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THE ROLE AND CONTRIBUTION OF HOME ECONOMICS TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT¹

Florenda S. Gabriel²

INTRODUCTION

The improvement of quality of life has always been aspired for by the people. In the national context, the attainment of this aspiration is facilitated through the framework of national development. As such, the Philippine government's foremost agenda is national development popularized by the term Philippines 2000.

This development agenda sets the direction for the mission, aims and activities of all sectors of the society including education. Educational aims and goals are revised so that it is in line with national development efforts. Therefore, a field of study or a discipline is deemed relevant, important and thus promoted based on how it supports the nation's development goals.

It is to this end that the role and contribution of home economics to national development must be determined. This paper begins with setting out the concepts and definitions of national development and home economics. It then proceeds to determine the role of home economics and identify its specific contributions to national development policies and strategies. The concepts used were largely derived from selected papers and speeches delivered during conventions and conferences of various home economics professional organizations.

CONCEPTS OF NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND HOME ECONOMICS

Concept of National Development

The present view of national development by the government is operationalized in the Medium Term Philippine Development Plan for 1993-1998 (MTPDP 93-98). The overall goal of this plan is total human development translated into an improved quality of life. Human development means the extension of people's capabilities and the expansion of choice (NEDA, 1993). More than just the provision of basic needs of food, clothing and shelter, the national development plan envisions a dynamic, vibrant Philippine economy and populace. It also attempts to reach a newly industrialized country (NIC) status by the end of the term. The vision of national development is accomplished through the twin strategies of international competitiveness and people empowerment.

International competitiveness is a strategy of attaining human development whereby domestic producers possess the ability to produce for the world market or are able to compete against imports in the domestic market on an even footing. To survive in today's world of global trade and international markets, the country has to be able to compete internationally with its material and human resources. Our products must pass international quality standards. Our labor force must possess the knowledge and skills that answer the manpower needs of domestic and international labor markets.

¹ A class paper submitted to Dr. Carolina Dizon for HEEd 214 (HE in the Philippine Educational System) August 1996

² Instructor Department of Home Economics Education. College of Home Economics

People empowerment is a mode of actualizing human development that encourages the direct and combined efforts and participation of the people in development activities. It aims to harness the productive capacity of the people to increase the level, broaden the scope and sustain the growth in their incomes thereby allowing them to improve their quality of life. For the country to progress, it needs a populace who is not mere recipients of development efforts but active participants in improving the quality of life on individuals, families, communities, and the nation.

A guiding principle of all efforts for progress is the sustainability of the development plans. The improvement of the quality of life must not only take into account the present generation but must also include the future generations of Filipinos. This is the essence of sustainable development. Sustainable development looks into the interplay of the material and human resources as these are utilized for development. There is the danger of human resources damaging or destroying the natural material resources particularly the environment in pursuit of development. When this happens, the survival of the future generations is threatened. Eventually, development efforts will cease when there are no more natural resources to utilize.

All planning for development includes the determination of development indicators. These are measurable outputs which are used to gauge the success or failure of the plan. The government identified several key areas of concern in the MTPDP (NEDA 1993):

1. Income and employment
2. Health and population
3. Nutrition
4. Education
5. Housing
6. Social welfare

CONCEPTS OF HOME ECONOMICS

Home economics is a discipline which is explicitly concerned with the family and all aspects of family living. From the time it was founded in 1902 during the Lake Placid Conference and until the present, its basic mission is still to improve individual and family life amid changing social, political, economic and physical conditions. It is accomplished through "the study of laws, conditions, principles and ideals which are concerned on the one hand with man's immediate physical environment, his nature as a social being and the relationship between the two factors" (East, 1980). Its broad areas of concern revolve around the goal of helping families meet their basic needs and realize satisfying personal, family and community goals based on an understanding of the physical, psychological and socio-economic needs of the family in the Philippine cultural setting (FAO, 1955)

Home economics was founded for the purpose of helping individuals and families relate to change. Its uniqueness lies in the holistic view of daily living of individuals and families. Issues are approached both from its physical or material and relational dimension of life and their interaction (Florencio, 1995). The UP College of Home Economics in 1990 collectively defined home economics as "the

study of families and the management of resources available to them for the satisfaction of basic needs in changing environments” (UP CHE, 1996).

