

WOMEN and UNITED

METHODISM

in the

PHILIPPINES

REPORT to the

GENERAL COMMISSION

on the

STATUS & ROLE of WOMEN

By

Chita Rebollido-Millan, Ph.D.

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Evanston, Illinois

PART I THE PHILIPPINES

- The total land area of the Philippines is 300 square kilometers or 115,830 square miles.
- As of 2008, the population was 90.5 million.
- 171 native tongues or dialects
- There are three [3] different religions in the Philippines: Islam, Catholicism and Protestantism. And the most known of all Catholicism.
- The country has the world's 13th-largest Protestant population with almost 9 million adherents, about 10 percent of the national population.
- Protestant Christianity arrived in the Philippines during the late 19th century and the early 20th century. These denominations were introduced mostly by American missionaries.
- Early History. Protestantism developed in the Philippines through the United States taking possession of the Philippines with the 1898 Treaty of Paris. United States rule allowed more opportunity for missionaries to enter the Philippines than under Spanish rule. In addition, there was a backlash against the Catholicism of the Spanish and a greater acceptance of Protestant Christianity represented by the Americans. The dominance of the Catholic Church in the Philippines and Protestant animosity towards Catholicism were prominent reasons for the start of Protestant missionary activity.¹
- First Protestant Worship Service. The first Protestant service held in the Philippines was on Sunday, August 28, 1898. Chaplain George Stull, a member of The Methodist Episcopal Church, came with the occupying forces. Although his primary duty was to minister to the soldiers, he recorded in his diary that that first service, held in an old Spanish dungeon facing the bay, was attended not only by his own men but by some Filipinos as well. He commented on this service:
"That the power of God will use this day to make a good Catholic better, any weak American stronger, any backslider ashamed, and the gloomy old dungeon the beginning of wonderful things in these Islands, is my prayer"
- The *Philippines Central Conference* is divided into twenty-two (22) Annual Conferences under the authorities of three Episcopal Areas: Baguio Episcopal Area, [BEA], Manila Episcopal Area, [MEA] and Davao Episcopal Area [DEA].
- The UMC in the Philippines has an official membership of about 600,000, but it serves a much larger community of close to 1 million. From six annual conferences in 1968, The United Methodist Church in the Philippines has grown to 19 annual conferences located in three episcopal areas, and now, with 22 annual conferences.

- Source: <http://wiki.answers.com>

PART II. STATISTICS & SURVEY

CLERGY BY EPISCOPAL AREA, CATEGORY AND SEX

No. of Local Churches	BEA			DEA			MEA			TOTAL	
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Clergy											
• Elders	315	79	394	93	10	103	350	76	426	758	163
										82.12	17.88
• Retired Elders	-	-	-	3	0	3	90	0	90	93	0
										100	0
• Deacons	17	10	27	10	8	18	27	82	109	54	100
										35.06	64.94
• Probationers	96	31	127	22	6	28	0	0	0	118	37
										76.13	23.87
• Local Pastors	202	82	284	97	30	127	207	0	207	506	117
										81.88	18.12
• Associate	3	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0
TOTAL	633	202	835	225	54	279	674	158	832	1532	414
	75.81	24.19	100	80.65	19.35	100	81.01	18.99	100	78.73	21.27

Central Conference-wide, the female clergy (414) constitutes a little more than one-fifth of the total number of clergy (1946). This gives a ratio of 1:5. That is one female clergy for every five male clergy. Among the three Episcopal areas, the Baguio Episcopal Area has the most number of female clergy (202) which constitutes almost one-fifth (24.19%) of the areas clergy and almost 50% (48.79%) of the total number of the PCC female clergy (414).

DEACONESSES BY EPISCOPAL APPOINTMENT AND STATUS

NO. OF LOCAL CHURCHES	BEA	DEA	MEA	TOTAL
Deaconesses				
• Active	151	53	204	408
				95.11
• On-leave	0	0	18	18
				4.20
• Retired	0	0	3	3
				.69
Total	151	53	225	429
	35.20%	12.35%	52.45%	100.00%

DELEGATES TO THE PCC/COORDINATING COUNCIL

By Gender

	Male	Female	Total
Delegates to the Philippines Central Conference '08	326	170	496
	65.73%	34.27%	100%
Delegates to the Coordinating Council Q '08-'12	38	22	60
	63.33%	36.67%	100%

Source: *Board of Women's Work*

III.

