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## Sustainable development goal 5: How does the Philippines fare on gender equality?

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**Philippine Institute for Development Studies**  
*Surian sa mga Pag-aaral Pangkaunlaran ng Pilipinas*

## Sustainable Development Goal 5: How Does the Philippines Fare on Gender Equality?

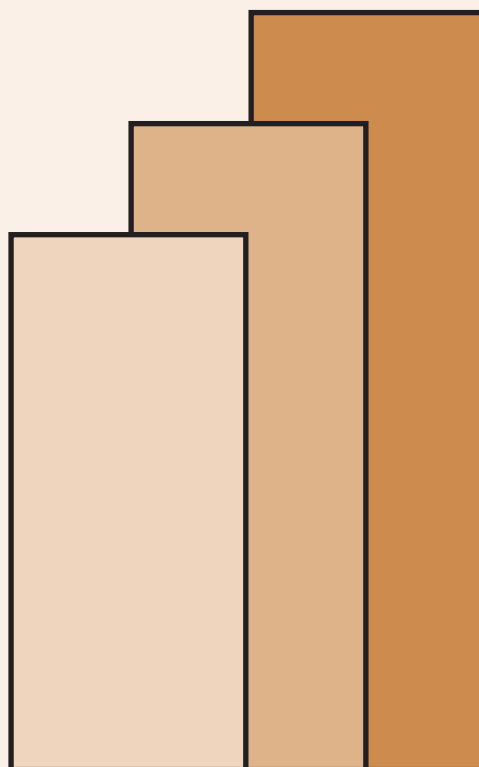
*Clarissa C. David, Jose Ramon G. Albert,  
and Jana Flor V. Vizmanos*

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# Sustainable Development Goal 5: How Does the Philippines Fare on Gender Equality?

Clarissa C. David,  
Jose Ramon G. Albert and  
Jana Flor V. Vizmanos

PHILIPPINE INSTITUTE FOR DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

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## **Abstract**

The global goal to attain gender equality, including ending all forms of discrimination against women and girls, and ensuring their safety, is central to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Its attainment means that every person, regardless of sex, is empowered to reach their full potential. This entails having both men and women being given equal opportunities to education, paid employment, and real decision-making power whether in private, or public sectors. This paper discusses how the country fares in several gender and gender-related indicators that can be used to monitor progress toward gender equality and women's empowerment. It provides an overview of the current situation in areas such as equality of human capabilities, equality of economic opportunity, equality in political voice and leadership, and the safety of women and girls. The paper also identifies priorities for public policy while seeking new directions in a number of transformational issues to attain gender equality and women's empowerment in the country.

**Keywords:** decentralization, expenditure assignment, equalization transfers, federal government, fiscal autonomy, intergovernmental transfers, political dynasties, political turncoatism, tax assignment, unitary government, vertical fiscal gap, vertical fiscal imbalance

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# **Sustainable Development Goal 5: How Does the Philippines Fare on Gender Equality?**

***Clarissa C. David, Jose Ramon G. Albert and Jana Flor V. Vizmanos\****

## **1. Introduction**

The Philippines, together with 192 other UN member states, committed to attaining the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. The SDGs consist of a set of 17 goals and 169 targets that the world aims to meet by 2030. The SDGs aspire to eliminate poverty, protect the planet, and ensure peace and prosperity for all. Among the 17 global goals is SDG5, a global goal to "achieve gender quality and empower all women and girls". There are 9 targets and fourteen indicators for SDG5 (Box 1). Each of the SDG5 targets seeks to pursue the main goal of real and sustained gender equality in all aspects of women and girls' lives. The targets include ending discrimination, eliminating violence against women and girls, eliminating early and forced marriage, ensuring equal participation and opportunities for leadership, and universal access to sexual and reproductive rights.

Many of the SDG5 targets is composed of multiple indicators. For example, for target 5 of SDG5 (SDG 5.5) to ensure women's full participation in leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life, the SDG5 indicators are the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments and local governments (Indicator 5.5.1), and the proportion of women in managerial positions (Indicator 5.5.2). Of these 2 indicators, only the second belongs to the so-called Tier I indicators<sup>1</sup> which have a clear and established methodology and for which data are regularly collected by many countries, while the first indicator has only the first component that is Tier I (with the second component having an unclear methodology thus far).

Many of the SDG5 targets is composed of multiple indicators. For example, for SDG 5.5 to ensure women's full participation in leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life, the indicators are the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments and local governments (Indicator 5.5.1), and the proportion of women in managerial positions (Indicator 5.5.2). Of these 2 indicators, only the second belongs to the so-called Tier I indicators which have a clear and established methodology and for which data are regularly collected by many countries, while the first indicator has only the first component that is Tier I (with the second component having an unclear methodology thus far).

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\* The first author is a professor at the UP College of Mass Communication, while the second and third authors are senior research fellow and research assistant, respectively, of the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS). The views expressed here are the author's own.

<sup>1</sup> The current set of global indicators for monitoring the SDGs are grouped into three tiers - Tier 1, Tier 2 and Tier 3. Indicators classified as Tier 1 have a clear and established methodology and data are regularly collected by many countries. Tier 2 indicators are those that have an established methodology but are not regularly collected by many countries. Tier 3 indicators do not have established standards and/or estimation methodology. Of the 14 indicators for SDG5, 2 (namely, Indicators 5.5.2, and 5.b.1) belong to Tier I indicators; 7 (5.2.1, 5.2.2, 5.3.1, 5.3.2, 5.4.1, 5.6.1., 5.a.1.) are Tier II indicators; 4 (viz., Indicators 5.1.1, 5.6.2, 5.a.2, and 5.c.1) are categorized under Tier III indicators and 1 indicator (namely Indicator 5.5.1) has multiple tiers since different components of these indicators are classified into different tiers.



**Box 1. Targets for SDG5 ("Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls") and Indicators for Monitoring SDG5 Targets**

Target 5.1 End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere	Indicator 5.1.1 Whether or not legal frameworks are in place to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex
Target 5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation	Indicator 5.2.1 Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by form of violence and by age
	Indicator 5.2.2 Proportion of women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to sexual violence by persons other than an intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by age and place of occurrence
Target 5.3 Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation	Indicator 5.3.1 Proportion of women aged 20–24 years who were married or in a union before age 15 and before age 18
	Indicator 5.3.2 Proportion of girls and women aged 15–49 years who have undergone female genital mutilation/cutting, by age
Target 5.4 Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate	Indicator 5.4.1 Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by sex, age and location
Target 5.5 Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life	Indicator 5.5.1 Proportion of seats held by women in (a) national parliaments and (b) local governments
	Indicator 5.5.2 Proportion of women in managerial positions
Target 5.6 Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences	Indicator 5.6.1 Proportion of women aged 15–49 years who make their own informed decisions regarding sexual relations, contraceptive use and reproductive health care
	Indicator 5.6.2 Number of countries with laws and regulations that guarantee full and equal access to women and men aged 15 years and older to sexual and reproductive health care, information and education
Target 5.a Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws	Indicator 5.a.1 (a) Proportion of total agricultural population with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land, by sex; and (b) share of women among owners or rights-bearers of agricultural land, by type of tenure
	Indicator 5.a.2 Proportion of countries where the legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women's equal rights to land ownership and/or control
Target 5.b Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women	Indicator 5.b.1 Proportion of individuals who own a mobile telephone, by sex
Target 5.c Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels	Indicator 5.c.1 Proportion of countries with systems to track and make public allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment

Aside from SDG5, various SDGs (e.g., SDG1 on no poverty, SDG2 on 4 on zero hunger, SDG 3 on good health and well-being, SDG 4 on quality education) provide a gender lens, especially when indicators discuss conditions of women as regards their economic empowerment, and access to services for improving their human capabilities.

Even before the adoption of the SDGs, commitments for action to achieve gender equality were established in numerous UN resolutions and international instruments dealing with human rights, including the rights of women and girls. Particularly significant are the UN General Assembly (UNGA) Resolution 217A of 1948 (also called the *Universal Declaration on Human Rights*), the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)* and the *International Covenant on Economic and Social Rights (ICESR)* (both adopted by the UNGA in 1966, entered into force 1976)—which together constitute the International Bill of Human Rights—and the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)* (adopted in 1979, entered into force 1981).

Building on the agenda in CEDAW and other human rights instruments, the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women mobilized support for gender equality across government, business, civil society and the development community. The *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* adopted at this conference called for strategic action across 12 areas, viz.,

- 1) The burden of poverty and inequality on women;
- 2) Inequalities, inadequacies, and unequal access to education and training;
- 3) Inequalities, inadequacies, and unequal access to health care and related services;
- 4) Violence against women;
- 5) Effects of conflict on women;
- 6) Inequality of economic structures and policies, in all forms of productive activities and access to resources;
- 7) Inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making;
- 8) Inefficient mechanisms to promote the advancement of women;
- 9) Lack of respect for and inadequate promotion and protection of the human rights of women;
- 10) Stereotyping of women and inequality in women's access to and participation in communications systems, especially in the media;
- 11) Gender inequalities in the management of natural resources and safeguarding the environment; and
- 12) Persistent discrimination against and violation of the rights of the girl child.

Since the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995, gender equality concerns have been elaborated and interpreted in various global, regional, and national advocacy documents, plans of action, and progress reports. A subset of the international agenda for action laid out by CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action has even been incorporated in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)<sup>2</sup>, the predecessor to the SDGs. The MDGs, a set of 8 global goals, was supported by 21 specific, time-bound, and quantifiable targets with a target date of 2015. Global, regional and country monitoring of the MDGs was conducted with 60 global

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<sup>2</sup> The MDGs comprise eight goals: reduce poverty and hunger; achieve universal education; promote gender equality; reduce child and maternal deaths; combat HIV, malaria and other diseases; ensure environmental sustainability; develop global partnerships.

statistical indicators using 1990 baseline data (and with other proxy indicators at the country level when the global indicators were not available or relevant). The MDGs though were somewhat compartmentalized, with no explicit recognition of linkages and interdependence among the goals. MDG3 on promoting gender equality and empowerment of women, had targets in three areas, education (as indicated by the ratio of girls to boys in school enrollment); employment (as indicated by the share of women in non-agricultural wage employment); and political participation (as indicated by the share of women in seats in national parliaments). MDG5 on maternal health was also aimed toward meeting the gender equality agenda. Other MDGs, however, while important for improving human development outcomes, were not specifically aimed at gender nor were they meant to target the empowerment of women.

As the world started crafting the SDGs as a successor to the MDGs, the MDGs was seen as having omitted important issues such as governance, conflict situations and peacebuilding, women's reproductive health issues, access to resources, inequality, economic growth and employment, urbanization, innovation. More fundamentally, the MDGs were observed to be inadequately aligned with human rights standards and principles, especially equality, participation, non-discrimination, and transparency.

Despite their limitations, the MDGs, together with the Beijing Platform for Action, CEDAW, however, undoubtedly yielded processes, outputs and outcomes for promoting and attaining gender equality in several socio-economic dimensions. In many countries across the world, women now have increased legal rights in ownership and inheritance of property, marriage, and opportunities for advancement though implementation deficits persist. The World Bank's 2012 study on Gender Equality in East Asia and the Pacific reported that,

“Women still have less access than men to a range of productive assets and services, including land, financial capital, agricultural extension services, and new information technologies.”

Further, this World Bank study noted persistent trends in “employment segregation” along gender lines: women being more less likely than men to work formal sector jobs and more likely to work in poorly paid occupations and enterprises. Despite diminishing gender disparities in education outcomes and achievements, it has been observed, however, that women continue to join the labor market less, and when they do, they tend to be paid less than men for similar work. (World Bank, 2012).

The prevention of violence against women has also become an important part of the policy and legislative agenda in several countries although implementation deficits persist compounded by the lack of political will and willingness to prioritize gender equality from those who perceive CEDAW as a challenge to cultural or religious norms, and the lack of capacity and resources for stakeholders in government and civil society to participate in moving the gender equality agenda.<sup>3</sup> Further, even with policy frameworks in place, gender gaps remain in most dimensions of economic and social development. Further, severe discrimination and violence against women can also intensify, thus underscoring the challenges ahead in ensuring gender equality.

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<sup>3</sup> See for instance World Bank. 2012. *Toward Gender Equality in Asia and the Pacific*. Washington, DC: World Bank; UNDP. 2010. *Regional Human Development Report 2010: Power, Voice and Rights: A Turning Point for Gender Equality Asia and the Pacific*. Bangkok: UNDP; and UN Women 2015, *op cit*.

Through its gender gap indices, the World Economic Forum (WEF) also has provided another lens on the diversity of experience across countries in attaining gender equality. The WEF has listed the Philippines as the best performer in gender outcomes in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) since 2006. In 2017, the Philippines ranked 10th among 144 countries assessed for gender outcomes worldwide (WEF, 2017). This standing, however, went down by three ranks from the 2016 performance, partly on account of a decrease in wage equality for similar work indicator, with the country dropping in ranks for this sub-measure from 7th to 21<sup>st</sup> globally. Further, the Philippines also re-opens in 2017 a Health and Survival gender gap for the first time since 2006, according to the WEF. Indicators also in recent WEF reports suggest that while there are no gender gaps in access to education, the Philippines needs to address its gender gaps in political empowerment, economic participation, and economic opportunities.

This discussion paper presents a more detailed view of some of the current statistics in the country pertinent to SDG5, as well other gender and gender-related indicators for monitoring the SDGs; this paper seeks to provide more in-depth examinations into the critical issues of gender equality in the Philippines today. There are SDGs that are especially pertinent to women and girls such as human trafficking, which should be integrated into the policy and response discussions. This report focuses on female representation in leadership positions, violence against women and children, and women's economic empowerment or the degree to which women are free to pursue economic independence. Beyond the statistics shown, we take a closer look at the remaining legal, cultural, and administrative challenges to effective gender equality and protection of women and girls. Much of the insight in these areas come from the experiences of various women and gender leaders interviewed for this study through Key Informant Interviews and Focused Group Discussions. Interviewees include women in high-level positions in different sectors of industry (top management and higher), elected officials in the barangays, city government, and senate, and leaders of non-government organizations (NGOs) doing work in the areas of human trafficking, women's rights, and violence against women and children (VAWC). Through such an examination we hope to point toward specific recommendations for improved public policy and action, implementation, enforcement, and governance to meet or exceed the SDG5 targets on ensuring equal opportunity for all, regardless of sex, thus ensuring no woman or man, and no boy or girl is left behind.

## **2. Philippine laws supportive of gender equality**

Throughout the last three decades, the Philippines has had an active and aggressive legislative agenda to protect women's rights and ensure gender equality. While many landmark laws have been passed and are in full effect, the implementation of some of these measures are constrained by a lack of political support or resources at various levels. Moreover, there also remain old laws in effect that are indirectly harmful to women. The legislative agenda to advance women's and girls' rights and safety is continuously active and should be monitored closely since the decision-making bodies of the legislature are dominated by men (as shown in the next sections).

