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# Women and Education<sup>\*</sup>

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***Strategic Objectives:***

- B1. Ensure equal access to education.*
- B2. Eradicate illiteracy among women.*
- B3. Improve women's access to vocational training, science and technology, and continuing education.*
- B4. Develop non-discriminatory education and training.*
- B5. Allocate sufficient resources for and monitor the implementation of educational reforms.*
- B6. Promote lifelong education and training for girls and women.*

Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights emphasizes the right of everyone to education. It further provides that: "Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit ... Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms" (United Nations [UN], 1948).<sup>1</sup> Equal access to education by girls and boys, women and men is further elaborated in the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination (CEDAW) and in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In 1995, education and training was one of the key areas of the Beijing Platform for Action (UN, 1996).

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<sup>1</sup>On 11 December 2011, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Declaration of Human Rights Education and Training. This Declaration stresses in Article 1, Sec. 2: "Human rights in education and training is essential for the promotion of universal respect for and observance of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, in accordance with the principles of the universality, indivisibility and Interdependence of human rights" (UN, 2011).

## ASSESSMENT OF GOVERNMENT COMPLIANCE

### Access to Education, Literacy, and Non-Discriminatory Education and Training

**Strategic Objective B1.** *Ensure equal access to education*

**Strategic Objective B2.** *Eradicate illiteracy among women*

**Strategic Objective B4.** *Develop non-discriminatory education and training*

#### **Access to Education**

The Philippines is signatory to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, CEDAW, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and other human rights treaties. The commitment of the Philippine State to people's rights to education and equality is enshrined in the 1987 Philippine Constitution (Official Gazette (n.d.)). In this connection, in 2000, or five years into the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, the Philippine government committed itself, under the Millennium Development Goal No. 2, to ensure "that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling," and under Goal No. 3, Target 3A, "to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015" (National Economic and Development Authority [NEDA], 2014).

Since 2005, the Philippine Congress has passed several laws that protect, promote and fulfill the rights of Filipino women and girls to education and training. One, the Magna Carta of Women (Republic Act No. 9710), was enacted in 2009. Among the salient points related to education are the provisions for equal access and elimination of discrimination in education, scholarships, and training (Chapter IV, Sec. 13); and the promotion of the rights of marginalized sectors to education and training (Chapter V, Sec. 24). Moreover, its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) spells out the duties and obligations of the three Philippine education and training institutions—the Department of Education (DepEd), Commission on Higher Education (CHED), and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA)—to ensure that women's right to education is protected, promoted and fulfilled (Philippine Commission on Women [PCW], 2010, pp. 57–60). The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), on the other hand, is tasked to ensure access to training and retraining by women in marginalized sectors, such as women in rural areas, indigenous women, displaced women, and women migrant workers (PCW, 2010, pp. 93–94).

In 2013, the Philippine Congress passed Republic Act No. 10533, or the Enhanced Basic Education Act (Official Gazette, 2013), and DepEd subsequently issued the Implementing Rules and Regulations (Department of Edu-

cation [DepEd], 2013). This law instituted the “K to 12 program,” which covers kindergarten and 12 years of basic education. Basic education is divided into six years of primary education, four years of junior high school, and two years of senior high school (Sec. 4), “to provide sufficient time for mastery of concepts and skills, develop lifelong learners, and prepare graduates for tertiary education, middle-level skills development, employment, and entrepreneurship” (Official Gazette, n.d., para. 1).

How has the country performed vis-à-vis access to education? At the elementary/primary level, the percentage of school-age population who are in school (or the net enrolment rate [NER]) has, after five years of steep decline, “steadily improved from a low of 83.2% in SY 2006-2007 to 95.2% in SY 2012-2013” (NEDA & UNDP, 2014, p. 17).

There have been two distinct gender patterns in basic education. For the period 1996 to 2012, girls were consistently outnumbered by boys at the elementary level, with sex ratio (female/male) fluctuating between a high 0.96 in 1996 and a low 0.92 in 2012 (NEDA & UNDP, 2014, p. 52). Girls, however, reportedly continued to outperform boys in all the key indicators, but especially in cohort survival rate and completion rate (NEDA & UNDP, 2014, pp. 52–53). Meanwhile, girls outnumbered boys in secondary education, with the sex ratio ranging from 1.07 in 2004–2005 to 1.02 in 2012; and in tertiary education at the ratio of 1.25 in 2000 and 1.19 in 2011 (NEDA & UNDP 2014, p. 54).

