

Gender Profile of the Philippines

Summary

Current Situation of Women in the Philippines

The current situation of women in the Philippines is best described as having sharp contradictions. The Filipino women may be considered as one of the most advanced vis-à-vis the women in other countries, in the areas of academic, professional, politics and legislation. However, they also suffer from domestic violence, economic disadvantages, discrimination at the workplace, exploitation as migrant workers, and as prostituted women and displacement brought about by the intermittent wars in conflict affected areas.

The Philippines is the only country in Asia to have closed the gender gap on both education and health and is one of only six (6) in the world to have done so. Moreover, the Philippines' scores on political empowerment continues to improve as its economic indicators such as estimated income, labor force participation and income equality for similar work. The Philippines is the only country in the world where women have parity to men in senior management roles. However, despite the remarkable achievements above, thousands of Filipino women suffer from sex and other gender related abuses

While Filipino women suffer the same domestic violence, and economic disadvantages all over the country, women in some parts of Mindanao and other conflict affected areas in the Philippines suffer more. As in most countries affected by displacement brought about by armed conflict, women and children make up the great majority of the displaced population in the Philippines, and experience additional vulnerabilities. The intermittent wars affect women's livelihood, health, education and family life, among other things.

In the area of legislative reforms, the Philippines has ensured the protection of women against economic, social and political forms of discrimination. The country has passed important laws like the Rape Victim Assistance and

Protection Act of 1998, the Anti Sexual Harassment Act of 1995 and the Anti-Violence Against Women and Their Children Act of 2004. The Philippines also has a vibrant women's movement which is recognized for its work in the international and national levels.

Government Policy on Gender

The Philippine government adopted the Philippine Plan for Gender Responsive Development (PPGD) 1995-2025, a 30 year strategic plan that translated the Beijing Platform for Action into policies, strategies, programs and projects for Filipino women. To operationalize the PPGD, the Philippine government, with its partners in the non-government organizations, and the academe formulated the Framework Plan for Women (FPW) in 2001.

The FPW has the following three (3) priority areas: (i) promotion of women's economic empowerment, (ii) protection and advancement of women's rights, and (iii) promotion of gender responsive governance.

The Philippines is one of the few countries in the world that has adopted a GAD Policy Budget that requires all government agencies (including local government units) to utilize at least five percent of their respective total budgets for programs, activities and projects that address the needs and uphold rights of women.

National Machinery

The National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (NCRFW) was established on 7 January 1975 and it serves as an advisory body to the President. Among its mandate is to review, evaluate and recommend measures, including priorities to ensure the full integration of women for economic, social and cultural development at national, regional and international levels. It is also mandated to ensure further equality between men and women.

The NCRFW has a Board of Commissioners which is headed by a Chairperson. The Board sets policies, programs, thrusts and rules toward the achievement of the vision and mission of the Commission. The Chairperson is

responsible for ensuring the overall implementation of the policies and programs of the Commission. The Commission's Executive Director, on the other hand, oversees the planning and implementation of the Commission's operations. The Executive Director is assisted by two Deputy Executive Directors and five Division chiefs which handle the following divisions: (i) Policy Advocacy and Analysis, (ii) Technical Services, (iii) Monitoring and Evaluation, (iv) Information Resources Management, and, (v) Administration and Finance

Situation of Women/Gender in Education

Female students in the Philippines fare very well in the area of education. Relative to male students, females have a higher participation rate in the elementary and secondary levels. Moreover, female students have a better cohort survival rate in elementary and secondary levels. This is because the drop out rate for males is higher than that of the female students. The female students' completion rate is also higher than that of the male students' in both levels. Poor families tend to make boys work because they are considered to be more physically able than girls. Since boys generally perform poorer in school, it seems easier for parents to make them quit and get a job. Moreover, girls value education more than boys do because they no longer see themselves merely staying at home when they grow up, they expect to have careers. Boys tend to assume they would be able to work even without finishing school.

The results of recent National Board Examinations show that female examinees scored better than male examinees in most of the engineering courses. On the other hand, male examinees fared better than female examinees in medicine, midwifery, nursing, nutrition-diabetics and social work. Female students can excel on areas where men traditionally excel on and vice versa. At the post graduate level, more females than males are enrolled in graduate courses.

Overall, in terms of basic and functional literacy, females have higher rates than males, except in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

Situation of Women/Gender in Health

Across the regions in the Philippines, women have varying levels of access to health facilities during delivery. While 69.5% of live births occurred in health facilities in the National Capital Region, only 10.7% occurred in the same facilities in CARAGA. Consequently, the number of deliveries assisted by trained health professionals vary according to the region. CARAGA has the least number of deliveries assisted by health professionals while the NCR has the most number.

The Philippines has a number of women in especially difficult circumstances. These include (i) women in armed conflict, (ii) women victims of domestic violence, (iii) women in prostitution, (iv) women in prison, and (v) single women. In general, women are put in disadvantaged position due to the differences in gender roles. This limits their access to resources and their ability to provide and protect their health.

