

Linking-up with Women in Government: Mainstreaming Gender in the Bureaucracy

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The purpose of this paper is to share the results of a continuing effort to mainstream gender and development in the executive line agencies of the Philippine government. It will briefly describe the rationale for initiating one such effort, as well as the processes, outcomes and issues arising from the experience.

Origins of a Project

In 1989, the Philippine government officially adopted the Philippine Development Plan for Women (the PDPW), a companion document to the Philippine Medium-Term Development Plan. It articulated the issues faced by women in various sectors of society, and suggested developmental strategies to address these problems.

To ensure that line agencies would implement, monitor, assess and update the PDPW, *WID Focal Points* were established in all government entities. The *National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (NCRFW)* supervised the establishment of the *WID Focal Points* and gave their members orientation seminars and gender sensitivity training programs. The *Focal Points* were also organized as a group which met frequently to discuss the progress of their work for women and development, and sought to identify new areas by which to operationalize the PDPW.

In the course of time, the *WID Focal Points* realized their limitations as core groups for implementing the PDPW. They asked the Commission to review the appropriateness of their structures and

functions, and sought to enhance their capabilities to integrate gender concerns in the priority areas of their respective agencies.

As a response, the NCRFW developed a proposal for the *Strengthening of Institutional Mechanisms for Gender-Responsive Development*, the end product of which was envisioned to be an operations' manual to be used by the *Focal Points* in their work related to the PDPW. The proposal was approved for implementation by the UNIFEM and commenced in late 1991. The author was asked to direct the project for the NCRFW.

Gender and Development: A paradigm shift

Feminist discourse in the Philippines in the late eighties and early nineties revolved around the need to attune feminist goals to local situations, and emphasized the importance of equity and empowerment strategies for women's development. The *Philippine Development Plan for Women* itself is a compendium of actions aimed at the minimization of discrimination in socio-economic and political realms, equality in opportunities and access to resources, as well as recommendations to continue and disseminate further welfare-oriented interventions for women.

Initial recommendations to integrate women's concerns in the bureaucracy were couched within these same perspectives. Thus, the *Focal Points* principally imbibed the *WID* framework, and the first efforts undertaken in the line agencies were women-directed projects.

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This included the provision of more credit programs for women, day care facilities, gender sensitization, increased consciousness on human and reproductive rights, and training programs for women for livelihood and employment.

The proposal to strengthen existing mechanisms in government for gender-responsive planning represents a paradigm shift to a Gender and Development (GAD) framework, consistent with the views of Molyneux (1985) and Moser, (1991, 1993). *Gender-responsive planning* provides both a theory and a methodology for addressing the needs and interests of low income women within the particularities of their distinct life situations. It emphasizes the importance to identify the practical and strategic gender needs of individuals arising from the gender division of labor in a household, community or society. It advocates the use of participatory approaches in planning, implementing and evaluating development programs. It seeks to incorporate gender interests in the policy and planning efforts of a country.

Hence, the proposal to provide operational guidelines to the WID Focal Points on how to mainstream gender in the line agencies of the Philippine government led to self-reflections, dialogues, and debates among and between the NCRFW, the project staff and its consultants. This paradigm shift represents a major contribution to feminist thinking and practice in the Philippines. Its impact on development approaches in the Philippine bureaucracy will be discussed in this paper.

Strengthening Institutional Mechanisms for Gender-Responsive Development: Project Highlights

The project was planned to go into three stages:

First, to conduct quick diagnostic studies of six (6) selected line agencies for organizational systems analysis and program review;

Second, using the findings of the research, to conduct training programs for

members of the Focal Points in order to incapacitate them to mainstream gender concerns in their respective agencies; and

Third, to develop an operations manual for the Focal Points.

In the actual course of the project, another stage of work interfaced between research and training. This is the distillation stage, at which time the project director attempted to abstract from separate reports common areas of organizational concern for engendering the bureaucracy, and desirable features of gender-responsive programs.

The Research Phase

The first challenge posed by the project was to select consultants who could do organizational and program reviews using a gender perspective. Getting organizational experts was easy, but orientation workshops had to be undertaken in order to ensure that they would use a gender framework in their analyses. For the program reviews, mostly individuals already familiar with gender goals and concerns, and who were active to some degree, within the women's movement, were selected.

