

PC4D Philippine Launch: When Women Celebrated Communications

by Nina Somera

On its celebration of International Women's Month, Bahay ni Isis International Women's House was a full house. In the afternoon of 10 March 2008, over 100 guests flocked to Isis for the launch of People's Communications for Development/PC4D, the book and campaign.

Attended by mainly women from various grassroots communities and organisations, the launch was an opportunity for Isis to share the results of PC4D as well as some feminist communication strategies.

Dubbed as "Show & Tell on 'People's Communications for Development (PC4D)," the launch consisted of a plenary session and communication stations. At the early part of the programme, Isis General Membership member Aida F. Santos presented the highlights of the book while Isis Associate Director Tesa de Vela spoke on the PC4D campaign, which aims to make the research findings feed into policy-making and planning processes of various stakeholders, including national governments.

Six simultaneous interactive communication stations on radio, film, poster, publications, website development and PC4D later drew the attention of the crowd as these discussed how feminist movements and other social movements effectively use communication for their advocacy work. Following the technique of speed-dating, each station presented a 15-minute programme, after which guests were asked to move on to the next station until they have completed all 6 stations within a span of 90 minutes.

In the Philippines, PC4D entailed interviews with more than 20 groups scattered in Mindanao, Visayas, Luzon and the National Capital Region and a focus group discussion with some grassroots women. The study reinforced the popular belief that traditional technologies such as radio and television rather than computers and the internet remain more useful and empowering for communities.



Philippine Launch

10 march 2008, quezon city, philippines

Isis board member and UN women's rights advocate Senator Leticia Ramos-Shahani and feminist writer Rina Jimenez David led the press conference.

Isis Coordinator for the Governance, Citizenship and Communications Programme Marion Cabrera shared the PC4D findings in the Philippines with the media.



The Philippine launch drew more than a hundred participants, perhaps the greatest number of visitors Bahay ni Isis-the International Women's House had ever seen in the last several years. Among the guests were representatives of grassroots women organisations, women's groups, non-government organisations, the academe, government, donors and embassies including IDRC, the European Union, and the Vietnamese embassy.



The programme largely consisted of stations, where participants were oriented on web development, publications, film and documentary, radio production, poster production, and the PC4D, the research and campaign.



During the press conference in the morning, Isis board member and former senator Leticia Ramos-Shahani considered PC4D as a material which can inform policy-making and project initiatives around ICTs. “What the book shows is very humbling. Grassroots women still come from the *bukid* (rural community). Nothing is (being done) at the grassroots yet culture is very important for them,” she said.

She added that, “The introduction of ICTs [new technologies], like in the case of the National Broadband Network (NBN) is based on the notion that these will lead to empowerment and development for all. This ICT-centric development is the reason that we are interrogating this framework to determine the most effective communication tools used by intermediary groups to reach grassroots women.”

The NBN deal stirred controversy and reinforced criticism against the current Philippine administration. The US\$330 million NBN project intends to connect government offices and other critical institutions via a broadband network but an overpricing of nearly half of the amount occurred.

Columnist Rina Jimenez-David also expressed the need to review existing initiatives which put a premium on new technologies like computers and internet especially in remote areas. “ICT4D [information and communication technologies for development] must

reflect its direction for development to ensure that it is not contributing to counter-development.”

Jimenez-David also lauded the study as it constitutes a sound feedback to media practitioners, leading them to ponder: “Are we communicating to everybody? How have the media helped create a more knowledgeable population?”

The Philippine study reinforced the popular belief that traditional technologies such as radio and television rather than computers and the internet remain more useful and empowering for communities.

Fifty-nine percent of the respondents affirmed that radio is still the most effective tool because of its accessibility, affordability and coverage. Radio was followed by cellular phone with 49 percent and television, including film and video with 29 percent. Rounding up the top five communications tools are theatre and computer. But of all the communication tools, oral communication was cited as most empowering especially among grassroots women.

“Still, tools that create interaction, participation, reflection, and dialogue were considered most empowering. Oral communications [which happen in meetings and trainings] is still most empowering because of [its] immediacy, dialogue and direct interaction,” according to the book. ■



India Launch

25 april 2008, pune, india

Aalochana Executive Director Simrita Gopal with Isis Coordinator for the Governance, Citizenship and Communications Programme Marion Cabrera.

Articles on the PC4D Indian launch which saw print in the media, the Digital Edition and MH.



A participant, Wandana Sonalkar raised an issue during the open forum.

Isis Coordinator for the Governance, Citizenship and Communications Programme Marion Cabrera presented the PC4D findings in India.

Aalochana's Simrita Gopal with guest speakers John D'Souza and Anita Borker and other participants in the study.

ThaiLaunch

31 July 2008, Bangkok, Thailand

Isis board member and IPS News Asia-Pacific regional director **Johanna Son** shares the history and work of Isis International.

Civil Media Development Institute Executive Director Uajit Vitrojtrairatt with guest speakers **Post Today** editor **Pattara Khampituk**, Women's Studies professor **Wilasinee Adulyanont** and **Foundation for Women Executive Director Usa Learsrisantand**.



Isis Media, Information, Communications and Campaigns Associate **Nina Somera** shares a summary of the PC4D study across the 5 Asia-Pacific countries.



Sharon Bhagwan-Rolls, Executive Director of femLINK PACIFIC gives the opening remarks.



PacificLaunch

11 March 2008, Suva, Fiji

Isis Resource Development Officer Lalen de Vela and the **University Librarian of the University of South Pacific, Sin Joan Yee** pull out the books and other PC4D materials.