Some of the most significant laws of the last decade that impact the welfare of women and girls (see Box 2) include the Magna Carta of Women (MCW) also known as Republic Act (R.A.) 9710), the Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Act (R.A.10354), the Domestic Workers' Act (R.A. 10361), and the Anti-Child Pornography Act (R.A.9775). In particular the Magna Carta of Women is the encompassing Act that operationalizes the country's commitment to the CEDAW. It sets out the State's obligations in promoting and protecting gender equality, women's rights, and the promotion of female empowerment across all sectors

of society. Some of the key features of the law include setting targets for increasing the participation of women in high-level government positions and governing councils at the local level, expanding the coverage of maternity benefits, penalizing discrimination on the basis of gender, and protecting women and girls against violence. Its implementing rules provide for a governance structure for the monitoring of gender equality goals, i.e., the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) and the enforcement and governance of gender and women protections and participation across all levels of government. The Magna Carta is the overall framework that guided and continues to guide efforts to legislate, implement, support, and program the gender equality efforts of government, civil society, and other stakeholders. As far as laws are concerned, the Philippines performs better than its neighboring countries, although enforcement and implementation of these laws remains understudied.

**Box 2. Recent significant laws for the protection of the welfare of women and girls**

R.A. 10361 Domestic Workers' Act (2012)	Also known as <i>Batas Kasambahay</i> , the law seeks to protect the rights of domestic works against abuse, to provide them decent working conditions and income, and to reduce the incidence of child labor and trafficking in persons for the purpose of domestic work.
R.A. 10354 Responsibly Parenthood and Reproductive Health Act (2012)	Specifically stating gender equality goals in its declaration of policy, the RH Law provides a national policy for family planning, maternal and child health, and age-appropriate reproductive health education.
R.A. 9710 Magna Carta of Women (2009)	Operationalizes the Philippines' commitment to CEDAW, the Magna Carta is an expansive comprehensive Act which aims to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women.
R.A. Anti-Violence Against Women and their Children Act (2004)	Through the criminalization of physical, sexual, psychological, and economic abuse of women and children by their intimate partners, the Anti-VAWC Law seeks to protect victims and prevent all forms of abuse against women and children.
R.A. 9208 Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act (2003)	Institutes policies to eliminate trafficking in persons, most of whom are women and girls.
R.A. 8972 Solo Parent's Welfare Act (2000)	Provides for benefits and privileges to solo parents and their children.

Compared to many other countries, the Philippines can boast of having relatively progressive laws intended to promote gender equality. The legal environment is also favorable to SDG5, although ground conditions and the extent to which the laws are properly interpreted and supported by the offices responsible, largely local government units (LGUs), requires monitoring and evaluation. For areas such as access to education, access to employment, and participation in government the figures suggest close to equality conditions, in some cases with even higher participation of women than men, such as in education and the civil service. However, these national-level averages hide some important inequalities in certain industries, sectors, leadership positions, and vulnerabilities.

While it appears that the Philippines is faring better than most other countries in gender equality (not only from the WEF indices, but also among other international assessments), there remain stubborn glass ceilings in representation in high-level decision-making positions and high levels of vulnerabilities to violence and trafficking for certain pockets of the female and girl population.

### 3. SDG Target 5.1: End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere

The previous section provided a review of a number of laws in place in the country that promote gender equality and enforce non-discrimination on the basis of sex. The conditions of women in the country particularly in education, health and labor may also be seen from other SDG indicators, and other related statistics, especially when data are disaggregated by sex, or when the statistics particularly focus on women and girls.

#### 3.1. Human Capabilities

Education is considered a pathway for achieving many SDGs, including gender equality. Building on the MDG2 commitment for the participation in primary education of all boys and girls, the aspiration for SDG4 includes a more comprehensive set of targets that move beyond just the number of girls (and boys) enrolling and completing school to focus on the quality of education. Unfortunately, very little can be currently gleaned from the SDG Global Indicators Database of the UN Statistics Division on gender-related indicators pertaining to the Global Goal on Education, SDG4 (Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning) as regards the performance of the Philippines (**Table 1**) and many developing countries. This is largely because of sparse data: of the 11 SDG4 global indicators, only two are Tier 1 indicators (that are widely available from countries). That is, since SDG4 focuses on quality education, the indicators have not been fully tested or available from countries. The available data though suggests minimal disparities between the sexes, at the surface.

**Table 1. Philippine Data on Selected SDG4 Indicators, by Sex**

Sex	Indicator 4.2.2. Participation rate in organized learning (one year before the official primary entry age), by sex		Indicator 4.c.1 Proportion of teachers in primary education who have received at least the minimum organized teacher training (e.g. pedagogical training) pre-service or in-service required for teaching at the relevant level in a given country
	2001	2009	2013
Male	24.13	41.41	100
Female	23.83	43.03	100
Both sexes	23.98	42.19	100

Source: UN Statistics Divisions, SDG Indicators Global Database. Available at: <http://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/> (Accessed 14 December 2017)

When we look at indicators measuring access to education, we notice that the Philippines has fared well in ensuring gender parity in access to education. Various assessments on the MDGs e.g., [MDG Watch](#) of the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), 2016, and the [2015 MDG](#)

[Section of the Key Indicators for Asia and the Pacific](#) (ADB, 2015) suggest that the Philippines attained gender parity with the number of females participating in various education tiers being at least equal to that of males. In fact, the advantage in the country has even been on the side of females (Albert and Raymundo, 2016; David and Albert, 2015). According to the [2017 ASEAN Community Progress Monitoring System Report](#), aside from the Philippines, most countries in ASEAN in recent years have a bigger proportion of girls attending school (than boys) not only in basic education, but also in early childhood, care and development, as well as in tertiary education. **Table 2** shows latest data on net attendance rates<sup>4</sup> of boys and girls in basic education, sourced from the 2016 Annual Poverty Indicator Survey (APIS), conducted by the PSA.

**Table 2. Primary and Secondary Net Attendance Ratio, by Sex and by Region, 2016.**

Region	Primary Net Attendance Ratio			Secondary Net Attendance Ratio		
	Male	Female	Both Sexes	Male	Female	Both Sexes
Region 1 – Ilocos	88.5	95.1	91.4	84.3	79.2	81.7
Region 2 - Cagayan Valley	81.5	92.6	86.8	58.2	49.3	53.2
Region 3 - Central Luzon	79.6	80.8	80.2	58.1	68.3	63.0
Region 4A- CALABARZON	76.7	82.7	79.5	61.6	76.1	69.2
Region 4B – MIMAROPA	91.9	94.3	93.1	72.9	71.2	72.2
Region 5 – Bicol	92.0	90.6	91.2	59.7	66.3	63.0
Region 6 - Western Visayas	90.7	96.2	93.3	64.0	74.8	68.9
Region 7 - Central Visayas	92.5	92.1	92.3	59.9	63.8	61.7
Region 8 - Eastern Visayas	95.1	94.1	94.6	68.9	81.5	75.2
Region 9 - Western Mindanao	93.0	96.6	94.7	71.0	72.9	72.0
Region 10 - Northern Mindanao	91.6	92.1	91.8	61.6	71.3	66.1
Region 11 - Southern Mindanao	89.4	89.3	89.4	67.2	71.5	69.4
Region 12 - Central Mindanao	91.8	93.4	92.5	51.9	63.0	57.3
Region 13 - National Capital Region	79.3	84.4	81.9	71.8	68.6	70.2
Region 14 - Cordillera Administrative Region	85.2	86.1	85.6	61.1	72.3	67.0
Region 15 – ARMM	83.3	86.9	85.1	43.3	44.7	44.0
Region 16 – Caraga	91.9	91.6	91.8	63.7	66.3	65.0
Total	86.1	89.1	87.6	63.4	69.4	66.3

Note: Authors' calculations on microdata of Annual Poverty Indicator Survey (APIS) 2017, Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA)

Across the country, higher school participation rates for girls can be observed than for boys at both the primary and secondary levels. In 5 out of 17 regions, viz., Bicol, Central Visayas, Eastern Visayas, and Southern Mindanao, and Caraga, boys have the advantage in primary school participation, while in a bigger majority of the regions, a bigger proportion of girls attend primary school (than boys). At the secondary level, a larger proportion of boys are in school than girls in only four regions, viz., Ilocos, Cagayan Valley, the National Capital Region, and MIMAROPA.

<sup>4</sup> Net attendance rates refer to the ratio of the number of children of official school age in the education tier (i.e. primary level and secondary level) who are enrolled in that tier relative to the total population of children of official school age for the level. When instead of survey-based data, the data source used is administrative data on enrolment (and census-based projections of school age population), the participation rate is called net enrolment rate.

While increasing school participation of girls is commendable, the gender disparities in school participation and even in learning in the country (see, David *et al.*, 2009; David and Albert, 2015) are driven by various educational, economic, and social factors, including motivational issues and differences in learning expectation for boys and girls. These inequities between boys and girls should be a cause for concern and the subject of specific interventions as the objective is for all children to go to school, to learn in school, and to complete their schooling.

### 3.2. Economic Opportunities

Compared to most developing and underdeveloped countries, women in the Philippines appear to have high levels of access to economic opportunities and participation in the labor market. A closer investigation of the nature of that participation, and the remaining inequality in other forms of economic participation, for instance in different sectors or in access to entrepreneurial opportunities, is warranted. This section reviews some of the trends and current figures in female access to economic opportunities.

Ending poverty in all its forms is the heart of the SDGs as poverty restrains the quality of life of people and ultimately limits their social mobility and capacity to make choices about their education, employment, health and living conditions. Women's lower labour force participation, lower wages and a lack of access to social protection, can exacerbate their poverty putting poor women at risk of being unable to exit from poverty. At the household level, inequitable access to assets as well as the unequal sharing of unpaid care and domestic work hinder women's earning capacities and increase their vulnerability to life-long poverty.

Examining the poverty experienced by women is a challenge. The number of people living in poverty, by sex, is typically not directly available. In the Philippines, while this may be generated by merging the FIES with the Labor Force Survey (LFS), the results may not necessarily give an adequate gender dimensions of poverty, as this will not provide a clue about the extent by which household resources are shared between women/girls and men/boys, the inequalities in time use (which may result in longer working hours for women, or their lack of voice in decision-making, or their lack of control of household income).

At the global level, estimates of the working poor have been made available by the International Labor Organization (ILO) not only in the ILO website but also through the SDG Global Indicators Database. Data for the Philippines on the working poor (**Table 3**) put women in the Philippines at an advantage over males: the proportion of females employed earning less than the international poverty line is lower than the corresponding proportion of male working who are poor. This advantage is across age groups, i.e., whether among the youth aged 15 to 24 years old, or among adults 25 and over.

**Table 3. Working Poor in the Philippines**

Age Group	Sex	Proportion of employed population with incomes below the international poverty line of US\$1.90 per day (the working poor)			
		Early Year		Latest Year	
15 to 24 years old	Male	20.84	(2001)	13.30	(2016)
	Female	13.37	(2001)	6.51	(2016)
	Both sexes	18.08	(2001)	10.82	(2016)



Age Group	Sex	Proportion of employed population with incomes below the international poverty line of US\$1.90 per day (the working poor)			
		Early Year		Latest Year	
25 years old and over	Male	15.29	(2001)	9.00	(2016)
	Female	12.93	(2001)	6.59	(2016)
	Both sexes	14.40	(2001)	8.04	(2016)
15 years old and over	Male	16.45	(2001)	9.83	(2016)
	Female	13.02	(2001)	6.58	(2016)

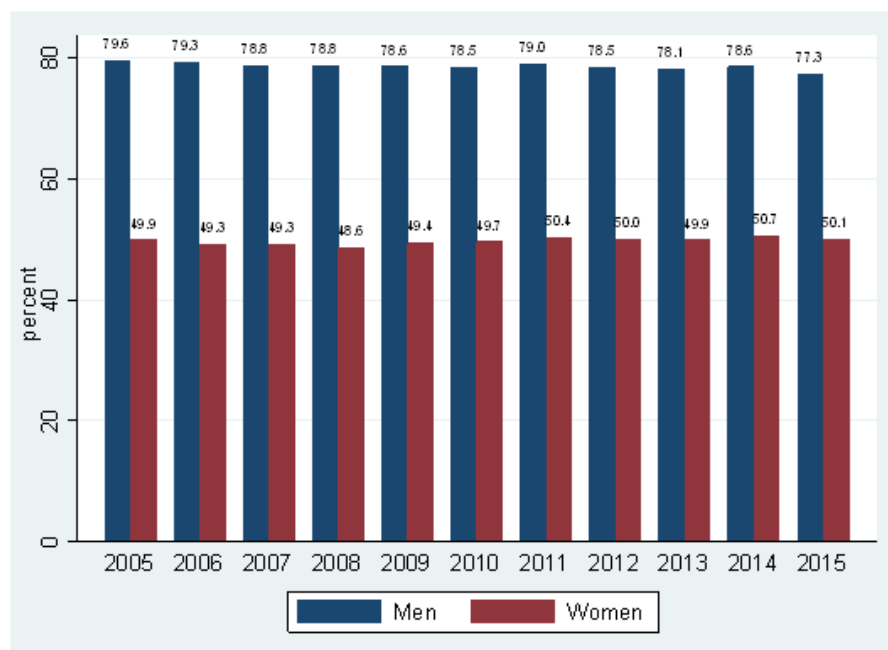
Source: UN Statistics Divisions, SDG Indicators Global Database. Available at: <http://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/> (Accessed 14 December 2017)

The working age population aged 15 and over can be divided into three groups, viz., the employed, the unemployed, and those who are neither. The labor force or economically active population comprises the employed and unemployed. The unemployed consists of working age persons who are (1) without work; (2) currently available for work; and (3) seeking work or not seeking work because of the belief that no work is available, or awaiting results of previous job application, or because of temporary illness or disability, bad weather or waiting for rehire or job recall. Those who are not in the labor force (i.e. who are neither employed or unemployed) include stay-home spouses, students, persons with disability, retired persons, and seasonal workers, as well as discouraged workers who are not actively seeking employment.

A key labor market indicator is the labor force participation rate, defined as the total percentage of working-age persons (i.e. aged 15 years old and over) who are part of the labor force. Far fewer females join the country's workforce: only half (50.1%) of working-age females are part of the labor force compared to the nearly fourth fifths among males (77.3%) in 2015 (**Figure 1**), which means that only one in five males are not economically active, compared to one in every two females. The trend since 2006 has been stagnant, with barely a 1-ppt increase for females and a 2-ppt decrease for males. Lower participation of females than males may be the result of getting discouraged from looking for a job due to the high burden of unpaid work women bear—leaving much of their work in employment and in the home uncounted in labor statistics.

Lower labor force participation among women is noticeable not only in the Philippines but also across all ASEAN member states (**Figure 2**), and even in many countries across Asia and the Pacific. As the [2014 Framework for Inclusive Growth Indicators Report](#) (ADB, 2014) suggests, many analysts can find this puzzling considering how the gender gap in education has narrowed in Asia-Pacific countries, and even reversed in some countries (such as the Philippines).