Although there are more females than males who reach college or the university, there continues to be considerable gender segregation or gender tracking in terms of courses they pursue. Women have consistently outnumbered men in business administration and teachers’ training, medical and allied disciplines (specifically, nursing), as well as mathematics and computer science, and several other disciplines. However, they are in the minority in engineering, information technology, and maritime (Philippine Statistics Authority [PSA], 2014).

Traditional career tracking was also observed among indigenous peoples (IP) and Muslim groups. In Davao Oriental, women among the Mandayas tend to enrol in an education course rather than in other courses, while among the Kagan (an Islamized IP tribe), more men have gone to study agriculture under scholarship from the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, in coordination with non-government organizations and the local government unit.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Interview with M.G.R. Lugo, faculty of Davao Oriental State College of Science and Technology, Makati City, 5 February 2015.

## **Literacy**

How literate are women and men in the Philippines? The 2008 Functional Literacy, Education and Mass Media Survey (FLEMMS) reported that 86.4% of Filipinos aged 10 to 64 years old (88.7% among the females and 84.2% among the males) could read, write, do simple calculations and comprehend (Philippine Statistics Authority [PSA], 2010). These were improvements from those reported in the past two to three surveys (1989, 1994 and 2003). "Females improved with a 6.3 percentage point increase for simple literacy rate and a 12.5 percentage point increase for functional literacy rate, while males garnered 5.3 and 8.8 percentage point increases, respectively (NEDA, 2014, p. 55). Despite these improvements, it is alarming to note that only among respondents who had completed high school education or higher that a 100% functional literacy rate was noted. This could be a reflection of poor quality of education if even with nine years in school, 10% are not functionally literate.

Figuring among these illiterate are people living in poverty, or as Soriano (2011) put it, "the marginalized groups ... who are denied the right to education" (Soriano, 2011, p. 39). She pointed to a survey conducted by the National Statistics Office in 2000, which showed that children from the poorest quintile were more likely to leave school, at a ratio of one for every five poor students. Studies in education in Central Mindanao, where, in 2012, some 37.5% of families (versus the national figure of 22.3%) are poor (PSA, 2013), also linked poverty and poor education results. Soriano (2011) noted, "Education performance is twice as severe [there] as the realities at the national level. The Education Watch in Armed Conflict Areas reported that 44% of school-age children and youth are out of school due to poverty and the continuing conflict in the region" (p. 39).

At the national level, poverty-related reasons (high cost of education and work or looking for work) were also cited by 46% of Filipinos aged 6 to 24 years old who responded to the 2008 FLEMMS. Meanwhile, some 20% cited lack of personal interest. "Alarmingly, marriage (which did not figure much in the 2003 FLEMMS) came out as the fourth reason for dropping out in the 2008 survey. It is also significant to note that a higher percentage of those who mentioned housekeeping chores, difficulty in coping with schoolwork and illness/disability belonged to the poorer section of the population" (Soriano, 2011, p. 40).

The reasons for leaving school highlight different issues. The lack of interest among school children indicates a weakness in classroom management (poor teaching quality) to make learning interesting, inadequate supplies and/or infrastructure weakness (shortage of classrooms that results in large classes) which make learning impossible. On the other hand, "poverty, social exclusion, school distance and poor health are factors that weigh heavily on children and dampen their interest to pursue schooling" (Soriano, 2014, p. 41).

Given the rising number of displacement due to armed conflict especially in the Southern Philippines and the occurrence of more natural disasters (i.e., typhoon, earthquake), the Center for Peace Education and the Women and Gender Institute of Miriam College, in partnership with the Spanish non-government organization (NGO) *Paz y Desarrollo*, have been implementing a program that aims to help advance a culture of peace through education. Meanwhile, the DepEd, under the six-year Basic Education Sector Transformation (BEST) program, will continue to address infrastructure, access and quality issues. The program seeks to improve the quality of education through better trained teachers and improved school curriculum in the context of the K to 12 program. To be implemented at the national level and with intensive support initially in six regions (National Capital Region, Bicol, Northern Mindanao, Western Visayas, Central Visayas, and Eastern Visayas), the program is expected to build an additional 1,000 classrooms, 40 science and computer laboratories, and two IP Learning Centers. Among others, the program would strengthen “systems within DepEd” and the department’s “capacity for disaster preparedness” (DepEd, 2014).