Several consultative meetings were held in the project. The sessions sought to introduce gender-planning principles to the staff and the consultants, to assess the nature of data that was quickly being collected from six line agencies, and to give gender interpretations to the data through discussion and debate.

To gather information, the consultants used a variety of techniques. They held key informant interviews, did short surveys on organizational policies and procedures, examined office documents (including planning reports, annual reports, training modules, project and research reports, statistical information, and the like), and interviewed beneficiary groups.

After each consultative meeting, data were further collected and re-interpreted. Suggestions were given concerning what important bits of information to obtain for a comprehensive gender analysis of the organization, its programs and directions.

Eventually, the end product attained was the completion of organizational diagnoses and program reviews framed within a gender analysis of the mandates and directions of five of the six line agencies (the corresponding reports for one of the six agencies were not completed as desired). In consequence, the project staff, the NCRFW, and the consultants became equipped with gender analyses and interpretations of the line agencies' principal functions. For instance, the gender component in highways construction and roads building became clearer to us. The necessary directions towards gender-responsiveness in local government's administration were identified. The place of sex-disaggregated data in labor relations training and curriculum development in education surfaced. The importance of a farm systems perspective for gender analysis of agriculture was clarified.

The studies, therefore, provided a set of gender-responsive frameworks for examining the principal mandates, functions and programs of the bureaucracy. These perspectives were to prove important to capability-building for mainstreaming.

The Distillation Phase

At the end of the research phase, separate reports on the six line agencies were available to the author. Preparatory to the design of training modules, it was important to distill and abstract the different observations into a set of meaningful categories and guidelines for mainstreaming the organizations, policies and programs of the bureaucracy.

The following organizational factors were identified.

1. Expression of gender goals in the mandates, vision, mission and objectives of the organization. It is easier to design gender-responsive programs if mandates/visions/ objectives referred to people's development, at the very least. Examples of objectives and their rewritten forms are as follows:

"[to build] socially-oriented infrastructure to enhance public health and education ..."

"[to build] socially-oriented infrastructure to enhance the public health and education of women and men of all ages ..."

"to improve the quality of education and training and its relevance to Philippine needs and conditions..."

"to improve the quality of education and training and its relevance to the needs and conditions of Filipino men and women across demographic and socio-economic formations..."

2. Top-level sponsorship of gender and development goals. It was discovered that most of the efforts for integrating gender concerns in the line agencies could either flourish or be thwarted by senior level managers. Hence, it is important that among the advocates for GAD are the managers themselves. This meant that the Focal Points, which at the time were mainly composed of women interested in women's development, had to be re-organized to include key decision makers in the respective agencies, be they women or men.

3. Development of gender consciousness in the organization. Before a new idea can take root in an organization, its members must first appreciate the essence of the innovation. Hence, an agency which seeks to mainstream gender has first to create an awareness of GAD goals among its personnel, especially those in human resource development, personnel, planning and information systems.

4. Institution of non-discriminatory structures, mechanisms and processes. Sources of gender bias should be eliminated in employment policies, in decision-making procedures, in the deployment of staff to field areas, in training programs, and in other areas of organizational life affecting women and men.

5. Nurturance of a favorable organizational climate for women and men. A gender-sensitive organizational culture promotes the following values: equality of opportunity and equity of impact, individual development, regardless of sex, and the increased participation of women in areas formerly closed to them.

6. Conduct of capability-building strategies. Gender sensitivity alone is not enough to enable an organization to integrate gender-responsive strategies in its work. Gender analysis tools, gender planning principles and other related skills and knowledge have to be provided to the pertinent personnel of an agency.

An important insight distilled from the research was that the mandates, organizational processes and procedures of the agencies themselves could not be ignored. Programs could only become gender-responsive if the people who design and implement them work within a gender-sensitive climate which provides equity and equality to its own personnel, and is attuned to society's goals for gender and development. *This also meant that gender mainstreaming could not be successfully undertaken by the Focal Points alone. This particular finding had far-reaching implications in the line agencies.*

Factors found to be important in the mainstreaming of gender in development programs were identified to be as follows.

1. Incorporation of gender sensitivity and awareness in regular education, training and service delivery programs. Efforts must be taken to sensitize program and project implementors, as well as beneficiary groups, through regular services and programs of the agency. Even technical training course should be re-designed to incorporate gender concepts and issues.