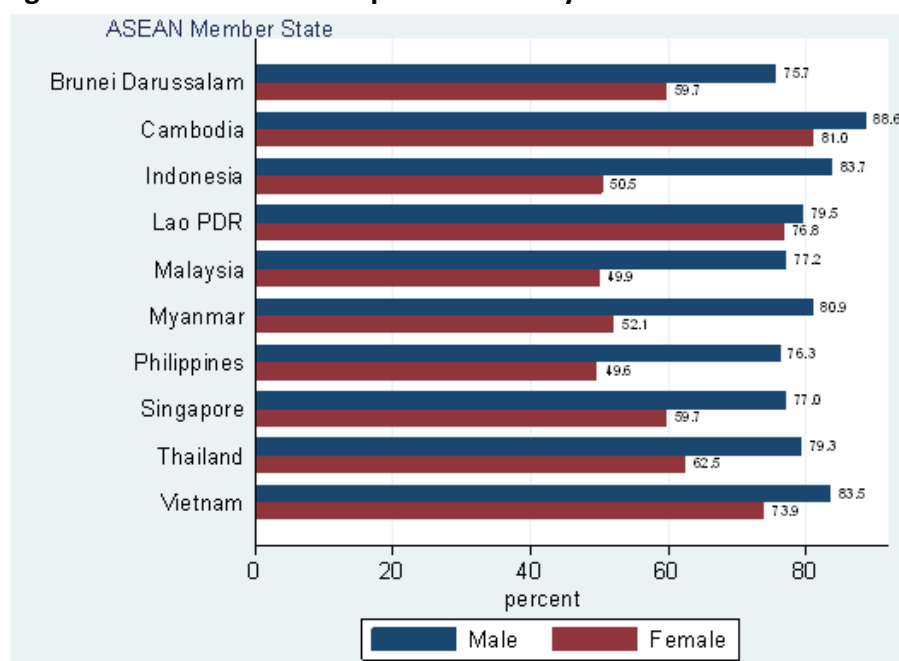
**Figure 1. Labor Force Participation Rate by Sex: Philippines, 2005-2015**



Source: [Decent Work Statistics Online Database](#), Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).

Note: Data are obtained from averages of the quarterly Labor Force Survey conducted by the PSA.

**Figure 2. Labor Force Participation Rates by Sex in ASEAN member states, 2014**



Source: [Key Indicators of the Labour Market database](#), International Labour Organization (ILO)

Note: Data are modelled estimates produced by the ILO.

Across most of Asia-Pacific countries with available data, women and girls tend to bear the larger burden of unpaid care and domestic work, which includes cooking and cleaning in the household's dwelling, person-to-person care activities, as well as transporting water (if

unavailable on the household premises) from safe sources to the home (Hirway, 2016). The range of household, child and elderly care (and unpaid work in farms) undertaken especially by women that goes unremunerated in society is undoubtedly a compelling reason why many women are invisible and even excluded from their local and national economies. This can be a serious impediment for opportunities for improved welfare conditions not only for women but also for their entire household.

While description of labor participation of women and men by way of cross tabulations can be informative, it does not provide a way to examine what among various factors that influence labor market participation have the most weight among women and men. Such an analysis may, however, be obtained by examining econometric models such as a logistic regression<sup>5</sup> model. **Table 4** shows the results of a logistic regression explaining participation of married working-age females in the Philippines. The analysis covered 23,719 females with spouses across households interviewed in the January round of the LFS 2016. Explanatory variables considered in the logistic regression, include: (1) age of the married woman; (2) her educational attainment (in years); (3) the educational attainment of her husband; (4) her number of children; (5) ages of her children, i.e., whether any of her children are aged below 1 year old, whether any of her children are aged between 1 and 5 years old, and whether any of her children are between 5 to 8 years old; (6) her age when she had her first child; and information on the (7) location of the household residence (urban/rural and region).

**Table 4. Logistic Regression Model on predictors for labor participation by married female working aged persons (15 years old and above)**

Analysis of Maximum Likelihood Estimates					Odds Ratio Estimates		
Variables for Explaining Labor Force Participation	Estimate of Coefficient	Standard Error	Z	P>z	Point Estimate	[95% Confidence limits]	
age	-0.005	0.0018	-2.91	0.004	0.995	0.991	0.998
educational attainment (in years)	0.075	0.0047	15.96	0	1.078	1.068	1.088
educational attainment of husband (in years)	-0.015	0.0044	-3.34	0.001	0.985	0.977	0.994
number of children	0.182	0.0140	13.04	0	1.200	1.168	1.233
Indicator on whether she has at least one child 1 year old or below	-1.223	0.0469	-26.09	0	0.294	0.269	0.323
Indicator on whether she has at least one child between 1 to 5 years old	-0.592	0.0382	-15.48	0	0.553	0.514	0.597
Indicator on whether she has at least one child between 5 to 8 years old	-0.267	0.0379	-7.04	0	0.766	0.711	0.825

<sup>5</sup> Logistic regression is used to predict a discrete outcome, such as group membership or category from a set of explanatory variables that may be binary, continuous, discrete, or a mix of any of these. In general, the dependent or response variable is dichotomous, such as the presence/absence or success/failure. In the case of this study, the dependent variable is dichotomous – whether or not a working age female is in the labor force as distinct categories and with probability of each category occurring respectively as  $\theta$  and  $1-\theta$ . The relationship between the response and explanatory variables is not a linear function in logistic regression, rather, it is the log odds that is a linear function of the explanatory variables:

$$\log \left( \frac{\theta(x)}{1-\theta(x)} \right) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x_1 + \beta_2 x_2 + \dots + \beta_p x_p$$

where  $\beta_0$  is the constant (intercept) of the equation and  $\beta_i$  is the coefficient of explanatory variable  $x_i$ . If an explanatory variable is categorical (e.g., regions) with say  $k$  categories, then this variable will be represented by  $k-1$  binary (indicator) variables in the model such that  $x_i = 1$  if category  $i$  and  $x_i = 0$  if not category  $i$ . The last category which is not included in the model is considered the reference (or base) category.

Analysis of Maximum Likelihood Estimates					Odds Ratio Estimates		
Variables for Explaining Labor Force Participation	Estimate of Coefficient	Standard Error	Z	P>z	Point Estimate	[95% Confidence limits]	
Age of woman at first child	0.017	0.0027	6.16	0	1.017	1.012	1.023
Region (note: base region is National Capital Region)							
<i>Region I – Ilocos</i>	0.378	0.086	4.370	0.000	1.459	1.232	1.729
<i>Region II - Cagayan Valley</i>	0.837	0.084	10.000	0.000	2.310	1.960	2.722
<i>Region III - Central Luzon</i>	-0.120	0.064	-1.870	0.061	0.887	0.782	1.006
<i>Region IVA – CALABARZON</i>	0.328	0.072	4.560	0.000	1.388	1.206	1.598
<i>Region V- Bicol</i>	0.349	0.075	4.660	0.000	1.417	1.224	1.641
<i>Region VI - Western Visayas</i>	0.489	0.069	7.050	0.000	1.631	1.424	1.868
<i>Region VII - Central Visayas</i>	0.666	0.071	9.350	0.000	1.946	1.692	2.237
<i>Region VIII - Eastern Visayas</i>	0.378	0.073	5.160	0.000	1.459	1.264	1.684
<i>Region IX - Zamboanga Peninsula</i>	0.038	0.080	0.480	0.632	1.039	0.889	1.215
<i>Region X - Northern Mindanao</i>	0.381	0.069	5.550	0.000	1.464	1.280	1.676
<i>Region XI – Davao</i>	0.146	0.071	2.060	0.040	1.158	1.007	1.331
<i>Region XII – SOCCSKSARGEN</i>	0.423	0.073	5.820	0.000	1.526	1.324	1.760
<i>Cordillera Administrative Region</i>	0.647	0.075	8.650	0.000	1.909	1.649	2.211
<i>Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao</i>	-1.194	0.089	13.490	0.000	0.303	0.255	0.360
<i>Region XIII – Caraga</i>	0.135	0.074	1.820	0.069	1.145	0.990	1.323
<i>Region IVB – MIMAROPA</i>	0.493	0.075	6.610	0.000	1.638	1.415	1.895
Indicator on residing in urban area	-0.123	0.035	-3.510	0.000	0.885	0.826	0.947
Constant	-1.017	0.105	-9.660	0.000	0.362	0.294	0.444

Note: Authors' calculations on microdata of Annual Poverty Indicator Survey (APIS) 2017, Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA)

The results of the logistic regression for explaining labor force participation of Filipino women aged 15 and over suggests, that all explanatory variables held constant (*ceteris paribus*):

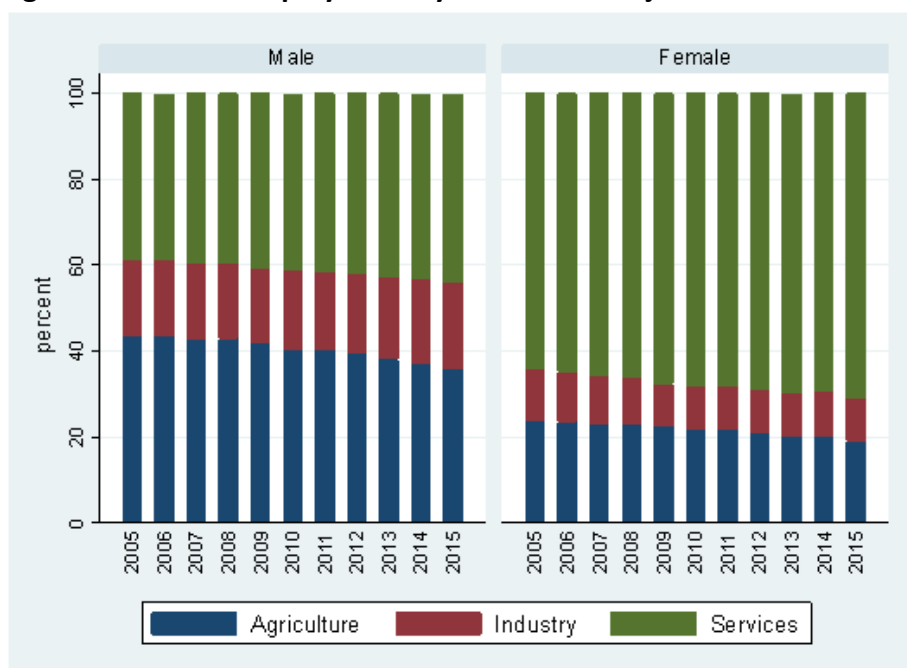
- Age matters, i.e., the older the woman, the less likely to be part of the labor force;
- The more educated the woman, the more likely she is in the economically active population;
- The more years of educational attainment of her spouse, the less likely she is a part of the labor force;
- The more children she has, the more likely is she to be in the labor force;
- The ages of her children matter, i.e., (a) if she has at least one child under 1 year old, the less likely she will be economically active; (b) When she has at least one child between 1 to 5 years old, the less likely she will be in the labor force; and, (c) If she has at least one child between 5 to 8 years old, more likely she will not be in the labor force;
- If she were older when she had her first child, she would more likely be economically active;

- Location matters: women in rural areas are 1.13=1/0.885 times more likely to be in the labor force (than their corresponding urban counterparts); and
- Compared to married women living in the National Capital Region, married women residing in twelve regions out of sixteen other regions, viz., Ilocos, Cagayan Valley, CALABARZON, Bicol, Western Visayas, Central Visayas, Eastern Visayas, Northern Mindanao, Davao Region, SOCCSKSARGEN, Cordillera Administrative Region and MIMAROPA, are more likely to be part of the labor force; while in one region, the Autonomous Region of Moslem Mindanao, married women are less likely to be in the labor force than their NCR counterparts.

Another economic indicator that is closely watched especially by governments and labor analysts is the unemployment rate, i.e., the ratio of the total number of unemployed to the corresponding labour force. This is one of the 232 SDG indicators. Information on unemployment by sex shows whether men or women have more difficulty in entering the labour market, revealing links to a country's social and cultural aspects and traditions.

While the unemployment rate provides a summary of labor market conditions, examination of total unemployment rates alone can be deceptive (Albert 2014). Looking at the rather equal unemployment rates by sex may lead one to think that women in the Philippines who join the labor force have similar economic opportunities as men. Data disaggregation across sectors, however, shows that the sexes are situated differently across the job market in the country (Figure 3).

**Figure 3. Share of Employment by Sex Across Major Sectors in the Philippines: 1995-2015**



Source: [Decent Work Statistics Online Database](#), Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).

Data in 2015 shows that about a third (35.8%) of working men in the country are engaged in agriculture, over two-fifths (43.9%) in services, and a fifth (20.2%) in industry. Meanwhile, working women are predominantly in the services sector (71.0%). The rest of them are in the industry (10.0%) and agriculture sectors (19.0%).

Two decades ago, half of working men were employed in agriculture, about 3 out of 10 worked in services, and a fifth were in the industry sector. In the mid-1990s, working women also dominated in services, but with a relatively smaller share (56.5%). The rest were in agriculture (29.9%) and industry (13.6%). The industry sector employed only a small proportion of men and an even smaller share of women despite its capacity to provide better quality jobs.

Filipino women who are in the workforce are more likely than men to be in white collar occupations, they are more likely to be professionals and clerks (PSA, Women and Men Report 2016<sup>6</sup>). These jobs tend to pay a higher salary, especially in the category of professionals, where women outnumber men to a ratio of almost 2 to 1. Occupations in the associate professional level, service workers, government positions, and special interest groups have an equal gender split. Men outnumber women by a large majority in work as laborers, farmers, trade, and unskilled workers. The largely female-dominated industries are education, service activities, human health and social work, retail trade, and accommodation and food service activities. Meanwhile men dominate construction, transportation, agriculture, administrative and support services, and information and communication (PSA, Women and Men Report 2016<sup>7</sup>). According to the 2014 LFS, the category “activities of households as employers” are 90% female, likely accounted for largely by women and girls working in homes as carers of children, domestic helpers, and other home care.

Notwithstanding the larger proportions of working women than men in managerial positions, there is a gender gap in vulnerable employment in the Philippines that skews toward females. Vulnerable employment, such as self-employment and family work, is often characterized by inadequate earnings, low productivity, and poor conditions that undermine workers’ fundamental rights. Women in several ASEAN member states, like the Philippines, tend to have a bigger share of employment in these types than men do (**Table 5**). As a result, they are less likely to have formal work arrangements and more likely to lack decent working conditions, adequate social security, and voice.

**Table 5. Proportion of Self-Employed and Unpaid Family Workers in Total Employment by sex in ASEAN member states, 2000-2014**

ASEAN member state	Vulnerable employment, male (% of male employment)				Vulnerable employment, female (% of female employment)			
	Earliest Year		Latest year		Earliest Year		Latest year	
Brunei Darussalam	...		...		...		...	
Cambodia	80.9	(2000)	58.8	(2012)	87.9	(2000)	69.7	(2012)
Indonesia	60.1	(2001)	24.2	(2013)	69.6	(2001)	47.5	(2013)
Lao PDR	...		...		...		...	
Malaysia	22.8	(2000)	19.6	(2014)	22.7	(2000)	23.6	(2014)
Myanmar	...		...		...		...	
Philippines	43.2	(2000)	36.1	(2013)	46.7	(2000)	42.0	(2013)
Singapore	12.2	(2001)	10.6	(2013)	7.3	(2001)	6.2	(2013)
Thailand	55.1	(2000)	54.4	(2013)	59.5	(2000)	57.8	(2013)
Viet Nam	76.9	(2000)	56.6	(2013)	83.2	(2000)	69.0	(2013)

Source: [Key Indicators of the Labour Market database](#), International Labour Organization

<sup>6</sup> PSA Women and Men Report 2016. Figure 2.1

<sup>7</sup> PSA Women and Men Report 2016. Figure 2.2

While the proportion of workers in vulnerable employment in the Philippines has decreased over the past 15 years, the gap between men and women has remained. About 7 in 20 men are in vulnerable employment compared to 8 in 20 for women. This means a bigger share of employed women in the country are engaged in jobs lacking decent working conditions. These women either work with unregistered companies in the informal economy or as unpaid family workers. These working conditions provide them limited opportunities for social mobility, participation in unions, and social protection.

Although there are small differences in the proportion of informal employment (in non-agricultural employment) between women and men in the Philippines, the proportion is over 70%, as in other Asian countries, such as Indonesia, Pakistan, and Vietnam (**Table 6**). In contrast, Timor-Leste has a wider gap between women and men, but these proportions are far lower than those in the Philippines.

