**CHAPTER IV RIGHTS AND EMPOWERMENT**

SEC. 8. Human Rights of Women. – All rights in the Constitution and those rights recognized under international instruments duly signed and ratified by the Philippines, in consonance with Philippine law, shall be rights of woman under this Act to be enjoyed without discrimination.

SEC. 9. Protection from Violence. – The State shall ensure that all women shall be protected from all forms of violence as provided for in existing laws. Agencies of government shall give priority to the defense and protection of women against gender-based offenses and help women attain justice and healing.

Towards this end, measures to prosecute and reform offenders shall likewise be pursued.

(a) Within the next five (5) years, there shall be an incremental increase in the recruitment and training of women in the police force, forensics and medico-legal, legal services, and social work services availed of by women who are victims of gender-related offenses until fifty percent (50%) of the personnel thereof shall be women.

(b) Women shall have the right to protection and security in situations of armed conflict and militarization. Towards this end, they shall be protected from all forms of gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, and all forms of violence in situations of armed conflict. The State shall observe international standards for the protection of civilian population in circumstances of emergency and armed conflict. It shall not force women, especially indigenous people, to abandon their lands, territories, and means of subsistence, or relocate them in special centers for military purposes under any discriminatory condition.

(c) All government personnel involved in the protection and defense of women against gender-based violence shall undergo a mandatory training on human rights and gender sensitivity pursuant to this Act.

(d) All local government units shall establish a Violence Against Women’s Desk in every barangay to ensure that violence against women cases are fully addressed in a gender-responsive manner.

SEC. 10. Women Affected by Disasters, Calamities, and Other Crisis Situations. – Women have the right to protection and security in times of disasters, calamities, and other crisis situations especially in all phases of relief, recovery, rehabilitation, and construction efforts. The State shall provide for immediate humanitarian assistance, allocation of resources, and early resettlement, if necessary. It shall also address the particular needs of women from a gender perspective to ensure their full protection from sexual exploitation and other sexual and gender-based violence committed against them. Responses to disaster situations shall include the provision of services, such as psychosocial support, livelihood support, education, psychological health, and comprehensive health services, including protection during pregnancy.

SEC. 11. Participating and Representation. – The State shall undertake temporary special measures to accelerate the participation and equitable representation of women in all spheres of society particularly in the decision-making and policy-making processes in government and private entities to fully realize their role as agents and beneficiaries of development. The State shall institute the following affirmative action mechanisms so that women can participate meaningfully in the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of policies, plans, and programs for national, regional, and local development:

(a) Empowerment within the Civil Service. – Within the next five (5) years, the number of women in third (3rd) level positions in government shall be incrementally increased to achieve a fifty-fifty (50-50) gender balance;

(b) Development Councils and Planning Bodies. – To ensure the participation of women in all levels of development planning and program implementation, at least forty percent (40%) of membership of all development councils from the regional, provincial, city, municipal, and barangay levels shall be composed of women;

(c) Other Policy and Decision-Making Bodies. – Women’s groups shall also be represented in international, national, and local special and decision-making bodies;

(d) International Bodies. – The State shall take all appropriate measures to ensure the opportunity of women, on equal terms with men and without any discrimination to represent their government at the international level and to participate in the work of international organizations:

(e) Integration of Women in Political Parties. – The State shall provide incentives to political parties with women’s agenda. It shall likewise encourage the integration of women in their leadership hierarchy internal policy-making structures, appointive, and electoral nominating processes; and

(f) Private Sector. – The State shall take measures to encourage women leadership in the private sector in the form of incentives.

SEC. 12. Equal Treatment Before the Law. – The State shall take steps to review and, when necessary, amend and/or repeal existing laws that are discriminatory to women within three (3) years from the effectivity of this Act.

