

MOVING TO GENDER MAINSTREAMING The Case of San Juan, Metro Manila

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Introduction

Background

“It is difficult to advocate GAD in the National Capital Region (NCR).” This is what Ms. Arsenia Morta, DILG Regional GAD Coordinator, cautioned Guaranteed Best Management and General Services¹ (GBest) when it laid and coordinated its GAD Access program with her sometime in February 2002, almost six months after the successful gender advocacy in San Juan. With this in mind, GBest persisted in bringing GAD Access to the local government units (LGUs) in this part of the country.

As a strategy, the creation of a gender equality focal point was used as a springboard in influencing 10 out of the 17 LGUs in the NCR to undertake gender mainstreaming. The experience proved to be an uphill climb. The response of the local chief executives, though enthusiastic, took different forms. Thus, the routes used to achieve GBest were varied. GBest thus took the route considered most effective; used the legal, planning and

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development offices, the *Sanggunian* Committee on Women and Family Affairs, and the administrator's offices.

Why go on with GAD Access despite the odds?

For 27 years, the Philippine government has been pursuing gender initiatives at the national government level. Now it is high time to carry on and ensure gender equality at the local level. Included in this relatively favorable scenario are legislative and executive measures directed specifically to the local government. Despite these efforts, much still needs to be instituted at the local level to dovetail and link with the substantive accomplishments at the national landscape. It is at the local level where the gains and insights of these continuing gender equality endeavors must be nurtured, connected and implemented, if transformation in the lives of ordinary women and men in the barangay is to take place. This is the challenge the San Juan municipal government faces.

The San Juan journey has been an exhilarating experience. Looking back, it was in August 2001 that Ms. Morta recommended two municipalities to test the GAD Access program. Ms. Morta preferred San Juan and Pateros because of the presence of potential gender advocates in each LGU.

San Juan was the first LGU GBest chose to work with. The project, *Making the Municipal Government Work Toward Gender Equality*, was so designed to make the application of gender mainstreaming concepts and principles friendly and easily appreciated in the local government parlance. It spelled out the proposed activities and strategies that the municipality would be undertaking to mainstream and institutionalize gender in its planning, policy and legislative making, budgeting, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation processes.

The project document was presented to Dr. Ruben Quimosing, OIC of the San Juan Population Office, who was drawn to the project immediately. Dr. Quimosing right away presented it to Ms. Lorenza Ching, the Municipal Budget Officer, who gave her immediate support being very much aware of the GAD budget policy. The gender mainstreaming project was later presented to Mayor JV Ejercito. Quite unexpectedly, the mayor appreciated it right there and then and gave instructions to include it in his state of the municipality address (SOMA).

The San Juan municipal government's commitment, particularly that of its key players, to gender mainstreaming has ever since served as an inspiration and source of strength for GBest to carry on its corporate social responsibility through the *GAD Access* program. More importantly, the San Juan experience as shown by the political will of the mayor, the commitment of his department heads, supportive staff and their willingness to make use of the technical assistance offered by a private-sector-led organization may serve as a guide and an inspiration as well for other LGUs on how to implement the gender equality policy of the government.

Taking on the Gender Mainstreaming Responsibility

Dr. Quimosing, together with the Population Office staff, slowly but strategically elicited support from other key officials—both executive and the *Sanggunian* (legislative branch)—to prepare the ground firmly for the mayor's gender equality agenda.

What set the San Juan initiatives toward gender mainstreaming apart? The path taken by the San Juan gender sponsors and advocates on the gender mainstreaming project bespeaks of ownership, how they had taken it in their own pace and strides.

The project document presented was rightly treated as a launching pad and they were out there onboard their gender mainstreaming ship charting and navigating towards their very own gender equality destination amidst the technical difficulties and inadequacies they have to transcend and the strength they have to sustain, needing less and less guidance from GBest.

Unveiling the gender mainstreaming project

In July 2001 during his SOMA, the mayor made gender equality part of his administration's agenda. A month later, the Population Office initiated a half-day orientation provided by GBest and participated in by the different departments. The objectives were to rationalize gender mainstreaming in the context of the local government and to gain the appreciation and support of the departments for the implementation of the project.