Towards Understanding Women Leaders of the UMC in the Philippines by Chita Rebollido-Millan

General Problem

The study aimed to answer the question “How may women leaders of the UMC in the Philippines be described?”

Specific Problems

Specifically, it aimed to answer the following specific questions:

1. How may the women leaders be described in terms of age, civil status, happiness with their spouses, number of children (if married), ages of their children, highest educational attainment, current employment, and monthly household income?
2. What is the church involvement of the women in terms of status (clergy, deaconess, lay, others), the gifts they brought to their positions, their level of involvement in different areas of service and their past and present leadership levels (participation at different churches levels, local, district, annual, central and general.
3. What experiences on sexual harassment do the women have?
4. What personal attributes do the women consider having helped them in journey as leaders/ members of the UMC as they cross barriers and meet the expectations of others from them?
5. As the women look into the future, what are their dreams/visions for the UMC in the Philippines?

Sources of Data

Convenience sampling was utilized. Participants were chosen for their positions in the church at the time of the study and their known participation in the life of the church. Clergy, clergy spouses and women lay persons were chosen as participants.

By Episcopal area, the following were the sample:

Baguio Episcopal Area (BEA) - 30 (49.18%)
Manila Episcopal Area (MEA) - 20 (32.78%)
Davao Episcopal Area (DEA) - 6 (9.84%)

Number of study participants decrease with distance from the researcher. In BEA, 20 (73.33%) came from the Pangasinan Philippine Annual Conference, the researcher’s home conference. This number comprises 32.78% of the total sample.

Instrumentation

A seven-paged researcher-developed questionnaire comprised of structured and open-ended items was developed for this survey. The instrument was either given personally, sent by e-mail or through a third person. The same were retrieved personally, were sent back by email or postmail.

Salient Findings of the Study

Selected socio-demographic characteristics of the study.

Age. Of the sixty-one participants, 1 did not indicate her age. More than one-third are in the 41-50 years old cluster (21 = 35%) and in the 51-65 years old group (22 = 36.67%). Eight (13.33%) are 66 years old or older while 5 (8.33%) and 4 (6.6%) are in the 26-35 years old and 35-40 years old cluster, respectively.

AGE	f	%
41 - 50 years old	21	34%
51 - 65 years old	22	36%
66 years old or older	8	13%
26 - 35 years old	5	8%
35 - 40 years old	4	7%
Did not answer	1	2%
Total	61	100.00

Civil Status. One did not indicate her civil status. More than three-fourth (46 = 76.67%) are married, 9 (15%) are single while 3 (5%) are widows and 2 (3.33%) are separated.

CIVIL STATUS	f	%
Married	46	75%
Single	9	15%
Widow	3	5%
Separated	2	3%
Did not answer	1	2%
Total	61	100.00

Happiness with Husband. In a scale of 1 to 7, the married women were asked to rate their relationship with their husbands. Sixteen (26.22%) that is 7 more than the number of single, widower, separated, and who did not indicate their civil status did not answer the questions. The women are generally happy with their

husbands with 17 (27.87%) saying they are very happy 18 (29.51%) happy and 6 (9.84%) fairly happy.

HAPPINESS WITH HUSBAND	f	%
Very happy	17	28%
Happy	18	29%
Fairly happy	6	10%
Did not answer	20	33%
Total	61	100.00

Number and ages of children (of the married sample). Number of children of the sample ranged from 1 to 7 with 4 made of 17, and a mean of 2.94 or 3 children. The samples age ranged from 2 months to 50 years old with mean age 23.68 years old. By clusters, the children age clusters 24-35 had the highest (58 = 37.66%), that is of the young adult (UMYAF) age followed by those in the 12 to 23 years old (50 = 32.46%).

