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Defending indigenous women's rights

1. GENERAL INFORMATION

1.1 Title of practice or experience

Cordillera Women's Education and Resource Center: Defending indigenous women's rights

1.2 Category of practice and experience and brief description

This is a report of the efforts of a community-based organization of indigenous women to protect the rights and further the interests of indigenous women in the Cordillera region of the Philippines.

The Cordillera Women's Education and Resource Center (CWERC) is a non-governmental, non-profit, non-stock organization, formally established on March 7, 1987. Its vision is to help develop a dynamic women's movement in the Cordillera working for the elimination of inequality and discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, class, nationality and race.

The CWERC was established as part of a growing indigenous people's movement in the region. Some women activists felt that there was a need to highlight women's perspectives on the various issues and also raise specific women's concerns which should be addressed. The need to build the capacities of the indigenous women for leadership was also seen as crucial.

1.3 Name of person or institution responsible for the practice or experience

Cordillera Women's Education and Resource Center, Inc.

1.4 Name and position of key or relevant persons or officials involved

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2. THE PROBLEM OR SITUATION BEING ADDRESSED BY THE PRACTICE/INNOVATIVE EXPERIENCE

The Philippines, and the Cordillera region in particular, is endowed with rich natural resources. It has vast mineral deposits, major rivers that can generate hydropower and large timber reserves. In spite of the wealth of its land, the region remains relatively underdeveloped.

The indigenous inhabitants of the Cordillera are collectively known as Igorots. The Cordillera was excluded from the economic, political and cultural development process of the colonial society because of their strong resistance against the Spanish. The resistance of the Igorots to the colonizers made them retain their indigenous lifestyles and institutions throughout the period of Spanish colonial rule. To denigrate those they could not conquer, the Spanish colonizers labeled the Igorots as savage, heathen and uncivilized.

During the American colonial period, the Igorots were categorized as cultural minorities and were subjected to discrimination, for example, they were subjected to assimilationist policies. The traditional economy of some of the

Igorots was eroded to shift production towards the market. The penetration of the cash economy into the region slowly destroyed the natural self-sufficient economy of the region. Environmentally sustainable agricultural practices of the Igorots were considered backward and unscientific. Agricultural production that generated cash crops like coffee, beans, vegetables and bananas was what was considered as a productive activity. The colonizers were also able to exploit the region's natural resources through legislation which facilitated the entry of big corporations.

From the American colonial period to the present, the Cordillera has been a resource base for business interests. This can be seen in the presence of mining companies, logging concessions, hydroelectric power plants and export processing zones in the region. This has resulted in environmental problems such as denudation of forests, river pollution and depletion of mineral resources.

In spite of the fact that the region provides revenues to the national government from the extraction of its natural resources, social services and appropriate development projects are very inadequate. This inadequacy is seen in the lack of good roads; poor communication facilities; inadequate, dilapidated schoolhouses with few teachers; insufficient and inappropriate health services; and the poverty of the indigenous peoples.

Most of the women are found in the rural areas of the region, with an overwhelming majority engaged in subsistence agricultural production. In traditional rice production, the women assume most of the major tasks, from seeding to seed selection. The erosion of the traditional economy in some areas has led to the displacement of women. Many outmigrated to the mining areas to join their miner husbands and to the urban poor communities in the city. Since subsistence production and women's work are mainly for domestic purposes, these have not been considered as productive activities and factored into the gross national product. Outside of traditional agricultural production, a significant number of women are engaged in commercial farming. As wage earners in the temperate vegetable-growing areas and rice-producing areas of the region, women are being paid less for their labor than men.

A considerable number of women are also found in Baguio, the only urban center in the region. Employment opportunities in Baguio and neighboring towns are found in the export processing zone, the mining areas, banks, tourism-related businesses like hotels and restaurants, government offices, private and public schools and hospitals. In the mining areas, the women are confined to their homes and have very limited livelihood opportunities. The mining companies do not hire women. Some miners' wives have cultivated the sides of the mountains near the mines to supplement their husbands' meager

income.

With the shift in mining strategy from underground mining to open-pit and bulk mining which requires less workers to operate, a large number of workers are being retrenched. Laid-off workers, along with their wives, are forced to leave the area to seek for new sources of livelihood. Small-scale mining, which employs not only men but also women in the area, is prohibited within the areas claimed by the big mining corporations.