2. Promotion of equal access to resources, opportunities and benefits through the programs of the agency. Government programs should aim, among other things, to extend the benefits of programs and services equally to men and women.

3. Development of gender-fair educational materials. Teaching aids, promotional-informational materials, and even service delivery efforts should avoid sexism and the perpetuation of gender stereotypes.

4. Recognition of the multiple roles of women in the formulation of policies, plans and programs of government. Agencies which have regulatory functions should set conditions which ensure the implementation of gender-fair policies, procedures and objectives. Appropriate legislation should be proposed.

5. Design or adaptation of technologies which either increase women's production or reduce their work burden. Technologies should be developed which increase women's chances to participate in productive endeavors. Some technologies should also aim to reduce household drudgery, especially for low income women.

6. Design of technical and financial support packages for the specific needs of male and female clients. A gender-responsive program caters to the specific requirements of its target groups, be they women or men, and takes note of their residence, socio-political profile, level of organization, livelihood, technology and skills base.

7. Advancement of innovative and nontraditional roles for women and men. Government programs should reduce traditional notions of the gender division of labor, especially when economic and cultural realities no longer support such distinctions in society.

8. Linkages forged with like-minded agencies which, and with individuals who, aspire for gender-responsive goals. Networking efforts for gender mainstreaming should include the formation of joint activities and exchange of know-how with other organizations, both locally and abroad, for shared goals vis-a-vis gender and development.

As developed through our observations of six pilot agencies, mainstreaming programs in the bureaucracy is conceived to include the following processes:

First, an effort to include a gender-responsive framework in the design and implementation of plans and projects which carry out the mandates of the line agencies;

Second, a process by which as many members of the line agency as possible are trained to use gender lenses in of their regular programs and services;

Third, the allocation of sufficient logistics (both human and material resources) for the implementation of gender-responsive programs and services; and,

Lastly, the conscious creation of opportunities to offset traditional notions of gender roles, while encouraging the development of societal values for more egalitarian relations between women and men.

The Capability-Building Phase

Capability - building was originally conceived to target the existing WID Focal Points only. As a result of the research and distillation phases, however, the capacities of the Focal Points, other key decision makers in the agencies, and even the members of the planning unit of the NCRFW benefited from the project.

1. Solicitation of top-level sponsorship for GAD.

Aligned with the results of the study, among the first efforts undertaken to strengthen institutional mechanisms in the pilot agencies was the setting-up of meetings with their respective key officials. The project results were scheduled for presentation to the Secretary (or Minister) of the line agency, whenever possible. This happened successfully in two of five cases. For the rest, undersecretaries and assistant secretaries (or deputy ministers) were the audiences we obtained.

In each meeting, the gender analysis of the agency's principal functions was presented. The factors discovered to be important for organizational engendering as well as program mainstreaming were discussed, and the officials commitments to the government's PDPW and GAD goals were solicited.

A related effort undertaken was to ask the key officials to become more directly involved in the Focal Points. Thus, it was suggested, in each case, that the Focal Point Chairperson of the agency be any one among the senior officials, preferably the Secretary or an

Undersecretary. Moreover, it was recommended that membership in the Focal Point follow the decision making structure of the organization, with clear representation therein of important bureaus, divisions and attached agencies. In most cases, the members of the original Focal Points were retained, often as the technical working groups of the formalized Focal Points.

The replication of the Focal Points in regional offices was also suggested inasmuch as the existing ones were situated only in the central offices. By doing so, it was hoped that mainstreaming efforts could more easily radiate downwards, and more decision makers harnessed as GAD advocates.

As a result of these consultations, the structure and composition of the WID Focal Points in five of the six pilot agencies were altered to achieve greater representation of key decision makers in each of the organizations. Moreover, as a result of the project's paradigm shift from WID to GAD, the WID Focal Points were renamed *Focal Points for Gender and Development*.

2. Development of support mechanisms for mainstreaming gender in line agencies.

Crucial steps were taken by the NCRFW to help along the agencies' efforts to mainstream gender. For one, it developed a set of implementing guidelines accompanying the "Women in Development and Nation-Building Act" (Republic Act 7192) towards GAD rather than WID goals. Secondly, it mandated governmental agencies to allocate a portion of both domestic resources (governmental appropriations) and money from bilateral agreements for gender and development projects. Thirdly, it has developed a document entitled "Philippine Perspective Plan for Gender-responsive Development" which interprets the Philippines' future in terms of gender-related issues, and suggests appropriate lines of developmental intervention within this context.

