

ROUNDTABLE 3: **HARMONISATION**

HARMONISATION OF GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES IN THE PHILIPPINES



1. COUNTRY CONTEXT: DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES AND PRIORITIES IN THE PHILIPPINES

The Philippines is ranked as a lower-middle-income country. While not poor, it nevertheless has a high proportion of poor people: about 33% of its total population, some 28 million people, live below the national poverty line. The country has not achieved sufficient economic progress over the past decades to substantially reduce poverty. Some measures have been taken to redress the fiscal balance after the recent severe fiscal crisis, but more economic reforms appear necessary to sustain momentum.

In the 2006 **Gender Gap Index Study** of the World Economic Forum, the Philippines ranked 6th out of 115 nations. This clearly indicates the opportunities in health, education and decision-making that women enjoy in the Philippines. However, there is still much to be done with regard to other gender equality indicators, such as the low access to reproductive health services, high maternal mortality ratio, feminised migration, and trafficking in and violence against women. Furthermore, school drop-out rates for boys continue to exceed those for girls, while unemployment rates have been higher among men than among women in recent years.

Official development assistance commitments have been substantially decreased over the last four years. In 2004, **official development assistance** was mainly di-

rected to sectors comprising transport, agriculture, multi-sector projects, energy, government and civil society. Major donors have been the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the European Union and several of its member states, Japan, Australia, and the USA. Attempts to contain the growing fiscal deficit prompted major lending partners in official development assistance, such as the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the Japan Bank for International Cooperation and Germany, to keep the programming of funds for new projects below normal levels in some cases until the fiscal position of national government started to show signs of significant improvement.

In the process of further enhancing aid effectiveness and donor harmonisation,

2. HARMONISATION OF GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES IN THE PHILIPPINES

PRE-PARIS INITIATIVES: PROVIDING HARMONISED GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES

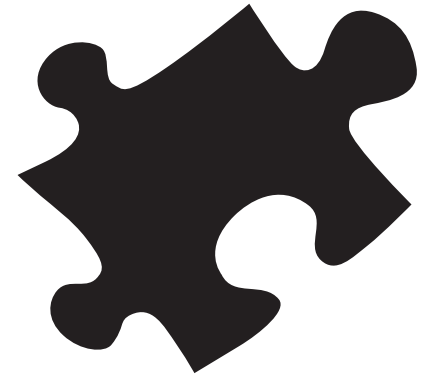
In 1993, the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) and the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (NCRFW), in conjunction with various Philippine government agencies, produced the Guidelines for Developing and Implementing Gender-Responsive Programs and Projects. The document was meant to help line or implementing agencies to comply with the Women in Development and Nation-Building Act, to inte-

grate a **gender and development (GAD)** perspective in development planning and project management, and to address the issues of inadequate sex-disaggregated data for development planning and programming.

the **Philippine Development Forum (PDF)** replaced the Consultative Group Meeting in 2005. The participative forum created a space in which donors, government and other main stakeholders in development can express their views. The last Philippine Development Forum held in March 2008 emphasised the need for far-reaching reforms and encouraged the Philippine Government to sustain fiscal reforms and ensure that the benefits of these reforms will reach the poor.

China is becoming an increasingly important donor in the Philippines, especially for infrastructure projects. This poses a two-fold challenge to other donors, as China's approval policy is faster and China does not usually take part in donor coordination efforts.

Since the mid-1990s, most official development assistance donors have also crafted their own gender and development guidelines to assist their own personnel involved in incorporating these guidelines into their programme design. By early 2003, Philippine government agencies had been contending with often overlapping GAD



checklists. Therefore, the **National Economic and Development Authority**, the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (NCRFW) and the Official Development Assistance Gender and Development (ODA-GAD) Network agreed to harmonise the existing checklists and to produce a common set of guidelines for Philippine government agencies and donors while allowing variations in priorities among them. In 2004, the Harmonized Gender and Development Guidelines for Project Development, Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation were produced and officially launched by the President of the Philippines. The new Guidelines reflect the evolution of the assistance framework from ‘Women in Development’ to gender and development and the current focus on women’s rights.

HARMONISATION AFTER PARIS: REVISING AND UPDATING THE HARMONISED GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES

The **ODA-GAD Network** has been one of the thematic coordination mechanisms that have gained momentum in the preparation of the Philippine Development Forum. The twin goals of gender equality and women’s empowerment in development cooperation have been pursued persistently. Gender has been treated as a cross-cutting issue to be incorporated into various aspects of development programme and project cycles. Promoting equality between women and men through a gender mainstreaming strategy has also been promoted. This includes

funding initiatives that address women’s human rights or enable institutions to pursue gender and development mainstreaming. The Harmonized Gender and Development Guidelines reflect the convergence of the gender and development frameworks of the Philippines and the Official Development Assistance (ODA) donors and are revised and/or updated on the basis of the experience made so far in applying the guidelines.

3. BENEFITS AND EFFECTS OF HARMONISING GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES

The Philippines is one of the few countries whose constitution includes gender equality provisions. The conscious effort to put gender issues on the development agenda started in 1990s. Meanwhile, the “how” has become particularly essential to those tasked with ensuring the gender responsiveness of programmes and projects.

Translating international law into local laws and policies

The Philippines has made the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women a part of its national law. Its constitution states that “it recognizes the role of women in nation-building, and shall ensure the fundamental equality before the law of women and men”. Several other laws and policies promoting gender equality followed, inter alia the **Women in Development and Nation-Building Act**

In 2007, a second edition of the guidelines came out as an expanded version of the 2004 edition. It incorporates the recommendations made by the stakeholders during a series of consultations with different national and regional government line agencies, state universities and colleges, and the ODA-GAD Network.