### ***Non-discriminatory Training and Education***

The Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 was anchored on the principles of Education for All (EFA) and on achieving the Millennium Development Goal targets. The implementation of the enhanced basic education programs was designed to address the physical, intellectual, psychosocial, and cultural needs of **all** learners and, thus, includes the following programs: (1) for the gifted and talented at all levels of basic education; (2) for learners with disabilities, (3) Madrasah program for Muslim learners in private or public schools, comprehensive program using the Madrasah curriculum prescribed by the DepEd, in coordination with the Commission on Muslim Filipinos<sup>3</sup>; (4) indigenous peoples (IP) education program<sup>4</sup>; and (5) for learners under difficult circumstances, such as those suffering from geographic isolation, chronic illness, child abuse and child labor practices, and/or displacement due to armed conflict, urban resettlement, or disasters. Most, if not all,

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<sup>3</sup> A technical working group (TWG) created for Muslim education prepared a detailed roadmap for an inclusive Muslim education program. IP education was reportedly a recent addition and made to include a livelihood-based access approach. It also covered the development of an IP curriculum that is consistent with the Revised Basic Education Curriculum (RBEC) with support from the Basic Education Assistance for Mindanao (BEAM), a multi-year DepEd initiative supported by the Australian Government.

<sup>4</sup> Republic Act 10533 elaborates the IP education program as supporting education initiatives delivered through formal, non-formal, and informal modalities, focusing on, among others, the key areas of indigenous knowledge systems and practices and community history; indigenous languages; indigenous learning system (ILS) and community life cycle-based curriculum and assessment; educational goals, aspirations, and competencies specific to the Indigenous Cultural Community (ICC); engagement of elders and other community members in the teaching-learning process, assessment, and management of the initiative, recognition and continuing practice of the community’s ILS; and the rights and responsibilities of ICCs.

of the programs have been ongoing for decades, but all would be strengthened. The long-standing programs are special education, under which the first two programs used to fall; and some programs for learners under difficult circumstances. Moreover, classroom construction in recent years has included access for physically disabled students, such as ramps to buildings, toilet with special features, and even simple latches instead of doorknobs.

The Implementing Rules and Regulations expanded Section 5 of the law, and instructs DepEd to ensure that the enhanced basic education curriculum be “gender- and culture-sensitive” (DepEd, 2013). In this connection, DepEd has reportedly initiated efforts “to correct remaining biases in educational materials and methods” (PCW, 2014a, p. 12), such as the gradual “integration of gender concepts and use of gender sensitive principles in curriculum development and implementation at various levels...and is working on the release of the third edition of the ‘lesson exemplars’ or teaching guides that have the effect of harmonizing the implementation of pedagogical strategies and gender concepts in primary and later on secondary education and in accordance with the K to 12 Program” (PCW, 2014a, p. 12). A review of the existing materials in early 2014, however, showed little evidence of these materials, except in a few DepEd divisions where there were people who were involved in the preparation of the materials. However, DepEd has adopted gender and development (GAD) criteria among those that would be used in the review of Learning Resources Management and Development System (LRMDS) materials. This continues a long-standing practice (but applicable primarily to commercially published materials), and will likely be institutionalized under the BEST program (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade–Australian Government [DFAT], 2012), which aims to “aid in teacher development...promote gender sensitive education, and advance curriculum, assessment and materials,” among others (DepEd, 2014). The implementation of gender initiatives at the DepEd has been spotty at best for various reasons, which BEST needs to address if it were to realize its GAD results.

At the tertiary level, Women’s Studies programs and courses continue to thrive in some colleges and universities, although it is not clear what the current trend is in terms of offering these courses. There are reports of some Women’s Studies centers, programs or courses closing down after the departure of sympathetic administrators or program advocates. However, in the past three or four years, CHED has been reinvigorating its commitment to promote gender equality and gender-responsive education. In February 2015, it issued its first memorandum of the year, which provides guidelines to introduce gender equality, and gender responsiveness in the various aspects of Philippine higher education through curriculum development, gender-responsive research and extension programs to ensure that gender stereotypes

and images in educational materials and curricula are adequately and appropriately revised (Commission on Higher Education [CHED], 2015).<sup>5</sup>

## **Access to Vocational Training, Science and Technology and Continuing Education**

*Strategic Objective B3: Improve women's access to vocational training, science and technology, and continuing education*

Technical and vocational education (TVE) forms part of secondary education, which has a role to achieving economic and full productive employment. According to Article 1 of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Convention on Technical and Vocational Education, TVE consists of “all forms of the educational process involving, in addition to general knowledge, the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills, know-how, attitudes and understanding relating to occupations in the various sectors of economic and social life” (UNESCO, 1989).