The Department of Education in the municipality accepted the invitation by sending its representative. The representative would like to understand how his agency could inculcate the values of gender equality among children and was provided with examples to address issues on discrimination, biases and human rights such as providing the teachers with gender sensitivity training and reviewing the textbooks to remove gender biases and stereotyping. The planning and development representative had a hard time appreciating her department's role in gender mainstreaming. The bottom line, as detailed in the presentation, was the acquisition and deepening of gender consciousness by means of training, self-study and focus group discussion, and the application of gender tools in their functions, and making gender awareness and sensitivity a way of life rather than treating it as another field of expertise. Based on their functions as embodied in the Local Government Code, the presentation

tackled how to make their office gender-responsive through the following measures:

- Ensure that the GAD Plan is integrated in the local development plan.
- Conduct training programs incorporating gender sensitivity and awareness.
- Integrate gender in conducting studies and researches.
- Enhance monitoring and evaluation system by including gender indicators.
- In coordination with the budget, develop or localize guidelines on gender planning and budgeting.

The orientation conducted became a venue for raising the participants' awareness on their gender responsibility and accountability, and the benefits/advantages they would be getting as stakeholders in implementing the gender equality program.

Creating the SJMGEFP²

With the mayor at the helm as well as Ms. Ching (budget officer), Atty. Dacalos (administrator), Dr. Alaño (health officer) and Dr. Quimosing and his staff, the time was deemed to be ripe and the municipal government was primed for the creation of a Gender Equality Focal Point. GBest provided the technical assistance and the ground working began as spearheaded by the stakeholders. Finally, the mayor signed and issued Executive Order No. JVE-09, Series of 2001, Creation of the Municipal Gender Equality Focal Point, and its Executive and Technical Committees.

It states that the “municipal government is implementing and institutionalizing its Gender Equality Program (GEP) as an affirmative action to the United Nations and Philippine

² San Juan Municipal Gender Equality Focal Point

government goals of gender equality, development and peace. Its legal framework cites RA 7192, otherwise known as Women in Development and Nation-building Act, and the presidential directive, Executive Order No. 348, Approving and Adopting the Philippine Development Plan for Women, which calls for the constitution and strengthening of an appropriate mechanism for the integration of gender concerns in the development processes.

The municipal government created its Focal Point as the “mechanism to implement its gender agenda of securing harmonious partnership between its female and male constituencies and the full exercise of their equal rights and freedom, providing them equal opportunities and access to resources, and enabling them to share equally in family responsibilities and decision making.” It is composed of the Executive Committee, Technical Working Group and the pool of gender equality trainers.

The functions of the Executive Committee are to provide direction in the implementation of the gender agenda, recommend to the mayor and the *Sanggunian* policies, legislation and measures to achieve gender equality, development and peace, and to validate and prioritize the gender issues in the annual GAD Plan and to recommend its integration in the local development plan. The Municipal Population Officer chairs the Executive Committee (ExeCom). Among the members are the budget officer, treasurer, chairpersons of the *Sanggunian* Committee on Women and Appropriations, and the women, youth and urban poor representatives from the non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

The Technical Working Group (TWG) is responsible for recommending strategies on how the departments can integrate gender concerns in its functions and programs, projects and activities; provide technical support to the departments in their

formulation of a GAD Plan; be responsible for ensuring the deepening of gender consciousness of their departments by coordinating it with the pool of trainers. It is composed of eight clusters: the Liga ng mga Barangay chairperson, two representatives from the Department of Education and two units/sub-offices under the mayor's office.

The pool of trainers is in charge of conducting gender training and serves as secretariat of the ExeCom. To date, the trainers have not yet been organized. However, during the focal point meeting on September 2002, the Women Desk officers in each barangay and the barangay health workers (BHW) were identified as the trainers because they act as the direct service providers in the barangay. A trainers' training for these frontliners has been included in the GAD plan of the Health and Population offices.