From the comprehensive view of home economics sprung out several sub-disciplines and a variety of professional careers. Though these specializations and careers may seem separate from home economics, they fall under the umbrella of home economics because their purpose is to serve families, individuals and consumers in their day-to-day life. Figure 1 shows the branching out of home economics to many specialized fields and careers.

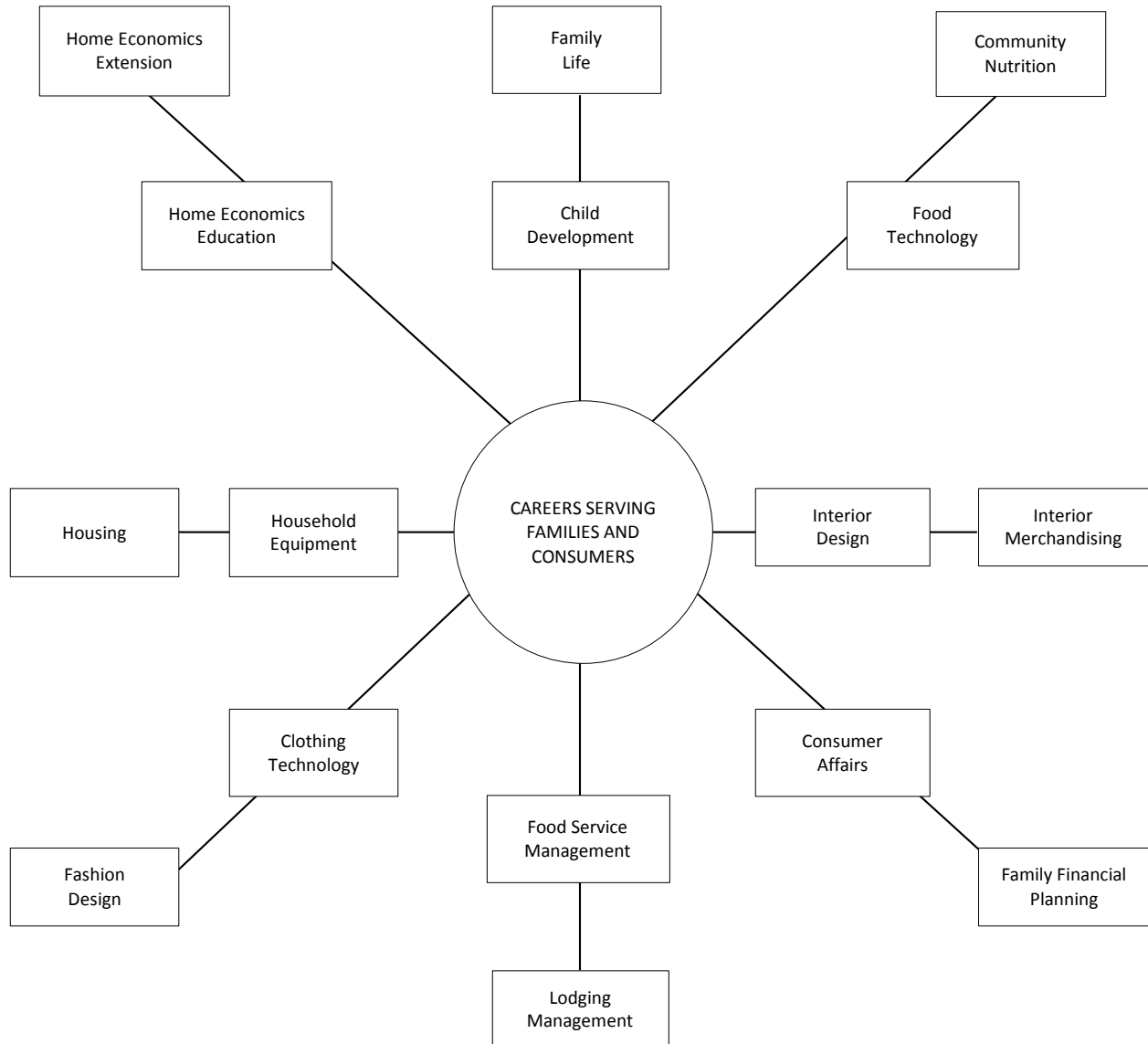


Figure 1. Home Economics and Its Specialized Fields
(From Sproles, E. and Sproles G. Professional Development in Home Economics, 1992)

