

Vicky knows first-hand what it means to be marginalized within one's own country or community. She had polio as a toddler and learned to walk as a child with great difficulty. Considered physically handicapped, to go to school she had to prove everyday that she had a right to be there. When Vicky was twelve, her older brother, a labor organizer working to help fellow peasant workers during the Marcos dictatorship, was assassinated. Vicky became the English-speaking interpreter for her parents as they pursued justice for her brother through the court system.

In 2001, Vicky decided to go back to school and in 2004 received a Masters Degree from World Learning's School for International Training (SIT) graduate program in International Management (Vermont, USA). While she was studying at SIT, she met Mary Hensley, a fellow graduate student, who had been in the Peace Corps in the Philippines in the 1970's.

In 2004, when Mary returned to the Philippines to promote the idea of marketing rice as a high-end retail product through the Cordillera Heirloom Rice Project, she asked Vicky with her background as a community development expert to facilitate the first village meetings with the farmers. Impressed by the farmers' enthusiasm for the idea, Vicky recognized that the farmers would need institutional and organizational support in order to take advantage of the opportunity. So in 2005, she founded RICE, Inc. to support the capacity building efforts of the farmers.



One of the refrains Vicky hears on an almost daily basis in terms of her work with Cordillera Project is "it can't be done" or "no one has ever done this before." When the project was first proposed in 2004, government officials and development workers said exactly that: native rice has never been sold commercially; farmers could never work together across tribal groups or provincial

boundaries to produce the commercial volume needed.

By 2010, the project had expanded to include farmers in 90 villages in 18 municipalities across three provinces. This is a testament to what Vicky has accomplished with great determination, a small operating budget, part-time staff and committed village farmers.



Other Related Work

* pioneering member of a GO and NGO taskforce to address trafficking of children in the sex and drug trades.

* teacher of English and life skills to refugee children in World Relief's PREP program at the Philippine Refugee Processing Center (Morong, Bataan) eventually becoming one of the first Philippine nationals to be promoted to instructional supervisor in that program.

* teacher-training supervisor in Cambodia with Save the Children/ USAID until the project was cancelled due to civil unrest.

*Executive Assistant to the Undersecretary for General Administration and Labor Relations, Department of Labor and Employment (Philippine National Government) as a special projects coordinator for improving internal processes and customer satisfaction.