Equally important are initiatives taken by international donor-partners to integrate gender equity goals in bilateral agreements. Many donor countries and agencies now stipulate that WID or GAD goals be part of development plans and projects.

3. *Training of line agencies on mainstreaming strategies.*

As an essential component of the project, the results of the initial phases were communicated to representatives of the line agencies in training sessions.

The author designed a prototype training module, with the following considerations in mind: (a) that the participants should include key decision makers in the line agency, with representation of existing bureaus or divisions; (b) that most of the participants have no prior gender awareness; (c) that the participants will emerge from the training equipped with basic concepts and skills for developing gender-responsive action plans; and (d) that follow-up activities will be initiated by the Focal Points, under the guidance of the NCRFW, towards the development of strategic plans using a gender-responsive framework.

Given these considerations, a three-day training course was designed so that participants will be able to:

- (1) review basic concepts on gender analysis and gender-responsive planning,
- (2) identify gender issues affecting themselves and their co-workers,
- (3) apply and refine a gender-sensitive framework for assessing the policies and programs of their agency,
- (4) use gender analysis to review the programs of their agencies,
- (5) identify organizational factors which affect the integration of gender concerns in their agency, and,
- (6) develop action plans preparatory to strategic planning for gender and development.

Four modules were developed to operationalize the design.

The first module was on Gender Analysis and Gender Planning. Initial sessions were devoted to introducing participants to basic concepts of gender, gender planning and gender analysis. Integral to the module was the development of gender awareness among the trainees, using group processes and experiential exercises. *The second module sought to enable participants to identify Gender Issues at Home and at Work.* This was included to stress the point that 'the personal is political', and that gender issues affect everyone – including the development planner, human resource specialist, or technical trainer. It also sought to describe the continuities of gender problems in both reproductive and productive spheres of one's life. *The third module dwelt on Gender Analysis Tools for Mainstreaming Gender.* It enabled the participants to analyze their organizations and programs with 'gender lenses' appropriate to their own circumstances, by using the gender analysis framework earlier developed in the research phase. *Finally, the course ended with Action Planning,* during which time trainees were asked to plan their next sets of action towards gender mainstreaming.

Around 25-30 participants attended the training sessions conducted for each of the five line agencies. Even while the instruction was for heads of divisions or bureaus to attend the training, male chiefs were prone to assign female subordinates to attend in their stead. Thus, in many cases, no more than five to seven male participants were included in any one of the training sessions.

The evaluation of the program was generally favorable. Participants developed gender awareness, as well as a better appreciation of how to incorporate gender concerns in the re-structuring of their organizations and reformulation of programs.

In fact, a common observation was that the course should be conducted for the more senior officials of the respective agencies, so that they could also appreciate the processes and problems attendant to mainstreaming gender in development programs. Such moves were done in at least two of the five line departments.

Each program was 'customized' for the trainees, i.e. they were introduced to the gender analysis of their mandates and objectives and made to engage in workshop sessions to examine their own home and office situations. By doing so, the participants were given ample clues to determine the direction of their efforts after training. They were able to analyze the gender biases in their organizations and programs, and asked to modify these according to GAD principles and objectives. These sessions constituted practice in mainstreaming gender.

The Manualization Phase

One important output of the project was supposed to be a manual of operations to guide the Focal Points in their mainstreaming efforts. However, after the distillation phase, and faced with a wealth of concepts, prescriptions and insights into a totally new experience (i.e., mainstreaming in government), the author decided to develop a sourcebook instead.

The sourcebook is designed to introduce GAD advocates in government to key concepts on gender, gender-responsive development, gender planning and participatory approaches. It combines guidelines for organizational change, program design, implementation and evaluation with real examples describing experiences, issues and solutions associated with gender-blind development and its antithesis: gender mainstreaming. It lists sources of information and organizational resources for gender-responsive development planning (Torres & Del Rosario, 1994). Thus far, the sourcebook has been favorably endorsed by its readers.

PostScript to the project: Gains and Shortcomings

Favorable Outcomes. Presently, the experiences of these agencies have attained some degree of institutionalization. Four of the five agencies included in the project undertook gender-responsive strategic planning sessions after the course. The outcomes of their efforts may be seen both in the annual plans developed by the agencies, as well as in medium and long term plans. In at least one agency, the objectives and mission of the department were reformulated as well, along gender-responsive lines.