Another health related issue affecting women is the violence committed against them and their children. Violence against women and their children (VAWC) is an act or a series of act committed by any person against his wife, former wife, a woman with whom he has or had a sexual dating relationship, or with whom he has a child, or against the woman's child. This act may have been committed within or outside the family residence resulting to (i) physical violence (bodily or physical harm), (ii) sexual violence, (iii) psychological violence, and (iv) economic abuse

The Department of Health has identified the following factors that lead to poor health among Filipino women: (i) low social status of women, (ii) reproductive risks, (iii) inadequate gender-responsive services and facilities for women, (iv) environmental hazards and contaminants, and (v) increased participation of women in the workforce (reproductive health risk at work especially during pregnancy and lactation)

Situation of Women/Gender in Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries

The percent distribution of female hired workers in agriculture is lower than that of the males. On the other hand, there are more unpaid female family workers than male family workers.

Despite the important role played by women in Philippine agriculture, most of the land titles of land owning households are in the name of their husbands. This may be explained by the patriarchal system in the Philippines, where men are traditionally believed to be the main breadwinners while women are responsible for childbearing. In the Philippines, women are still strongly tied to their traditional roles as mother, wife, and housekeeper.

There are more men than women employed in forest based industries as well as in the fisheries sector. Women are engaged in almost all areas of rice production. Besides the actual rice production, women are also primarily tasked to prepare food to be brought to the field during meal time. Women's scope of influence extends beyond household maintenance, it also includes decisions relating to budget allocation for farm input expenses and productive activities. Most of the women are directly involved in capital procurement.

Among the individuals of farming households who out migrated, a higher proportion of females than males migrated. Although rural to urban migration occurs, domestic to international migration is more prevalent. Female migrants mainly worked as domestic helpers and entertainers within the Philippines and in the Middle East, Italy, Singapore, and Hong Kong. Others worked as factory workers in Taiwan, Japan and Korea.

Situation of Women/Gender in Economic Activities

While women's labor force participation rate is close to 50%, their rate is still lower than that of men. Filipino women are prevented from entering the labor force because of the gender role stereotyping, particularly in relation to reproductive responsibilities. Women have slightly higher unemployment rate than men, except in 2005 and 2006. Compared with its neighbors in the region, the Philippines has the highest percentage of female professionals and technical workers. The Philippines is the only country where women have parity to men in senior management roles.

The lack of employment in the country has led millions of women to leave and work abroad as overseas Filipino workers (OFWs). From 1998-2006, women outnumbered men in terms of newly hired OFWs. Women OFWs outnumber men as

professionals, clerks, service and sales workers, laborers and unskilled workers. Working overseas has brought a lot of difference in the lives of Filipino women. For instance, those working as domestic workers are now getting remuneration for domestic work which they have been doing in their own homes but were not credited for any economic value. The women's ability to contribute financially to their families has not only empowered them but also gave them a greater sense of self-worth.

Situation of Women/Gender in Political and Public Life

As early as 1937, Filipino women were already allowed to vote and stand for election. Further, as early as 1941, a woman has already been elected into Parliament (the first in the region).

The Philippines takes pride in having numerous Filipino women who played significant roles in the United Nations to advance women's global agenda. As early as 1964, Filipino women already occupied high position in the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women. They have also sat as Commission on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) Committee Chair and Experts.

There are more female employees than males in the Philippine government bureaucracy. Filipino men dominate as decision makers and managers while women are predominant professional in government. The Philippines has produced two women Presidents. While the incumbent President is a women, the percentage of elective positions occupied by women is less than a fifth of the total number of positions. According to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report of 2007, the Philippines ranked 14th out of 128 countries, in terms of political empowerment. In the judiciary branch of government most of the judges are males.

Situation of Women in Mindanao

According to the Mindanao Commission on Women, urgent attention should be given to Mindanao Women in the areas of economic opportunities, reproductive health, political participation, education and even basic services such as water and power. The Moro and Lumad women are the poorest and most disadvantaged

among the Mindanao population. They are not only victims of the long running conflict in Mindanao but resilient survivors as well. Moro and Lumad women are considered as minorities within minorities.

According to the Mindanao Commission on Women, bride abduction, forced marriage and payment of bride price still persist as part of the culturally sanctioned practices in Mindanao. Further, other forms of sexual violence like incest rape, sexual harassment, wife battering and abuse in intimate relationships are still common in the everyday lives of many women in Mindanao, especially those in the remote areas.

As in the whole Philippines, females attained higher basic and functional literacy rates compared to that of men in all regions in Mindanao, with the exception of the women in Mindanao. With regard to health services, women in Mindanao had the least number of deliveries which occurred in a health facility. Consequently, they had the least number of deliveries assisted by a trained health professional. It may be noted that on the average, Mindanao has the least number of government health practitioners serving the population.