

**Opening Remarks**  
**Dr. Sergio S. Cao Chancellor**  
**University of the Philippines, Diliman**

It is a "double pleasure" to open the programme for this two day seminar.

The University of the Philippines prides itself on being a *university of the people*, as well as a *university for the people*. The reputation of being a part of, or a product of UP is to be the intellectual, the idealist or the principled. These are the people who will stand up for what is right and just in society and fight for the cause of the disadvantaged and the oppressed.

As Chancellor of U.P. Diliman, it is my honor to have the campus involved in such a significant project such as this. Republic Act 7277 or the Magna Carta for Persons with Disabilities enjoins state universities to take the lead in blazing trails for our differently-abled brothers and sisters. Thus, it heartens me to know that faculty, students and alumni of this campus from:

- the Depts. of Speech and Theater Arts, of Filipino of the College of Arts and Letters,
- the Dept. of Psychology of the College of Social Sciences and Philosophy,
- the Sentro ng Wikang Filipino,
- the College of Mass Communication,
- the College of Education,
- the Institute of Human Rights, and the College of Law,

have all given of their time and expertise in being part of this year-long project up to this very seminar. Majority of these individuals do not know how to sign or perhaps are meeting deaf people for the first time here at this seminar. However, they have immediately appreciated the fundamental human need that we share for information and communication - the need to understand, and be understood. They have also quickly taken up the cause of the Deaf community, specially women and children who are abused and sexually violated as a marginalized sector fighting for its right and access to law and justice.

As President of the Board of the Philippine Deaf Resource Center, I have seen its growth for the past five and a half years from its inception in 2001. It has also been quite an experience to have witnessed advocacy firsthand and up close from volunteers who courageously go where others do not even care to tread, in an organization which is fiercely *lean and mean* in its work ethic but forward-looking and hard-hitting in its targets.

It is also particularly exciting to see and demonstrate the partnerships built by, and through this project and seminar. It is good to see members of the faculty apply theory to real-life issues and work hand-in-hand with sectors beyond the academic sphere. It is equally heartening to see NGOs, and in this case, particularly, Deaf people's organizations, work collaboratively with the academe and benefit from scholarly interactions. A dose of realism, grounding and relevance is received on the one end, while the other end receives a dose of scholastic structure and perspective. The Filipino Deaf community, are beneficiaries from many different angles. To have endeavors like this supported by agencies with such reputations as the World Bank of Manila and the Panibagong Paraan Secretariat, The Asia Foundation and the U.S. Agency for International Development send out strong validations of the problems of Deaf Filipinos and the concerted solutions required.

I am happy to open the doors of this campus to our guests from all over the Philippines - the Deaf, social workers, teachers, interpreters, church workers, judges, lawyers, court interpreters and administrators. I hope these next two days will be a productive and enjoyable learning experience and by tomorrow, you will leave this campus with more knowledge and awareness, brighter hopes and new friends and partners.

Good day!

**Message from The Asia Foundation**  
**Mr. Ky Johnson**  
**Deputy Country Representative**

*Magandang umaga po sa inyong lahat.* Good morning. It is my pleasure to be with you today.

As was mentioned, my name is Ky Johnson and I am the Deputy Country Representative of The Asia Foundation here in the Philippines.

For those of you not already familiar with The Asia Foundation, we are a non-profit, non-governmental organization, headquartered in San Francisco, California, committed to the development of a peaceful, prosperous, just, and open Asia-Pacific region. The Asia Foundation has 17 country offices throughout Asia, from Japan to Afghanistan. We have been continuously operating in the Philippines since 1954 and a few years ago we celebrated our 50th anniversary in the Philippines.

In the Philippines we have a number of programs in governance, legal reform, the environment, women's issues, and so forth. One of our most successful and interesting programs is in the area of legal and judicial reform. The program is called LADR. The program advocates for a strong and efficient legal system to facilitate economic growth and increase access to justice by the citizenry. This project receives very important support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). I'd like to publicly thank USAID for making resources available to us so that we can run important programs and activities such as the one for which we are gathered today and tomorrow.

Let me give you a little background. About two years ago, I got a message from my boss, the Country Representative, saying that our office would be participating in the World Bank's 2006 Panibagong Paraan Development Marketplace competition. I quickly learned that I would be on the Technical Working Group and responsible for helping to sort through more than 1000 grant proposals to select a handful for funding. That would mean working weekends, evenings, and over the holidays. Since I often have to do that for my regular work, as you can imagine I was a bit, well..., I was not excited about the extra tasks. I later learned how interesting and exciting the results would be.