Highest Educational Attainment of the Women. Almost two-third of the women (38 = 62.30%) have graduate degrees, 17 (27.87%) have 4-year college degrees and 6 (9.83%) have 2-year trade or professional studies.

HIGHEST EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT	f	%
Graduate degree	38	62%
Four-year college course	17	28%
Two-year trade/professional studies	6	10%
Total	61	100.00

Current Employment of the Women. Except for 2 who did not indicate their employment status and 1 who is self-employed almost three-fourth of the women (44= 72.12%) were employed outside of the home with 38 (62.30%) of them working outside the home full-time and 6 (9.84%) working part-time. Six (9.84%) are full-time parents/homemakers while 8 (13.11%) are retired.

CURRENT EMPLOYMENT	f	%
Employed outside of the home full time	38	62 %
Employed outside of the home part time	6	10%
A full-time parent and/or homemaker	6	10%
Retired	8	13%
No answer	2	3%
Self-employed	1	2%
Total	61	100.00

Monthly Household Income. Almost one-half (49.18%) of the women have a monthly income of P30,000 (\$625, P48 to \$1). This is followed by 7 (11.49%) who had monthly income of P20,001 – P25,000 (\$416.68 - \$520.83). With these incomes, the women are more economically stable than their counterparts in other sectors, even if their number of children is taken into considerations.

ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME [US\$1 = P48.00]	f	%
A) P5,000 or less \$104	2	3%
B) P5,001-P10,000 \$104 - \$298.33	5	8%
C) P10,001-P15,0000 \$208.34 - \$312.5	6	10%
D) P15,001-P20,000 \$312.51 - \$416.661	1	2%
E) P20,001-P25,000 \$416.67 - \$520.837	7	11%
F) P25,001-P30,000 \$520.84 - \$625.001	1	2%
G) P30,001 or more \$625.01 or more	30	49%
H) Do not like to answer	9	15%
TOTAL	61	100.00

Church Involvement of the Women

Status

Almost one-half of the women 28 (45.90%) are lay, 16 (26.33%) are deaconesses, 5 (8.20%) are clergy persons, 9 (14.75%) classified as others, 2 (3.27%) are clergy and deaconesses, while 1 did not indicate her status. This status of the women indicates that women leadership in the UMC in the Philippines is in the task of the lay people.

STATUS	f	%
Lay	28	46%
Deaconesses	16	26%
Women Clergy	5	8%
Others	9	15%
Clergy & Deaconesses	2	3%
Did not answer	1	2%
Total	61	100.00

Level of participation in identified programs

The women were asked to indicate their level of participation in the following programs: WSCS, educational programs, missional programs, lay speaking, and others.

Level of participation is either as leader, regular participant, occasional participant, and not a participant. They were also given the option not to answer.

Tables. Involvement in Church Programs

1. A	f	%
WSCS		
1. Leader	21	34%
2. Regular participant	5	8%
3. Occasional participant	18	29%
4. Not a participant	3	5%
5. Leader and regular participant	12	20%
6. Leader and occasional participant	1	2%
7. No answer	1	2%
Total	61	100.00

1. B		f	%
	Educational Program		
1.	Leader	21	34%
2.	Regular participant	8	13%
3.	Occasional participant	14	23%
4.	Not a participant	1	2%
5.	Both 1 & 2	10	16%
6.	Both 1 & 3	1	2%
7.	Did not like to answer	6	10%
	Total	61	100.00

1. C		f	%
	Missional Work		
1.	Leader	15	24%
2.	Regular participant	11	18%
3.	Occasional participant	17	28%
4.	Not a participant	1	2%
5.	Both 1 & 2	9	15%
6.	Both 1 & 3	2	3%
7.	Both 2 & 3	1	2%
8.	No answer	5	8%
	Total	61	100.00

1.D		f	%
	Lay Speaking		
1.	Leader	12	20%
2.	Regular participant	11	18%
3.	Occasional participant	17	28%
4.	Not a participant	7	11%
5.	Leader and regular participant	7	11%
6.	No answer	7	11%
	Total	61	99.00

