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Mainstreaming Gender Through Gender Audit

The Philippines is recognized for making significant progress in advancing gender equality and women empowerment, according to the Asian Development Bank (ADB). But much more needs to be done in order to truly minimize discrimination against women, especially in the rural areas.

The Philippine Constitution of 1987 affirms the equality of men and women. With this as its policy guiding light, the government sought to mainstream gender concerns in its policies and programs starting with the adoption of the Philippine Development Plan for Women in 1987. In 1994, the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (NCRFW) formally introduced gender mainstreaming in government as a strategy to implement the gender equality policy of the state.

Since then, government agencies have made various efforts to make gender mainstreaming a regular commitment. Notable achievements include the allocation of a GAD budget in all government agencies since 1995, and the enactment of several laws protecting women's rights and promoting their role in national development.

Despite these efforts, the OECD Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) notes that gender imbalances

remain. According to the 2009 SIGI Country Notes on the Philippines, customary laws that discriminate against women still prevail, especially in the rural areas. Likewise, a joint report by several international development organizations describes the Philippines as a country of "paradox and promise" with regard to gender equality, noting the country's favourable policy environment and respectable scores on international gender indices vis-a-vis the need to sustain achievements, overcome challenges, and fully implement gender policies and laws.

In its 2001 book, *The Rationale Behind Gender Mainstreaming*, the NCRFW identified the need for parameters with which government agencies can measure the status of their mainstreaming efforts and assess the extent of their accomplishments.

Gender audit in gender mainstreaming

According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), Participatory Gender Audit (PGA) is a tool and process that aims to promote organizational learning on how to effectively implement gender mainstreaming in policies, programs and structures, and to assess the extent to which policies have been institutionalized at the level of the organization, work unit, and individual. The tool can enhance the organization's collective capacity to examine its activities from a gender perspective, and identify strengths and weaknesses in promoting gender equality issues.

The ILO said, moreover, that gender mainstreaming monitors and assesses the relative progress made in gender mainstreaming, helps to build organizational ownership for gender equality initiatives, and sharpens organizational learning through a process of team building, information sharing, and reflection on gender. Often, a gender audit works as an entry point for discussing wider substantive and operational concerns.

In 2007, PGA was introduced in the Philippines through a series of training courses participated in by representatives of UN agencies, academe, unions, and nongovernment organizations. NEDA was among the government agencies trained on PGA in 2009.



Objectives of PGA

According to the ILO's 2008 publication, *ILO Participatory Gender Audit: A tool for organizational change*, PGA aims to:

- Generate understanding of the extent to which gender mainstreaming has been internalized and acted upon by staff
- Assess the extent of gender mainstreaming in terms of the development and delivery of gender-sensitive products and services;
- Identify and share information on mechanisms, practices and attitudes that have made a positive contribution to mainstreaming gender in an organization;
- Assess the level of resources allocated and spent on gender mainstreaming and gender activities;
- Examine the extent to which human resources policies are gender-sensitive;
- Examine the staff sex balance at different levels of an organization;
- Set up the initial baseline of performance on gender mainstreaming in an organization with a view to introducing an ongoing process of benchmarking to measure progress in promoting gender equality;
- Measure progress in implementing action plans on gender mainstreaming and recommend revisions as needed ; and
- Identify room for improvement and suggest possible strategies to better implement the action plan.

The PGA method is based on four pillars of current thinking on gender and organizational change, namely: gender and development approach; qualitative self assessment; adult experiential learning; and the learning organization theory.

According to NEDA SDS Assistant Director Cleofe Pastrana, a participatory gender audit has the following features:

- *Participatory approach* that encourages active involvement of everyone.
- *Diagnostic self-assessment* to evaluate what is right and wrong, and what could have been done better.
- *Collective exercise* in the form of workshops and interviews.
- *Reflective analysis* on the dimensions of gender mainstreaming.
- *Promotes learning and ownership.*
- *Consensus building.*
- *Preserves confidentiality.* Results should not go out of the organization.
- *Mainly subjective* based on perceptions.

Participatory Gender Audits in the ILO

Since October 2001, the ILO has been conducting participatory gender audits in accordance with its Mainstreaming Policy. The audits aimed to promote organizational learning on how to implement gender mainstreaming in the policies, programmes and structures of the institution, and to assess the progress made in achieving gender equality.

Some of the key findings were as follows:

- Though committed in principle to gender equality, conceptual clarity on gender concepts and gender mainstreaming found to be rather limited
- Gender is still considered an “add on” – need to make it “visible”, “specific”, “explicit”, “concrete” and integrated
- Limited exposure to gender mainstreaming tools and methodologies
- How to integrate gender into technical areas is the “million dollar question” posed by all
- Need to develop mechanisms for accountability on gender mainstreaming
- Lack of specific gender indicators that would help track progress made or obstacles encountered
- Lack of consistency and sustainability of gender mainstreaming throughout institutional structures and mechanisms
- Need for management to explore ways of highlighting and giving recognition to good practices in gender mainstreaming

Conclusion

The achievement of many of the MDGs is intrinsically linked to the achievement of gender equality. With gender mainstreaming as a strategy to implement the Philippine government's gender equality policy, the country is making progress in the promotion of gender equality and women empowerment.

Through PGA, government agencies and institutions should be better able to evaluate the efficiency and efficacy of their internal practices and related support systems in the practice of gender mainstreaming. At the same time, the process will help identify and address gaps and challenges, as well as documenting good practices in working toward gender equality. ■ *Jyasmin Calub*

Sources:

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