



Miriam College - Women and Gender Institute
in partnership with Oxfam sa Pilipinas

KATIPUNERA, KABABAIHAN, KAPWA: A YOUNG WOMEN'S CAUCUS

A PRE-NATIONAL WOMEN'S SUMMIT EVENT

March 4, 2020 | ESI Conference Rm., ESI
Building, Miriam College, Philippines

Katipunera, Kababaihan, Kapwa: A Young Women's Caucus and a Pre-National Women's Summit Event was held on 04 March 2020 at the ESI Conference Rm., Miriam College, Katipunan Ave., Loyola Heights, Quezon City. A total of 123 participants from feminist organizations, youth organizations, community organizations, local and national government agencies, and colleges & universities from different regions were present at the event. The Young Women's Caucus was hosted by the Miriam College – Women and Gender Institute (MC-WAGI) with support from Oxfam sa Pilipinas.

Welcome Remarks



Brenda Pureza **Program Coordinator** **Women and Gender Institute (WAGI)**

Ms. Brenda Pureza expressed gratitude to the participants for attending despite the hectic schedules of Women's Month. In celebration of the 25th Anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA), Ms. Pureza emphasized the caucus' main goal: to engage young women in understanding the critical areas of the platform in relation to the issues they currently face.

She encouraged the participants to continue the fight for women's rights and highlighted the value of the many roles young women play in their own communities.

“Sana ang caucus na ito ay hikayatin tayong labat na ipagpatuloy, palakasin, at bigyan ng sariling kulay ang boses ng mga kababaihan.

**- Brenda Pureza, GAD Program Coordinator,
MC-WAGI**

Keynote Speech



Patricia Licuanan, Ph.D. **Convenor, SEA Women's Watch** **(SEAWWatch)** **Former President, Miriam College**

For her keynote speech entitled *Beijing on My Mind*, Dr. Patricia Licuanan aimed to answer one question: *What should the Beijing Platform for Action mean for everyone?* According to Dr. Licuanan, the 4th World Conference on Women in 1995 gave birth to the BPfA. It is now considered the most comprehensive global blueprint for women's rights.

Dr. Licuanan shared both good and bad news about the BPfA's plight. On the good side, there have been substantial decreases in maternal mortality, gender gap in education and incidences of child, early and forced marriages. Many countries have also passed laws to combat domestic violence, as well as created national machineries for the social advancement of women.

She emphasized that there were also many broken promises: continuing under-representation of women in high profile jobs and decision-making platforms, increase in threats against women human rights defenders, and the various effects of climate change on women.

Moving forward, Dr. Licuanan called on more young feminists to continue what the feminists of Beijing had started. She also called for the need to revive and revitalize the spirit of Beijing.

“We must keep the faith, we must stay the course. Because another important lesson I have learned from Beijing is the need for tenacity and steadfastness.”

- Dr. Patricia Licuanan, SEAWWatch

**Plenary: Katipunera, Kababaihan, Kapwa:
What do we stand for? Where do we want to
go?**

Moderator: Regina Rebueno
Women and Gender Institute (WAGI)



Ms. Regina Rebueno moderated the plenary session entitled “Katipunera, Kababaihan, Kapwa: What do we stand for? Where do we want to go?” with young women leaders from the academe, the community, and the local government. They each shared their leadership journeys and the challenges they face as young women leaders.

“Paano nakaaapekto ang pagiging isang babae at kabataan sa inyong mga gawain? Paano mabibikayat ang iba pang mga kabataan na maging kabahagi sa pagsulong ng mga isyu ng kabataang kababaihan ngayon?”

- Ms. Regina Rebueno, WAGI



**Khylla Calica Meneses
Community Youth Leader
Caloocan City**

Ms. Khylla Meneses grew up in a family of human rights advocates who influenced her at a young age. Growing up, she noticed double standards and unfair gender roles within their home. Before she can leave the house, Ms. Meneses had to wake up earlier than her brothers to do house chores, something the boys weren't expected to do. She said practices like this must change.

“Dapat pantay kami ng ginagawa. Hindi porket babae ako eh ako na yung babala sa gawaing bahay.”

- Ms. Khylla Meneses

As she became a member of groups advocating for human rights, she also questioned the lack of spaces within these organizations for young women. Despite her leadership positions, she always felt dismissed by her male members. She found it difficult to delegate tasks to them when they showcase their *macho* attitudes. With perseverance, she was slowly able to gain their trust and respect.

