THRU THE YEARS, UNDP HAS PROVIDED
MANY OF ITS PROGRAMS IN PHILIPPINES,
TRANSFORMING THE CEDAW INTO
A CRUCIAL DEVELOPMENT ISSUE

Gender equality is well advanced in the Philippines. The country scores
well on international gender equality measures and indices, but more
is needed to sustain the achievements and to overcome remaining
challenges.

Despite a favorable policy environment – the Philippines is signatory to
international human rights instruments and has successfully enacted
policies and laws for the protection and promotion of women’s rights -
the implementation of policies appears uneven and slow.

More than ten million Filipino women still live today in poverty, with rural
and indigenous women being the most vulnerable. Maternal mortality
and access to reproductive health care services are among the most
pressing concerns in the country. Eleven women die every day due to
pregnancy and child birth-related causes. Women’s representation in
politics, though improving, continues to be low: less than 20% of the seats
in Congress and 13% in the Senate are occupied by women. According to
the 2004-2010 Report on the Convention on the Elimination of all forms
of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), 1 in 5 Filipino women or 4.6
million have experienced physical violence since age 15. The International
Labor Organization (ILO) reports that less than half (45.9%) of working age
women are able to access decent and productive employment, compared
to 3 in every 4 male (72.6%) of working age. In the agricultural sector,
men receive 20% higher wages than women. According to the HIV/AIDS
Registry of the Department of Health, 24% of the reported 5,233 cases as
of June 2010 are women. Gender disparities in education favor girls, with
higher enrolment and completion rates than boys, which compromise the development of
gender-equal education opportunities.

The gaps in gender equality hinder the achievement of the Millennium Development
Goals by 2015 in the Philippines. The Goals for
which progress is reported as slow are the ones
where the needs and status of women and
girls are given low priority. Targets on maternal
health and access to reproductive health are
among the least likely to be met.

UNDP is the UN’s global development network, advocating for change and connecting
countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people
build a better life. In the Philippines, UNDP fosters human development for peace and prosperity. Working with central and local Governments as well as civil
society, and building on global best practices, UNDP strengthens capacities of women, men and institutions to empower them to achieve the Millennium
Development Goals and the objectives of the Philippine Mid-term Development Plan.

Strategies to Make a Difference

UNDP is committed to making gender equality a reality. Gender
equality is firmly recognized as a basic human right and support is
provided to Government and other stakeholders to include gender
and human rights in policies and programs towards the achievement
of sustainable human development. To this end, UNDP focuses on
three main areas:

- **Policy Advocacy** - Thru the years, UNDP has provided
  key support to the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) in the implementation of gender mainstreaming
  initiatives and advocacy efforts for key national legislation.

Since 2007, UNDP participates in the “UN Joint Programme on
CEDAW Concluding Comments” to support national efforts to strengthen
the national machinery for the advancement of women’s rights.

The Magna Carta of Women, translating the CEDAW into
national policy, was signed into law in 2009 with support from
the UN. It is a historic step forward in upholding women’s rights,
promoting gender equality and ensuring the elimination of
discrimination against women. The law grants women, especially
those in the marginalized sectors, the full enjoyment of their rights.

In July 2010, PCW, in partnership with UNDP, launched the
Implementing Rules and Regulations for the Magna
Carta of Women together with the UNDP 2010 Asia-
Pacific Human Development Report on “Equal Rights, Equal
Opportunities: Progress for all”. This potent implementation
mechanism leads the way for the advancement and economic
empowerment of women, and calls among other for gender
balance in Government positions within the next five years.

UNDP has supported the Office of the Presidential Adviser on
the Peace Process (OPAPP) and partnered with women
and peace advocates in the development of
the Philippine National Action Plan on
Women, Peace and Security to implement
the UN Security Council Resolutions 1325
and 1820, the first of its kind in Asia. The
creation of a National Steering Committee,
co-chaired by OPAPP and the PCW, will
intensify the efforts to respect and protect the
fundamental freedoms of women, including
the right to protection and security in armed
crisis and the right to participate in policy
and decision making in peace processes.
**En-gendering Programmes** - The UN System in the Philippines has a strong and active UN Gender Mainstreaming Committee that offers technical support to UN programmes and ensures that gender equality and women's empowerment are at the centre of the UN agenda.

UNDP promotes gender mainstreaming in all of its projects and activities and subjected itself to a comprehensive Participatory Gender Audit of both programme and operations in 2009 that sets the basis for a stronger gender strategy.

According to the 2009 Report on the Classification of Official Development Assistance (ODA) projects according to Gender Responsiveness prepared by the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), 86% of UNDP's projects are gender responsive or sensitive.

UNDP works with its local partners to set up models of gender-responsive practices in the delivery of basic services like potable water, health, and other social services, especially those related to the MDGs.

From 2007 to 2009, UNDP has provided support to NEDA through the project “Poverty Monitoring and Mapping” to track MDG progress by generating and consolidating sex-disaggregated data. This information allows gender-responsive planning and programming in the MDG localization.

In partnership with the Supreme Court of the Philippines and Civil Society groups, UNDP has supported human-rights based capacity development for the key agencies of the justice sector to strengthen their investigative mandates and the enforcement of new laws against gender violence.

UNDP is working closely with national and local governments to improve the country's preparedness and capacity to address the negative effects of Climate Change. Women and girls are among the most vulnerable groups to natural disasters. UNDP has contributed to the creation of Microfinance Funds to provide rural women with financial access to solar lanterns and cooking stoves. Community-based programmes on renewable energy sources provide women with both clean energy services and new opportunities for livelihood and employment.

**Empowering through Capacity Development** - The empowerment of women is central to human development. Since 2009, UNDP has been implementing the programme, "Promoting Leadership and Mitigating the Negative Impacts of HIV and AIDS on Human Development" to strengthen capacities of government institutions, civil society organizations and people living with HIV to halt and reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS. With support from the UNDP Asia Pacific Regional Center and in partnership with the NGO “Babae Plus”, leadership programmes for women and girls living with HIV have empowered 40 positive women from across the country to eliminate social barriers, stigma and discrimination. Similar efforts exist in most UNDP projects.

**Matters of Fact**

**Moro Women in Conflict Transformation**

Parts of the island of Mindanao in Southern Philippines has been in conflict for more than 40 years. In its current 4th phase, UNDP's ACT for Peace programme, with support from the Governments of Australia, Spain, New Zealand as well as the European Union, has supported peace advocates in their peace-building efforts and the progressive transformation of conflict-affected areas into Peace and Development Communities (PDCs). Moro women have played a significant role in this success. Ms Diocolano, a former Moro Guerrilla leader, has led the way for stronger women's participation in the transformation process by helping former combatants become peace and development advocates.

Gender equality is not only one of the MDGs, it is an important means for realizing all the other Goals. UNDP Philippines is committed to strengthen the capacities of all its partners to adopt approaches that advance women's rights and recognize their unique contribution to human development.

**To contribute to this initiative, or to find out more about UNDP Philippines work on gender and development, please visit our website at www.undp.org.ph or contact Ms. Nerea Sanchez, Management Support Unit, at nerea.sanchez@undp.org**