In the factories of the export processing zones, **80%** of the workforce are women. Companies prefer hiring females to males because they believe that females are “more adapted to boring and dexterous assembly work” and can be hired cheaply. Working conditions are often unfavorable for the women. Some of these companies do not provide maternity benefits and in some cases, pregnancies meant the termination of employment.

Gender discrimination is manifested not only in the economic realm, where women are paid less in wages, and in the political realm wherein decision-making processes are dominated by men, but also in the cultural arena. Patriarchy, which perpetuates the belief that women are subordinate to men, was reinforced by the colonizers' culture, religion, education, economic and political systems. The problems of gender discrimination are found in the social, economic, political and cultural realms. Marginal production, illiteracy, lack of social services, inappropriate development programs, domestic violence, violence from structural and institutional forces, and commodification beset the Cordillera women.

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE PRACTICE/INNOVATIVE EXPERIENCE AND ITS MAIN FEATURES

The CWERC was established to help build a women's movement in the region. The women's movement in the Cordillera is envisioned to be not only a part of the national women's movement but also part of the indigenous peoples' movement and the national movement for genuine sovereignty **and democracy**.

The CWERC's starting point is that the liberation of the Cordillera women from inequality and oppression based on gender, class, race, ethnicity and nationality can only be achieved by addressing the multiple realities of women simultaneously. **It is** within this framework that the programs of the Center have been designed to respond to the various issues and needs confronting the women. These include education and training activities, research, documentation and publication, socio-economic work and networking at the regional, national and international levels. Women belonging to the poor classes and

underprivileged sectors in the region are the main targets of the CWERC's education and organizing efforts.

Organizing work

Prior to the establishment of the CWERC, organizing among indigenous people in the Cordillera had already started. This was witnessed in their strong opposition to the World Bank-funded Chico River Dam project which would have caused the displacement of around 300,000 Igorots from their ancestral lands. The community had also opposed a project of the Celophill Resources Corporation, owned by an influential friend of the former Marcos administration, which was given two hundred thousand hectares of ancestral pine forests to log. Protests against these projects started in the mid-1970s and were sustained up to the end of the decade.

The success in stopping these two projects empowered the Cordillera peoples to build and strengthen the region-wide indigenous peoples' movement. From this period to the eighties, the indigenous peoples' movement in the Cordillera slowly grew, and gained more strength with the founding of the Cordillera Peoples' Alliance (CPA) in 1984. The CPA is a federation of indigenous people's organizations in the Cordillera, which originally constituted 27 people's organizations. The grassroots organizations of the CPA and other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) facilitated the CWERC's entry into the communities to establish initial contacts and to gather data on the women's situation in the various provinces.

To conduct its initial organizing and education work, the CWERC also worked with existing women's organizations. Many of these organizations were organized by either the churches or government agencies like the Department of Agriculture or Social Welfare and also by politicians. Except for active church-related women's organizations, most of these were non-functional and only became active when funds were brought in for particular activities or projects or during elections when politicians wanted to mobilize the women to campaign for them.

The CWERC deemed that it was not necessary to create new organizations. What it did was to reorient some of these organizations toward becoming more socially relevant and toward addressing the women's issues and concerns. A core curriculum was developed in what was called the basic women's orientation. This includes a discussion of the national situation of women, workshops on the local women's situation, discussion of the responses of the women and the building of a women's movement at the national level. Several frameworks are used in analyzing the situation of women and the situation of the Filipino people and the indigenous peoples in the Cordillera. Popu-

lar methods of education which are dialogical and participatory are used.

In establishing initial contacts and organizing the women in Baguio City and its neighboring areas, the CWERC sought the help of the other NGOs operating in the area, like the Women Workers Program (WWP). WWP is involved in organizing and education work among women workers, women in the informal economy and urban poor women. WWP provided initial contact persons in the mining and urban poor communities in these areas.

In areas where there were no existing traditional organizations, the organizers helped build new women's organizations. After having had initial consultations, established initial contacts and gathered information on the women's situation in the area, the organizers identified potential women leaders, who were formed into a core group. Members of this core group were then encouraged to initiate the formation of the women's organization in the community. To facilitate the organization-building, education activities were planned by the organizer, together with the core group and in coordination with the other NGOs working in the area.