Ms. Meneses also organized the *Bukluran ng Nagkakaisang Samahang Organizado para sa Karapatan (Bunso Ka)*, a children's organization which focuses on adolescent health and reproductive rights. For her, educating the youth at a young age is vital to prevent teenage pregnancy and other issues faced by teenagers. *Bunso Ka* produces plays on reproductive health and rights. They also teach life skills such as goal-setting and discusses various women's issues in their activities.

One of the highlights of Ms. Meneses' leadership journey was being able to see one of their out-of-school youth members study again. She also took pride in members who have become feminists and human rights advocates themselves.

Ms. Khylla Meneses ended her presentation by encouraging all young people to fight for gender justice.

She also encouraged young women to challenge others into being advocates, and ensure that young women are included in decision-making.



Rio Anne Secolles
Sangguniang Kabataan Kagawad
Brgy. Western Bicutan

As a young woman and an SK Kagawad, Ms. Rio Secolles faced many challenges. First, she experienced sexual harassment numerous times. As an SK Kagawad, a number of their activities involved field work such as going to basketball courts and other public sites. She often received catcalls, sexual jokes, and unwanted hugging or touching in these spaces. She also experienced being labeled *pokpok* and *malandi*, just because she worked with a lot of men.

Serving in the Sangguniang Kabataan, Ms. Secolles also observed more unrealistic expectations for female members than for male members.

“Kapag ang kalalakihan sa council ginawa ito, wala lang sa constituents, pero pag kaming mga kababaihan, labat yan may reaksiyon.”

- Ms. Rio Secolles, Sanggunian Kabataan, Brgy. Western Bicutan

She talked about experiencing threats to her personal safety. She received online bashing from constituents who did not agree with her. She was also exposed to violence in the places she visited. She shared how she feels unsafe going home alone at night after working late.

Aside from being a young woman leader, Ms. Rio Secolles had to balance other roles. She was also a daughter, a friend, and a student. For her, all these identities brought each of their own challenges.

She encouraged others to continue learning and studying, to not be afraid of speaking up even to older generations, and to learn when and how to react to situations. Ms. Secolles ended her talk by promoting activities of their council. These included a pride march and a series of talks on Violence Against Women (VAW).



Mavy Medrona
Student Council Chair
College of Communication
Polytechnic University of the Philippines
(PUP)

Ms. Mavy Medrona started her leadership journey in high school as an officer for the Junior Council. When she entered college, she realized how conformist most of the things she practiced in high school were. Being a student leader in college taught her how to make political decisions herself. This was very different from high school where a lot of her decisions were influenced by the school administration.

Ms. Medrona's leadership experience in PUP taught her to question the unequal treatment of women and men in politics. According to her, women are expected to conform to traditional norms which hinders them from participating in political spaces.

One of the biggest challenges she faced as a young woman leader is being called out for not wearing “decent” clothes in school. She stood firm in her belief that a state university is for the masses, and thus, clothing should not be an issue. She also emphasized that the Filipino culture is changing, and it must become a culture that frees instead of oppresses.

“Ang kultura natin mapagbalaya, ang kultura natin, nagbabago. Dabil ang kultura natin ay nagbabago, dapat bindi tayo naiwan.”

- Ms. Mavy Medrona, PUP College of Communication

In closing, Ms. Medrona called on other young women to take up the challenge of leadership and to speak up for their rights.



Allison Bobier
President
Sanggunian ng mga Mag-aaral ng Miriam

Ms. Allison Bobier shared the lessons she learned as a student leader in Miriam College. Before becoming president of the student council, she felt very doubtful about her capabilities. She only gained more confidence after honing her skills in public speaking. According to Ms. Bobier, she isn't afraid to share her views on politics. One time, she got called out by her father for sharing such views online. She stayed firm in her beliefs. For her, young women must let their voices be heard, no matter the circumstances.

As a leader, Ms. Bobier also experienced feeling burnt out. She dealt with this by reevaluating her choices: escape responsibility by quitting or choose her battles wisely to better manage her time. She chose the latter.

An all-girls school education taught Ms. Bobier to become independent, but it also taught her to delegate. For her, there is no shame in asking for help. Amidst all the issues young women leaders face, for Ms. Bobier, being a woman leader is a blessing. She also emphasized that anyone can be a leader, regardless of gender.

In closing, Ms. Allison Bobier called on the participants to become catalysts of change. She also encouraged them to become global citizens: to know one's place in the world and become aware of the issues faced by the marginalized. She encouraged everyone to rise from adversities as the world needs more young women leaders.

