



Confab
underscores
equation:

WOMEN'S HEALTH = WOMEN'S WEALTH

The Sixth International Women and Health Meeting brought together 346 women activists, academicians, writers, theologians, organizers, traditional medicine practitioners and health advocates/workers from 64 countries. This gathering was held at the Film Center of the University of the Philippines in Diliman, Quezon City, from November 3 to 9, 1990. Participants stayed at various hostels and hotels around the university campus.

The plenary sessions, workshops, community tours, video showings and socials made possible a rich sharing and exchange of ideas, experiences, analyses, reflections, emotions, poetry and literature, music and dances, and networks.

English, Spanish and French were the official languages at the plenary sessions. The diversity in language and perspectives did not prevent the participants from expressing their thoughts and feelings during the sessions.

One of the conference high-



lights was the passing of workshop, issue and country resolutions at the last plenary session. These resolutions underscored the realities of the unjust treatment of women by policymaking structures of governments around the world and the almost invisible participation and the powerlessness of women in development programs that are even meant to empower them. Issues tackled were wide-ranging and demanded both immediate and long-term resolutions, changes and commitments.

The organizers put out a daily newsletter, *Diary*, so participants could keep track of daily schedules, review the previous day's activities and examine participants' impressions and suggestions on the conduct of the conference.

Media coverage was extensive. Newspaper and magazine articles profiled the conference participants, and reported on the papers read and issues





raised during the conference. The organizers were also invited to speak on the meeting's highlights in radio and television programs.

This media exposure provided Philippine groups working on women's health, including organizations that make up the Phil-

ippine Organizing Committee, with a venue to air their positions on and demands for women's health and reproductive rights. It also shed light on the forms of discrimination against women.

Overseas participants were able to glimpse the texture of the Manila metropolis and the Philippine countryside through exposure trips. These trips enabled them to reflect on the string that links the violence of poverty to the relations of the Third and First Worlds, women's reproductive health and choices, and women's relentless efforts to empower each other and change their lives.

The organizing staff was composed of 130 women and men who worked tirelessly to ensure the safety and comfort of participants, the accurate and fast translation and documentation of conference sessions, and the availability of facilities and equipment for an orderly conference. Add to this list were the warmth and hospitality they showed to foreign sisters.

The conference was considered an overall

success in the history of the International Women and Health Meeting on these grounds:

- It is credited for having the most number of country and regional representatives.
- It was the first time that discussions emphasized the concerns of women in the Third World based on the fact that a bigger portion of participants came from there.
- It strengthened solidarity and sisterhood through direct exchanges and organized networking between and among individuals, organizations and regions.
- Most raging women's health issues that women's health groups wished to tackle were exposed and discussed deeply.

The local women's health movement gained much in terms of education, local and foreign networking, strategy-building, skills and experiences in conference-organizing. The positive media exposure and coverage helped inform and influence the public the movement's concerns and calls.

The organizing committee was set to publish the conference proceedings, complete with plenary documents, workshop discussions, important points and issues and photographs this year. The conference resolutions, the meeting's most substantial product, are being finalized.