Home economists are seen as generalists in the area of families and family life education. However, with the explosion of knowledge, many specialized fields were formed. These specializations are useful in furthering the expansion of knowledge and in dealing with the societal complexity of the present world. Sproles and Sproles (1992) identified the many specialized fields under home economics as follows:

1. Specialization in the Arts and Sciences

Professionals in these areas have thorough understanding of individual and family consumer needs and can translate these needs into well-designed functional consumer products. These specializations are founded on artistic and scientific skills dealing with the following individual and family needs:

- a. Food science and nutrition
- b. Clothing, textile, fashion and related arts
- c. Interior design, furniture and home furnishings
- d. Housing and household equipment

2. Specializations in Business

There are areas of studies in business in every major field of study related to families and consumers. Graduates of home economics and its sub-disciplines possess skills in the production of many marketable consumer products and the entrepreneurial ability in making a livelihood out of these production skills. Their knowledge of the needs of consumers and families, skills in producing and the products and services that meet these needs coupled with entrepreneurial spirit and training gives them an edge in professional development in business. There are four main areas of home economics specializations and careers in business.

- a. Entrepreneurship
- b. Service businesses (hotels and institutions)
- c. Foodservices
- d. Business support services

3. Specializations in Education and Extension Services

At present, careers in education are the ones popularly associated with home economics. The wide range of knowledge in home economics has produced specialized courses in home economics and vocational education.

- a. Home economics education
- b. Early childhood education
- c. Adult education
- d. Tertiary education in the specialized fields
- e. Vocational and technical education

4. Specializations in Human Services

Among society's most important area of study are those in which one can help people. The competencies that home economists have such as foundation of courses in family and child studies,

supportive general courses in the behavioural sciences, specialized education in humanitarian subjects (human and household resource management, adult education), and work experiences, practicum and volunteer assignments in service oriented activities equip them for a successful career in human services. These are some human services specializations related to home economics:

- a. Family life and child development
- b. Family counselling and guidance
- c. Community nutrition

This is one of the most satisfying specializations because this enables the professional to help others, often in a personal face-to-face basis. These areas of study help solve family problems, serve individuals and families and increase the overall well-being of individuals, families and communities.

5. Specializations in government and public policy

Professionals in family and consumer fields find a wide range of opportunities on all levels of national and local government. For the home economist who believe in serving families, communities and the society, "there certainly can be no better way than to determine public policies that affect all" (Sproles and Sproles, 1992)

ROLE OF HOME ECONOMICS IN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The road to becoming a developed nation involves a process of change. Development is essentially a forward movement from one state of being to another of a higher level. This movement requires changes in many aspects of living for the individual and its society. The process of change starts with resources, human and non-human, and ends with human development.

This framework revolves around the human dimension for it is the central force and ingredient in development. It is the people of the nation who initiates changes, performs the changes and benefits from the changes. For example, non-human (natural resources, money resources, etc.) could not produce the development by themselves; they have to be utilized by humans. It is also the people who do the work of changing the systems, the structure, the culture even the people themselves for progress. Finally, development is aspired for the people.

This is the human development paradigm of national development. This is how leaders view national development in its Philippine 2000 and social reform agenda.

How does home economics fit in this framework of development? Home economics does not by itself produce the desirable changes necessary for national development to occur. It is the Filipino people, as a nation, who work for the development-oriented changes to come to fruition. Home economics can, however, be a catalyst for change. See Figure 2.