The official Beijing+20 report claims that there are efforts to open up career opportunities for women and men. In fact, there has reportedly been a movement of women towards technical and vocational training programs previously dominated by men, such as in welding, consumer electronics servicing and automotive servicing (PCW, 2014a, p. 13). In 2011, some 1,321 women got their certification in metal works (4% of the total), including 1,280, or 97% of them, in welding; 1,372 women (20% of the total) were certified for consumer electronics servicing; 2,517 women (0.4% of the total) received automotive certification, but only 11% of these for automotive servicing; while 963 women had trained and been certified in electrical installation (TESDA, 2012). Efforts of TESDA to popularize stereotypical male courses among women remain to be a challenge, partly because of the “unaffordable fees” to obtain certification at any level. With the private sector reportedly open to train women in non-traditional skills (PCW, 2014a, p. 13), paying the fees may be a good investment.

Nonetheless, according to TESDA (2012), the majority of the 334,229 women who got TESDA certification did so in gender-stereotypical fields. The most popular qualifications sought by women were in caregiving and household services (40%), which would enable them to work overseas as caregivers or domestics, and tourism (37%), a booming industry. In contrast, men constituted more than 95% of those who were certified by TESDA as machinists, welders, or electricians. Those who wanted to work in these areas in other countries might also need TESDA certification.

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<sup>5</sup>As of 7 March 2015, CHED Memorandum Order (CMO), No. 1, series of 2015, has yet to be uploaded in the CHED website.

At the tertiary level, CHED has provided scholarship grants to a total of 2,051 females and males who desired to enroll in male-dominated courses and female-dominated courses, respectively, from 2011 to 2014 (PCW, 2014a, p. 13). This effort is noteworthy, although too small to affect the overall gender patterns in enrolment. According to PSA (2014), between academic years 2009–2010 and 2012–2013, three disciplines have remained predominantly female, with women accounting for at least 60% of total enrolment. These are, by order of size of enrolment: business administration (65% female, up from 62%), education and teacher training (75% female), and medical and allied disciplines (71%). In contrast, two male-dominated disciplines have seen a rise in the percentage of women enrolment: architecture and town planning, by 7.7 percentage points; and agriculture and related fields, by 2.9 percentage points. Female enrolment in engineering and technology, and in law and jurisprudence has also risen, although by only 1.6 points and 1.1 points, respectively.

What about education and training for women and girls with disability? The official Beijing+20 report (PCW, 2014a, 13) noted an initiative of the National Commission on Disability Affairs (NCDA), the institutionalization of a Leadership Training Manual, which promotes the full integration of women and girls with disability. Among the training areas covered by the manual were leadership, enterprise management, and livelihood management, as well as, orientation on the advancement of women's rights and accessibility for persons with disabilities. Moreover, there are a few government projects that involve women with different abilities. In Metro Naga, for instance, an active partner of the Gender-Responsive Economic Actions for the Transformation of Women (GREAT Women) Project is a vibrant woman entrepreneur with disability. She, in turn, has mobilized women like her to become entrepreneurs, too (Naga Smiles, 2014, p. 25).

## Financing Educational Reforms

**Strategic Objective B5.** *Allocate sufficient resources for and monitor the implementation of educational reforms*

In January 2014, the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) Secretary remarked that quality education remains a top priority of the present government. To this end, the Department of Education has been given the biggest budget among the departments (309.43 billion pesos), accounting for 14% of the 2,265 billion peso national budget (Official Gazette, 2014a). The DBM contends that the basic education budget has risen continuously from 155.71 billion pesos in 2008, or an annual growth rate of 14% over the seven-year period. Further budget increases can be expected due to the implementation of the K to 12 program.

