

## WFWP Philippines: Women Leading Change, Promoting Health, Protecting Lives

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The Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP) Philippines is rekindling the babaylan in its women empowerment programs. The babaylan is the pre-colonial Philippines' indigenous spiritual leader and healer. In partnership with Sun Hwa International Academy, it held the "Babaylan Spirit 2026: Women Leading Change, Promoting Health, Protecting Lives" in raising awareness on pressing health issues such as HIV, and promoting a culture of responsibility and care within the community.

Held at the Sun Hwa International Academy on March 27, 2026, the program was participated by 44 attendees, composed of faculty members, students, and parents. Two key issues were addressed by this event: the need for stronger women leadership and the urgent need for health awareness, particularly regarding HIV. By combining empowerment and education, the program provided practical knowledge and inspiration for participants to make responsible choices and influence others positively.



Mariflor Gavarán, Principal of Sun Hwa International Academy Philippines, opened the program and warmly greeted participants. Like the babaylan, she emphasized the role of women in shaping values today. Dr. Jaime O. Vergara, President of Sun Hwa International Academy, highlighted the importance of collaboration between institutions in promoting education and health awareness.

The first session, "Babaylan Spirit: Women Inspiring Women," was presented by Prof. Juvy V. Delmonte, National President of Women's Federation for World Peace Philippines. She spoke about the strength and influence of women as modern-day "babaylan," or leaders who guide and uplift others. The second session, "HIV Awareness in the 21st Century: Education, Prevention, and Breaking the Stigma," was delivered by Dr. Janet L. Kabayama, Secretary of WFWP Philippines; Dentist and Nurse (Philippines and USA). She addressed the growing concern of HIV cases and the importance of education in preventing its spread. Her talk was both informative and eye-opening.



Erika Shera, Grade 3 Teacher at Sun Hwa International Academy, shared her reflections: "We are the spark of hope. Women are not fearful or emotional." Ronnie Sodusta, Chairman of Sun Hwa International Academy, delivered a special message encouraging continued collaboration and action. He noted that programs like this are essential in building a stronger and healthier community. Edna Butardo, Elementary Department Head, thanked the organizers and participants and emphasized the importance of applying the lessons learned in daily life.