Webster Third New International Dictionary (1993) defines catalyst as "an agent that provokes or precipitates an action or reaction." In the context of development, a catalyst is any person, thing, organization or institution that affects the rate of change toward development. A catalyst provokes,

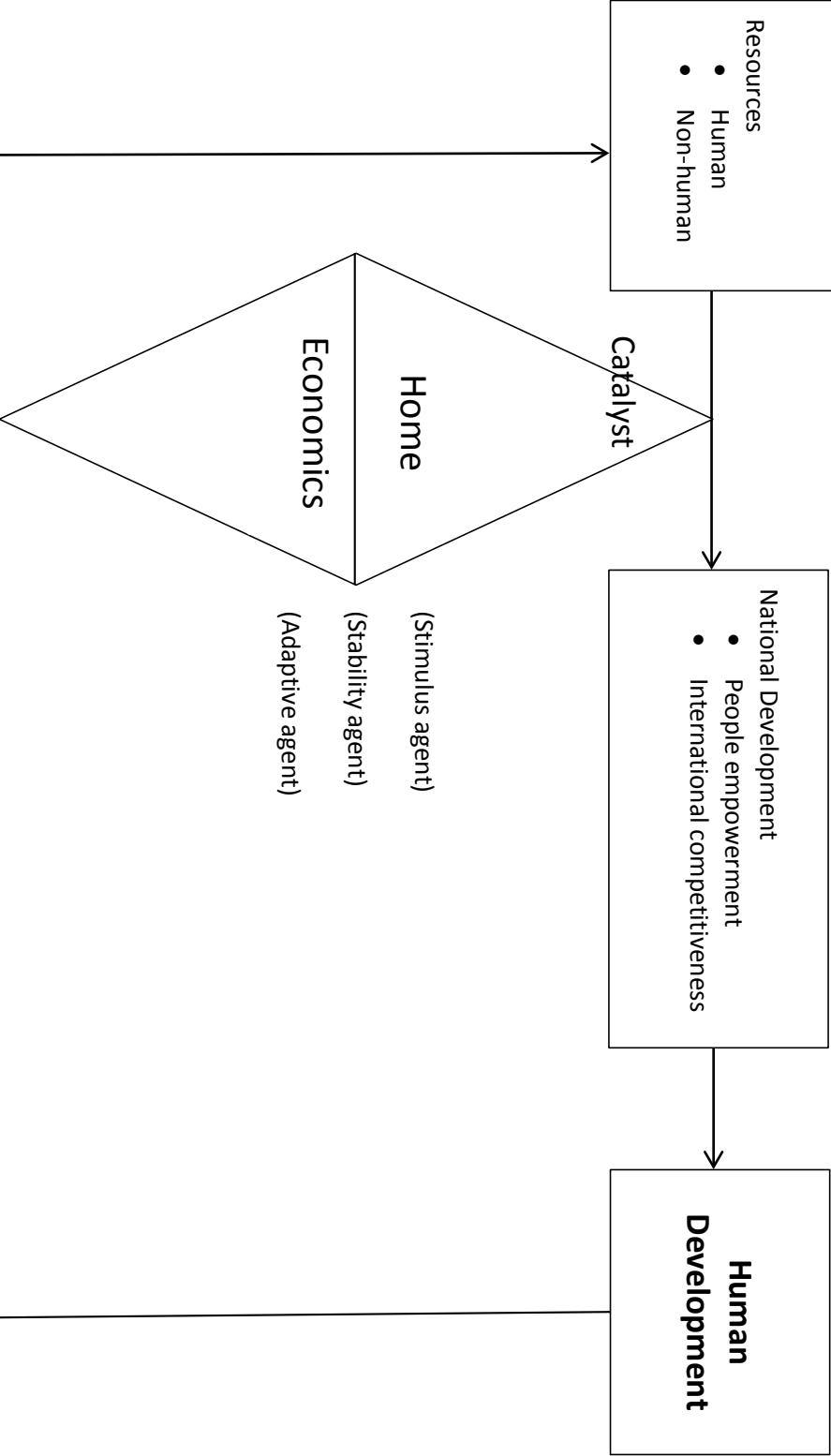


Figure 2. Home Economics as a Catalyst of Change toward National Development

speeds up or slows down the change. Home economics enter into the change process by facilitating progress. “(As) the change agent vibrant with life and energy, (it) lends impetus to promote and accelerate change for progress” (Matsushima, 1989). As an agent of change, a catalyst performs these functions (modified from Matsuhima, 1989).