The Focal Point has a total membership of 21, excluding the pool of trainers and the secretariat. Only 20 of the positions have been occupied. To date, no urban poor representative sits in this local mechanism. It is made up of 11 men and nine women. This is further subdivided into 10 department heads, five councilors, one NGO representative, one division chief and one assistant division chief.

According to Ms. Morta, the SJMGEFP was the first GAD mechanism created in a municipality and the first functional Focal Point among the 17 LGUs in the NCR. Before the year ends, Ms. Morta will be giving them an award in recognition of their exemplary initiatives on GAD in the NCR.

Appreciating and Understanding Gender Equality

Massive sensitizing has been the forefront activity pursued by the Focal Point. It goes beyond the members by including

both internal and external constituencies. For its internal clients, the GST was attended by other department heads and staff. The Focal Point external clients are barangay officials—the *Punong Barangay*, *Sanggunian* Committee on Peace and Order chairperson, executive officer of the *Barangay Tanod*, and the Women's Desk officer.

Sensitizing the SJMGFP

Ms. Morta proposed a three-day trainers' training for the Focal Point. The mayor issued a corresponding memorandum directing the members to participate in this activity last December 5-7, 2001. Although GBest never provides a three-day trainers' training, it redesigned the proposed program of activities and revised its five-day trainers' training module as requested by the Focal Point as a compromise to the disseminated memorandum and expectations of the members, as well as to avoid marking the first ever activity of the focal point with a misleading training identity. The activity was renamed GST: A Basic Course for Trainers. During the last day of the training, the members were given an orientation on their roles and responsibilities in the implementation of a gender equality program. A workshop mobilizing and strengthening the Focal Point was conducted to determine the competencies necessary to become effective members of the Focal Point and to prepare a work and financial plan adopting the knowledge, attitude and skills (KAS) identified by the members.

“Pantasya ni Eba” was given as an exercise to firm up their understanding and application of the sex and gender concepts. The output was presented creatively by the participants. The Poinsettia group came up with this *Balagtasan*:

Ang Aming Ulat

*Ang aming napansin
Na kakaiba sa ating babasahin
Sa bayan ng Kagawasan
Ang angat at bida ay kababaihan.*

*Ang mensahe ng sulatin o aralin
Tila reverse psychology ang dating
Pinagbaligtad sa lipunan
Gawain ng sangkatauhan.*

*Paano nga kung ang babae
Ay gagawa ng panlalaki
At ang mga lalaki
Ay aasta ala-babae?*

*Kaya't ang tema ng salaysay
Dapat babae't lalaki ay pantay-pantay
Ang kaya ni itay, kaya rin ni inay
Sa loob man o labas ng bahay.*

*Kung kami ang mga mamamayan
Ng bayan ng Kagawasan
Ayaw naming ng ganitong kaayusan
Gender Equality ang kailangan.*

In the workshop identifying the forms of gender inequality, the groups were asked for two outputs. One was another creative presentation identifying the principles for a gender fair society and the forms and the manifestations of gender bias. The same group composed the following to the tune of *Bahay Kubo* (Nipa Hut):

Isang Awitin

*Sa bayan ng San Juan
Gender fair ang kailangan
Mga mamamayan
Ay walang lamangan;*

*Pantay ating suweldo
Pati ang trabaho
Desisyon hati tayo
Dapat may 'say' ako.*

*Pati sa 'ting bahay
Gawai'y pantay-pantay
Kung ako'y maglalaba
Ika'y mamamlantsa;*

*Ang iyong gawain
Ay kaya kong gawin
Huwag mong sasabihin
Lamang ka sa akin.*

*Igalang mo ako
Mahalin nang totoo
Huwag mo akong saktan
Walang karahasan;*

*Ating pagkatao
Bigyan ng respeto
Sa gawaing ito
Liligaya tayo!*

Marginalization

Subordination

Multiple Burden

Gender Stereotyping

Violence Against Women

On Their Own

The initiatives

For the next eight months after the GST was conducted, the Focal Point members were left on their own. They have carried out the following efforts:

- Integrated gender in their Vision-Mission Statement:

We, the people of San Juan, Metro Manila, uphold the promotion of a gender fair society where we recognize the full potential and capabilities of our citizenry, are given chances for quality participation in decision-making thus, promoting equal pay for equal work in an atmosphere where there is freedom from violence and harassment, where there is equal access to all resources and opportunities, where there is commitment to the total development of personhood, where there is economic independence disregarding personal differences.

