. I call it the "AAA Approach to Promotions."

The "A"s stand for Attitude, Actions, and Achievement. Let me explain a bit. Of course, your attitude determines your fate. You must visualize your success and believe it's achievable. Fear and rejection are part of the process of moving ahead, so you must take risks to get the better jobs. Your disposition, your work ethic, and your ability to accomplish results are primary components that will aid you.

You'd never get ahead without taking some action. You must explore options and as I've highlighted in Rose's case, some of the best career moves are with other companies, or maybe even starting your own. Take initiative and develop a written action plan that will help you reach your goals. Don't expect someone else to point the way. You are in charge and responsible for your own career success nowadays (or lack thereof). Your interests will change over time. Every day new fields and

opportunities are opening up that might be a terrific fit with a brighter future. Stay true to your passions, as this will allow you to progress into new areas and enjoy what you do.

Those who achieve the most dream big. They set high goals for themselves and obtain the necessary skills, training and education to get to where they want to go.

They do the research and get an accurate picture of exactly what their skills are worth to employers. On the job, they produce quantifiable results so they have plenty of examples and evidence to discuss with employers in the interview.

They are not deadweight nor are they waiting for someone to tell them what to do. High achievers demonstrate initiative, resourcefulness, and seek to make improvements all the time. They master the important self-marketing techniques needed to write good resumes and cover letters. Lastly, they negotiate their salary, and most times obtain a much higher salary than the original offer. An added bonus is that others value you too. So dream big, set goals, write out your action plan, and remember — the future is what you make it. ■

"The pessimist complains about the wind; the optimist expects it to change and the realist adjusts the sails."

— William Arthur Ward

### The Manila Women's Forum

The Manila Women's Forum (MWF) is a cross-cultural network for women. It provides opportunities to build friendships, to talk to women of various cultures, and to share information about resources. Our meetings are intended to provide intellectual stimulation and lead to personal and professional development. All women are welcome to join. The current officers are **Lisa Lumbao**, Chair, Programs, and Newsletter. **Penny Poole**, Programs, Newsletter. **Beulah P. Taguiwalo**, Newsletter. **Ruthie Dy**, Treasurer.

Cost of membership is P300 per year. Members receive a copy of the current mailing list in addition to the newsletter, which is also sent to non-members. A contribution is collected at each monthly meeting: P20 for members, and P40 for non-members. Please contact Lisa Lumbao at Tel. 818-2887 or 813-0168, or at [lumbao@mozcom.com](mailto:lumbao@mozcom.com) for more information about MWF.

# kaWOMENan

Selected and Edited by Beaulah P. Taguiwalo

“All wars are civil wars,  
because all men are brothers.”

— François Fénelon

## Collateral physical effects of armed conflict

The population movements and breakdown of social controls engendered by armed conflict encourage, in their turn, rape and prostitution as well as sexual slavery to serve combatants.

Unwanted pregnancies and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, particularly HIV/AIDS, are the collateral physical effects of this human degradation.

## For women, in times of war

“Often health services available in emergency situations are dominated by men, so many women and girls, for cultural or religious reasons, underutilize these services despite their need of them.”

• UN agencies such as UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF and WHO, and non-governmental organizations such as the International Rescue Committee, have joined with the Red Cross to mandate essential reproductive health services to women in emergency situations. These include mental health services for rape and torture victims, emergency contraception and discussion of all treatment options. <sup>1</sup>

• The United Nations’ New Emergency Health Kit-98, one of 12 standard pre-packaged kits used by relief workers entering an emergency area, now contains emergency contraception medication, with a note that women in need must be fully informed about its effects. <sup>1</sup>

1. Girard, F., and Waldman, W., “Ensuring the Reproductive Rights of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons: Legal Policy Issues,” International Family Planning Perspectives, Alan Guttmacher Institute, New York, December 2000, pp 167-173.



## Gender-based violence

• Gender-based violence tends to increase in refugee situations, where reproductive health services are often lacking.

• More than 26 million refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced persons, half of them girls and women, are registered worldwide with the United Nations.

• Millions more are unregistered.

## On war and giving birth

“I dream of giving birth to a child who will ask: Mother, what was war?” — Eve Merriam

Since 1994, the UNFPA has provided comprehensive reproductive health care services during and after 52 conflicts and natural disasters in 33 countries.

Supplies provided by the UNFPA included a health center delivery equipment, and a home delivery kit consisting of a plastic sheet, a razor blade for cutting umbilical cords, sterile gloves, and plastic aprons.

## War hits home when it hits women and girls

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), “gender-based inequity is usually exacerbated during situations of extreme violence such as armed conflict.”

Women and girls in particular experience conflict and displacement in different ways from men because of the gender division of roles and responsibilities. The targeting of women and girls by armed forces further exacerbates the situation.