Present and Last Participation in Different Church Levels

CONFERENCE	PRESENT		PAST	
	f	%	f	%
1. Local	34	56%	36	59%
2. District	31	51%	26	43%
3. Annual	36	59%	28	46%
4. Central	24	39%	10	16%
5. General	9	15%	4	7%

- **Positions in the local church:** WSCS/Church Secretary, Chair/Vice Chair Administrative Council, Finance Chair/Sec, Auditor, Lay Leader, Nurture Chair, Chair Worship, Chair School Board, Chair Christian Educ, BOT Chair, PPRC Chair, Delegate to the AC
- **Positions in the district conference:** WSCS Pres Sec/ Adviser/ Auditor, Member/Chair CFA, Chair Finance, Chair DCOOM, Member Nurture Comm, Chancellor, Member Comm on Superintendency, Consultant Children's Ministry, Lay Leader, BOOM Member, Director Lay Speaking
- **Positions in the annual conference:** CODS Chair, BOT member, CSA Secretary, WSCS Pres/ Adviser/ Auditor, Treasurer, Chair/Sec BCS, Chair Comm on Church Structure, Chair Finance, Member BOT & BOOM, Sec Comm Nominations, Chair CSA, Auditor, Member/Chair CSRW, Statistician, Statistician, Lay Speaking Director, Chair Comm to Edit & Publish Journal, BOT Chair, Chair Statistics Comm, Vice Chair Strategic Planning
- **Positions in the central conference:** CODS Chair, CECED Chair, Sec BCEC, PCC Delegate, Co-Co delegate, Associate Secretary, CFA Ex-officio, Member COE/BOP/BCS, Nat'l WSCS Recording Secretary, Chair HECEM, CSA Officer, Member/Staff BWW
- **Positions in the general conference:** Principal/ Alternate delegate, GBGM Area Financial Executive, Member Connectional Table, Member GBCS Advocacy Network, Director GBHECM

Talents/ Gifts They Brought to their Position

The women have diversified gifts which helped them as they participate in the life of the church. They are:

- * teaching skills, speaking/lecturing, preaching, music ministry, youth ministry, children's ministry, writing, leadership & governance/administration,

project proposal making, relational skills, IT skills, team ministry, counseling/ pastoral care, women’s empowerment advocacy, financial management, facilitating seminars, cooking, flower arranging, cross stitching/crocheting

Challenges the Women meet as Women leader/clergy/lay

Diverse challenges are very much a part of the women’s life as they participate in the life of the church. Challenges include time management or they blend work with their responsibilities as mothers and church participation.

Women and Sexual Harassment

Experience of any form of harassment	f	%
YES	27	44%
NO	21	35%
NEVER	13	21%
Total	61	100.00

What those who experienced harassment did?

f

1. I held it to a trusted someone (family members, close friend, pastor) 9
2. I brought the matter to higher church authorities (e.g. resident pastor, district superintendent, bishop) 3
3. Confronted him right away after he uttered a words “saanakon nga makaturrog iti rabii no kastoy kapintas ti diakonesak” 1
4. I talked to clergy that I did not like what he did and told him not to do that again

Awareness of Violence Against Women and Children in the Church	f	%
YES	42	69%
NO	13	21%
NEVER	6	10%
Total	61	100.00

Forms of Abuse*	f	%
Physical abuse	23	38%
Sexual abuse	21	34%
Incest	10	16%
Verbal abuse	32	52%
Rape	10	16%
Others	7	11%
Total	103	167.00

- Emotional Abuse - 1
- Pornography - 1
- Rated XXX movies - 1
- Financial Abuse - 1
- Sexual Harassment - 1
- Sexism - 1
- Illicit Relationship - 1

N = 61 (basis for percentage)

* - multiple responses (respondent gave more than one response to the item)

The Perpetrators*	f	%
Laymen	21	36%
Male clergy	22	37%
Church members	2	3%
Family members	9	15%
Female clergy	1	2%
Women	4	7%
Total	59	100.00