**Table 6. Proportion of informal employment in non-agriculture employment, by sex (%) in selected Asian countries**

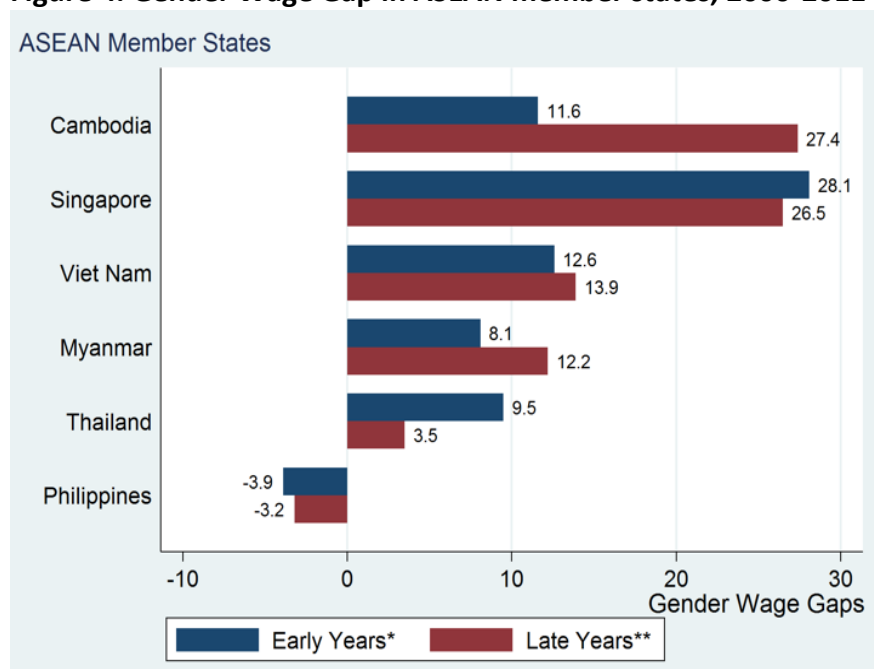
Country	Proportion of informal employment in non-agriculture employment (%)		
	Male	Female	
Armenia	24.8	12.7	(2009)
China	30.1	35.7	(2010)
Indonesia	72.3	72.9	(2009)
Kyrgyzstan	65.4	50.7	(2009)
Pakistan	78.7	75.7	(2009-10)
Philippines	69.9	70.2	(2008)
Russian Federation	13.3	10.9	(2010)
Sri Lanka	65.2	55.7	(2009)
Thailand	41.2	43.5	(2013)
Timor-Leste	13.5	26.5	(2010)
Turkey	30.1	32.6	(2009)
Viet Nam	69.4	66.8	(2009)

Source: International Labor Organization, 2012, Statistical update on employment in the informal economy. Available at [http://laborsta.ilo.org/informal\\_economy\\_E.html](http://laborsta.ilo.org/informal_economy_E.html) (Accessed 15 May 2017) TABLE II. 47 Countries: Employment in the informal economy in non-agricultural activities by component and sex, latest year available

### 3.3. Gender Gap in Wages

The gender wage gap refers to the difference between gross average nominal monthly wages of male and female employees expressed as a percentage of gross average nominal monthly wages of male employees. Contrary to the scenario in other ASEAN member-states, women in the Philippines seem to be slightly earning more than their men counterparts on the average (**Figure 4**). The gender wage gap is calculated based on the wages and salaries of employees, and thus covers only paid employment. That is, it does not take into account self-employment (including own account workers and contributing family workers).

**Figure 4. Gender Wage Gap in ASEAN member states, 2000-2011**



Source: [Global Wage Database](#), International Labor Organization (ILO).

Notes:

\* Early years generally 2001, except for Cambodia (2004), Singapore (2000) and Viet Nam (2007);

\*\* Late years generally 2011, except for Cambodia (2009), Myanmar (2008) and Viet Nam (2010).

**Table 7** and **Table 8** reveal that high-level positions generally have wages favoring women, who also have the lion's share of the occupation.

**Table 7. Gender Wage Gap by Major Occupation Group: Philippines, 2001-2015**

Major Occupation Group	Year			
	2001	2006	2011	2015
Officials of Government and Special Interest-Organizations, Corporate Executives, Managers, Managing Proprietors and Supervisors	-2.3	3.9	-3.2	-3.3
Professionals	10.8	12.3	10.6	8.5
Technicians and Associate Professionals	5.9	13.6	11.9	11.3
Clerks	5	-3.2	5.7	3.7
Service Workers and Shop and Market Sales Workers	33	37.2	34.3	30.8
Farmers, Forestry Workers and Fishermen	20.5	25.1	13.3	-19.6
Trades and Related Workers	19.4	24.8	26	27.5
Plant & Machine Operators and Assemblers	0.6	0.3	-1.1	6
Laborers and Unskilled Workers	20.4	30.9	27.1	26.5
Special Occupations	39	37.3	36.8	5.7
TOTAL	-3.9	2.7	-3.2	-5.4

Source: [Decent Work Statistics Online Database](#), Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).

Note: Data are obtained from averages of the quarterly Labor Force Survey conducted by the PSA; data shown in Table are only for selected years though a longer time series is available from the PSA website.



**Table 8. Female Share in Occupational Employment by Major Occupation Group: Philippines, 2001-2015**

Major Occupation Group	Year			
	2001	2006	2011	2015
Officials of Government and Special Interest-Organizations, Corporate Executives, Managers, Managing Proprietors and Supervisors	59.0	57.9	52.1	46.6
Professionals	68.1	68.8	68.3	66.9
Technicians and Associate Professionals	49.1	50.9	51.3	51.1
Clerks	67.1	64.1	62.0	62.2
Service Workers and Shop and Market Sales Workers	53.3	51.2	50.8	51.2
Farmers, Forestry Workers and Fishermen	17.0	15.2	14.7	17.3
Trades and Related Workers	28.3	25.1	20.8	15.4
Plant & Machine Operators and Assemblers	8.1	9.2	11.0	14.1
Laborers and Unskilled Workers	45.4	44.1	42.1	40.1
Special Occupations	14.8	12.2	20.5	15.8
TOTAL	38.5	38.7	39.3	39.6

Source: [Decent Work Statistics Online Database](#), Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).

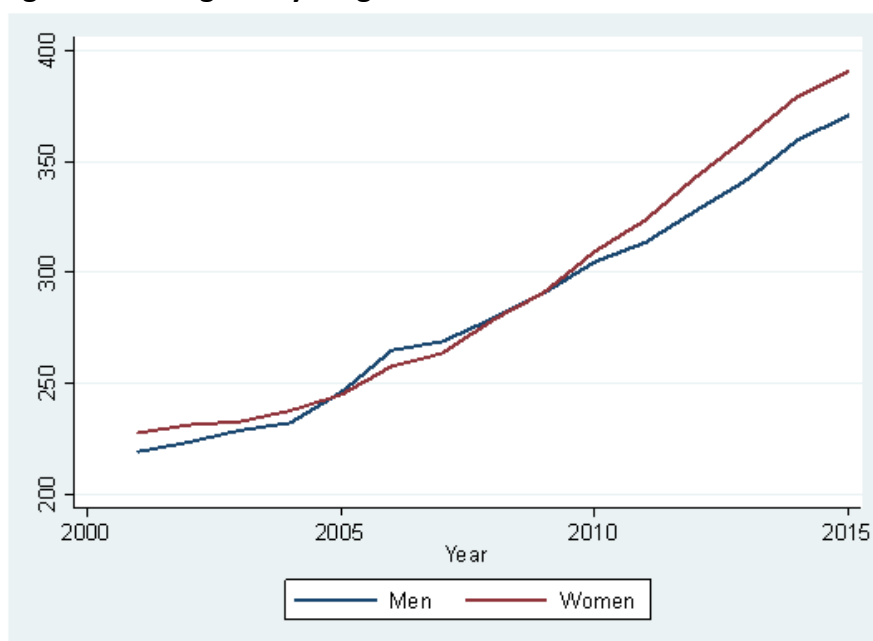
Note: Data are obtained from averages of the quarterly Labor Force Survey conducted by the PSA; data shown in Table are only for selected years though a longer time series is available from the PSA website.

Moreover, the gender gap in farming, forestry, and fishing has now favored women over men. However, men, who are working as technicians and associate professionals, clerks, service workers, and shop and market sales workers, are better compensated in the country despite women having the bigger share in employment.

Among various occupation groups, the professionals group showed the widest disparity in average wages between the sexes. Moreover, occupations with a higher share of male workers, such as trades, plant and machine operation, labor and unskilled work, and those classified under special occupations, also provide better compensation for men than women.

Since women in professional fields appear more likely to be in managerial and supervisory positions than men, and as a group are more likely to be in professional and service positions, they also will be in higher paid positions. Since around 2010, statistics on daily wages (sourced from the LFS) indicate higher wages for women (than those for men), with the gap further continuing to grow into 2014 (**Figure 5**).

**Figure 5. Average Daily Wages of Women and Men: 2000 to 2014**



Source: Fig 2.3 in the PSA Women and Men Report 2016 (generated from results of the LFS)

#### **4. SDG Target 5.5: Women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making**

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, identified women in power and decision-making as one of twelve critical areas of concern. Under this area, two essential commitments to change have been advocated: (i) measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making; (ii) steps to increase women's ability to participate. In this section, we firstly consider the context of participation of women in leadership and decision making in both the public and private sectors.

##### **4.1. Government**

The Philippine government is the largest single employer in the country. Government employment is desirable because of security of tenure, availability of competitive benefits packages, and in the lower-level positions, salaries are competitive. The majority of the government workforce is female, owing in large part to the high proportion of government employees serving as public school teachers, a profession that is dominated by women.

##### **4.1.1. Women in the Bureaucracy**

In national government agencies (NGAs), which accounts for about 67% of all government employees, 63.6% are women and 36.4% are men (2010)<sup>8</sup>. Local government units (LGUs) have an almost equal split of 49/51% female to male ratio, but in Government-Owned Companies and Corporations (GOCC), many of which are under the financial sector and have higher paying positions overall, there are slightly more men (56%) than women.

<sup>8</sup> PSA, Women and Men Report 2016

Across levels of civil service positions there are significant differences by sex such that those in first level career service are more likely male and those in the second level are most likely female. First level career service positions are clerical, trades, crafts and custodial positions that require less than a college degree. Second level positions require at least a four-year college degree, these include professional, technical, and scientific positions up to Division Chief level.

**Table 9** shows the percentage of civil service employees that are female in each of the levels, indicating a slightly smaller percentage for female than male at the national-level in the first level positions (46.8%), whereas in the second level positions it is much higher at 66.9%.

**Table 9. Percentage of national government civil service employees who are female by Level of Career Service, 2016**

Region	1st Level Career	2nd Level Career	All Career and Non-career
Region 1 – Ilocos Region	46.9	67.9	60.6
Region 2 - Cagayan Valley	46.6	64.2	58.0
Region 3 - Central Luzon	44.6	70.3	62.9
Region 4 (comprising CALABARZON and MIMAROPA)	45.0	71.8	63.7
Region 5 – Bicol	45.5	71.9	64.9
Region 6 - Western Visayas	51.0	78.4	68.8
Region 7 - Central Visayas	46.4	71.3	63.9
Region 8 - Eastern Visayas	47.2	68.3	62.2
Region 9 - Western Mindanao	40.8	55.5	51.2
Region 10 - Northern Mindanao	46.6	68.7	61.8
Region 11 - Southern Mindanao	47.9	64.7	59.8
Region 12 - Central Mindanao	43.8	65.3	60.1
Region 13 - National Capital Region	48.2	60.3	54.8
Region 14 - Cordillera Administrative Region	48.0	64.1	58.4
Region 15 - Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao	41.5	49.7	50.4
Region 16 – CARAGA	49.2	69.5	62.7
National	46.8	66.9	60.2
Memo Note: Total Population (male and female)	354,842	1,171,608	1,706,029

Source: Civil Service Commission, 2016 (Table 8.1 of CSC report of government employees)

Including all career and non-career employees, the proportion is 60% female. Majority of those females in 2nd level positions are public school teachers and personnel; the Department of Education (DepED) alone has 558,988 females employed as career second-level positions. In the higher-level positions, women's numbers begin to dwindle, from the third level service all the way up to the cabinet secretaries and equivalent positions.

#### 4.1.2. Women in High-level Offices

Representation of women in elected offices has been an area of modest development even as the economic participation rates of women improve. The figures across all elected offices reflect poor participation of females both in terms of serving in offices, and in terms of choosing to run for office in the first place. Across all elected offices in 2001, 83% were occupied by

men, in 2016 it had declined to only 78%. This shows a vast underparticipation of women in elected positions across all offices (Table 10).

**Table 10. Distribution of Elected Women and Men, by Position: 2016**

Position	Women		Men		Total Number for Both Sexes
	Total Number	% Share	Total Number	% Share	
President	0	0.0	1	100.0	1
Vice-President	1	100.0	0	0.0	1
Senators	2	16.7	10	83.3	12
Congressmen	68	28.6	170	71.4	238
Governors	19	23.5	62	76.5	81
Vice-Governors	14	17.5	66	82.5	80
Board Members	154	19.8	622	80.2	776
Mayors	377	23.2	1,248	76.8	1,625
Vice-Mayors	322	19.8	1,303	80.2	1,624
Councilors	2,888	21.4	10,588	78.6	13,476
Total	3,845	21.5	14,070	78.5	17,915

**Source:** Table 8.3, PSA-WM Report generated from Commission on Elections (COMELEC)

According to data from the Commission on Elections (COMELEC), between 2001 and 2016 the proportion of female legislators in the House of Representatives (HoR) nearly doubled from 15.8% to 28.6%. The Senate figures are more volatile since there are only 24 positions, in 2001 only 7.7% were female, the year when the highest number of females were serving was in 2013 when there was 33.3%, then in 2016 this dropped again to 16.7%. These low percentages reflect poor representation of women, and therefore poor representation of female interests in protecting women and children, in the country's legislative landscape. Very few women vote on laws, few get to propose bills, and get to speak on behalf of women's interests in the legislative agenda. Progressive men who have an interest in protecting women and encouraging gender-forward legislation and policies may be in the HoR and the Senate, but they are few and far between. Increasing the proportion of women, particularly in the HoR, should be pursued aggressively by encouraging more females to run for office.

Committee chairpersonships and memberships in Congress (**Table 11**) suggest some gender stereotyping that would pose a constraint to women taking on sufficient power over the legislative agenda of issues that are traditionally male-dominated. Chair and Vice Chair positions provide greater opportunity to craft the agenda of a committee.