A majority of the line departments identified orientation seminars, gender planning and sensitization sessions as among their priority plans of action towards mainstreaming. To this end, in-house seminars and short-term training courses have been designed and implemented by the re-organized Focal Points, with some assistance from NCRFW. In one department, efforts are underway to incorporate gender sensitivity modules in its regular training programs for local government executives. At least three of the trained agencies have spearheaded the conduct of Gender Sensitivity and Planning Workshops for their various bureaus and offices.

Flagship programs and policies have been reformulated to become more gender-fair and responsive. For example, the Agriculture Department has re-gearred its Grains Enhancement Program to take greater cognizance of the roles and labor contributions of women in production and post-production activities. The Education Department has taken pains to introduce gender-fair messages in textbooks. The Labor Department has set the objective of improving the welfare of female overseas migrant women through its services, informational materials and other support programs. All the agencies are committed to gathering more relevant sex-

disaggregated data to guide their planning and programming activities.

The pilot agencies have also allied themselves with feminist lobby groups for the introduction and reformulation of laws and policies affecting women. Thus, the Philippines now has a set of policies against sexual harassment in government offices. Legislative initiatives are also being taken for the improved protection of female migrant workers, and for the recognition of women's human and reproductive rights. Many joint efforts between governmental and non-governmental entities are being taken to combat *violence against women*. Executive directives and policies now consciously articulate the anticipated benefits of development interventions on women and/or men.

The agencies involved in the project have become role models for other line departments bent on mainstreaming gender. Members of the Focal Points are sought after as resource persons in training courses on mainstreaming of other governmental agencies. The reformulated programs of these departments, their 'engendered' organizational policies and procedures, as well as their non-sexist and gender-sensitive informational and promotional materials, are being circulated among a growing number of government officials and workers keenly interested in GAD and mainstreaming.

Difficulties and Shortcomings. While the project has provided impetus to mainstreaming efforts, much remains to be done.

One difficulty which was not clearly anticipated was the fluidity of headship in the line agencies. Since we wanted top-level sponsorship, the continuing presence of the officials whose commitments to GAD we had encouraged needed to be maintained. Unfortunately, in the course of time, several cabinet secretaries who gave their commitments to engendering their

organizations were replaced. Bureau and division chiefs were reshuffled, replaced, assigned to other jobs, or resigned. This translates into a need to continuously develop new GAD champions, through more training and orientation sessions.

Given the limitations of time and resources, and the voluminous size of the Philippine bureaucracy, the project was able to reach only a small percentage of development planners, human resource specialists and program implementors. Thus, it is important to continue advocacy and capability-building activities both horizontally and vertically. This means that many more agencies of government have to be drawn into the circle of mainstreaming. At the same time, capability-building must permeate downwards to reach frontline functionaries directly in touch with people, clients and communities, instead of training only those in the central offices. The localization and focusing of mainstreaming efforts cannot be over-emphasized, since gender-responsive planning has to be relevant to the particular needs and interests of a multiplicity of sectors of men and women.

Another problem area is the continuing notion that GAD and gender training is only for women. As earlier mentioned, a majority of the participants to the training sessions were women. Yet, our organizational studies reveal that the commitment and participation of men are important and integral to mainstreaming gender in the bureaucracy. More information materials have to be disseminated and greater advocacy efforts taken to enable men to appreciate what GAD can do for them.

Short-term training programs cannot work miracles. Capability-building must continue in other ways. Greater interaction between Focal Point members needs to be encouraged, to enable them to share and reflect on their gains and shortcomings. Mentoring sessions between GAD specialists and advocates have to be arranged, to be able to deal with specific operational problems in an office or sector.

Documentation of mainstreaming experiences, alive with its pitfalls, effects and impacts, should also be undertaken, widely circulated and reviewed.



Conclusion

Given our initial experiences in linking-up with women in the bureaucracy, it is recommended that the theory and practice of gender and development must fuse in mainstreaming efforts. Praxis provides fresh insights to both the scholar and the practitioner, and gives depth and breadth to feminist ideals. It also adds strength to the global aspiration towards and movement for an egalitarian, gender-sensitive, sustainable and humane society. In due time, development theory and its processes will have the imprint of the women and men whose conditions it aims to uplift.

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