One of the projects that emerged from all the others was the joint proposal by Philippine Deaf Resource Center (PDRC) along with the Philippine Federation of the Deaf, Inc. (PFD) and the Filipino Deaf Women's Health and Crisis Center, Inc. (FDWHCC). It was nominated by the Technical Working Group, endorsed by the panel of Judges, and chosen as an awardee from among more than 1000 application. The project was called "Equal Access to Communication for the Deaf in Legal Proceedings".

As many of you are aware, there is no comprehensive system for sign language interpreting in the Philippines today. For many of you that has huge implications for quality of life issue,

finances, etc especially for the deaf and their families. But for us at The Asia Foundation agreed that this was also as an issue of access to justice. Remember that, despite the large numbers of deaf people in the country, deaf people have long been marginalized in society, including in the Philippine legal system. They often lack the means to communicate their thoughts and, in a society where they are largely misunderstood, the deaf have become easy prey for criminals and are at a disadvantage in a court room. Deaf women and children are particularly vulnerable.

Within this context, the Philippine Deaf Resource Center, Inc. (PDRCI), in partnership with the Philippine Federation of the Deaf, Inc. (PFD) and the Filipino Deaf Women's Health and Crisis Center, Inc. (FDWHCC), conceptualized this project as a means of addressing the lack of interpreters and court officials who are fully aware of the special needs of the deaf or are experienced in interacting with them. They envisioned that this project shall be an initial yet significant step to ultimately provide access to and ensure fairness in the justice system for the deaf in the country. In particular, it shall address inequities in access to communication in legal proceedings by deaf women victims of abuse.

That brings us to today. I'm very very excited about being here. For one, I think this is a watershed event, we are part of history, and I think this National Seminar will have a big impact for both the deaf and hearing communities in the Philippines with regards to access to justice. Also, I'm very excited due to the partnerships that were formed by the three groups who worked together on this project – I think they should be very proud of conceptualizing and carrying out this project. Finally, I think that more partnerships and collaboration among the many of the people and organizations in this room will emerge as a result of this National Seminar which will lead to even greater advancements and impact.

I'd like to close with a brief personal story. I have a 1 \_ year old daughter named Layla. When she was just a little baby my wife and I read a number of books that said that children can communicate even before their voices develop. So beginning at about 3 months we started using some simple sign language like "milk" and "more" and "eat". And the books were correct, from about 6 months old she could make the sign for milk when ever she was hungry, and "more" when she wanted more milk. Later she learned "shoes" and "socks" and "help". So now that she's 1 \_ she has a number of signs for basic needs in her life. Sometimes she says a word with her voice that we can't understand, like "ba". That could mean just about anything. But when she makes the sign... we know she means that she wants to ride her "bike". What's amazing is that if she's crying or angry or just feeling like nobody is listening, she can make her sign and be understood. And then her frustration and anger just disappears. It makes her life better and it sure makes my life better. I think like Layla, we are all seeking to be heard and understood. I hope that through this National Seminar, the tools that are developed, and your advocacy efforts, you (especially those of you in the deaf community) will be heard by everyone throughout the Philippines and the frustration and will disappear and the barriers will be removed.

Again on behalf of the Asia Foundation, I would like to than USAID for making resources available for this project. I congratulate the three organizations that have brought us together, and I thank you for your time and efforts.

Maraming salamat at Mabuhay!

**Message from the World Bank**  
**Ms. Leonor Aquino-Gonzales**  
**Senior External Relations Officer**

Greetings; congratulations to the Philippine Deaf Resource Center (PDRC), the Philippine Federation of the Deaf, Inc. (PFD), and the Filipino Deaf Women's Health and Crisis Center, Inc. (FDWCC), supported by The Asia Foundation and USAID.

