

## GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN THE PHILIPPINES

### 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.



### 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 conflict 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.



*Hadja Giobay Diocolano signs an agreement with ACT for Peace Programme for the establishment of a Barangay Health Station in Maguindanao. Formerly a part of the armed movement, Giobay now leads efforts to build peace in her community*

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.

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**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](http://www.undp.org.ph) or contact Ms. Nerea Sanchez, Management Support Unit, at [nerea.sanchez@undp.org](mailto:nerea.sanchez@undp.org)**

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