The increased budget allocation for basic education aims at closing the country's supply-side educational requirement gaps (classroom backlogs, textbook procurement that would allow for a 1:1 book-to-student ratio, and additional teachers). Meanwhile, the Conditional Cash Transfer and various scholarship programs lodged with different government agencies should help address demand-side issues that should not only get children to school, but, more importantly, to remain in school until they graduate (Official Gazette, 2013). Support for tertiary education primarily consists of subsidies to state universities and colleges (SUC) and the budget of the Commission on Higher Education. The DBM claims that the SUC budget has risen since 2010 (23.8 billion pesos), although it did decline in 2012 to 26.4 billion pesos from 28.0 billion pesos in 2011, but rose to 37.1 billion pesos in 2013 and 40.5 billion pesos in 2014 (Official Gazette, 2014b). The CHED budget has also increased to 6.9 billion in 2014, from 1.4 billion pesos in 2012 and 2.8 billion pesos in 2013 (CHED, n.d.).

All these may be true, but the basic education budget, although large, is still but 2.4% of the country's gross domestic product (GDP),<sup>6</sup> much lower than the UNESCO prescribed 6%; and the debt service (pegged at 3% of the GDP) continues to eclipse the education budget and eat into other social services. Ibon Foundation (IBON, 2015) makes the same case and more, using 2012 budget data.

## Lifelong Education and Training for Girls and Women

***Strategic Objective B6. Promote lifelong education and training for girls and women***

TESDA, through its TESDA Training Institutes and accredited training service providers, offers a number of technical and vocational courses for women and men. Some are community based, others are enterprise and institution (school or center) based. The community-based training for enterprise development program usually caters to marginalized groups, particularly those without access to formal training facilities. A Philippine report on TVET describes the bulk of the program clientele as having "low levels of skills and have very limited access to capital as most of them are not qualified to access formal credit programs" (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation [APEC], 2008, p. 1). The program provides skills training and helps trainees start a livelihood enterprise that they could pursue after the training.

In partnership with the Gender-Responsive Economic Actions for the Transformation of Women (GREAT Women) Project of the Philippine Commission on Women, TESDA sought to stimulate "tech-vocpreneurship"

<sup>6</sup> Computed using the approved appropriation for DepEd (309.43 billion pesos; Official Gazette, 2014a), and the gross domestic product for 2014 (12,634 billion pesos) that the National Statistical Coordination Board [NSCB] has in its website (NSCB, 2015).

through mainstreaming gender and entrepreneurship in its Enhanced Technology-Based Community Training Program curriculum (PCW, 2013). The enhanced curriculum incorporated gender-responsive training modules. The integrated training module has two parts: Skills Development of Women through Technology-Based Community Training Program, and Development of Technology Business Incubation for Women, whose target beneficiaries include women's groups from the identified pilot sites. These training modules were further enhanced to include occupational health and safety, and environmental considerations in collaboration with other national government agency partners of the GREAT Women Project (PCW, 2014b, p. 27). TESDA also partnered with Coca-Cola Foundation for its STAR Program assisting women with *sari-sari* stores to become better skilled at retail trading (PCW, 2014b, p. 27).

Although there are no available statistics on women and men who joined the community-based training, it could be deduced that the potential effect of the enhanced program would be significant, considering that community-based program graduates account for at least two-fifths of TVE graduates (TESDA, 2012, p. iii). The challenge, however, is two-fold: one, helping the women grow their enterprises to a sustainable level, and, two, preparing the women to engage in a broader or wider range of enterprises, that is, beyond retail trading, food processing, and the like.

An example of a long-running program, the scholarship program of the Good Shepherd Sisters through the Mountain Maid Training Center Foundation (MMTCF) focuses on women (especially single mothers) from the indigenous tribes of the Cordillera who need practical life skills. Single mothers are trained in bakery skills at the MMTCF, using TESDA-accredited training programs, to help them develop entrepreneurial skills and to start small businesses in bakery products. For college-age, single women from Cordillera tribes, the MMTCF offers scholarships to help them pursue a bachelor's degree or a certificate course from local universities.

Non-government organizations and peoples' organizations have also been training women and women's groups in economic, health, and other issues. Many of the NGO training programs listed in the Beijing+5 NGO report on education (Reyes and Illo, 2005, p. 6) are still ongoing.