Open Forum



Ms. Regina Rebueno, as moderator, facilitated the open forum. Some of the open forum highlights include the following:

One student asked, “As young women leaders, how do we encourage men to join us in this cause?” The speakers emphasized the importance of taking small steps. According to the speakers, slowly educating them instead of aggressive and hostile approaches will be more effective.

Another participant asked about the difference between the leadership of young and older feminists. The speakers agreed that one of the differences is that young people now are more confident in airing their views due to a more open-minded society. They are also more technologically advanced.

The last participant asked, “How can we encourage other people to believe that their rage is valid?” The response to this question emphasized how social influences are strong in shaping people's emotions. It is important to validate one's own reactions and feelings. People, young women especially, should also be able to tell others how they feel.

The caucus participants went for lunch after the plenary at the Our Lady's Court (OLC). They then came back to the conference room for the afternoon activity.

Know Your BAEjing: A Closer Look at the BPfA Critical Areas

In the afternoon session, simultaneous interactive stations representing 5 select critical areas of the BPfA were set up. These were the following:

- Women and Health
- Women in Power and Decision-making
- Violence Against Women
- Women's Human Rights
- Women and Poverty

The participants were asked to go to each station for 15 minutes in an activity similar to the concept of “Speed Dating”. The following are highlights of what transpired in each station.

Station 1: Women and Health



Ms. Shiela Conde-Quigan and Ms. Jomarie Oliva of Likhaan Center for Women’s Health Inc. facilitated the critical area of Women and Health. Their presentation, entitled *Kabataang Babae at Kanilang Kalusugan*, focused on defining concepts of Reproductive Health (RH), its different elements, and its current state in the Philippines.

They started each session by asking the participants some questions to level off:

- *What first comes to mind when you hear the words Reproductive Health (RH)?*
- *What questions do you have in relation to this?*

Most of them associated RH with pregnancy, contraceptives, family planning, and choice. Common questions centered on lifting the taboo on RH, its effectiveness, and the integration of sex education within the school system.

According to Ms. Conde-Quigan, understanding adolescence plays a key role in the issue of Reproductive Health. It is a phase where puberty and various sexual changes happen in the bodies of the youth. She emphasized that Reproductive Health means that people are able to have a satisfying and safe sex life, the capability to reproduce, and the freedom to decide if, when, and how to do so. She proceeded to explain the different elements of RH which included family planning information and services; and maternal, infant, and child health and nutrition among others.

The second half of Likhaan’s presentation was the current state of sexual and reproductive health in the Philippines. According to the speakers, early and teenage

pregnancies occur due to early sexual engagement without protection. This is influenced by factors such as curiosity, peer pressure, low self-esteem, and sexual violence.

They also emphasized that awareness on reproductive health and rights is still lacking among young women. To address this, the implementation of Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) is vital.

The highlight of Likhaan’s presentation was the demonstration on how to use the different types of contraceptives such as pills, injectables, implants, IUDs, and condoms. They debunked many popular myths about these contraceptives while demonstrating.



Station 2: Women in Power and Decision-Making



Women in Power and Decision-Making was facilitated by Ms. Shebana Alqaseer of PILIPINA. She was also joined by Ms. Celia Flor, PILIPINA Vice Chair.

Ms. Alqaseer started each round with an activity called the Gender BINGO which aimed to see how politically active the participants were. In processing the BINGO activity, Ms. Alqaseer highlighted that political participation is not just limited to having positions in the

government. Participating in the elections, being an advocate and using power to improve other people's lives are also other ways.



"Sometimes we think political participation is just running for office, but there's so much more."

- Ms. Shebana Alqaseer, PILIPINA

Ms. Celia Flor shared that in the 90s, very few women were interested in entering politics. Although there were existing women empowerment and gender related advocacies, they knew that something was missing.

"If we want women to make decisions, if we want to empower women, tingnan natin, saan ba yung arenas of decision making? Saan ba ang resources? Nasa gobyerno. Sabi namin, kailangan, It's about time that pakialaman natin yung pulitika."

- Ms. Celia Flor, PILIPINA

According to Ms. Flor, the difference between young women then and now is that more women gained interest in entering the government.

Participants also identified barriers hindering them from participating in politics. One of them is parents not allowing their children due to the dangers and risks. Another is the boxing of young women to roles in the homes.