- * Family Members
 - Uncle 2
 - Sibling 1
 - Father 2
 - Family Members 1
 - Relative (non-church members) 3

N = 61

* - multiple responses

Expectations of Others from a Woman Leader

1. To be a good leader
 - Nurturant
 - Guide lay organizations issues and plans.
 - Listen to peoples voices.
 - Living by example. Practice what one preach to live the Christian life
 - Discipline others for leadership positions
 - Availability – to serve at all times in diverse capacities: give lecture, preach, lead workshops.
 - Flexibility
 - Consistency – Especially to be consistent on one’s stand on what is right and what is wrong, on advocacies on social and women’s concerns; including youth and children concerns
 - Results oriented
 - Promote collective and shared leadership
2. Represent the causes of those she leads (e.g. deaconesses, clergy spouses)
3. To be an active participant in ministries aimed to empower those in the pews and the unchurched
4. To assist families in their concerns and problems
5. Nurture fellow church workers and other church leaders.
6. Active participation in one’s local church sharing one’s gifts
7. Expectation of a women bishop of the UMC in the Philippines

Church Role in the Development of the Women as Leaders

When asked about the role of the church in the development of women as leaders, the women did give diverse responses.

1. Providing opportunities for leadership development in the Sunday School, VCS, UMYF and WSCS
2. The Christian nurture program of the local church, the district, church agencies like KKFI
3. The deaconesses expressed their education at Harris Memorial College as a key factor in their development as women leaders.
4. Support of pastors and deaconesses in the local churches where they grew up was also recognized
5. Scholarships for degree programs and financial assistance for training and seminars were also mentioned.

The encouragement/inspiration/motivation/deepening of the spirituality and assistance of the church in diverse ways, opportunities to serve in leadership positions all contributed to molding the women to what they are today. Family support, even of those who did not grow up in a parsonage runs through the women's journeys.

The Future and the UMC in the Future: The Women Leaders Vision

1. The Church as a whole
 - Self-sustaining
 - Self-propagations
 - Missionary chapel

2. Mission
 - Bible as foundation, ministries be holistic in approach
 - Advocate moral upliftment of the country
 - The UMC will uphold the aspirations of the Filipino people for a just and humane society, and be more inclusive
 - Continues its mission to the poor, especially women and children
 - Nurtures the rich heritage of living one's neighbour
 - To be a missionary church
 - Church programs be more focused. Corruption be stopped
 - Increase in membership
 - To make the church really united
 - To nurture individuals in stewardship of money, talents and time

3. Structure
 - The UMC in the Philippines be autonomous
 - Affiliated autonomy

4. Church workers
 - Be models of the Christian values they preach
 - All church workers be one in mission and avoid politics
 - The vocation of pastors and deaconesses and other church workers be seen by church.
 - Members with dignity be oriented with the roles of clergy spouse and deaconesses

5. Leadership
 - The women leaders be developed. More women district Superintendents and representatives to the General Boards and Agencies
 - Have a woman bishop in the future
 - Stop electioneering
 - Leaders led by the Holy Spirit and not by the influential people
 - Liberating church leaders with integrity
 - Leadership development be a major function of the church at all level

6. Church members

- More intensive nurturing on the church doctrines
- More participation in the life of the church including its ministries
- Practice personal and social talents
- To be really united

From the data, the vision of the UMC in the Philippines encompasses the church they dream of, the mission of the church, its structure, the church workers, leadership and the church members. These dreams we entrust into God's hands even as we share these with you. As the UMC Women in the Philippines say "We will journey into the future with hope".