(Republic Act No. 7192) and the **Philippine Plan for Gender-Responsive Development**. For women’s rights advocates in government and non-governmental organisations as well as national and local government leaders who adhere to these commitments, the gender and development approach is a necessity. It has become obvious that any effort toward sustainable development requires the participation of women at all levels of policymaking and policy implementation.

Keeping gender mainstreaming on the development agenda

Since the late 1980s, the Philippines has taken concrete steps toward integrating gender and development concerns in the development process. The Harmonized Gender and Development Guidelines are considered a vital contribution to the process of gender mainstreaming. Start-

ing out with the efforts to implement the rules and regulations of R.A. 7192, the Philippine Plan for Gender-Responsive Development was prepared using multisectoral approach and mechanisms. The Harmonized Gender and Development Guidelines were aligned with the gender and development checklists of ODA donors and the strategies of Philippine government agencies. This was formulated as a minimum requirement for development projects, including those supported by ODA funds, leaving the option for ODA donors and government agencies to introduce additional requirements to fit their priorities and policies.

Providing applicable guidelines for integrating gender perspectives in development planning and project cycle

The Harmonized Gender and Development Guidelines consist of three parts. The first part focuses on a core set of requirements, in the form of questions that apply to project development in general,

regardless of sector or project type. The second part deals with gender and development guidelines for the development of certain types of projects in particular sectors. The third part presents gender and development checklists for the implementation, management, monitoring and evaluation of development projects. The Guidelines are designed for the use of people and institutions involved in development programme and project activities in the Philippines. This includes the National Economic and Development Authority, line agencies, local government units, donor agencies and their consultants, and civil society organisations. Furthermore, the Guidelines are meant to support the National Economic and Development Authority in evaluating or assessing projects for funding.

Testing applicability and spreading sector-specific checklists

The harmonised guidelines have been disseminated to various Philippine government agencies and the donor com-

munity. A series of training-of-trainers courses has been conducted for project officers, project evaluators and implementers to develop their capacities for using the guidelines. The donors have also used the guidelines in evaluating the gender responsiveness of the programmes and projects they are funding. Various needs came to light in the course of adopting the tool, such as the inclusion of relevant checklists for certain sectors. Meanwhile, the overall design of the harmonised gender and development guidelines has been made relevant to more sectors. It introduces sector checklists for justice, information and communication technologies and microfinance projects. They complement the first checklists on agriculture and rural development, natural resource management, infrastructure, private sector development, education, health, housing and settlement, projects in armed conflict areas, women's issues and peace projects. To date, three more checklists have been added: child labour, decent work and migration.

4. LESSONS LEARNED

The Philippine exercise of developing and revising harmonised gender and development guidelines provides a clear case for harmonisation efforts led by the government in general. A shared understanding of a concept needs to be translated into applicable and concrete steps at each stage of the project cycle to ensure that gender equality gaps are addressed.

At the implementation stage of a project, the executing agency or the project management office holds the key to the achievement of gender equality results, since it interprets and implements the project's gender equality strategies and plans. However, the sustainability of changes introduced or fostered generally depends on how well the change agendas have been incorporated into the mainstreaming concerns of the government agency, office, or unit, and on what capacities have been developed within the agency to manage the change.

In connection with project management, both gender and development mainstreaming and post-project sustainability of gender and development initiatives and results must be addressed. These include

capacity development measures such as support for project leadership, staff commitment and regular involvement of agency personnel in implementing and enforcing procedures and processes that promote gender equality and women's empowerment. Furthermore, the monitoring of project management, progress and performance can be supported by adding a menu of sample gender and development monitoring indicators to gender and development checklists.



LESSONS LEARNED CONCERNING THE DONOR COMMUNITY

- Strong partnership with the donor community is needed to ensure that the Harmonized Gender and Development Guidelines are applied in project development, implementation, monitoring & evaluation.
- More efforts among some development partners to conduct joint programming missions would contribute to reduced transaction costs.
- Challenges remain in the use of parallel project implementation units. While the Philippine Government's surveys suggest little progress, some donor partners point out that there are legal constraints on disbursement of their respective government's funds to an agency of the Philippine Government.



LESSONS LEARNED CONCERNING THE PARTNER COUNTRY

- The gender and development approach has been translated into harmonised applicable guidelines for all stakeholders in development programmes and projects. Nevertheless, it has to be closely linked to the implementation of the Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan (MTPDP) and the Medium-Term Public Investment Program (MTPIP). The current MTPDP runs from 2004-2010 and is presently being updated by the Philippine Government. More recently, the Philippine Government has made serious efforts to strengthen the links between planning and budgeting and to increase budgetary allocation to health, education and infrastructure.
- Continuous advocacy and capacity building have to be undertaken to make the Harmonized GAD Guidelines a useful tool for ensuring that gender and development concerns are fully integrated into all stages of the project cycle and government processes.
- Although the Philippine oversight agencies, such as the National Economic and Development Authority, the Department of Finance and the Department of Budget and Management encourage the use of programme-based assistance, there is still a need to enhance the capacities of the technical personnel within these agencies and the implementing agencies.
- Successful development cooperation depends on the adoption by the Philippines of international standards in its country systems that development partners ought to observe. The Philippine Government has legislated important reforms in government procurement that meet international standards. Discussions have also taken place with the government's Commission on Audit to harmonise public financial management with international standards.