With the assistance of the organizer, the constitution and by-laws of the organization were drafted and a general assembly held. In this general assembly, the women elected their officers and approved or revised the draft constitution and by-laws. General programs of action were also planned. Then, the newly elected officers or the executive committee scheduled regular meetings to implement the general programs of action formulated in the assembly. Particular plans and actions of the organization were prepared by the executive committee and implemented. In the implementation of these plans, the organization formed committees. The number of committees set up depended on the needs, capabilities and plans of the organization and the community. In most cases, education, health and project committees were set up.

Aside from establishing and developing organizations, the CWERC also helped in consolidating them through Innabuyog. Innabuyog is a federation of women's organizations in the region, which was used to reorient the existing women's organizations in the Cordillera toward becoming more people-oriented and gender-sensitive. Through Innabuyog, the CWERC has not only strengthened the leadership of the various organizations but also united their membership in a common vision of a transformed society which they will help create. It also widened their area of influence. It was able to reach thousands of grassroots women and build and develop more than a hundred women's organizations in more than a hundred communities in the Cordillera.

In its organizing work, the CWERC uses an effective tool – integration. Under this approach, the community-organizers learn from experience. Immersing themselves in the lives of the women, the organizers are able to enrich the concepts, methods and theories in community-organizing learned from

formal education and training. To do this, the organizers have to live in the community. This allows them to directly experience the day-to-day life of womenfolk. They also discuss with the women their problems and issues, thus enabling them to obtain firsthand data for research and documentation purposes and as a basis for future plans, projects and actions of the Center. This approach also allows the organizers to share their views with the women in the community. The organizer synthesizes the women's experiences and problems and relates them to the overall problems faced by the society.

The main bulk of the CWERC's personnel are women organizers who have to be based in the communities. They are trained to be educators, researchers and organizers at the same time. It is necessary for them to have a thorough knowledge of the economic, political and socio-cultural situation at the local and national level, the root causes of the poverty and problems of the Igorots in particular and the Filipinos in general, and the reasons behind the problems faced by the women.

Education and training

Social and gender awareness-raising is done through education activities and participatory research. Leadership formation and skills training seminars are also provided. This includes training in mass campaign administration, communication skills, organization management, etc. Education or consciousness-raising activities are focused on women's discrimination and oppression and its interrelationship with the economic, political and socio-cultural problems of the society. These are done through seminars, fora, lectures and workshops on the national, regional and local women's situations.

Basic leadership training seminars also are given to the women leaders to equip them with the knowledge and tools on how to transform traditional organizations from being organizations reinforcing women's subordinate role, to organizations that will advance women's rights. They are also taught how to run and manage organizations, how to speak at public events, how to run mass campaigns, etc. The ideas and know-how drawn from these training seminars have not been confined to those who underwent the training. Representatives to these seminars are required by their organizations to share with their co-members what they learned.

Gender-sensitivity training is also conducted among the women and mixed organizations. Education activities and training provide the women with knowledge and skills for them to effectively address their particular situation. Some women leaders at the community level are now able to deal with local issues and have increased their capacity as articulators in national and region-wide activities. The medium of instruction is the local language. Visual aids and

creative presentations which do not water down the content of the subject are used.

Effort has also been expended toward raising the gender-awareness and sensitivity of the staff of NGOs in the Cordillera and the leaders of people's organizations. Thus, CWERC has consciously made efforts to influence the behavior of activists within its own network.

Research, publication and documentation

Information dissemination and the propagation of women's perspectives on concepts, issues, problems, policies and laws are crucial to further raising the level of consciousness of the women and the public. These are done through the Center's research, documentation and publication program. Research has been undertaken on the Cordillera women's situation. This has focused mainly on the situation of indigenous peasant women, women workers, the urban poor women, and specific areas like reproductive health, human rights violations, women in situations of armed conflict, etc.

Research and documentation that have been done employed the participatory research approach. Specific data on the situation of peasant and working women were gathered and analyzed. Research results were used to understand, analyze and present the women's situation and to determine the appropriate assistance the Center will provide to the women. Some of the research results have also been published in the Center's newsletter, *Chaneg*, and its journal, *Tebtebba*.