## **CIVIL SOCIETY AND ACADEMIC INITIATIVES**

In the area of education and training, the academe and/or civil society have collaborated or worked with government agencies, particularly the CHED, the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW), TESDA, and other relevant agencies. Government-CSO-academic collaborations have been proven to create the biggest impact in Filipino women's education and training. In the forefront of these are the Women's Studies Association of the Philippines (WSAP), the University of the Philippines Center for Women's

Studies, the Women and Gender Institute of Miriam College, Center for Women's Resources, various Women's Studies or Gender Offices and Centers, and the Youth and Students Advancing Gender Equality.

Other civil society groups have education and training-focused advocacy agendas. Among these groups are:

- *Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT)* calls for the increase of minimum monthly salaries of public school teachers to Php 25,000.00 and non-teaching personnel to Php 15,000.00.
- *LINGAP-SMCL* or *Lingkod ng Pagmamahal ng Saint Michael's College of Laguna Foundation, Inc.* is a non-stock, non-profit foundation which conducts livelihood trainings for women in poor communities.
- *Coalition Against Trafficking in Women-Asia Pacific (CATW-AP)* organizes the youth sector through its Youth and Students Advancing Gender Equality (YSAGE), to enable young men and women in advocating for gender equality through annual camps.

Meanwhile, at the public school level are Parents-Teachers-Community Associations (PTCA), whose representatives sit in school governing boards under the school-based management (SBM) system that the DepEd has instituted in many parts of the country. Parents' and community associations help the school prepare the school improvement plan, mobilize every summer to do repairs and other works on school grounds and buildings prior to the start of classes, and raise funds for electric fans and other facilities for their children's classrooms.

## **CONTINUING AND NEW CHALLENGES AND POSSIBLE ACTION POINTS**

### **Persistent Gender Stereotyping and Career Tracking**

An issue that continues to this day is that, while Filipino women have generally been in school longer than the men, they tend to go to very gender stereotypical fields, such as nurturing careers (teaching, nursing), handling money and business (business administration), and the like. The same pattern holds in technical and vocational training, with women seeking training and TESDA certification in caregiving and housekeeping, while men seek skills in construction, metalworks, and similar qualifications. With the implementation of the K to 12 program, young men and women might be guided to sex- or gender-appropriate skills or competency areas. Gendered career tracking and training narrow down employment opportunities and entrepreneurial options for both women and men.

What can be done? To help achieve Strategic Objectives B3 and B6,

- The Department of Education should review learning materials for sexist and gender-stereotyping content (text and visuals), and privileging of the experiences of boys over girls.

- The Department of Education should institute non-sexist guidance and career counselling at the junior and high school levels. Reinforce this with de-gendering subjects or courses by encouraging young women to venture into “masculine” specializations, and recruiting female teachers for “masculine” subjects or courses, and male teachers for “feminine” fields, thereby serving as role models.
- CHED should encourage teachers’ training institutions and other higher education institutions to offer non-sexist career counselling courses, and encourage women and men to specialize in non-traditional fields of specialization.

The same tack can be taken by TESDA with its TVE training providers, but with one additional set of suggestions. The training center or the provider of community-based entrepreneurship programs should actively recruit women to enter hitherto masculine skills areas, ensure that there are separate toilets for women and men, and that the equipment to be used could accommodate women’s smaller build.

### **Discontinuous or Intermittent Gender Mainstreaming Efforts in Educational Agencies**

Ten years ago, the Department of Education seemed to have a functioning GAD focal point system that included GAD advocates at the central, regional and divisional levels, and a high-level champion. The retirement or reassignment of key GAD advocates and champions has caused gender mainstreaming to languish for almost a decade now. As noted in an earlier section, there have been efforts to develop GAD learning resources and to incorporate gender messages in these materials. The BEST program hopes to invigorate gender mainstreaming in the department.

The Commission on Higher Education, for its part, is formally instituting gender mainstreaming not just at the agency, but also at various higher education institutions. At least since 2011, there have been continuous campaigns to increase gender awareness in colleges and universities, aided by observance of key events. The commission has also convened national and regional “CHED GAD Summits,” with the first national summit held in 2011. The Third GAD Summit reiterated gender mainstreaming in all aspects of higher education, including gender-responsive curricular development, research and extension.