SEC. 13. Equal Access and Elimination of Discrimination in Education, Schoolarships, and Training. – (a) The State shall ensure that gender stereotypes and images in educational materials and curricula are adequately and appropriately revised. Gender-sensitive language shall be used at all times. Capacity-building on gender and development (GAD), peace and human rights, education for teachers, and all those involved in the education sector shall be pursued toward this end. Partnerships between and among players of the education sector, including the private sector, churches, and faith groups shall be encouraged.

(b) Enrollment of women in nontraditional skills training in vocational and tertiary levels shall be encouraged.

(c) Expulsion and non-readmission of women faculty due to pregnancy outside of marriage shall be outlawed. No school shall turn out or refuse admission to a female student solely on the account of her having contracted pregnancy outside of marriage during her term in school.

SEC. 14. Women in Sports. – The State shall develop, establish, and strengthen programs for the participating of women and girl-children in competitive and noncompetitive sports as a means to achieve excellence, promote physical and social well-being, eliminate gender-role stereotyping, and provide equal access to the full benefits of development for all persons regardless of sex, gender identity, and other similar factors.

For this purpose, all sports-related organizations shall create guidelines that will establish and integrate affirmative action as a strategy and gender equality as a framework in planning and implementing their policies, budgets, programs, and activities relating to the participation of women and girls in sports.

The State will also provide material and nonmaterial incentives to local government units, media organizations, and the private sector for promoting, training, and preparing women and girls for participation in competitive and noncompetitive sports, especially in local and international events, including, but not limited to, the Palarong Pambansa, Southeast Asian Games, Asian Games, and the Olympics.

No sports event or tournament will offer or award a different sports prize, with respect to its amount or value, to women and men winners in the same sports category: Provided, That the said tournament, contest, race, match, event, or game is open to both sexes: Provided, further, That the sports event or tournament is divided into male or female divisions.

The State shall also ensure the safety and well-being of all women and girls participating in sports, especially, but not limited to, trainees, reserve members, members, coaches, and mentors of national sports teams, whether in studying, training, or performance phases, by providing them comprehensive health and medical insurance coverage, as well as integrated medical, nutritional, and healthcare services.

Schools, colleges, universities, or any other learning institution shall take into account its total women student population in granting athletic scholarship. There shall be a pro rata representation of women in the athletic scholarship program based on the percentage of women in the whole student population.

SEC. 15. Women in the Military. – The State shall pursue appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination of women in the military, police, and other similar services, including revising or abolishing policies and practices that restrict women from availing of both combat and noncombat training that are open to men, or from taking on functions other than administrative tasks, such as engaging in combat, security-related, or field operations. Women in the military shall be accorded the same promotional privileges and opportunities as men, including pay increases, additional remunerations and benefits, and awards based on their competency and quality of performance. Towards this end, the State shall ensure that the personal of women shall always be respected.

Women in the military, police, and other similar services shall be provided with the same right to employment as men one equal conditions. Equally, they shall be accorded the same capacity as men to act in and enter into contracts, including marriage.

Further, women in the military, police, and other similar services shall be entitled to leave benefits such as maternity leave, as provided for by existing laws.

SEC. 16. Nondiscriminatory and Nonderogatory Portrayal of Women in Media and Film. – The State shall formulate policies and programs for the advancement of women in collaboration with government and nongovernment media-related organizations. It shall likewise endeavor to raise the consciousness of the general public in recognizing the dignity of women and the role and contribution of women in the family, community, and the society through the strategic use of mass media.

For this purpose, the State shall ensure allocation of space, airtime, and resources, strengthen programming, production, and image-making that appropriately present women’s needs, issues, and concerns in all forms of media, communication, information dissemination, and advertising.

The State, in cooperation with all schools of journalism, information, and communication, as well as the national media federations and associations, shall require all media organizations and corporations to integrate into their human resource development components regular training on gender equality and gender-based discrimination create and use gender equality guidelines in all aspects of management, training, production, information, dissemination, communication, and programming; and convene a gender equality committee that will promote gender mainstreaming as a framework and affirmative action as a strategy, and monitor and evaluate the implementation of gender equality guidelines.