- They packaged the materials on the GST:
A Basic Course for Trainers was included in their own comprehensive handout known as Developing Equality with Leadership Tenets for Administration (DELTA San Juan).
- Using the DELTA San Juan handout, they redesigned the program of activities and abridged the training timeframe from three days to 1 ½ -days.
- They served as trainers in the gender sensitivity training.
- They conducted gender sensitivity training participated in by the department heads and the Women Desk officers on March 14-15, 2002.
- They continue to hold regular meetings every second Thursday of the month.

- They strengthened continuously the capacity of the Women's Desk officers in each barangay to handle VAWC cases.
- They conducted gender sensitivity training for all punong barangay, *Sangguniang Kabataan Barangay* chairpersons, *Sanggunian* Committee on Peace and Order chairperson and the executive officer of the *Barangay Tanod* from Nov. 7 to 8, 2002.
- They sensitized three of the seven-body ExeCom, 12 out of the 13 TWG members, 15 heads of the 22 departments which do not belong to the TWG, 84 barangay officials, and the DILG head in the municipality.
- They featured a regular GAD column in their weekly municipal publication.
- They made the mayor, the department heads and the staff conscious of using gender-fair language.
- They conducted a planning session for 2003 last October 2002.

Raising the gender awareness of the barangay officials

The recently concluded GST for the barangay officials was very successful. All the barangays were represented by 84 participants. Councilor Cesar Sto. Domingo, president of the Liga ng mga Barangay, knowing the culture of his co-barangay officials, strategically positioned himself at the training hall to encourage them to stay throughout the training period. He was quite successful in that most of them stayed. The mayor during the fellowship required all the punong barangays to assign a portion of their barangay bulletin boards for GAD to make their constituents aware of their gender rights, the GAD programs and services available to them. The mayor also told them that aside from their barangay GAD funds which they will be

allocating, he will be apportioning his funds also to support their GAD projects. The budget officer told them to prepare their respective proposals to facilitate the immediate processing of the mayor's fund allocation for them next year. The budget officer also served as a resource person on the legal mandates informing them of the international, national and local laws and policies.

On the part of the barangay officials, they proposed the following for action:

- the Philippine National Police to operate or put up its Women's Desk for 24 hours since there is no PNP Women's Desk officer on duty at night in Barangay West Crame;
- putting up of temporary shelter at the barangay halls exclusively for VAWC victims;
- Barangay Women's Desk officers (WDO) to be given honorarium or salary because they are providing services to their barangays for 24 hours, seven days a week. An operating expense should also be extended to support the services given to victims.

The Focal Point recently received a letter from the president of the Organization of Executive Officers of the barangay tanods requesting that all barangay tanods should be given gender training for being frontliners in helping maintain peace and order.

Moving Forward

Key people on fire with GAD

The Mayor

The highest elected official is leading the GAD stakeholders in the municipality. The mayor made a pronouncement during

his SOMA to make gender a priority development agenda. He approves all the funding proposals and signs all memoranda and the training certificates of the Focal Point. He always makes it a point to be present during GAD training to show his support for the gender program and appreciation of the commitment of the participants. He even uses non-sexist language as this was pointed out to him by the Focal Point. He reads intently the materials given to him by the Focal Point. The role of the mayor as a GAD champion is something to look forward to in the League of Metro Manila Mayors, as it is most crucial to advocate the use of the state-of-the-art gender mainstreaming technology to its members.