1. Stimulus agent

A catalyst can provoke or initiate positive changes in individual or family life thus speeding up the rate of exchange toward national development. They set new directions for their families for the improvement of their lives. “Change is derived from a rational decision to directly affect family living. Home economists (must) take the initiative to solving family problems effectively in order to improve family living, rather than simply adjusting to present planes of living” (Matsushima, 1989). Home economists have initiated changes in individual and family conditions by:

- a. providing knowledge and skills which can be used by families to improve living conditions (income, health and nutrition);
- b. improving household technology in order for women to have opportunities to earn a living; and
- c. campaigning for the recognition of the value and capabilities of women

Home economists assist children, youth and adults especially the women to learn better skills for accomplishing daily tasks. Emphasis should be given to appropriate training in the knowledge and skills geared towards international competitiveness and sustainable development (Badir, 1989).

It is essential for home economists to become intimately involved in empowering women, i.e., in demanding their rights as citizens to economic security through productive activities. Home economists must recognize that the condition of women must be improved, particularly the lack of power of women over their own destinies. Home economists must be intimately involved with the issues and concern of women. This includes documenting the conditions of women, of advocating change and in ultimately conducting the research and in practicing the profession to the end of helping women and children to a better quality of life. To accomplish long lasting sustainable development, it is necessary to consider women’s involvement in developing, administering, and evaluating the programs being introduced to help them meet the challenges of their lives (Badir, 1989).

Since the care and welfare of children are primarily a female responsibility and since home economists work intimately with women, it must be assumed that much is required in the way of knowledge about sanitation and nutrition and information dissemination by home economists (Badir, 1989). This brings about an improvement of health and medical standards

2. Adaptive agent

There are instances when the possibility for movement is in the direction of adjusting to a changing environment rather than initiating change. Changes like technological advancement and raised standard of living can produce stresses on the family. By studying the family carefully, home economists look for ways to help families cope with the changes. For example, home economists are:

- a. helping individuals and families deal with the growing consumerist world through consumer education;

- b. equipping families to cope with changing family structure and roles brought about by the increasing of single parent households;
- c. adapting household technology to the needs of families and the effective utilization of these new high-tech resources (time, money, etc.) saved with the use of technology;
- d. assisting family entrepreneurs adapt to the changes brought about by the growing internationalization of the economy; and
- e. helping rural families cope with industrialization through efficient resource management.

Development produces problems which impact on families especially the rural families. Among these are excessive increase in population, destruction of the physical/natural environment and a host of social problems. For example, the growing number of women joining the work force produced changes in family structures like decrease in family size, family breakdown, and poor child rearing practices (Soon, 1989). Researches on families provide baseline data for designing realistic solutions to these problems (Nacarayan, 1995).

Due to the changes in development perspective particularly that of industrialization, rural families face new challenges in terms of employment and work. Home economics courses address these issues and concerns. Home production is the key to rural development. Home economics help rural families add much needed value to primary production and generate income based on all the principles of good home management translated into small-scale, home-based, rural enterprises (Stephens, 1989).

Through home economics, families are able to adapt to changing environmental circumstances brought about by new technologies in information and communication, household equipment, health and medicine, and others. Technological advancement has led to the redefinition of the nature, quality and meaning of work in and outside of the household. It has also led to the growing urbanization of communities. Home economists assist families in coping with technological know-how, critically evaluating technological development from the perspective of its impact on family life and helping families to adequately adjust to, take advantage of and continue to work toward technological development (Boyd, 1989).

Home economists must be involved in identifying the technologies which will be most appropriate to women's needs and circumstances; how they can be effectively introduced on the massive scale; determining whether the labor-serving devices actually result in significant reduction in time and effort; and instructing users to properly utilize the time saved with the use of the device. Home economists have a role to play in the development of income generation activities which can be worked into the available time created by the new technologies, but which do not require long periods of time away from the domestic arena (Badir, 1989).

3. Stability agent

Not all changes are for the better. Sometimes even the seemingly good ones turn out to be not beneficial after all. Home economists need to study carefully the changes happening in the society and analyze the repercussions of these changes. Home economists strive for a steady supply of goods and services to meet the basic needs of the people. In order to achieve this, there are instances when it is better to emphasize the cultural heritage of skills, techniques and values rather than simply follow change. This may slow down the rate of change for national development but this results in a more stable and sustainable development. Home economists

- a. stress the prevention of moral values and professional ethics;
- b. emphasize the human and cultural aspects of technology management; and
- c. promote the utilization of appropriate and efficient local technology (skills and techniques) in daily living.