**Table 11. Percent females in committee chairpersonships and memberships for Senate and House of Representatives, 15th-17th Congress**

Committee	Senate			House of Representatives (HoR)				Equivalent name in HoR
	Chairs	Vice Chairs	Members	Chairs	Vice Chairs	Member Majority	Member Minority	
Accountability of Public Officers and Investigations	0	0	28	0	36	13	13	Good Government and Public Accountability
Accounts	0	0	36	33	8	30	11	
Agrarian Reform	33	0	23	0	50	23	22	
Agriculture and Food	100	50	14	0	23	24	29	

Committee	Senate			House of Representatives (HoR)				Equivalent name in HoR
	Chairs	Vice Chairs	Members	Chairs	Vice Chairs	Member Majority	Member Minority	
Banks, Financial Institutions and Currencies	0	33	21	0	19	27	18	Banks and Financial Intermediaries
Civil Service and Government Reorganization	0	0	33	0	67	32	17	
Constitutional Amendments and Revision Of Codes	33	0	25	33	18	33	11	
Cooperatives	0	100	50	33	27	25	33	
Cultural Communities	67	50	25	67	31	100	31	Indigenous Cultural Communities and Indigenous Peoples
Economic Affairs	33	33	10	0	23	14	25	
Education, Arts and Culture	33	14	29	67	47	37	45	
Electoral Reforms and People's Participations	50	33	41	0	0	38	0	Suffrage and Electoral Reforms
Energy	0	33	31	33	9	22	47	
Environment and Natural Resources	67	50	19	-	-	-	-	
Ethics and Privileges	0	0	36	0	30	32	20	
Finance	33	27	24	-	-	-	-	
Foreign Relations	100	17	23	33	36	45	56	Foreign Affairs
Games, Amusement and Sports	0	50	20	0	21	23	38	
Government Corporations and Public Enterprises	33	0	32	0	43	18	17	Government Enterprises and Privatization
Health and Demography	33	67	31	33	35	35	63	Health
Justice and Human Rights	0	33	14	33	67	30	33	Human Rights
Labor, Employment and Human Resources Development	0	0	30	0	13	26	38	Labor and Employment
Local Government	0	40	20	0	38	26	36	
Urban Planning, Housing and Resettlement	0	100	24	0	25	19	33	Housing and Urban Development
Ways and Means	0	50	18	0	13	23	50	

Committee	Senate			House of Representatives (HoR)				Equivalent name in HoR
	Chairs	Vice Chairs	Members	Chairs	Vice Chairs	Member Majority	Member Minority	
Public Information and Mass Media	67	0	10	0	0	33	0	Public Information
Public Order and Dangerous Drugs	33	50	23	0	20	20	0	Public Order and Safety
Public Services	33	0	23	-	-	-	-	
Public Works	0	0	24	0	20	19	17	Public Works and Highways
Rules	0	0	14	0	0	0	0	
Science and Technology	0	67	40	0	0	17	0	
Social Justice, Welfare and Rural Development	100	100	27	-	-	-	-	
Sports	0	0	0	0	33	35	0	Youth and Sports Development
Tourism	33	25	31	0	40	40	33	
Trade, Commerce and Entrepreneurship	0	0	27	0	0	23	0	Trade and Industry
Women, Family Relations and Gender Equality	100	0	56	0	0	0	0	Women and Gender Equality
Youth	0	0	77	0	100	77	100	Welfare of Children

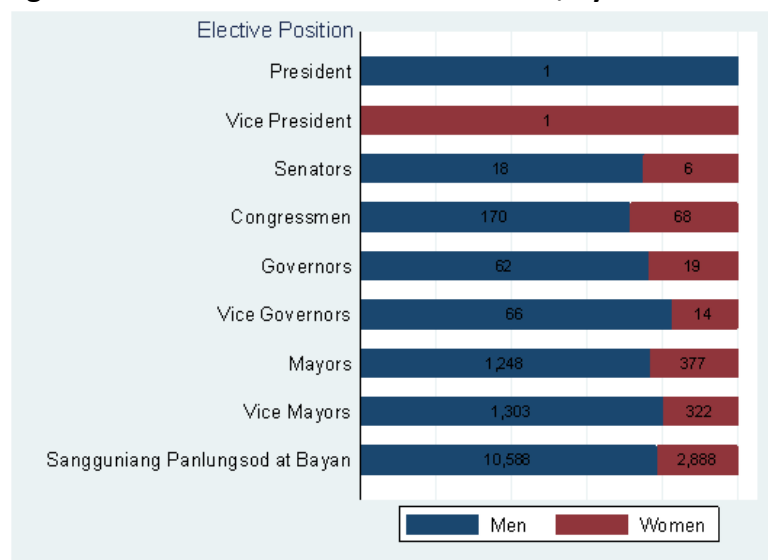
**Note:** Author's calculation using basic data sourced from Senate and House of Representatives selected committees present in both Houses and existing across last three Congresses

There have never been any female Chairpersons for both Chambers in the last three Congresses in the following committees: public accountability, banks and financial institutions, civil service and government reorganization, ethics and privileges, games and sports, labor and employment, local government, urban planning and housing, ways and means, public works, rules, science and technology, and trade and commerce. As a set it is interesting to note that the areas of finance, economics, urban planning and housing are all largely male dominated. Areas where female leadership are higher than average are the traditional ones of cultural communities and women's and gender equality. This lack of representation of female leadership in the most powerful committees that steer the budget, national planning, and the government management is in large part because of the overall low number of women. The few female legislators are then given many committee memberships and chairpersonships of the "traditionally female" issues, then there are not enough women to appoint to other committees.

In the executive the numbers are not much different. After the 2016 elections, 23.5% of governors serving are female, 17.5% vice governors, 23.2% of mayors, 19.8% of vice mayors, and 21.4% of councilors (**Table 12**). This corps of local government lead positions is dominated by men, and together these offices represent almost all consequential top decision-making offices at the local levels. Women are sorely underrepresented (**Figure 6**), possibly

down to the level of barangay officials. In 2013, only 11 percent of elected local officials were female, a sharp decline from 20 percent in 2010, 18 percent in 2007, and 17 percent in 2004. At the barangay level, specifically, women only occupied 19 percent and 27 percent of all barangay captain<sup>9</sup> and councilperson posts, respectively.

**Figure 6. Distribution of Women and Men, by Elected Position: 2016**



Source: Figure 8.5, PSA-WM Report generated from data sourced from Commission on Elections (COMELEC)

The low proportion of women is not because the public is not inclined to vote for women. Instead, few women are entering electoral politics. According to COMELEC, women had comprised only 17 percent of the national and local candidates from 2004 to 2016 (**Table 12**).

**Table 12. Proportion (in %) of female candidates and elected officials in national and local elections, 2004-2016**

Indicators on Female Share of Candidates and Elected Officials	2004	2007	2010	2013	2016
Females share of candidates in both national and local elections	15	16	17	18	19
Female share of elected candidates in national and local elections	17	17	19	20	21
Female Share of Candidates for Barangay Captain	-	17	16	19	-
Female Share of Elected Local Leaders					
Governor	18	23	19	12	23
Vice Governor	10	18	14	10	18
Mayor	15	17	21	10	-
Vice Mayor	14	15	17	9	-
Representative	15	20	22	16	-
Councilor	18	18	20	-	-
Barangay Captain	-	16	16	18	-

Sources: COMELEC Report on gender distribution in elections (reported figures); Authors' calculations on data sourced from AIM Policy Center Study on Political Dynasties.

<sup>9</sup> The last Barangay Elections was held in 2013

About the same proportion won the elections, wherein women currently hold roughly one in every five (21%) national and local elective positions. Why do women not seem interested in running for public elective office? And when they do run, are they more or less likely to win? Are voters not interested in voting for women in office? These are questions that will require further investigation if the country aims to hit its own targets under the Magna Cart and its international targets under the SDGs.

In the executive branch, top positions in agencies (called cabinet offices) have likewise remained largely male dominated since 1986 (**Table 13**). Women have been more heavily represented in the traditionally female-associated areas of health (28.6%), tourism (33.3%), and social welfare (100%) while less represented in areas of economics (8.3%), budget and management (15.4%), finance (6.7%), and foreign affairs (6.2%). The Department of Social Welfare and Development, in particular, has had only female secretaries since 1986. Not surprisingly, no woman has ever headed the Agriculture, Defense, Interior and Local Government, and Public Works departments, which are traditionally male-dominated offices.

**Table 13. Share (in %) of Female Secretaries of the Philippine Cabinet, 1986-2017**

Departments	Number of Females	Total Number appointed	Share of Female Appointed
Agrarian Reform	1*	17	5.9
Agriculture	0	17	0.0
Budget and Management	2***	13	15.4
Education	2	18	11.1
Energy	1	13	7.7
Environment and Natural Resources	2	14	14.3
Finance	1	15	6.7
Foreign Affairs	1	16	6.2
Health	4	14	28.6
Justice	2	18	11.1
Labor and Employment	2	11	18.2
National Defense	0	14	0.0
Public Works and Highways	0	16	0.0
Science and Technology	1	8	12.5
Social Welfare and Development	11	11	100.0
Interior and Local Government	0	18	0.0
Trade and Industry	1*	14	7.1
Transportation and Communications	1*	16	6.2
Tourism	6**	18	33.3
National Economic and Development Authority	1	12	8.3

Notes: Authors' compilation of data. Excludes OICs, includes appointees later not confirmed.

\*Served 1 year or less, or was appointed yet not confirmed;

\*\*3 of the 6 served <1 year;

\*\*\*same appointee 2 terms

The appointment of female leaders in cabinet positions, from the Secretary to the Under and Assistant Secretaries, is at the discretion of the Office of the President. At times the Secretary



has the freedom to identify appointees serving under them, but the final say is still with the President. Given is relative freedom in appointments, it would, in theory, be straightforward to make the cabinet make-up less gender unequal. That said, continuous reliance on the ability of any given President to determine the gender balance in the highest levels of the Executive must be re-examined and quota systems seriously considered.

With proportion of judgeships as the main metric of the judiciary, the female/male split has improved dramatically over the last 15 years. Nearly equal in distribution with 43.8% of the 1,699 judge positions occupied by females in 2015, it climbed sharply from 19.7% in 2000 (**Table 14**). Unlike the legislature and the executive, the judiciary has an organized and institutionalized manner of promoting the role of women in judge positions. The Philippine Women Judges Association (PWJA) is an active and long-standing association linked to international judges' associations that seek to increase the proportion of women in the ranks of judges, and to protect their interests while in service on the bench. The PWJA President is an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court and its officers include members of the Court of Appeals, Appellate Courts, and lower level courts, ensuring a broad spectrum of participation across all levels of the judiciary. Owing to this and other manner of interventions over the years, the judiciary sets a high standard for how quickly and effectively high-level positions can move toward gender parity.

**Table 14. Distribution of Judges by Sex: 2000 to 2015**

Year	Female		Male		Total Number
	Number	% Share	Number	% Share	
2000	298	19.7	1215	80.3	1513
2001	318	21.4	1169	78.6	1487
2002	354	23.6	1148	76.4	1502
2003	385	25.3	1136	74.7	1521
2004	430	27.3	1148	72.8	1578
2005	426	28.6	1063	71.4	1489
2006	460	28.3	1167	71.7	1627
2007	567	31.3	1245	68.7	1812
2008	576	32.7	1186	67.3	1762
2009	574	32.8	1176	67.2	1750
2010	381	38.1	620	51.9	1001
2011	430	39.5	660	60.6	1090
2012	523	40.8	759	59.2	1282
2013	607	42.3	827	57.7	1434
2014	662	42.8	884	57.2	1546
2015	747	43.8	952	56.0	1699

Source: Table 8.4, PSA Women and Men Report 2016 generated from data from Supreme Court

## 4.2. Industry

Female managers and decision-makers see additional aspects of problems and solutions in the daily operations of their companies (LeanIn.org and McKinsey 2016). Women are informed by their own challenges and experiences, which are different from those of men. This additional source of experience means that greater participation of women in all industry levels is good for business.

#### 4.2.1. Women managers in the private sector

According to more recent international figures of publicly-listed companies, only about 11% of board members in the Philippines in 2015 are women. It is at about the same level as India, Singapore and Thailand. The most progressive countries on this metric are Norway with 47%, France, Sweden, and Italy all of which have over 30% women members in Boards of Directors of publicly-listed companies (Unite *et al.*, 2017). By a similar metric, between 2003 and 2012, the increase in percentage of women in Philippine Stock Exchange-listed firms only increased from 13% to 14%, not anywhere near parity.

There are different ways the government and large companies can encourage greater diversity at the top levels of corporations. Multinational companies often have aggressive diversity-positive programs which encourage target-setting for recruiting qualified women into the workforce, and into high-level positions<sup>10</sup>. These measures have been necessary to engender not only diversity in the workforce, but also a cultural shift toward more gender-friendly and less female-hostile work environments (SWEA, 2016). Having more women in the office, at least approaching parity if not completely equal, makes the working environment safer for all women (i.e. less likelihood of sexual harassment, perceived environments that are more supportive of women's careers). Various countries have adopted quotas or targets for increasing female representation in boards, including imposing proportional quotas on board membership of females in state-owned firms (Austria, Brazil), in all firms (France, Germany), or recommendations for proportions of women in boards (UK) (Unite *et al.*, 2017). In the Philippines there is a "Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) recommendation" of at least one female independent member of the board for all listed firms.

The pursuit of gender parity in all levels of industry has social and economic benefits. By mere expansion of the talent pool of women rising up corporate ranks, the pool of qualified nominees for top positions would expand, to the benefit of all companies. Women's experiences and identities are different from men, even when equally qualified, they are able to understand for example, consumer behaviors and considerations from the point of view of female consumers. Women's psychosocial skills, commitment to ethics and standards (Krishnan and Park, 2005), and loss avoidance focuses (He *et al.*, 2008) all could result in positive economic impacts of greater female participation in high-level positions.

Increasing the participation of women in leadership positions has social equity benefits in that when they are able to influence the working environment of a company, the culture can be less hostile to women. Globally, sectors have highlighted the need to craft specific interventions to eliminate gender discrimination in the workplace, change hostile work environments for women, and institutionalize family-friendly policies that encourage balanced family obligations between men and women (Piterman 2008). Unfortunately, few related initiatives have been undertaken in the Philippines.

Still, Filipino women's share in senior and middle management is close to proportional against women in the population. In the past 15 years, for instance, 40–43 percent of management positions have been occupied by women, a larger proportion than their overall current labor

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<sup>10</sup> Examples: <http://weprinciples.org/Site/CompaniesLeadingTheWay/>, <https://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/2015/apr/27/women-top-better-business-environment-sustainable>

participation rate (PSA, 2017). However, female participation in ownership has been stagnant at 69 percent during the same years (WB, Various years). Our ASEAN neighbor countries, such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Viet Nam, and Lao PDR, have also posted similar levels of participation in top management but lower representation in ownership.

When women are in the labor force, they have a high potential to reach senior management positions. In fact, in a survey of businesses across different countries, the Philippines ranks among the highest in the proportion of senior management team roles held by women at 40 percent (Grant Thornton, 2017). However, the evidence of equity in the promotion process ends at supporting roles in the senior management level (e.g., human resource officer and chief financial officer). Unfortunately, the proportion drops at the level of corporate executives and memberships in boards. According to the World Bank (Various years), data from its Enterprise Surveys suggests that between 2009 and 2015, the proportion of firms in the Philippines with female top managers declined from 32.7 percent to 29.9 percent (**Table 15**). With the exception of Lao PDR and Malaysia, female participation of owning companies in most ASEAN member states has likewise decreased. Still, the Philippines shows the largest proportion of firms with female participation in ownership.

**Table 15. Percent of firms with female top managers and percent of firms with female participation in ownership in ASEAN member states: 2007-2015**

ASEAN member state	Firms with Female Top Manager (% of Firms)				Firms with Female Participation in Ownership (% of Firms)			
	Earliest Year		Latest Year		Earliest Year		Latest Year	
Indonesia	31.2	(2009)	22.1	(2015)	42.8	(2009)	22.1	(2015)
Lao PDR	...		32.2	(2012)	39.3	(2008)	41.9	(2012)
Malaysia	8.7	(2007)	26.3	(2015)	13.1	(2007)	25.4	(2015)
Myanmar	...		29.5	(2014)	...		27.3	(2014)
Philippines	32.7	(2009)	29.9	(2015)	69.4	(2009)	69.2	(2015)
Vietnam	26.4	(2009)	22.4	(2015)	59.2	(2008)	51.1	(2015)

Source: World Bank. Enterprise Surveys. <http://www.enterprisesurveys.org/data/exploretopics/gender#--1>  
 ... = no data available.