Moreover, research results contributed a great part in theorizing and popularizing the indigenous women's struggles and issues. The CWERC has contributed significantly in the theorizing of the women's question among indigenous women in the Cordillera, within a framework that strove for a proper balance in addressing the factors of gender, class, ethnicity, race and nationality.

Socio-economic work

The CWERC also has socio-economic projects, which are implemented through the projects planning and assistance desk, and run mainly by organized grassroots women's groups. They are the ones who determine, set up and manage appropriate socio-economic projects. The women are assisted in setting up viable small-scale projects in the various communities. These projects were designed to alleviate poverty and lighten women's multiple burdens and strengthen their participation in the community's political and social life. These are implemented particularly in the provinces where government services prove

inadequate. The experiences gained in operating the socio-economic projects are regularly assessed to derive lessons which can be applied for improving subsequent projects.

However, in implementing these socio-economic programs, the Center is faced with a dilemma: whether or not to encourage the women to be fully integrated into the market economy even if its effect is the erosion of the traditional economic system in which they play key roles. Another trade-off is that for socio-economic projects to be viable and well managed, the management skills of trained women activists are required. Since it is not easy to train managers and activists, sometimes the effective women activists get sidetracked to help run these projects instead of engaging in activities like organizing and educating.

Networking and international solidarity work

Another program set up by the CWERC is networking and international solidarity. Through this program, the Center was able to establish linkages and relationships with other women's organizations, people's organizations, institutions and development agencies working within and outside the region. The Center was also able to project the Cordillera women's issues not only in the local but also in the international arena.

At the international level, the CWERC played a major role in the formation of the Asian Indigenous Women's Network (AIWN). AIWN was set up to strengthen networking among the indigenous women in Asia, to articulate and project their issues and demands and to empower them.

Prior to this, the CWERC was a member of the International Steering Committee of Indigenous Women which convened and organized the Second International Indigenous Women's Conference which was held in 1991 in Karasjhoka, Norway.

AIWN performed a significant role in the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing, China. It organized the indigenous women attending the conference and drafted the Beijing Declaration of Indigenous Women. This draft was discussed and approved by the indigenous women's caucus which comprised of 150 indigenous women from different parts of the world. This declaration summarized the issues and problems of indigenous women, critiqued the Draft Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women, and stated their demands to the international community, the governments and the NGOs. It also contained resolutions on how the indigenous women would collaborate among themselves in future.

The declaration expressed the unity of the indigenous women in their "struggle to actively defend their rights to self-determination and territories,

which have been invaded and colonized by powerful nations and interests.” This declaration emerged as one of the major documents that came out of Beijing, and is presently used as lobby and education material by indigenous women in different countries.

The CWERC also participated in the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) or the Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. It was officially accredited by the UNCED and subsequently by the UN to be one of the NGOs in the roster allowed to attend the sessions of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development, the Convention on Biological Diversity, etc.

It also participated in the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, the Social Summit in Copenhagen and the preparatory meetings for the Conference on Population and Development. In these conferences, the representatives of the CWERC made presentations at various NGO events and also at the official plenary sessions. The Director of the CWERC was chosen by the NGOs attending the Social Summit to present the NGO Copenhagen Declaration in the official plenary session. She had been part of the NGO steering committees for the Social Summit and the Commission on Sustainable Development.

Networking and establishing linkages with other organizations was also found useful in consolidating the women's organizations since it enabled the women to comprehend that women's problems were linked to other issues within a global framework.

The CWERC has worked with various groups on a short-term and long-term basis. It formed loose coalitions such as the Task Force on Violence Against Women (TFVAW) through its Women's Crisis Center, which is a program created to address the problems of victims of domestic and state violence against women (VAW). The TFVAW is a support group which helped the victims of VAW through providing free legal and psychological counseling, sharing of skills and expertise, logistical support, devoting time to accompanying the victims to medical practitioners and court hearings on their cases, and supporting campaigns against VAW.