As home economists assist in empowering the people to participate in their own development, they must also strengthen their ethical responsibility. Ethical responsibility involves “thought about the consequences, both short- and long-term, of the act of and alternative actions that could have been taken” (Spritze, 1989). Home economics lessons in school must always include ethical application in the day-to-day activities of the child (Spritze, 1989). Emphasis should be given on developing student abilities to make defensible decisions and to participate in social decision-making. We can build on this capability by providing learning situations that promote critical thinking about the daily activities which are usually taken for granted and considered mundane and ordinary (Boyd, 1989). To be effective in imparting these, home economists must live these ethical responsibilities in their daily lives.

Home economics education has always stressed the preservation of family values in its subject matters in all levels. It realizes and emphasizes that values formation and education start at the home with the family members serving as primary socializing agents. It aims to promote this through parent education, family counselling and other support services.

Home economics, with its understanding of the properties and quality of food as well as its understanding of the preservation, storage and preparation of food is needed if food security is to become a reality. New crop varieties, new technologies of storage and preservation require some understanding of the cultural meaning of food, the likes and dislikes of individuals, the consequences of change in established methods of preparing food. Home economists’ knowledge and understanding of the wants and needs of their families will ultimately make or break the success of a new product (Badir, 1989).

In nutrition, effective programs need to be prepared with an understanding of the food culture of a particular area. Intervention programs should be based on the existing nutritional practices like the family meal patterns and food supply available within the country (Gloria, 1995).

These transitional orientations or roles of home economics as a catalyst arise because of the basic need of the home economist to be alert to change yet coupled with the desire for stability (Matsushima, 1989).

Home economics performs another important role as a link among the other catalysts and the individuals and families. Home economics is not the sole catalytic agent for national development. The primary change agent is the government which sets the national direction and strategies for development, promulgates public policies geared towards progress, and designs the overall structure of the development agenda. Home economics serves as a bridge that links government and other institutions to families and vice versa. The role that home economists play is two-fold: that which translate macro-level policies to micro-level implementation and that which assesses micro-level needs to be used as baseline data for policy-making (Tupay, 1980).

This is a challenge open to home economists to take responsibility in working with the government and organizations in policy planning. There is a need to forge partnership with planners and policy-makers on local values, local needs, and local processes of participatory planning (Umali, 1980). Home economists are the ideal persons to draft programs of action to solve problems on neighbourhood and

community, housing, management of family resources, homemaking and family and child development (Hopkinson, 1980).

Home economists also serve as coordinator of the implementing team of community development programs. Policy decisions on the national level can only have far-reaching effects when these reach the home and community level (Marcos, 1980). Having a broad view of family and community needs, they can assist in identifying areas of cooperation with other fields and sectors in implementing the development plans (Oni, 1980). There is no more appropriate person who can assist the policy maker in drafting and implementing plans to improve the life of families in rural and urban areas other than the home economist who studies the basic needs and problems of families.

CONCLUSION

There exist a direct correspondence between home economics and national development stemming from shared goals. The goal and true measure of development is the improvement of the quality of life of the people. Likewise, home economics studies families for the purpose of equipping them to improve their lives. Focusing on basic needs and broadening its scope through its integrative perspective and approach on all aspects of family living for a better life, home economics has a vital position in national development.

As a catalyst for change towards national development, home economics tries to maintain a stable rate of change for progress while initiating changes and helping families adapt to these changes. The contributions of home economics to the development agenda of the country is extensive. Home economics relate to almost all the sectoral strategies planned to achieve the desired development targets by 1998.

Knowing and understanding its position in affecting national development, Sen. Orly Mercado in his speech at a convention of home economists (1995) said that "Home economics should enjoy the prominence it so richly deserves." But however great and grand the role appears to be, it only becomes valid by what we do to actualize it. The role lives in us. In the final analysis, what people will see and remember is not the role and contribution of the discipline of home economics but our individual role and contribution as home economists in making life better for all.

