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**Government and NGOs' GAD Initiatives  
in the Philippines**

(Overall and in the Water and Sanitation Sector)

A Report Submitted By:

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to the

Gender Issues Working Group  
Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council

for the

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Filipino women, like other women all over the world, share essentially the same burden. Though the extent of the burden varies from community to community, women are confronted with a system which has been reinforced by misperceptions that resulted into a seemingly unending cycle. This condition has affected their personal development, focused them largely to the reproductive sphere of life and with limited chances or fail to harness their full potential for national development.

It is a fact that development plans, programs and projects - those that specifically target women as well those that do not - affect the lives of women and, in turn, are affected by the nature of gender relations that prevail in Philippine society. It was therefore emphasized in the **Philippine Development Plan for Women (1989-1992)**, that in order to mobilize women for development, a thorough understanding of the roles of both women and men, the social structures and processes that reinforce unequal gender relations and the changes that are taking place as a result of developments in various spheres of society is required.

### **Women's Status**

The National Statistics Office (NSO)-National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women's (NCRFW) "Statistics on the Filipino Women" (1993), presented that women comprise 49.8 % of the 60.7 million Philippine population (1990). The Filipino women are said to enjoy a better status than most women in Asia. They have a higher life expectancy (66.4 years) than males (62.8 years), have high literacy rate (93.34 % as of 1990) and compared to their mothers, are said to enjoy a better occupational status.

However, despite their active involvement in the social, economic and political arenas of the Philippine society, these women have remained marginalized. For example, the NCRFW has realized that although women's labor force participation rates have been improving, some 9.3 million women 15 years old and over are not in the labor force. Women workers though tend to occupy the lower positions. Worse, women generally get lower pay than men. On the average, women in the Philippines earn only P 0.37 for every P 1.00 earned by their male counterparts. This discrepancy is even higher when data are viewed within specific occupational groups - women earn P 0.15 for every peso earned by a man in executive, managerial and administrative positions.

The difficult economic conditions of the Philippines have forced many women to seek overseas employment, mostly as domestic helpers. Not only do these women suffer from grave discrimination as they are treated as second-class citizen in the host countries, they are also exposed to dangers of sexual exploitation and physical abuse.

While women and men have equal access to education, the problem of gender-tracking of professions severely limits the choice of women to lower-paying and less challenging jobs. Also, the Filipino women's participation in formal and informal structures of decision-making has been low.

Summing up trends in the status of women in the Philippines, the 1989-1992 PDPW notes that:

*There have been positive indications of an improving situation for women in the country ... in the recent past. More than ever, women have figured prominently in the political affairs of the country, and, gradually, they have been entering new fields. Deliberate efforts have been taken both by government and some non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to accelerate women's development.*

*However, much remains to be done. Women continue to suffer some disadvantages as women and as poor women because of the prevalence of sex-role stereotyping and other biases against them which have been attributed to the kind socialization process that women and men are subjected to from childhood and which shape their attitudes and perceptions in their adulthood. A related factor is the low level of consciousness of women's issues in almost all sectors - public, government bureaucracy, private - which is aggravated by the lack of sex-disaggregated data in many government agencies.*

## Policy Developments

The Philippine government has included in the Constitution a policy "to recognize the role of women in nation building" and "to ensure the fundamental equality before the law of women and men" (Article II, Section 14). This is pursued and translated into operational terms in two ways: through the integration of GAD-sensitive policies in the Medium Term Philippine Development Plan (MTPDP) and through the adoption of the 1989-1992 PDPW.

Moreover, to ensure that women's needs will be addressed at the various government levels, the 1991 Local Government Code has stipulated that all Provincial, City and Municipal Councils shall have, as member, a sectoral representative for women.

There is no question, that the efforts to address women gender needs constitutional bases as a public agenda. This is a positive factor for pursuing gender-related reforms, in programs of government and NGOs. However, given the state of government's finances, comprehensive packages of programs for women were not or not fully adopted. Up to the present therefore, implementation of these programs relies on foreign assistance and from the marginal allotment from government departments.

In the water and sanitation sector, the challenge of meeting women's gender needs through policies, programs and projects proved more difficult than anticipated. This is due to the fact that water supply and sanitation is subsumed under the "Infrastructure Sector", a field which is traditionally perceived to be masculine, and where planning is centered on physical projects rather than people concern. Also, because responding to women's gender needs calls for the *appreciation of the "why" and knowledge of "how" this has to be done.*

## Findings

In a country paper prepared by the NCRFW (Valdeavilla, Remigio and Umali, January 1994) submitted to the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN ESCAP), highly significant findings were made.

The findings show that:

1. There exist, in the sector's external environment, factors that positively influence the promotion of gender responsiveness in water supply and sanitation. These include:
  - a. the society's receptiveness to the idea of greater participation by women in various spheres of activities;
  - b. the presence of policies and legislations explicitly calling for the increased participation by women in development efforts; and

- c. the existence of institutions that advocate for gender issues in development planning.
2. Efforts to enhance gender responsiveness in the sector are, however hampered by the following external factors:
  - a. the low priority and small budget accorded to women's agenda;
  - b. the country's tight economic situation;
  - c. the leniency in enforcing, in the infrastructure sector, the Republic Act 7192 provision requiring government agencies to allot a portion of their foreign assistance funds to the GAD mainstreaming concerns;
  - d. the still transitional status of the Local Government Code implementation; and
  - e. the insufficiency of support mechanisms for the institutionalization of GAD Focal Points.
3. Women's gender interests are a relatively new concern in the water and sanitation sector. This is because the sector has traditionally been viewed as a man's domain, and because planning in the sector has traditionally been infrastructure-oriented.
4. Women have very limited involvement in the technical and managerial functions. At the agency level, this is directly traceable to the fact that there are very few women who pursue careers in the sector, an offshoot of the general perception that the sector is a man's domain. Moreover, the cultural bias against women holding key positions has further deterred women's advancement to technical and supervisory positions.
5. The major problem confronting women as users of water facilities is the lack of access to adequate water supply and sanitation services. This problem is a consequence of both sectoral shortcomings (i.e., the inability of agencies to provide such services, limited NGOs with adequate resources to deliver services), and women's personal constraints (i.e., low cash flow, domestic budgeting problems).