The TFVAW comprised 17 women's organizations of professionals in academe, women in the government service, members of religious congregations and students. The TFVAW acted as a pressure group. With the assistance of the volunteers of the TFVAW, petitions were distributed and signed, open letters and press statements were published and rallies were held. The task force also lobbied government bodies to change the laws that further oppress women and create new laws that will ensure the protection of women.

With the common aim of defending the indigenous people's ancestral land and fighting for their right to self-determination, the CWERC has worked

closely with the CPA. As a center that provides support and service programs to indigenous women working to strengthen the women's movement in the Cordillera, the CWERC cannot divorce itself from the problems confronting the indigenous people in general.

The CWERC has also forged relationships with national organizations like the Center for Women's Resources (CWR) and GABRIELA. CWR is quite similar to the CWERC but operates at the national level. It conducts participatory research and popular education activities for women, has several publications, and maintains a resource center. GABRIELA is a national coalition of women's organizations, programs and institutions across various sectors and groups.

Other programs

As the Center gained experience, it set up additional programs on functional literacy, women's rights and crisis intervention. Most women in the region are illiterate because of the lack of public schools and the traditional roles played by women. To address this problem, the Center set up a functional literacy program. In this program, the teachers used the Ilocano language (a major lingua franca in Northern Luzon) in teaching the Filipino alphabet instead of the English alphabet. They also taught simple arithmetic to women so that the women would not be cheated when selling or buying. The lessons used were also meant to raise the gender awareness of the women and to teach them to be as practical as possible. For instance, since the women had a rice-buying club, the actual transactions they made were used as examples in their arithmetic classes.

Aside from monitoring, documenting and campaigning against domestic and state violence against women, the CWERC also opened a Women's Crisis Center. This assisted the survivors of domestic and state violence and raised the awareness of the public toward the issue of violence against women. To democratize crisis intervention, a pool of volunteers from the legal and medical professions, and from the universities and other interested individuals was formed. Additionally, the TFVAW was organized to extend assistance to the survivors and to conduct campaigns.

Through its various programs, the CWERC was able to do advocacy work indirectly. For instance, because of its work on VAW, which included networking with the media and even having a radio program, the public's awareness of VAW has been heightened. In linking up with the different government agencies in relation to VAW cases, the CWERC was able to make the persons working in these agencies aware of the women's issues. CWERC staff were invited as resource persons on different occasions by offices and

institutions both locally and nationally, a recognition of the organization's pioneering work among women, particularly Cordillera indigenous women.

In the national consultations held to prepare the country report for the World Conference on Women, the CWERC was instrumental in the Cordillera consultations and in facilitating the workshop on women and environment during the National WID Forum. The CWERC Executive Director was assigned to write the portion on Women and Environment in the NGO Country Report.

The local academe also had been very active in soliciting the inputs of the CWERC in its gender program. These were in the form of consultations on researches, as resource persons for various fora, as co-sponsor of various activities, to give gender-awareness training, etc.

Strategies

The basic starting point of the CWERC's analysis is that the problems of women are intricately linked with the economic, political and socio-cultural realities of society. Women-specific issues and broader problems and issues encountered by Cordillera women, like institutional and domestic violence, alienation of the ancestral lands, environmental destruction, inadequate public and social services, and increasing prices of basic commodities, etc., are related to the fundamental problems of Philippine society that are rooted in socio-economic structures. The pervasive influence of patriarchy in the socio-cultural, political and cultural structures is also a key factor. The CWERC is realistic enough to know that its vision can only be achieved in the very long term.

The following strategies are employed by the CWERC to achieve its objectives:

- (a) conducting initial consultations at the community level to establish contacts and to reach out to organized and unorganized women;
- (b) giving gender-awareness and structural analysis workshops **as an initial** step towards developing the women's critical analysis of their situation;
- (c) research and documentation of the specific situations of women using the participatory research approach;
- (d) intensive training **of** women organizers who are then sent to live and do organizing, education and research work in the local communities;
- (e) providing support for appropriate and relevant socio-economic projects which the women have identified as priorities;
- (f)** popularization of women's issues and concerns through the media;

- (g) setting up a regional federation to carry out political, economic and socio-cultural analysis of issues and concerns of women;
- (h) linking up with regional, national and international alliances to be part of the broader people's movement and articulate the women's issues at these levels;
- (i) publication of a newsletter to project the women's issues, problems, viewpoints and perspectives;
- (j) actively engaging in **discussions/discourses/debates** on women's issues and other issues on which women have a perspective; and
- (k) conducting different fora where women's issues and perspectives on these issues are discussed.