In the Philippine Stock Exchange's 200 highest market-capitalized companies alone, Filipino women occupy 30 percent of the top executive positions, usually as treasurers, corporate secretaries, and finance managers. Philippine firms that have women as chair or president are also usually in the retail, food, and pharmacy sectors. In a number of these positions, the same person occupies multiple positions. For instance, Teresita Sy-Coson serves as the president and chair of the board of both SM Mart and SM Retail, Inc. The same goes for Robina Gokongwei, who is part of the board of four Robinsons-owned companies.

For this study, we interviewed women in high-level industry positions; they answered questions about their experiences moving up the ladder of corporate leadership and the opportunities and constraints they had to deal with as women. Female participation in different work environments at any level is affected, often limited, during the years of their lives when they are starting families. Women interviewed for this study attest to either changing industries, opting out of promotions, changing positions, or scaling back their work hours in order to focus on childcare and home management responsibilities. Highly competent and well-educated women at mid-career will shift out of positions or jobs where they were advancing, to find a

working arrangement that affords them the flexibility they need to attend to their children. Women in high-level positions interviewed were either single or made specific mention of the importance of having their husbands supporting their career. Supportive domestic partners are those who take equal responsibility for child and home care, who are as willing as their wives to consider scaling back their own work hours to care for family.

The primary role that women take in childcare, indeed, in overall family and home care, is often the reason for disruptions in work. Emergency leaves are used more often by women because of family care responsibilities, such as school activities, illness of a child/parent, or absence of a child caretaker. In many positions, emergency leaves have direct and indirect impacts, such as loss of income or lower performance evaluations. Increased participation of men in family responsibilities would lead to more equitable work participation overall. In a country where women are paid as much as men for doing the same work, and where women are more likely to have higher educational levels, this could translate to higher family incomes. Indeed, the national figures show clearly that unpaid family work of various kinds is disproportionately borne by females (PSA Women and Men Report, 2016).

One of the main goals of the Magna Carta law was to push for expanded maternity benefits, including lengthening the legally mandated leave days from the current 60 days to 100 days for a normal delivery. The law has not been passed but there is an optimistic assessment for its chances of passing into law soon. It is a positive development but is only part of the picture and still places upon women the full burden of childcare. Policy instruments to encourage sharing of home responsibilities should be targeted not only at the women but also the men. Longer paternity leave benefits, expanded family benefits for men, can have positive effects on equity in home responsibilities. The Senate version of the bill recognizes this and reflects it in the policy, 30 days of the woman's leave privileges once expanded to 100 days, is transferrable to her partner should the couple choose.

#### 4.2.2. The boys' clubs

There remain industries that are dominated largely by men, for various reasons. Some industries require technical education rarely chosen by women such as electronics and engineering. Thus, the employable trained workforce in these areas are already unequal in gender split favoring men, just as there are industries where these are dominated by women such as allied medical fields. In these cases, interventions to make these courses more attractive for women to choose in college could be the main driver of change. By the same token, men should feel freely able to opt into traditionally female-dominated professions like teaching and healthcare. The gender divides across fields and industries are not listed under SDG5, yet are important for the expansion of economic opportunities for women and would eventually benefit industries and the economy as well. When the workforce is diverse across different fields and industries the workforce policies, working environment, and opportunities for advancement across genders will follow.

Barriers to female participation in certain sub-areas of a discipline sometimes come in the form of informal practices that keep women away. Multiple interviewees cited workplace socialization and "bonding" activities that are considered the norm in some areas as reasons for staying away from sectors, industries, practices (e.g. law or medicine), and departments. These include after-work drinking, early-morning golf meetings, expectations to entertain and socialize with clients through drinks in the evenings. One of our interviewees explains how

there are areas of law practice that women will naturally opt out of because of the expectation for socializing and bonding with often-male clients through drinks in the evenings. Female government employees at local levels attest to the difficulties of spending time socializing with colleagues after hours because of their responsibilities to their children. At its worst, there are sub-areas where it is common practice to take clients out to bars and clubs where women are part of the entertainment.

In industries that are male-dominated, where the upper levels are referred to (by interviewees) as “boys’ clubs” the working environment can be hostile to women. The few women in the high-level positions are given what women refer to as “GRO” duties -- to entertain others, greet guests, order the food in a restaurant, be in charge of arranging socials and other tasks that when doled out in a gendered way, are discriminatory and sometimes can be demeaning. Women even at the executive levels, report experiencing being subject to inappropriate sexual propositions or advances. Even the high-level industry females remain vulnerable to harassment. Outright sexual harassment happens but is often not reported, even among those who are in powerful positions and enjoy job security. Providing women the safe space to report and the protocols to protect their identities is important for improving reporting rates. Again, training, awareness, education for men, with specific examples is necessary to prevent harassment in the first place. Men should be encouraged to call out other men’s behaviors when they feel it is out of line.

There is a common experience of having to break a ceiling to get to higher positions, where women have to work harder and longer to get promoted to the same rank as men. In working toward the high-level posts women have to learn to “speak the same language” as the men, ignore sexist remarks, and learn to accept the often-exclusionary socializing that men engage in with their peers. The difference in experience from female-dominated fields is striking. Women in less male-dominated companies do not experience harassment, the men in high-level positions which are not “boys’ clubs” defend their female peers in the face of demeaning behaviors of external clients, there is no perceived glass ceiling at the very top levels of a company.

These are shared experiences of women and there is widespread agreement among those that were interviewed for this study that such practices influence women’s selection of the fields and offices they would participate in. Women choose to, and are expected to, “prioritize” family over career. The fact that women speak of trade-offs and prioritizations commonly, begs the question, why is it that men are not burdened with the need to prioritize one over the other? The relative freedom of men from home and family responsibilities may seem at first cultural, but these are changeable and can be influenced by workplace policies.

Policies to protect women against the more obvious forms of harassment and discrimination are well-emplaced in most industries and professions, along with some pro-active measures to retain mothers in the workforce (e.g. breastfeeding facilities, daycare facilities). The measures that will promote the advancement of females to leadership positions and to industries which remain male-dominated, requires gender-sensitivity and awareness of subtle practices that may not be discriminatory in intent but are discriminatory in effect. There should likewise be efforts to craft male-centered policies to encourage equal burden-sharing of home and child care needed to empower women to participate more fully and with more freedom in the workforce

## **5. SDG Target 5.2: Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation**

The elimination of all violence against women (VAW) and girls is one of the most urgent goals under SDG 5 and arguably the most difficult to address. While the Philippines has passed a number of laws that provide wide protections against acts of violence against women and children (VAWC), and these laws take a relatively progressive view of women's rights, the constraints are often in the enforcement and implementation side. As the following section will illustrate, there are areas of marked improvement and there are areas where the situation is stagnant. Some of the pertinent laws include an Anti-Rape Law (RA 8353) which expanded the definition of rape and reclassified it as a crime against person instead of against chastity, Anti-Violence against Women and Children Act, which aims to address violence in the context of marital or common law relationships, and the MCW which contains specific provisions related to VAW.

### ***5.1. Violence against women and girls***

Even with great strides over the years in legislation to protect women and children against violence, there has been limited improvement in reported experiences of women. Compared to 20.1% of women in 2008 aged 15-49 years old reporting having ever experienced physical violence at aged 15, in 2013 the proportion stayed at 19.6% (**Table 16**). When asked if they have experienced violence in the past year, it was 5.6% in 2013 a slight decline from 7.3 in 2008. It has declined among women 20 years and older but remained the same for the young women 15-19 years old. Much of this violence is at the hands of their closest family members, partners or parents. According to those who have been victimized, violence is perpetrated mostly by a domestic partner such as a husband, partner, or ex-husband (51.6%), followed by parents or step-parents (46%)<sup>11</sup>. This is enabled the still-prevalent belief among women that there are instances when husbands are justified in beating their wives, particularly if the wife is perceived to have neglected the children. National Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) data show that while it has declined from 24.1% in 2003, the belief BY WOMEN that there is at least one reason for justified beating in 2013 is still at 12.9% (main reason is neglect of children, 10.6%). These are data from women; there are no available similar statistics from men.

Ever having been victimized by sexual violence declined by a little over two percentage points from 8.7% in 2008 to 6.3% in 2013 among women aged 15-49 based on self-reports in a household survey (**Table 16**). Incidences in 2013 are higher among those with no education or only an elementary-level education and lowest among those with a college degree. These are not small numbers. In clearer perspective, nationally, roughly one out of 20 women has been sexually violated. Among women who have only up to an elementary education the odds are nearly one in every ten having experienced sexual violence. While generally declining, the rate of decline remains slow.

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<sup>11</sup> PSA Report Men and Women, Table 11.4, NDHS data 2013

**Table 16. Percentage of women aged 15-49 who have ever experienced physical violence since age 15 and who experienced during the 12 months preceding the survey, 2008 and 2013**

Group of Women	Ever experienced physical violence after 15 years of age		Experienced physical violence often or sometimes in the past 12 months		Experienced sexual violence	
	2008	2013	2008	2013	2008	2013
National	20.1	19.6	7.3	5.6	8.7	6.3
Residence						
Urban	18.9	20	7.2	5.2	7.1	6.1
Rural	21.6	19.2	7.4	6.1	10.7	6.6
Education						
No education	26.3	18.5	12.9	7.9	14.5	9.4
Elementary	26.7	22.6	9.1	6.6	11.9	9.2
High school	21.7	21.9	8.6	6.7	9.1	6.8
College	13.5	14.9	4.1	3.7	6	4.3

Source: NDHS, figures from Women and Men Report 2016, PSA.

A nationally representative survey of children and youth aged 13-24 years old in the Philippines conducted by UNICEF in 2016 reveals the high prevalence rates of various forms of violence against women and girls. Experience of overall child and youth physical violence is 62.5% among girls, severe physical violence 1.9%, and severe sexual violence 2.3. Reported experience of cyberviolence is 42.2% (UNICEF, 2016). Of the high rate of reported overall child physical violence, the majority of incidences for both boys and girls are related to corporal punishments such as spanking, hair pulling, ear twisting, and spanking with a small implement like a stick (54.5%). A large portion, 30% experienced more severe abuse such as slapping, kicking, smothering, tying, and burning. Boys are slightly more likely to have experienced such violence in the home compared to girls (66.6% vs. 62.5%). Experience of violence in the home for both girls and boys can affect how they conduct themselves as adults, for this reason, any violence toward children should be cause for concern and is part of the reason why VAWC laws were passed.

Having experienced sexual violence as a child is not uncommon, 17.1% of children 13-18 years old report having experienced some form of sexual violence in their lifetimes. Severe sexual violence victimizes 3.2% of children and youth. Boys are victimized more often than girls (4.1% and 2.3%). The online space is a dangerous one for all children, 43.8% of those 13-18 years old has experienced cyberviolence, most of it verbal abuse and sexual harassment. Alarming is the estimated 2.5% of children reporting that their nude body or sexual activities have been shown on the Internet (UNICEF, 2016).

Human trafficking is closely attached to violence against women and children since a large majority of trafficking victims are female. SDG Goal 16 includes among its targets the end of abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children. The extent of trafficking is difficult to capture because it involves moving people across local and international borders and also because reporting agencies may not have a clear technical understanding of violations that constitute trafficking (Interview NGO Director). Based on the SDG baseline estimates (sourced from SDG Global Indicators Database), compared to neighboring ASEAN countries we have one of the highest trafficking incidences and the fastest growing. In 2011 it is estimated that 537 people are trafficked per 100,000 population, it

climbed to 1,083 in 2014. Of the 1,083 trafficked victims, 63% are adult women, and 24% are girls, the remaining 13% are either men or boys.

There are known risk factors for violence against women based on both experiences of NGOs and social workers, as well as based on the international literature. For domestic abuse in particular, poverty, lower educational background of the male, economic dependence of the female, and lack of community support for women in abusive relationships are all vulnerability indicators. In addition, based on interviews with NGO leaders, there are large-scale events and circumstances which may increase VAWC prevalence in certain areas. In disasters, when communities are disrupted and dislocated, in large housing relocation sites where communities are thrust into grinding poverty, and when economic catastrophes strike communities, violence and abuse of women and children tends to increase. Displacement of communities through natural or man-made disasters creates opportunities for human trafficking and victimization of women and girls in the sex trade. On the positive side the agencies and NGOs working in these fields are very aware of these risk factors and try to mitigate for heightened vulnerabilities during disaster times, but while rescue and prevention are possible, when it does happen, the assistance to victims in terms of livelihood, socio-emotional counseling, and health care is often not available.

Violence against women and girls exist on a continuum of progressively more heinous offences from men. These range from sexual harassment, to rape, to human sexual exploitation and trafficking. Women who are vulnerable to being victims of trafficking have a history of abuse in the home when they were younger (Interview NGO Director). Victims of physical abuse, rape, prostitution, incestuous rape, are more likely to be trafficked. The same risk factors that flag higher likelihood of being victimized by violence perpetrated by men are the red flags for vulnerability to trafficking.

Intricately connected to the issue of trafficking is that of prostituted women, since most trafficked women end up being prostituted. The debate that exists in the role of “choice” of women who end up in prostitution is a highly consequential one to future legislation and policing. Women in prostitution are often victims in their youth of some form of physical sexual abuse, often from a family member; as a result, they internalize their value as sexual objects and accept, rather than choose, their condition in life. The degree to which legislators and law enforcers believe that women can freely “choose” prostitution as a livelihood and “enjoy” it is important to study, since it directs behaviors and decisions at the high and powerful levels. Most prostituted women are conditioned by their experience of abuse early their life, and thus, any “choice” to live as a prostitute is a continued effect of that abuse (Interview NGO Director).

Laws and policies on prostitution is a remaining area of needed intervention in VAWC, where the attention has been targeted to penalizing the women, effectively neglecting the role of the demand from men that fuels the industry. That men are raised to believe that sex from women is something they can demand, and purchase is the crux of the problem (PCW Policy Brief 9). It is a deep-seated cultural norm that must be addressed directly and early in life. The power dynamics at play in prostitution between men and women is the same as in sexual harassment, rape, and other forms of sexual violence against women and girls. Consumers of prostituted women are socialized to assume that they have the power to purchase women’s bodies, that without prostitution there will be more rape. It is an assumption that they are taught, that whenever they feel the urge for sex, they should be able to access it.



“Prostitution thrives because of gender inequality and lack of respect for women’s human rights clearly manifested on the false notion that women are inferior, are considered as sexual objects and commodities, while men are superior, are the decision-makers and the owners of properties. The system also thrives because of complex socio-cultural and economic factors -- poverty, under-education, unemployment and economic disparity and power relations, making it easier for those who have more money and power to exploit more vulnerable people and lead them into prostitution and the sex trade. Women do not make a rational choice in entering prostitution; they settle with the limited options available to them bearing conditions of inequality that are set by the customers who pay women to do what they want them to do. Overall, prostitution is not a choice as survivors of prostitution have described it as “the choice made by those who have no choice”.<sup>3</sup> Women are forced into prostitution by gender discrimination, race discrimination, poverty, abandonment, debilitating sexual and verbal abuse, lack of formal education, or a job that does not pay a living wage.” – PCW Policy Brief 9<sup>12</sup>

A recognition of the victimization of prostituted women means equal recognition that men who pay women for sex are perpetrators of a crime just like the men who profit from it (the pimps). Unfortunately, according to the women’s groups leaders interviewed for this study, it is usually the women who are punished, not the men. Ultimately it means that in prostitution, ironically the victims are penalized.