### **On the project and its contribution to "Development with Equity"**

- This seminar is the culminating activity of the project, "Equal Access to Communication for the Deaf in Legal Proceedings", one of the 59 winning projects in *Panibagong Paraan 2006*, which had the theme, "Development with Equity". "Development with Equity" means working for equal opportunities, so that all citizens can have a chance for a better life, and together, work for the nation's development. Development with equity means addressing issues on incomes, assets, services, and voice (or participation).
- This project addresses inequities in access to communication by the deaf in the justice system, due to the absence of an organized, nationally mandated system of sign language interpreting. To address this inequity, the project has gone into the development of appropriate instruments for the selection of interpreters, the translation of legal terms into sign language, and now, the conduct of this national seminar. Hopefully, findings and recommendations discussed in this seminar will lead to the mainstreaming of improvements that will result in improved access by the country's deaf - estimated at around 120,000 - to the legal and judicial system. This national seminar is also a means of heightening public awareness on the need to improve the deaf's access to the legal and judicial system, and on practical measures that could help bring this about.

### **On the World Bank's projects and resources for PWDs**

- The World Bank recognizes that while it is important to ensure that persons with disabilities benefit from development projects, what is equally important is to include them in development efforts in order to improve their economic and human welfare.
- The KDCs have resources for persons with disabilities. People who are on wheelchairs, have low vision, blind, and deaf can access the center freely. KDCs are equipped with modern assistive equipment and facilities that make access to information easier for persons with disabilities (PWDs). The assistive devices are available at the KDCs in World Bank, Pasig; Saint Paul University Philippines, Tuguegarao; Palawan State University, Puerto Princesa; Silliman University, Dumaguete; University of San Carlos, Cebu; University of Southeastern Philippines, Davao; Notre Dame University, Cotabato; and Western Mindanao State University, Zamboanga. KDCs are established as partnerships between the World Bank and the universities.
- The KDC in Ortigas not only is used by persons with disabilities to access information in books and the Internet; it is now a hub of dialogues and workshops aimed at including disability issues in the development agenda. Disability groups in Ortigas focus on bringing disability issues in the media and in governance. The PDRC is a long-standing partner. Other groups include the National Anti Poverty Commission, the Department of Education's Philippine Printing House for the Blind, and the Philippine Association for Citizens with Developmental and Learning Disabilities.
- At the global level, the World Bank has initiated the formation of the Global Partnership for Disability and Development (GPDD), which seeks to accelerate inclusion of people with disabilities and their families into development policies and practices. The GPDD was formed to increase collaboration among development agencies and organizations to reduce the extreme poverty and exclusion of a substantial number of children, women and men

with disabilities living in poor countries. This unique Global Partnership is comprised of experienced development and disability specialists based in all regions of the world. Categories of membership in the GPDD include non-governmental organizations, disabled people's organizations, development cooperation and donor agencies, UN agencies, inter-financial institutions, corporations and interested individuals. GPDD membership is free of charge and all who are interested can participate through thematic working groups on such topics as education, poverty reduction strategies and emergencies caused by conflict or disasters. (on [www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org) website)

#### **On the project's contribution to judicial reform**

- This project also complements the ongoing efforts on judicial reform in the country.
- (Share information on:) The World Bank is funding the Judicial Reform Support Project which aims to support an accessible judicial system that would foster public trust, and confidence. The Judicial Reform Support Project assists in: (a) improving court efficiency and access to justice; (b) promoting the integrity of the judiciary; (c) upgrading institutional capability; and (d) deepening stakeholder support for sustained judicial reform. It will achieve these by implementing institutional reforms that improve court and case management, establishing pilot mobile courts, installing comprehensive computer-based financial and administrative systems, improving information and communication systems, strengthening feedback mechanisms for judicial performance, implementing a human resource development plan for non-judicial personnel, decentralizing administration, establishing pilot modern courts, and strengthening research. This Project, together with concurrent assistance from other development partners, helps the Judiciary address well recognized problems such as delays in the delivery of justice, corruption, weak administrative structures, outdated technology and deficient facilities, and underdeveloped human resources.
- The WB is providing USD 21.9 million for the Judicial Reform Support Project, which started in 2003 and will end in 2009.

#### **On Panibagong Paraan**

- As mentioned, the project was one of the winners in *Panibagong Paraan 2006*. Panibagong Paraan is a multi-partner initiative of the World Bank, the Asia Foundation, USAID and others, to identify and support innovative – meaning non-traditional or not yet mainstreamed - projects that address the country's development challenges. We intend to hold *Panibagong Paraan* every two years; planning for *Panibagong Paraan 2008* is now ongoing. Information on the next PP will be announced on the website [www.panibagongparaan.com](http://www.panibagongparaan.com) around September of this year. We hope that with each *Panibagong Paraan*, we will be able to provide support to a significant number of worthy projects such as this.