SEC. 17. Women’s Right to Health. – (a) Comprehensive Health Services. – The State shall, at all times, provide for a comprehensive, culture- sensitive, and gender-responsive health services and programs covering all stages of a woman’s life cycle and which addresses the major causes of women’s mortality and morbidity: Provided, That in the provision for comprehensive health services, due respect shall be accorded to women’s religious convictions, the rights of the spouses to found a family in accordance with their religious convictions, and the demands of responsible parenthood, and the right of women to protection from hazardous drugs, devices, interventions, and substances.

Access to the following services shall be ensured:

(1) Maternal care to include pre-and post-natal services to address pregnancy and infant health and nutrition;

(2) Promotion of breastfeeding;

(3) Responsible, ethical, legal, safe, and effective methods of family planning;

(4) Family and State collaboration in youth sexuality education and health services without prejudice to the primary right and duty of parents to educate their children;

(5) Prevention and management of reproductive tract infections, including sexually transmitted diseases, HIV, and AIDS;

(6) Prevention and management of reproductive tract cancers like breast and cervical cancers, and other gynecological conditions and disorders;

(7) Prevention of abortion and management of pregnancy-related complications;

(8) In cases of violence against women and children, women and children victims and survivors shall be provided with comprehensive health services that include psychosocial, therapeutic, medical, and legal interventions and assistance towards healing, recovery, and empowerment;

(9) Prevention and management of infertility and sexual dysfunction pursuant to ethical norms and medicals standards;

(10) Care of the elderly women beyond their child-bearing years; and

(11) Management, treatment, and intervention of mental health problems of woman and girls.

In addition, healthy lifestyle activities are encouraged and promoted through programs and projects as strategies in the prevention of diseases.

(b) Comprehensive Health Information and Education. – The State shall provide women in all sectors with appropriate, timely, complete, and

accurate information and education of all the above-stated aspects of women’s health in government education and training programs, with due regard to the following:

(1) The natural and primary right and duty of parents in the rearing of the youth and the development of moral character and the right of children to be brought up in an atmosphere of morality and rectitude for the enrichment and strengthening of character;

(2) The formation of a person’s sexuality that affirms human dignity; and

(3) Ethical, legal, safe, and effective family planning methods including fertility awareness.

SEC. 18. Special Leave Benefits for Women. – A woman employee having rendered continuous aggregate employment service of at least six (6) months for the last twelve (12) months shall be entitled to a special leave benefit of two (2) months with full pay based on her gross monthly compensation following surgery caused by gynecological disorders.

SEC. 19. Equal Rights in All Matters Relating to Marriage and Family Relations. – The State shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in all matters relating to marriage and family relations and shall ensure:

(a) the same rights to enter into and leave marriages or common law relationships referred to under the Family Code without prejudice to personal or religious beliefs;

(b) the same rights to choose freely a spouse and to enter into marriage only with their free and full consent. The betrothal and the marriage of a child shall have no legal effect;

(c) the joint decision on the number and spacing of their children and to have access to the information, education and means to enable them to exercise these rights;

(d) the same personal rights between spouses or common law spouses including the right to choose freely a profession and an occupation;

(e) the same rights for both spouses or common law spouses in respect of the ownership, acquisition, management, administration, enjoyment, and disposition of property;

(f) the same rights to properties and resources, whether titled or not, and inheritance, whether formal or customary; and

(g) women shall have equal rights with men to acquire change, or retain their nationality. The State shall ensure in particular that neither marriage to an alien nor change of nationality by the husband during marriage shall automatically change the nationality of the wife, render her stateless or force upon her the nationality of the husband. Various statutes of other countries concerning dual citizenship that may be enjoyed equally by women and men shall likewise be considered.

Customary laws shall be respected: Provided, however, That they do not discriminate against, women.