Ms. Alqaseer ended the session with a drawing activity. She asked the participants to draw how they envision a future where young women are enjoying full and genuine political participation. Most of the outputs depicted women working together and enjoying equal rights with men.

Station 3: Violence Against Women



Ms. Jeivi Nicdao and Ms. Angelique Villasanta of the Ateneo Gender Hub facilitated the session on Violence Against Women (VAW). They emphasized that in reflecting on cases of VAW, language plays a significant role.

"Talk is action."

- Ms. Jeivi Nicdao, Ateneo Gender Hub

According to the speakers, there are certain scripts that allow and perpetuate sexual harassment. They asked each participant to recall instances when they heard or said statements that they think promote sexual harassment and/or sexual violence.

The participants wrote these on meta cards, posted them on the panel boards, and shared what they wrote.



Most of the participants recalled being catcalled and hearing statements such as "Smile naman dyan, miss" and "Wow, ang sexy mo naman." Others also shared scripts pertaining to victim blaming such as "Gusto mo rin naman" and "Ang iksi ng suot mo kaya ka nababastos." Others recalled statements perpetuating traditional gender roles such as "Boys will be boys" and "Babae ka kasi." Because the activity entailed recalling traumatic experiences, some of the participants became emotional.

The second half of the session, was spent on re-writing the scripts. The facilitators stressed the importance of changing these scripts through empowering counter scripts, and that both women and men have the capability to do so.

Station 4: Women and Human Rights



The session on Women and Human Rights was facilitated by Ms. Aleijn Reintegrado and Ms. Jeza Rodriguez of Akbayan Youth. For each round, they asked participants to define human rights. They then presented different examples of human rights violations in Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao, highlighting the different contexts for each island.

For Luzon, they discussed the case of Jennifer Laude and stressed the absence of a law that protects LGBT persons from violence, abuse, and discrimination.

For Visayas, they focused on the relationship between climate change and human rights. They highlighted the situation in Leyte, post-Typhoon Haiyan where cases of trafficking rose significantly. Disaster situations are called “a feast for human traffickers” by experts because women become more vulnerable.

For Mindanao, the facilitators discussed the situation in Marawi where war and rehabilitation greatly affected women.

To close each round, Ms. Reintegrado and Ms. Rodriguez called on the participants to keep pushing for laws that promote and uphold human rights. They also encouraged them to keep on engaging with human rights and feminist organizations.

Station 5: Women and Poverty



Ms. Noleen Fabian of Gabriela Youth shared her thoughts on poverty’s effect on women historically and possible solutions to these issues. She identified two gender issues affecting poor women: multiple burden and unequal pay. She stressed that issues such as contractualization show how women have been discriminated and exploited within the workplace since the beginning. Today, women continue to be threatened by a capitalist system that treats workers like machines. Their rights to equal pay, maternity leaves, and many others are often ignored.

Ms. Fabian also emphasized that women are paid lower in various industries due to the essentialization of their roles in the home. Education also does not guarantee better jobs for women because of the multiple burden (reproductive, productive, and community work) they carry.

Ms. Fabian stressed that government policies must respond to the needs and issues of women. She also called out companies who engage in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) to pay lesser taxes, but are not willing to address women’s issues internally such as unequal pay and cases of sexual harassment.

After the sessions, the participants were invited back to the ESI Conference Rm. for the closing circle.

Closing (Round Robin)

The participants were asked to sit in one big circle and share a word or a phrase that best describes their main take away from the caucus and/or how they felt as the caucus ended.

Most of the participants were grateful to have been part of the caucus and looked forward to more spaces where young women can speak and share their experiences. Others found specific parts of the event very significant for young women. Dr. Laarni Rakman of the Bangsamoro Transition Authority expressed her appreciation for learning about reproductive health up close since it is not usually discussed in their culture.

Some participants also encouraged others to share their learnings outside of the caucus. Ms. Aleijn Reintegrado hoped that the participants continue sharing their narratives in other spaces to reach more young people.



Participants based in Manila also appreciated the bigger and more diverse group they were able to connect with. For older feminists present in the room, they found inspiration in seeing the future of the feminist movement through the younger generations.

Others also gave feedback to improve the event. One key pointer was to extend the time for the speed-dating like activity to have more room for dialogue.

During the closing circle words such as “safe space”, “enlightening”, “refreshing”, and “empowering” frequently came up.



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FB live coverage of the Young Women's Caucus and selected quotes and photos available at WAGI FB page <https://www.facebook.com/WAGIMC38/>