Starting from this conceptual viewpoint that women who are prostituted are victims, and men who purchase sexual services are perpetrators, is important to the country’s position in anti-trafficking laws and regulations. All victims should be protected regardless of consent<sup>13</sup>, victims should not be penalized for any acts related to trafficking, and accountability should be on the demand side. Addressing the demand is critical to reducing human trafficking and sexual violence, that men demand women be delivered to them as commodities is the very definition of trafficking. It is a globalized trade of the bodies of mostly, women and girls. Anti-trafficking laws in the Philippines are patterned after the UN Convention, following the conception that prostituted women and trafficked women and girls are always victims and should never be penalized (PCW, Policy Brief 9).

Unfortunately, the interpretation of these laws in communities does not follow the spirit of the law, according to women’s group leaders, and female victims are often penalized by law enforcement. For example, based on the law force is not a necessary element for the crime of trafficking, yet many groups in this area have misinterpreted the law. In the misinterpretation of the law, government agencies end up giving priority or services only to those who were trafficked internationally and not enough on the local trafficking victims (Interview NGO Director). A large portion of the trafficked population is local trafficking; the NGOs are the

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<sup>12</sup> <http://pcw.gov.ph/wpla/enacting-anti-prostitution-law-amending-articles-202-and-341-revised-penal-code-rpc>

<sup>13</sup> Anti-trafficking law, passed in 2003, was lobbied through many different terms of Congress, it was passed in 2003. Throughout its history in both houses, the main sponsors were always women. Legislators had to be convinced out of the victim-blaming that often happens with anything relating to prostitution, which is a large aspect of trafficking law. The provision on protecting ALL victims of trafficking regardless of “consent” was not easy to pass. Groups focused on pushing for a law that punished the perpetrators and protected victims, not only the people who profit from it but also the customers. In spirit, no victims of sex trafficking should be punished in trafficking and prostitution.

ones responding to those cases. There remain as well, gaps in the implementation of government agencies when responding to cross-border trafficking.

The work of local NGOs has been critically important to providing the necessary discipline in ensuring that the tenets of the international agreements and frameworks on human trafficking, especially as they pertain to women and girls, are faithfully reflected in the local laws. This is a continuous struggle, and one that faces head-on, legislators who do not share the same views about the protection of victims of prostitution and trafficking.

## **5.2. Barriers on the ground**

The Magna Carta for Women made way for the development of stricter protocols for dealing with VAWC cases across all levels of law enforcement, in principle and to some extent in practice. For example, while in older protocols, complaints of physical abuse against a wife by a husband that are reported to a barangay official are like any other complaint, subject to mediation or counseling, newer protocols specify that in VAWC complaints the case is referred directly to the police and is elevated to a criminal case. Barangay officials are, in theory, no longer allowed to attempt to reconcile the couple. When abused women are pressured into reconciliation, they are placed back under the power of their abuser and are left vulnerable to further harm. When complaints are referred straight to the police, the police are then compelled to open an investigation and an abuser is taken out of the home. These changes in protocols were designed to recognize the special nature of domestic abuse cases, that the normal way of dealing with disputes should not be applied to cases of violence against women and children because of the extreme level of vulnerability created by mediation.

Interviews with barangay-level focal persons for Gender and Development (GAD) provide initial indications of huge challenges that implementation of direct referral to the police, experiences on the ground. GAD focal people, usually also serving as the VAWC Desk, are the first-line officials in VAWC complaints, and the Barangay Captain guides their actions and decisions. Interviewees who work in barangay offices exercise wide discretion in how VAW complaints are handled in the beginning, and often if they form the impression that the offense is not “serious” the first thing they will do is “counseling” of the couple to sort out the problem and get them to reconcile. Women who intend to lodge complaints of VAW are counseled as to the gravity of the complaint and that the police will get involved, it seems that the intention of this counseling is to discourage the lodging of a formal complaint (Interview NGO Director and FGD with barangay officials). These breaches of protocols for VAW complaints are validated by the interviews of NGO leaders who have spoken with GAD focal people across the country. If the abuse is more serious or has happened more than once, one barangay official said that they request for a higher-level order called a Barangay Protection Order (BPO). The perpetrator is not allowed to be in the house or within a certain distance of the home, only the Barangay Captain is empowered to issue such an order and it is taken seriously by the community. It is however, temporary by nature, after which the perpetrator is allowed back into the house. Further, exceptions are made when the children ask to see their father. Barangay officials will often mention this, they will deviate from the prescriptions in memos and policies when they are protecting the interests of the children: *nakakaawa ang mga bata*. When they feel that the child needs to see their father or needs the income that the father brings into the home, they will do more to keep the father in the home even when there is evidence of domestic physical abuse. It seems, in their perception that they need to protect the needs of the children, they will make decisions that will put the mother back in a vulnerable position.

While we have limited knowledge of the prevalence of some of these issues, the fact that these experiences are in NCR where estimates show, VAWC is less common, and the responsible offices have more resources available suggests the prevalence is not low. A review of the implementation experiences is warranted to determine whether there are procedural changes that must be made, additional toolkits and information that must be provided, or changes in training contents in order to facilitate effective enforcement of the law against VAWC. Deeper examinations of the beliefs and considerations of each level of law enforcement involved in VAWC cases, with special focus on the frontliners (i.e., barangays), are needed in order to design interventions that would provide more discipline to the discretion exercised by officials. It is worth noting that the instinct to risk the safety of mothers against spousal abuse in favor of the interests of the child (at least, as perceived) is present for both male and female barangay officials. The gender rights community and its supporters have to grapple with these deeply ingrained beliefs, and perhaps find procedural solutions that will provide a continuum of offense severity which are penalized in a graduated fashion.

In addition to the criminal proceedings, the Magna Carta further provides that the victims of abuse “shall be provided with comprehensive health services that include psychosocial, therapeutic, medical, and legal interventions and assistance towards healing, recovery, and empowerment (Sec. 17).” It is unclear which agencies of government are responsible for providing all these technical and social services. One of the heads of an NGO which conducts legal training of VAW desk focal people says that while the law itself, in its formulation appears sufficient, it places a huge demand on local officials to provide various services which it has no resources for. There are many remaining issues that need to be resolved at the LGU level. In trafficking for example, the LGU offices where traffickers moving people through transit points, towns and barangays, have to be educated about dealing with victims. When victims are rescued, they are obliged to assist the victim from rescue to recovery to reintegration, yet there is sometimes little willingness on the part of often-overburdened municipal social workers because the victims are not from their jurisdiction. LGUs that are transit points, or where victims often land or are intercepted when being trafficked, are burdened with responsibilities and resources that they are ill-equipped for, to assist people who they consider to be outside of their community. These are real problems that need logistical solutions. It may be fruitful to examine any possibilities for a pool of funds that are centralized for assistance to local and international trafficking victims, so the municipalities who end up being frontliners by virtue of their geographical location, can get the assistance they need.

Both Magna Carta of Women and Anti-trafficking law, place the responsibility for much of these VAWC and trafficking cases squarely on the plate of local offices. First class municipalities may have no problems meeting the needs for health, social services, and livelihood needs for the rescue and reintegration of victims, but second to sixth class municipalities will not have the technical and financial resources to provide all services. In principle the funds to support such activities is sourced from the GAD funds, but this is insufficient for all the different forms of support barangays are municipalities are supposed to be providing as per law. Given the shortage of resources, different jurisdictions and officials pass along victim survivors to other offices, who then turn around and find another office to pass them along to the next office. In these scenarios victims end up back in the home of their abuser. A real assessment of the resources available needs to be done so that informed budgeting decisions at all levels of government can be made to fund all the required enforcement and support obligations spelled out in the laws.

The mayor is supposed to coordinate the full suite of responses, yet often there is little political will to conduct the work to get coordination under way. Social workers are always overburdened because they are expected to care for many groups, VAWC victims, PWDs, senior citizens, indigent families, abandoned children, and many others. The social workers, only a couple in any municipality, is always involved all cases across all barangays of a municipality. She is expected to heed a complaint referred to her, coordinate the rescue and response, counsel the victim, provide socio-emotional support, place the victim in a shelter and make sure she is protected, then follow through on the victim in terms of filing a case and of reintegration. It is a long protracted process for any single case, and there are never enough social workers and never enough resources at hand to support their needs.

Leaders of NGO groups working on VAWC and human trafficking attest that there are important improvements brought about by the Magna Carta, and that through widespread training and engagement with local-level frontline actors the implementation can be rolled out much more quickly. There remain, however, critical shortcomings in survivor and victim care that are borne out of a lack of resources and prioritization at the local level especially in the poorer municipalities<sup>14</sup>. When VAWC victims require protection, and are taken out of their homes, they need shelter and livelihood assistance. Female victims of domestic abuse are often financially dependent on their husbands, and they are more likely to be very poor. Without the husband they are left without any means to take care of themselves and their children, they need further support after rescue, in the form of a place to stay (shelter) until they can move to permanent lodging, and the means to make an income. Shelters for the protection of VAWC victims are rare, many are run by CSOs or church parishes. There is a critical shortage in these kinds of facilities, and the dependence on the civil sector to provide shelter is a precarious position, they are themselves pressed for resources and cannot accommodate all that need care.

LGUs and relevant national agencies, e.g., the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), the Department of Health (DOH), DepED, and PCW, need to establish an action plan for how shelters can be established, run, and continuously funded with government resources. Operational questions remain unresolved, what are the possible mechanisms for funding shelters, what are the technical expertise needed to run them, what are the financial requirements, what are the services that need to be emplaced and available to residents, and what are the protocols for referring and admitting victims to shelters? Once victims are in shelters, an exit plan must be in place to equip them for livelihood and employment in a sustainable manner, and some longer-term follow-up to ensure stability for the family and protection from their abuser. There may be successful publicly-run shelters in the country, these can be studied, documented, and emulated.

The devolved nature of core social services (social work and health) needed to coordinate a holistic response to VAWC presents a logistical and resource challenge, especially to poorer municipalities. Coupled with the pattern in national figures that abuse is more likely among the poor and in rural areas, the difficulty for the poor municipalities is in raising the necessary resources to comply with the law in a meaningful way. Targeted assistance (financial and technical) from national-level offices of DSWD, DOH, and other implicated line agencies would improve the effectiveness of government response to VAWC. Identification of high-risk municipalities and coordination with the agencies can be the role of PCW, since it is charged

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<sup>14</sup> Interviews NGO Leaders

with the monitoring of cases and prevalence rates. There should be an assessment throughout the system of whether there are enough social workers nationwide. Since this is a devolved function it is difficult to assess where the shortages might be but given the scope of their work (which is really overburdened across many laws) it is likely that the shortage is everywhere, and the differences are in levels of acuteness.

There are many laws, policies, and procedures which VAWC and GAD focal people need to know to deal with varied cases that are brought to their offices. Serious cases can easily be mishandled because of the unavailability of information, through no fault of well-meaning but overburdened lower level offices. The PCW and the NGO community with technical expertise and community experience can work together to produce printed and online reference materials written and packaged in a usable form for all VAWC and GAD focal people in various offices. A helpline through online and offline channels may be similarly useful as a service to those tasked with enforcing VAWC breaches.

### *5.3. Reproductive Health and Family Planning as a Precondition for Gender Equality*

All the indicators of SDG5 are affected directly or indirectly by the indicators of SDG3 on health that are pertinent to women, including reproductive health (RH). Differences in health outcomes between women and men, and between boys and girls are driven both by biological differences as well as social factors. Gender norms and discrimination shape how women's health needs are perceived both by themselves and by men. At the household level, intra-household relations may require women to obtain consent from family members to seek health care or be a result of competing priorities because of limited resources for addressing various household needs. Gender inequalities in health and poor access to RH services are compounded by other factors, such as living in a rural area (where access to services may be more challenging).

The protection of RH, namely in the form of family planning, and maternal health care services, are critical to furthering female social and economic empowerment. This has been a continuing struggle in the Philippines, where there was no national policy to ensure such services until the passage of the RH Law in 2012 (R.A. 10354). It took close to three decades for the legislature to pass this law, as it faced rabid opposition from the church hierarchy. This opposition continued until after the law was passed, with the law challenged before the Supreme Court on numerous grounds, further delaying its full implementation by several years. A temporary restraining order was placed against the purchase of modern family planning devices, an order that was only lifted in 2017. These are pertinent to the bleak figures on women's health and safe motherhood in the country as compared to other developing economies.

As of 2013, the proportion of women of reproductive age (15-49) in the country whose needs for family planning were met was only about half (51.5%). This is a dismal proportion compared to the rest of Southeast Asia where the average is around 70 percent, including countries like Vietnam (69.7 % in 2014), Myanmar (75.0 % in 2016), and Indonesia (78.8 % in 2015). The lack of RH services impacts all women's health outcomes such as maternal and infant mortality and adolescent pregnancy. Without family planning services, such as pre- and post-natal care and access to effective contraception and sexuality education, women are left vulnerable to high-risk pregnancies and death as a result of those pregnancies and high-risk births. Further, data from the SDG Global Indicators Database (**Table 17**) suggests that the adolescent birth rate has increased in the Philippines by 2.0 ppts from 55.0% in 2001 to 57.0%

in 2012. Across ASEAN, the Philippines is among four-member states (which includes Thailand, Viet Nam, and Cambodia) with increases in adolescent birth rates (and teenage pregnancies) between 2000 and 2015. This suggests the need for further mechanisms in the Philippines and neighboring countries to promote women's health and safe motherhood.

**Table 17. Selected Reproductive Health Indicators in ASEAN member states: 2000 to 2015**

ASEAN member state	Proportion of women married or in a union of reproductive age (aged 15-49 years) who have their need for family planning satisfied with modern methods				Adolescent birth rate per 1,000 adolescent women aged 15-19			
	Earliest Year		Latest Year		Earliest Year		Latest Year	
Brunei Darussalam	...		...		31.8	(2000)	11.4	(2014)
Cambodia	33.1	(2000)	56.4	(2014)	47.0	(2004)	57.0	(2013)
Indonesia	77.1	(2003)	78.8	(2015)	54.0	(2000)	48.0	(2010)
Lao PDR	40.3	(2000)	61.3	(2012)	96.0	(2000)	94.0	(2010)
Malaysia	...		...		15.3	(2001)	12.7	(2012)
Myanmar	58.5	(2001)	75.0	(2016)	22.7	(2000)	22.0	(2013)
Philippines	46.6	(2003)	51.5	(2013)	55.0	(2001)	57.0	(2012)
Singapore	...		...		8.0	(2002)	2.7	(2015)
Thailand	94.8	(2006)	89.2	(2012)	33.1	(2000)	60.0	(2012)
Timor-Leste	62.3	(2003)	38.3	(2010)	78.3	(2001)	50.0	(2010)
Viet Nam	66.6	(2002)	69.7	(2014)	25.0	(2000)	36.0	(2013)

Source: UN Statistics Divisions, SDG Indicators Global Database. Available at:

<http://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/> (Accessed 14 December 2017)

In the period 2000 to 2015, maternal mortality rates (MMRs) have dropped from 124 to 118 per 100,000 live births in the Philippines (**Table 18**), but a number of women continue to die from preventable pregnancies and birth-related causes.