Examples of such targeting and gender-based inequity leading to higher mortality and morbidity (illness) among females during armed conflict include:

- violence against girls and women, including rape and sexual slavery;
- hunger and exploitation in camps for refugees and internally displaced persons, when men take control of food distribution;
- malnutrition, when food aid neglects women’s and children’s special nutritional requirements; and

I understand it was Pat Schroeder who said, “When men talk about defense, they always claim to be protecting women and children, but they never ask the women and children what they think.”

• culturally inappropriate and/or inadequate access to health services, including mental and reproductive health services.

## While all around may be in chaos...

“While all around may be in chaos, schooling can represent a state of normalcy... the ability to carry on schooling in the most difficult circumstances demonstrates confidence in the future.”

The decline in schooling for females during periods of armed conflict has implications for a nation’s post-conflict recovery. According to the World Bank, education is the single most important factor contributing to national economic growth.

## War...

- discourages girls from attending school because it is unsafe for them to leave home
- further discourages girls from attending school when the absence of males means greater workloads for them
- pushes girls into early marriage
- forces adolescent girls to take over as heads of their households in the absence of both parents

## Schooling in unconventional sites

Schooling can take place even in the most unconventional sites. In Eritrea in the late 1980s, wartime classes were often held in caves, under trees, or in camouflaged huts built from sticks and leaves.

When threats of violence keep girls from attending school, flexible systems of ‘distance learning’ are recommended. Distance learning marries broadcast and recorded media with pre-packaged materials such as the ‘school-in-a-box’ consisting of brushes and paints, chalk, paper, pens, pencils and books, created by UNICEF and UNESCO.

“Youth is the first victim of war; the first fruit of peace. It takes 20 years or more of peace to make a man; it takes only 20 seconds of war to destroy him.”

— Baudouin I of Belgium

**Basic Services...** (From page 1)  
province of Maguindanao in Mindanao. Many refer to the area as the “front-line” vis-à-vis the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

CFSI profiling efforts in October 2001 suggested that there were at least 1,400 children between the ages of 6 and 17 years in Inug-Ug. Virtually all were of the Islamic faith and Maguindanaon. Many were displaced as a result of the war of 2000, and most of these had spent at least twelve months in crowded and unsanitary evacuation centers, such as tents or day care centers in Poblacion or elsewhere. A quick survey undertaken by CFSI in January 2002 involving 622 of these children indicated 36 percent had either never been to school or had been out of school for at least one full year. The

#### **Women and Armed Conflict**

The absence of women from decision making councils cripples efforts to forestall conflict, and also hampers peacemaking, peacekeeping and post-conflict reconciliation.

The breakdown of social structures during conflict costs the lives of countless women and children and helps spread HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections.

nearest public elementary school required a walk (one way) of anywhere from two to five kilometers. Less than one-third of the parents had more than an elementary education. The average monthly family income fell from P5,198 before the war (1999) to P1,756 in 2000 and P2,254 in 2001.

CFSI expects to receive a grant of P6,000,000 for the direct expenses of the children for one full year (e.g., clothing school bags, food, books, supplies, etc.) but must contribute as its counterpart P4,000,000, plus mobilize from the business sector or government an additional counterpart contribution equivalent to P6,000,000. The P4,000,000 that CFSI must raise will cover the cost of the project staff; the recruitment, training, deployment and support of para-teachers and tutors; and operations. CFSI will mobilize the business sector or government to provide and equip a pre-fabricated school building with six classrooms or build and equip a classroom building. The land for the school building will be donated by a private citizen, and the Department of Education is expected to recruit and/or re-deploy teachers for the school, ideally within 2002 and definitely in time for the 2003 school year. ■

CFSI needs your help in raising P4,000,000 for its Basic Education Project. Please contact Steven Muncy or Vladimir Hernandez at CFSI to donate or to help in other ways. Tel: (02) 510-1045/6 or (02) 510-1040 or email to [headquarters@cfsi.ph](mailto:headquarters@cfsi.ph).

#### **The Youngest Soldiers**

Children are affected by warfare in many ways, but one of the most alarming trends is their participation as soldiers. According to a 1996 UN report, a series of 24 case studies indicates that government or rebel armies have recruited tens of thousands of children.

Most are adolescent boys, but many are girls, and some recruits are 10 years or younger. Many of these are forcibly recruited, seized from the streets, or even from schools or orphanages.

Others are driven to join armed groups by fear or poverty, believing that this is the only way to achieve some protection from the violence around them or to be sure of regular meals, clothing or medical attention.

Child soldiers often start out in support functions. Boys serve as porters or as messengers. Girls may prepare food or attend to the wounded — though they also may be forced to provide sexual services or be ‘married off’ to other soldiers.

However, both boys and girls are soon forced onto the battlefield where their youth and inexperience leave them particularly vulnerable. Often they are unaware of the real dangers they face; they may even forget to take cover. In a number of cases children have been deliberately exposed to horrific scenes to harden them to violence. Some have even been forced to commit atrocities against their own families as a way of severing all ties with their communities.

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