4. DESCRIPTION OF THE INSTITUTION RESPONSIBLE AND ITS ORGANIZATIONAL ASPECTS

The Cordillera Women's Education and Resource Center (CWERC) was established through the First Cordillera Women's Assembly in March **1987**. The participants came from all the provinces of the Cordillera and from Baguio City, and from different sectors (peasants, workers, urban poor, professionals). It also enabled them to explore and discern what they could collectively do to address their issues and to help advance the indigenous people's struggle for self-determination.

An important part of the assembly was the discussion on the manifestations of women's oppression in the region and the attempt to define the particularity of the indigenous women's situation in the Cordillera. From these discussions, they were able to pinpoint the necessary services to strengthen and develop the women's movement in the Cordillera that would deal with the distinct issues and concerns of women. To address their needs, they resolved to set up the Cordillera Women's Education and Resource Center and mandated it to provide services and support for building up and strengthening the Cordillera women's movement in the region.

The objectives which the CWERC set for itself are the following:

- (a) to undertake more in-depth research on the situation of Cordillera women;
- (b) to raise the level of political, social and gender awareness of the women in the region;
- (c) to strengthen, reorient or help build women's organizations and networks;
- (d) to wage campaigns and set up projects addressing women's issues and needs:

- (e) to network with other women's organizations and network nationally and abroad; and
- (f)** To support women's socio-economic activities and projects.

The structure of the CWERC is based on the various forms of support and services it provides. The program components are reflected in the various desks. These desks coordinate closely and complement each other. The different desks of the CWERC are the following: Research, Documentation and Publications; Education and Training; Organizing; Projects Planning and Assistance; Networking and International Solidarity.

The desk coordinators with the Executive Director compose the Management Committee which sees to the day-to-day affairs of the Center. This Committee also operationalizes the programs recommended by women in the community and various sectors.

A Board of Directors, with representation from several sectors like peasantry, labor, professionals, church and business, and headed by a Chair, is the highest policy-making body. It is mandated by the Constitution and By-Laws registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission to meet annually.

At the beginning of each year, the Management Committee and the entire staff contingent of the CWERC meet to plan the one-year program. Assessment and evaluation of the program is done every six months to see what has been achieved, learn lessons and readjust targets. At the end of the year, an evaluation of the whole year's program is done and this forms the basis of the following year's program.

5. PROBLEMS OR OBSTACLES ENCOUNTERED AND HOW THEY WERE OVERCOME

One of the major problems encountered by the Center in its early operations was the militarization of the region in the late 1980s. Agricultural productivity was hampered, the incidence of poverty rose and the marginalization of indigenous women worsened. Some communities were bombed and people were evacuated from their communities. Most of those who ended up as internal refugees were women and children. The militarization of the region became a major obstacle for the CWERC in reaching out to the women in the communities or in carrying out socio-economic projects.

The CWERC participated in many fact-finding missions to document what was happening, to report these to the media, and to hold dialogues with the military and government officials. The CWERC also conducted relief operations to assist and support the internal refugees and also became actively involved in human rights campaigns.

Another problem faced by the CWERC was the initial hostility of mixed organizations and men to the CWERC approach and programs. When the CWERC was starting out, there were hostile reactions from men in mixed organizations or even in the communities to the idea of having a separate women's organization. The usual arguments of "why are we dividing the communities?", "isn't feminism a Western imposition which is alien to indigenous peoples?", etc. were used. However, there were also male leaders who were asking the CWERC to educate the women so that the latter would understand what the men were fighting for, they being the leaders of organizations. Also, in many communities, there already existed women's organizations which were actively involved in community affairs.

The way the CWERC dealt with this was to give women's orientation to the women and develop a core of women leaders in the communities and the organizations who, in the end, were the ones asserting that they would like to have their own organizations. Within the communities and tribes, the women have to be the ones to assert their rights to have their own organizations. This is not an alien concept but something relevant to them.