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APPENDIX

CONTRIBUTIONS OF HOME ECONOMICS TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

These are the specific contributions of home economics to the policies to national development targets and priorities, policies and strategies identified in the MTPDP 93-98

Poverty Alleviation and Employment Generation	Selected National Development Policies and Strategies (MTPDP 93-98)	Response of Home Economics (actual and possible)
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Promote sustained growth in incomes and employment among the poor. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Boost farm, off-farm, and non-farm incomes b. Design education and manpower training programs c. Implement effective program for rehabilitation of disaster victims 2. Provide safety nets for displacements arising from structural adjustments. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Establish mechanisms to address the needs of vulnerable groups b. Continue overseas employment program 3. Ensure effective response to natural and man-made calamities and disasters <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Assist local government units in providing relief and rehabilitation to disaster victims 4. Direct public resources and efforts toward basic social services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Entrepreneurship training offered by DA-ATI and other organizations to poor families -Assistance in establishing cooperatives and livelihood projects in individual families and communities -HE research on food, shelter & clothing needs of families and coping mechanisms of families under difficult circumstances -HE research in family conditions, resource management, entrepreneurship serve as inputs in policy making -HE extension helps bring the mechanisms for economic empowerment to the community/people. -Skills and entrepreneurship training for families as an alternative for working overseas -Skills training for OCWs to professionalize status -HE services like family counselling on coping with the separation of parent, or financial planning and other family concerns -HE researches and services in nutrition, shelter planning, food technology and safety. -HE is one sector providing various services to families in the areas of research, education and training, advocacy, and actual de-

- a. adopt an integrated multi-sectoral approach to the delivery of social service
 - b. in health, nutrition and family planning give priority to community-based, comprehensive nutrition services, groups with high health risks like adolescents, promotion of access to safe water
 - c. in education, institutionalize early childhood care and development and providing continuing education in life skills for adults and OSYs
 - d. in the area of social welfare, prioritize services for families, women, children, etc. and the economic upliftment of indigenous cultural communities
 - e. in the area of housing, give priority to community-based housing and site development activities, promotion of a more balanced population distribution, expansion and strengthening of existing community, family, women and child welfare programs
- livery of social programs
 -HE programs in nutrition provide research; formal, non-formal, and informal teaching of nutrition and food safety; and advocacy for the promotion of good nutrition and health
 -HE spearheads child development programs, and formal and non-formal vocational training for adults and OSYs
 -HE extension provides entrepreneurial training to all types of communities.
 -HE researches on family provide information on the more effective conduct of social welfare programs
 -HE researches on housing needs and shelter requirements of families help in providing adequate housing facilities

Human Resource Development and Nation Building

1. Strengthen the family as a basic social institution and the fundamental source of positive values and attitudes
 - a. Adopt the total family approach in services
 - b. Promote responsible parenthood
 - c. Enhance basic social, moral and cultural values within the family
 - d. Develop linkages with other sectors.
- HE education in the formal, non-formal setting directly teaches personal and family values like responsible parenthood, etc.
 -Studies on families aid in developing approaches for the programs for delivery of services, children's welfare and others
 -HE extension programs mobilize families

- e. Expand alternative development approaches for addressing specific needs of children
 - f. Intensify organizing efforts toward mobilizing families
2. Strengthen the moral fiber of the nation
- a. Adopt more coordinated and effective approaches to strengthen media and home based values education
 - b. Incorporate values development in skills training
 - c. Develop programs that harness the national culture
 - d. Promote responsible credit behavior in repaying housing, livelihood and other loans
3. Focus education and manpower development on meeting the changing demand for basic, mid-level and higher-level knowledge and skills
- a. Strengthen linkages between education/training institutions and industry
 - b. Strengthen non-formal education and community-based skills training for the poor
 - c. Develop an entrepreneurial mass base for self-employment
 - d. Improve access of women, cultural communities and disabled persons to formal and non-formal education
4. Promote balance between population, resources and environment
- HE advocates promotion of values in media especially for children and women
-All HE programs include values development
-HE studies promotes national culture in food, clothing and shelter
-Consumer education teaches financial planning
- HE education in all levels directly addresses this
-HE extension programs conduct entrepreneurship training and skills development in communities for women and all types of groups
- HE education include courses in population education and its consequences to family

ronment to ensure sustainable resources and environment
development

5. Develop and expand schemes to ensure the integration of gender-responsive concerns -Offering HELE and THE to both sexes is a response to gender sensitivity concerns