6. Women have strong potentials as managers of community water supply and sanitation projects. While there is a strong bias for women's involvement in the management of water supply and sanitation facilities, their full participation however, is being hampered by the following factors:
- a. the presence of policy provisions and program measures discriminating against women's involvement;
  - b. the inability to look at women's participation from the women's perspective;
  - c. the tendency to focus on women's practical needs to the neglect of their strategic needs;
  - d. the tendency to look at women as merely one of the resources for the achievement of the project's objectives; and
  - e. the notion that women's involvement should consist of free and unlimited service to the sector.

## Recommendations

In the light of these findings, recommendations to promote gender responsiveness in the water supply and sanitation sector address the following concerns:

1. Reevaluating the water supply and sanitation agencies' strong project orientation;
2. Addressing women's practical and strategic needs for water supply and sanitation services from the women's perspective;
3. Correcting those policy provisions and program strategies that hinder/mitigate against women's involvement as beneficiaries of water supply and sanitation projects;
4. Strengthening existing GAD mechanisms, and creating such mechanisms where they are absent to facilitate the integration of gender concerns in water supply and sanitation; and
5. Enhancing women's participation in their technical and managerial functions in water supply and sanitation projects.

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Operation and Maintenance  
Working Group



Water Supply and Sanitation  
Collaborative Council

## **ANNEX 2**

### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

#### **PARTNERSHIP IN OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE**

*by Dianne D. Arboleda*

##### **Introduction**

Significant developments for the advancement of women have taken place since the end of the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade, 1981–1990, and there is now a considerable collection of experience concerning women, water supply and sanitation. Many lessons have been learned.

Women's involvement in water supply and sanitation activities has basically been determined by their traditional roles; women being primary users, and providers of water as well as guardians of household hygiene. This is largely true for all sociocultural environments, although they vary substantially from country to country or even from one community to another. It is also a fact that, in many communities, the precept still prevails that women should be concerned only with the home and domestic matters, and that men should deal with more sophisticated, complicated and technical matters.

There was an important breakthrough, however, when massive international efforts were initiated to integrate women into the development process, to correct imbalances between women and men. And it has been realized that, since water supply and sanitation are the concern of women, men and children, the role of women should not be treated as a separate issue. To achieve effective and long-lasting water supply and sanitation programmes and projects, men must also contribute a fair share of the time, labour and money which so frequently are expected of women.

Past experience has indicated that, in order to ensure success in dealing with water supply and sanitation issues, each has to be viewed from both a female and male perspective and a conscious effort has to be made to look at what both women and men have got to do with it. This is the gender approach, which seeks to change existing situations into ones where equality should prevail, by facilitating the appropriate mechanisms for women and men to recognize and re-evaluate existing patterns and to look for possible actions to improve the balance between women's and men's opportunities, work, control and benefits.

##### ***Gender issues in operation and maintenance***

Gender considerations are extremely important in the operation and maintenance aspects of water supply and sanitation projects, especially at the community level where the partnership approach depends on all the project actors who should each have a say in the development process.

*In operation and maintenance, gender issues arise in the following areas:  
perceptions/attitudes of husbands, male leaders and other community members towards women, as well as the perceptions/attitudes of the women themselves;*



- women overburdened or disproportionately burdened as an extension of their reproductive roles;*
- women's passive role in community activities, especially in the decision-making process;*
- access to information on the project, on community tasks, on project meetings and on other matters of interest;*
- the formulation of operation and maintenance strategies and procedures, and their implementation;*
- opportunities for technical skills training;*
- access to the technical knowhow to carry out simple repairs;*
- women and men sometimes involved with the project under different conditions;*
- sharing of financial burden and benefits of the project.*

### **Developing a partnership**

To start with, it is important to stress that women's and men's practical participation should begin during the first stage of the project cycle. Before actual operation and maintenance of the water supply and sanitation facilities can get underway, many activities have to be performed. These activities include, for example, selecting and training of caretakers, formulation of operation and maintenance programmes, and the preparation of a cost recovery scheme. These preparations are all crucial for the sustainability of the facilities.

With both women and men playing vital roles in the operation and maintenance of systems, consideration of gender issues is essential to achieve favourable conditions which would result in the effective and continued use of the facilities. Dealing with these issues would bring about the following desirable results:

- the value of establishing an effective partnership/relationship between women and men in the operation and maintenance of water supply and sanitation projects would be appreciated;*
- the role and functions of women and men would be clearly and explicitly defined;*
- project tasks and activities would be identified and distributed or delegated fairly among female and male participants in the project, taking into account their existing workloads and schedules;*
- barriers to women's and men's appropriate participation as project beneficiaries and agents would be overcome;*
- there would be easier communication between and among women and men project members;*
- sensitivity to the needs of project partners would be increased;*
- both women and men project members would have the capabilities and confidence to maintain and perform minor repairs to the system;*
- project participants would be satisfied with the functioning water supply and sanitation system, and enjoy its benefits equally.*