Also, because the CWERC ensured that the women's issues were not handled in a fragmented manner but were integrated with the issues of the indigenous peoples in general and also with national issues, the number of women who became active in the regional and national movements increased. Their quality of leadership also improved significantly. Now, the women's organizations and movements within the region are here to stay and will have to be considered whether the establishment and male-dominated organizations like it or not.

6. EFFECTS OF THE PRACTICE/INNOVATIVE EXPERIENCE

The establishment of the CWERC, both as a women's organization and as an NGO providing services for women in the Cordillera, is a pioneering effort in the region. In the past, the capacity of women to analyze their situation within the context of a Third World country had been very limited. On the other hand, the public's awareness of the situation of women has also been shaped by a male-dominated media. The establishment of the CWERC has given a framework for analysis of the situation of women, an organized projection of the issues confronting women, a systematic documentation of the issues confronting women, and a sustained and active campaign to confront their problems. The CWERC is not just a service NGO but an activist organization. It articulates the issues being faced by women in the Cordillera. Its

staff are indigenous women and other Cordillera natives and they embody the mission of the CWERC, taking the program as their own.

7. SUITABILITY AND POSSIBILITY FOR UPSCALING

There are several women's programs that have been established in the region, each with a particular focus. In other regions in the Philippines, there are also programs similar to the CWERC's which have been established. The programs that have been implemented by the CWERC can be adopted anywhere and tailor-fitted to the needs of women. What is important is for the program to be not only a service agency but also an activist organization of women. With adequate support and commitment from activists who should be doing the organizing, a program like the CWERC can be multiplied. Instead of upscaling, multiplication or replication might be a better option *so* that the grassroots women will have more participation in the defining of programs. To geographically expand operations will bring about bureaucracy and this may put more demands on administrative work and may entail the setting up of a bureaucracy.

8. SIGNIFICANCE FOR (AND IMPACT ON) POLICY-MAKING

The publications of the CWERC were the first to address the women's question in the region. They defined the particularity of the Cordillera women's oppression and discrimination and helped trace the roots of this. The research results became the basis for the creation of an education curriculum, programs and activities, for campaigns, and for lobbying and advocacy work. The visibility of women's issues, analysis and demands increased significantly such that they could no longer be ignored by the general public nor by government bodies and other institutions. The program had been part of discussions with those in academe, both locally and at the national level. This also led to the popularization of certain issues, particularly the issue of violence against women (VAW). This particular campaign on VAW had a very strong impact in the region. It was a breakthrough. Before, domestic violence was not viewed as a societal problem but rather as a problem best settled inside the home. Prior to the CWERC campaigns, the concept of state violence against women was virtually unheard of. The differential impact of militarization on women and children was highlighted which helped relief and rehabilitation programs to be more gender-sensitive.

Before these issues were highlighted, government agencies had failed miserably in assisting victims of domestic violence and rape. The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) did not even provide temporary shelter to victims. The police sometimes harassed the victims instead of the perpetrators and women preferred to keep quiet to avoid further humiliation and degradation. But after the campaign, gender-sensitivity training was undertaken by some government agencies. The DSWD has now set up its own shelter for women survivors.

The anti-militarization campaign which the CWERC actively participated in contributed in stopping militarization in many communities. The CWERC, in coordination with other development programs and human rights groups, was able to respond not only to the women's needs but to the whole community as well.

In the international arena, the CWERC also contributed significantly to the projection of indigenous women's concerns and perspectives. It also contributed by starting networks among indigenous women which are slowly gaining strength. Because of these efforts, combined with those of other organizations, UN agencies like the Commission on the Status of Women, the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations, etc. are more conscious of the need for integrating indigenous women in their work and documentation.

9. POSSIBILITY AND SCOPE OF TRANSFERRING TO OTHER COMMUNITIES OR COUNTRIES

The CWERC experience can provide useful lessons or even a model that can be studied by groups in other countries interested in organizing programs run by women to advocate the interests of women, in particular, indigenous women.

The CWERC's program is very much replicable in other countries. Some programs in the Philippines operate in a similar manner to the CWERC. What is important is for the program to be responsive to the reality of women's lives in the particular place or country, the commitment of activists in managing the program, and the capacity of the women themselves to make the program their own.