The main challenge facing the education agencies is how to jumpstart or prime its gender mainstreaming campaign, and, once primed, how to keep it going. What can be done? To help attain Strategic Objective B4, the Department of Education and CHED should:

- Strengthen the GAD focal point system, carefully choosing strategically placed and committed officials and technical personnel to serve as champions, advocates, and Secretariat.

- “Mainstream” or incorporate gender equality and women’s empowerment messages in curricula, learning and teaching materials, research, and extension.
- In addition to mainstreaming initiatives, address a focus gender issue that will help yield gender results and demonstrate what “gender sensitivity” or “gender responsiveness” means to the organization. At the organizational level, the issue could be sexual harassment, including peer-harassment and those involving different gender sexual orientations and gender identities. At the student level, it could be violence, peer harassment and bullying, but also increasing teenage pregnancy and incidence of sexually transmitted diseases. Responding to these focus issues means serious discussion of human rights (and children’s rights), adolescent reproductive sexuality and health, and responsible sexuality, as well as alternative delivery modes for young female students who might have dropped out of school because of pregnancy.
- The Department of Education should review their respective anti-sexual harassment policies and mechanisms, constitute/reconstitute a Committee on Decorum and Investigation (CODI), and ensure that the CODI members understand the protocol and their duties.
- CHED should monitor how its GAD guidelines are being followed or implemented by its offices and colleges and universities, private and public.

### **Persistent Differences in Participation and Performance**

Filipino girls and young women have generally fared better than boys and young men insofar as education indicators are concerned. Inequalities in access to education stemmed from poverty, geography (distance from school), and ethnicity (more marginalized IP groups) than simply because of the child’s gender. The gender gap favors females, and gaps in school participation and cohort survival widen as one moves from primary, to secondary and tertiary levels.

What can be done? To help achieve Strategic Objectives B1 and B2, the Department of Education should closely monitor the implementation of the Enhanced Basic Education Act, particularly as regards more inclusive education. More specifically, it should

- Monitor the progress and results of its initiatives to reduce the dropout rates at the basic education level, and to understand the reasons why boys and girls leave school.
- Encourage divisions and public schools to investigate and analyze why boys and girls in the community are not in school, and to devise school-based strategies, with the help of parents and the community, to bring them to school, or to bring the school to them.
- Review how to improve the functional literacy of learners as one result of its quality education campaign.

- Institute improvements in class management, learning materials and processes to make learning more interesting, exciting and relevant to both boys and girls, particularly IP children.

As Soriano (2011) wrote: "The challenge, therefore, is how to make the school interesting and encouraging rather than intimidating; how to make it inclusive, nondiscriminatory and sensitive to the marginalized rather than exclusive and elite-oriented; and how to make it accommodating rather than restricting. Finally, the education content, process and experience should be made more meaningful to the children's life experiences by ensuring appropriate, culture-sensitive and values-based interventions. The need to address curriculum content becomes even more pronounced for indigenous communities" (p. 41).

### **Inadequate State Support to Education**

The Philippine government's education budget cannot solve the backlogs or deficits in classrooms, desks, laboratories and other facilities, teachers, textbooks, and the like. Looking at the 2012 education budget, IBON (2015) remarked, "The much-hyped increase in the 2012 national government budget allocation for the DepEd only targets to finance the building of 27% of the backlog in classrooms, fill up 20% of the shortage in desks and about 12% of the shortage in teachers. It also sets P1 million to subsidize the Government Assistance to Students and Teachers in Private Education (GASTPE), which finances poor students to enrol in private institutions. Despite this increase, the maximum amount that state universities and colleges (SUCs) may request from the Bureau of Treasury got a net decrease of Php142.44 million" (paras. 7-8). The IBON critique then focused on debt servicing (interest payments and off-budget principal payments) and the increased defense budget, and contended that "if 10% of the debt and defense budgets were redirected to education, the amount would be more than enough to cover remaining education shortages" (IBON, 2015, para. 9).

At a more personal level, rising tuition and matriculation fees continue to hound parents with children in private schools. In 2011, IBON claims that "around 324 higher education institutions raised their tuition fees by an average of 10.6%, with tuition increases ranging from Php21 to Php73 per unit" (IBON, 2015, para. 10).

Twenty years after the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, some gains have been noted insofar as education and training of women and girls in the Philippines is concerned. However, there were also some ground lost, and old and new challenges to address.

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