IV. STATISTICS ON VIOLENCE AGAINST FILIPINO WOMEN

- **Source:** <http://www.ncrfw.gov.ph>
- In 2008 the number of VAW cases reported to the police rose by 21 percent from the 2007 report. The increase caused the trend to go upward after a six-year downward trend from 2001 to 2006.
- For the past twelve years since 1997, the trend peaked at a record high of 9,132 VAW cases in 2001.
- The trend, however, is not conclusive of a decreasing or increasing VAW incidence in the country because data are based only from what was reported to PNP.
- DSWD data show that there is a downward trend on the number of Women in Especially Difficult Circumstances (WEDC) served; from 7,763 cases in 1999 to 5,549 cases in 2007.
- "Uncategorized" and "Others" account for more than half (58.7%) of the total WEDC cases served by DSWD in 2007. "Uncategorized" cases include clients who were "strandeers, abandoned, emotionally distressed, unwed mothers, sexually-exploited, voluntary committed/surrendered, neglected, etc." while those in the "Others" category include "number of WEDC clients provided with crisis intervention services whose cases are not categorized".
- Aside from the "Uncategorized" and "Others" categories, physically abused/maltreated and rape cases top the list of WEDC cases served by DSWD in 2007. Physically abused and maltreated women accounted for 26.6 percent while rape cases accounted for 4.1 percent of total cases served.

V. ACTIONS OF THE PCC/COORDINATING COUNCIL

Few petitions that have direct bearing on women were approved during the 2008 Central Conference and/or February 2009 Coordinating Council meeting, such as:

- 1) To ask the Board of Ordained Ministry [BOOM] of the annual conferences to implement a continuing education program among clergy members that will include studies on women's rights and issue-based discussions on

violence against women and children together with the Board of Women's Work [BWW].

- 2) To ask the Board of Church and Society to implement education programs among church workers and lay leaders at all levels on gender development, violence against women and children, women and children's rights, and other related issues.
- 3) To abide by the UMC Book of Discipline's policies on sanctions against clergy/pastors who are found to be perpetrators or offenders of violence against women and children.

Most of these petitions originated from either the BWW or the BCS. It is our hope that full implementation of said petitions be done if only to address the escalating cases of VAW and children in the church.

Also, for the first time, General Boards/Agencies/Commissions of the UMC were asked to give reports/updates during the Coordinating Council meeting last August 21-22, 2009 at Wesleyan University-Philippines. I welcomed this opportunity hence I gave a report of our GCSRW with 2 recommendations, which the Body approved:

1. That every annual conference shall organize its Commission on the Status & Role of Women [Par 644, BD];
2. That implementation of the approved petitions [see above] be done as soon as possible.

VI. WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS IN THE UMC PHILIPPINES

The **Board of Women's Work [BWW]** is a working, active board of the PCC where all women organizations fall into, i.g. Women's Society of Christian Service [WSCS], Commission on Deaconess Service [CDS], Clergy Spouses Association [CSA] and women clergy.

Two major program thrusts [Quinquennium 2005-2008]:

1. Education and Empowerment and
2. Social Advocacy

Programs/Accomplishments:

*** Program on Violence Against Women**

One of the centerpiece programs is on Violence Against Women. The focus and objective is clear: to extend ministry to women through an exhaustive study and analysis of the issue among women and offer immediate help and assistance to the victims. Started in 1996 as an awareness-raising campaign, the program evolved into a regular program of education and empowerment with development and establishment of networks for

referral of victims. Presently, the Board is now offering direct service assistance to victims of violence.

* **Program on Social Advocacy**

As women, we embraced the call of being “The Prophetesses” of our own time. For two quadrennia, the BWW has actively engaged itself in addressing issues that affect the lives of the people. We are at the forefront of bringing the UMC Social Principles to the women and youth of the church. We responded to a wide variety of issue ranging from peace, human rights, wars of aggression, repression of civil and political rights, economic injustice, women’s rights, children’s rights, corruption, and all other evils existing in our own time. Our belief that we should be actively denouncing the evils of our time and announcing the Good News of holistic salvation has deeply etched in our hearts, hence, this form of ministry is imperative of our Christian faith.

> The Statement “Let the Truth Prevail” (A Statement on Corruption) was published in the Philippine Daily Inquirer [national newspaper] last March 4, 2008 as Letter to the Editor.

> Another statement on the Call for Peace in Palestine and on the Bataan Nuclear Power Plant was made by the BWW last January and February 2009 respectively.