The SJGEFP

The Focal Point celebrated silently its first year of existence on October 15, 2002. The Focal Point has the financial support of the mayor. The monthly regular activities are supported financially by the mayor as well as by the non-governmental organizations particularly the Balikatan and the Women's Desk officers. The expenses for the regular meetings range from P500.00-800.00/month. Major activities solely come from the resources of the municipal government. In 2001, the Focal Point held two activities (the orientation on the program in August and the GST: A Basic Course for Trainers in December) and spent a total of P 161,281.00. For 2002, it completed two GSTs (March and November) spending P331, 500.00.

The only serious problem bugging the Focal Point is the participation of its entire membership. Never has it mustered a complete attendance. The same three members have not joined consistently any of its activities. Despite this constraint, the committed members have banded together forming its staunch, hardcore gender advocates.

How did the leadership encourage and keep the commitment of the hardcore gender group? The chair attributed it to the financial and moral support of the mayor by noting all the letters disseminated to the members and invited guest, the presence and support of the *Sanggunian* Committee on Human Resource Development (HRD), the GST conducted, constant communication among the members through activity updates, meetings, and eliciting their comments on the letters addressed to the mayor, and the untiring follow-up done by the PopCom staff as secretariat.

On top of this GAD machinery and at the same time leading the 13 members holding permanent positions in the municipal government is the chairperson. The Focal Point chairperson was trained on gender in 1998 in a JICA funded project under the Population Commission. Being chair is a challenge. Just like any advocate, his was not an overnight transformation. His gender journey spans all the stages and mirrors: what he has gone through. His frustration over cases of violence against women which failed to prosper is slowly subsiding. As a doctor, the faces of battered women had haunted him as he issued so many medical certificates, only to find out later that these victims were not aware of their rights and the support services available were inadequate and not gender-responsive.

He continues holding dialogues with the mayor and provides him immediately with the report of each activity of the Focal Point. The poor attendance of the members of the Focal Point in the beginning improved gradually. He finds correlation in the members' attendance and participation in the gender sensitization seminar to the increasing number of committed Focal Point members.

The administrator, budget officer, public information officer, Population Office staff, the health officers, the Barangay

Operations Office, Public Order and Security Office, the San Juan Municipal High School principal, the *Sanggunian* Committee on Women and Human Resource Development chairpersons, the *Balikatan*, the Barangay Women's Desk officers are very supportive and continue to help keep the fire on gender burning in the municipality. A challenge for other municipal government officials and staff, as a wake up call, is to heed their responsibility and accountability to promote and ensure gender equality, women empowerment and equal participation in local governance. This they can start by actively participating with their Focal Point right in their own backyard.

The Road Leads to Gender Mainstreaming

The SJGEFP revisited the two outputs of its 2001 GST Trainers' Training particularly the workshop, *Mobilizing and Strengthening the SJGEFP*, during its planning session held on October 2002. The members reviewed and enhanced the competencies' plan that they prepared in 2001. The plan contains the knowledge, skills and attitude they wanted to possess and acquire to be effective and proficient in performing their respective functions. The second output is the work and financial plan in implementing the necessary competencies. These two outputs served as their GAD plan for 2002 prior to the issuance of the Joint Memorandum Circular 2001-01 on December 19, 2001.

The common objective, as anticipated by the departments, and which came out of the planning workshop, was to mainstream gender in the department's functions, processes and programs, projects and activities (PPAs). To address this technical gap, the bulk of the capacity building for the Focal Point for 2003 will be on gender mainstreaming tools and mechanisms

such as gender analysis, gender planning and budgeting, results-based management (RBM) for its monitoring system, and gender-responsive evaluation.

The Challenges

As the municipal government lays the foundation of its gender mainstreaming firmly, at stake are the key players' role in seeing to it that services delivery emanate from and address the real needs and situation of its female and male constituency to ensure their equal participation to and benefit from their local government's decision-making processes.

The barangay officials and staff owes it to their female and male constituents to apply the skills they learned in their GAD training to their work, and to make GAD part of their lifestyle.

The gender mainstreaming experience should provide the other LGUs with insights on how to craft, operate, monitor and evaluate their GAD Plan in three levels – barangay, by departments and the municipality – premised on the equal participation of women and men in governance.