* **Ministries to Indigent Students and Retired Bible Women Workers**

> The Hong Kong Filipino Fellowship is BWW’s partner in this worthy endeavor. Despite financial limitations, it is able to help young and indigent students who are in need of assistance for them to finish their studies.

> Through the help of the GBGM-Women’s Division, help was extended to women who have been left out by the church after serving the church wholeheartedly in their younger years and even in the latter years of their lives. The Pension Program for Retired Bible Women is a continuing program of the board.

* **Programs for Youth.** Programs for youth have been a vital component of BWW’s life and ministry. The young people have proven to be one of its strong allies in terms of program implementations and issue advocacy

* **Publications.** ‘Indayon’, a regular newsletter published quarterly, continues to be a venue for promoting women’s issues, analysis and perspectives. Dr Chita R Millan is the editor. A pamphlet on all Constitution and By-Laws of all women’s organizations under the BWW was also published.

The WOMEN’S Society of Christian Service [WSCS/UMW]

1. Acquisition of a lot for the National Development Center located at Pulongbunga, Silang, Cavite, Philippines with an area of 1,665 square meters that costs

Php 1.6 Million. As much as fifteen million pesos [P15M] [\$320,000.00] is needed within 6 years for the construction of the long-dreamt center in 2014.

2. Series of Leadership Training for Area Coordinators of Study and Program at annual conference level were conducted.

3. Medical Dental Mission to serve depressed and calamity-stricken areas in the country were carried out.

4. Lakbay Aral [Educational Trips] for interested members of the organization were enjoyed.

Commission On Deaconess Service

The deaconesses met for their National Deaconess Assembly last year. This was intentionally conceived to equip the deaconesses for the Philippines Central Conference in Nov 2008. There were discussion on issues and concerns affecting the life and ministry of the church, study on parliamentary procedures, resolutions they liked to submit – among others. There are around 430 deaconesses in the Philippines.

VII. CHALLENGES

1. WSCS [UMW] is very active, if not, the most active lay organization in churches, and especially good at organization and fund raising. However, not all annual conferences have CSRW which is more intentional in addressing gender discrimination, sexual misconduct, sexism, inclusivity and justice & peace.
2. More intensive conduct of VAWC workshops/seminars among church workers and lay leaders, especially male clergy and laymen, and more intentional inclusion of Gender and Development by episcopal leaders and their cabinets. There are escalating cases of violence against women and children, yet, most church workers are still found wanting in terms of handling VAW cases.
3. Establishment of a shelter/sanctuary for women & children victims of violence. Women's program has encouraged more women to transcend the 'culture of silence', hence, are coming out into the open to seek assistance for their situation. Our immediate response has always been to do referral work to the Women's Crisis Center (WCC), our consistent partner. But given the urgency of situations there really is a need to establish a shelter of our own.
4. Equity of representation between women and men in all levels of decision-making bodies of the church. While there is noticeable increase of women's participation in church boards/agencies/committees, their number is still far from the males especially in the annual conference/Philippine Coordinating Council, General Conference, etc.
5. Election of a woman clergy for the highest echelon of leadership in the Philippine church.

6. Struggle towards affiliated autonomy church structure, a half-century old dream which is almost reached but missed due to technicalities or legalities.
7. The establishment of Summer Institute for Mission and Evangelism (SIME) in order to engage our women and young people in continuously developing passion on and deepening of commitment to mission work.
8. Difficulties in finances of the BWW. For the first time since the creation of the BWW in the 1960s, only this conference year is it not in a position to hire a paid staff/Executive Secretary due to meager finances. The financial crisis that hit the global church especially the Women's Division has adverse effect on our project proposals.
9. Lack of statistics or database at such a time of technology rapidity and information explosion.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GCSRW

1. Publication of resource materials on Gender Equality, Sexual Ethics, Violence Against Women, etc. for use in advocacy programs with special consideration of materials with theological background/reflections/implications for use by/with pastors, DSEs and bishops.
2. Financial support for Board of Women's Work programs especially those on women's education and empowerment; and social advocacy.