**Table 18. Maternal Mortality Ratio and Proportion of Births Attended by Skilled Health Personnel (in %) in ASEAN member states: 2000 to 2015**

ASEAN member state	Maternal mortality ratio per 100,000 live births [lower to upper limit] <sup>a</sup>				Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel (in %)			
	Earliest Year (2000)		Latest Year (2015)		Earliest Year		Latest Year	
Brunei Darussalam	31	[25-39]	23	[15-30]	99.5	(2009)	100.0	(2015)
Cambodia	484	[396-596]	161	[117-213]	31.8	(2000)	89.0	(2014)
Indonesia	265	[213-324]	126	[93-179]	66.3	(2003)	87.4	(2013)
Lao PDR	546	[417-720]	197	[136-307]	16.7	(2000)	40.1	(2012)
Malaysia	58	[50-66]	40	[32-53]	96.6	(2000)	99.0	(2014)
Myanmar	308	[234-408]	178	[121-284]	57.0	(2001)	60.2	(2016)
Philippines	124	[110-138]	114	[87-175]	58.0	(2003)	72.8	(2013)
Singapore	18	[15-22]	10	[6-17]	99.7	(2000)	99.6	(2015)
Thailand	25	[22-28]	20	[14-32]	99.3	(2000)	99.6	(2012)
Viet Nam	81	[61-102]	54	[41-74]	58.8	(2000)	93.8	(2014)

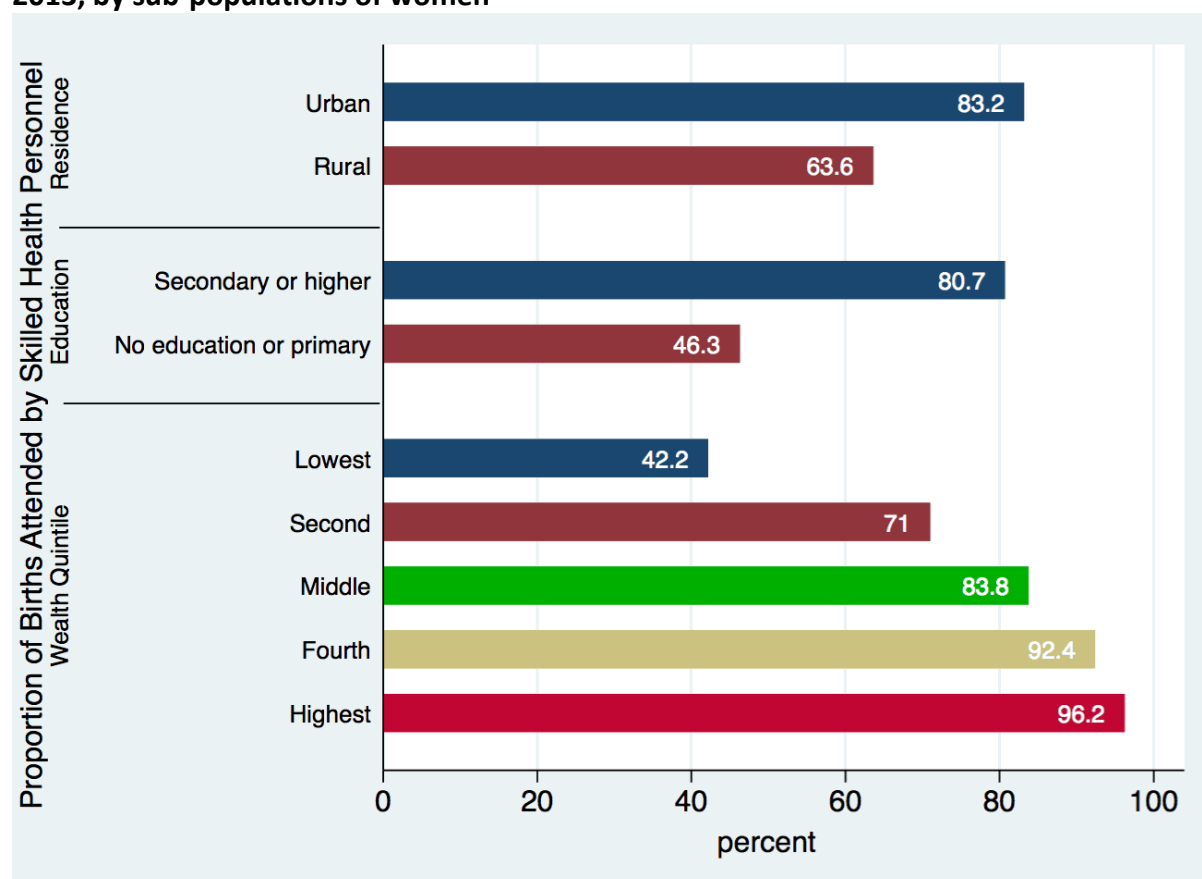
Source: UN Statistics Divisions, SDG Indicators Global Database. Available at:

<http://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/> (Accessed 14 December 2017)

Many (6) of our neighbors in the Association of South East Nations (ASEAN) have achieved far better progress in reducing maternal deaths during the same period. Brunei Darussalam, Singapore and Thailand have had less progress in reducing maternal deaths than the Philippines between 2000 and 2015, but their MMRs are far lower at 8 to 20 percent than that of the Philippines in 2015. Progress in reducing maternal deaths in the Philippines and across nearly all of ASEAN has been accompanied by a rise in the proportion of births attended by skilled personnel. The proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel are lower in the Philippines (72.8%) compared to the ASEAN average of about 80 percent.

Results of the 2013 National Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS), also conducted by the PSA, suggest equity issues on pregnant women's access to skilled health personnel when they deliver their babies (Figure 7). Those who have less access to skilled birth attendants live in rural areas, have less education and live in poorer households. Rural women have 24 percent less access than corresponding urban residents. Women with at most primary education have 43 percent less access than those with at least some secondary education. Further, while nearly all women (96.2%) from the wealthiest 20% of the income distribution have access to skilled personnel, only about two fifths of births are attended by skilled health personnel from the poorest 20% of households.

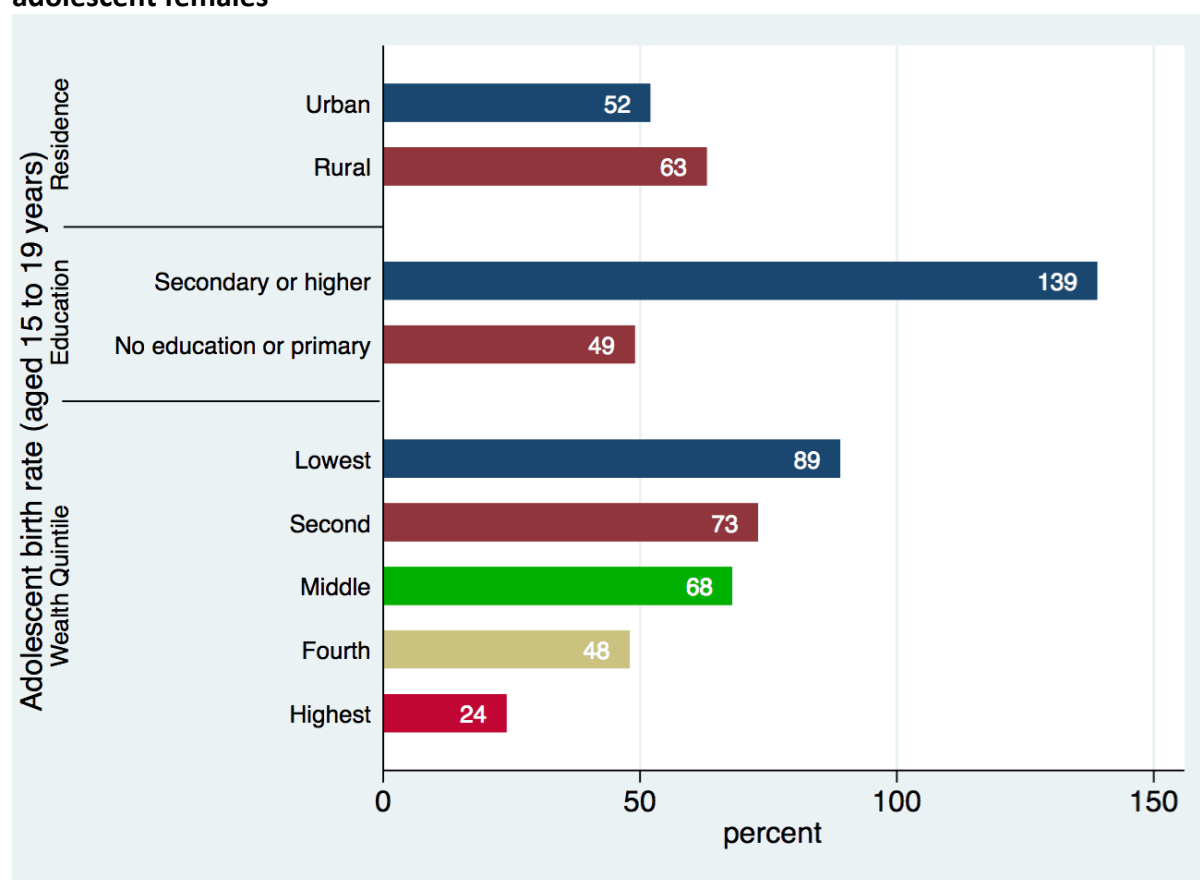
**Figure 7. Proportion of Births Attended by Skilled Health Personnel in the Philippines in 2013, by sub-populations of women**



Source: NDHS results obtained through the STATCOMPILER website of Demographic and Health Surveys  
<http://statcompiler.com/en>

The absence of real RH support impacts not only the health of mothers but also that of infants. High risk pregnancies result from a number of different conditions, one of which is early pregnancy, preventable by the availability of family planning methods. Equity issues also can be observed in adolescent birth rates (**Figure 8**). The rates remain high, particularly among poorer women. Adolescent birth rate (aged 10-19 years; 2013 NDHS) in rural Philippines is 63, in urban areas it is 52 per 1,000 women in the age group. Education level is an important source of disparity: the adolescent birth rate among those with less than a secondary level education is 139, compared to 49 among those with a secondary education or higher. While the rate is a low 24 among those in the highest wealth quintile, it progressively gets higher the poorer the group. For those in the 4th quintile the rate is 48, in the middle 68, in the second 73, and among the very poorest lowest quintile it is 89.

**Figure 8. Adolescent birth rates in the Philippines in 2013, by sub-populations of adolescent females**



Source: NDHS results obtained through the STATCOMPILER website of Demographic and Health Surveys  
<http://statcompiler.com/en>

Gender equality objectives will be near-impossible to achieve without due attention to the conditions that need to be in place for women to have meaningful empowered social and economic participation. Full provision of RH support to raise the metrics for maternal and child health as well as unmet need for family planning will give women the freedom they need to be able to make decisions about their own bodies and to gain more freedom of choice in the time they will devote to home and child responsibilities.



## 6. What Needs to be Done?

The Philippines fares well on some of the broad indicators of well-being of females and girls. In particular, the country is almost equal to gender parity in education (and even more favorable to girls), legal rights of women for economic participation, working poor, and gender pay gap. Labor force participation of women is influenced by their home responsibilities, namely care for younger children, as well as their educational attainment, and urban locality. Females are working in large proportions in government professional corps but have very low representation in the highest levels. The same is found in industry, where women are present in large numbers in the workforce, but their participation is concentrated in certain industries and in lower levels of management, rarely reaching the highest executive levels. There are real glass ceilings for women in industry and in government, a scenario which impact the broader indicators of gender equality, such as legislative agendas, workplace policies, and equity in promotion policies in the private sector.

Further, the issue of unpaid work, whether in farms or family owned enterprises, or unpaid home care by women also deserves attention and monitoring.

### 6.1. *Continuing work on legislative efforts*

The developments and monitoring of legislation to provide an enabling environment for women to reach their full potential is an active area. Proposed bills and repeals of laws and provisions that are harmful for women are being pushed by women's groups, anti-human trafficking groups, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) rights groups. It is difficult to get Congress to prioritize many of these measures, and the hurdles include convincing male legislators to champion issues that are priorities for women, a necessary strategy in a male-dominated legislature. Many of the currently proposed measures, or those that are being pushed by interest groups, require progressive thinking on gender issues to fully appreciate. Thus, the broader immediate project is to educate legislators about the value of and basis for the proposed bills that would promote gender equality and equal protections under the law. The long game should remain faithful to the goals of the SDG5 to increase female participation in the highest levels of decision-making, specifically the legislature.

In the history of legislation to address prostitution and human trafficking, the shuffle of new laws and repeals has created a current legal environment where in the crime of prostitution, those who use prostituted women and those who profit from it (i.e. pimps) are not penalized, yet the victims are. Repealing Article 202 of the Revised Penal Code as amended by Republic Act (R.A.) 10158 defines the coverage of "prostitutes" and equivalent penalties. Prostituted women and girls are victims and should not be penalized under the law. Penalties should be on the demand side, those who "purchase" and those who profit from the sale of women victims. Support for the legislative agenda to repeal this article, which is stated as a goal of the Magna Carta of Women, is needed in both houses of Congress in order to fairly protect the victims of these kinds of crimes. On the broader goal of "policing" the legislation against gender discrimination, all interest groups in and outside of the legislature should work toward a common goal to rationalize existing laws such that the "consent" of women to be sold in the sex slave or traded for labor across borders is made immaterial to the pursuit and punishment of perpetrators.

A number of bills have been filed in the Senate aimed at protecting women from harassment and rape, including proposals to more strictly prohibit and penalize gender-based online violence, increasing the age of statutory rape from 12 years old to 18 years old, and penalizing peer-sexual harassment<sup>15</sup>. There are initiatives from organizations such as CAT-WAP to propose an anti-prostitution bill which would, with finality, focus on punishing the perpetrators and caring for the prostituted women and girls.

A key insight from NGOs at the frontlines of human trafficking and VAWC advocacy, policy, and response/rescue is that the government needs to pay closer attention to the plight of girl children in all aspects of gender development. Often the policy responses speak broadly of women (adult) and children (both male and female), and in general since the lens has been disproportionately on enforcement and penalizing perpetrators, the side of victims (protection and care) is often neglected.

Across the legislative landscape and agenda for future bills, NGO leaders of women's groups note that the focus is largely on the side of law enforcement and penalization of violations, and not as much of prevention. There is a notable absence of legislative moves to incorporate more preventive programs, institutions, and support mechanisms against human trafficking, VAWC, and harassment. Moreover, once the laws are passed, implementation itself is heavy on enforcement (i.e. capture, investigation, prosecution) and light on victim care, the latter includes social service provision to victims in the form of shelters, health and counseling, and livelihood for reintegration. These services are provided for in laws, but there is little resource allocation and skills-training to ensure proper implementation.

Outside of gender-based violence and harassment, there are important measures to pursue which would improve the state of female empowerment. These are included in the agenda of the Philippine Commission for Women (PCW). Key ones include the adoption of divorce in the Family Code, a women's political participation and representation law, and amending the Family Code provision on legal separation.

## *6.2. Improving the quality and quantity of female participation in the workforce*

Gender parity in the labor force is a major indicator that women in a society have the means and the opportunities that men have. More importantly, releasing women from their economic dependence on their partners and unpaid home care gives them the freedom of having choices, for example of choosing to leave abusive domestic situations or of having a voice in major decisions for the home and children. When mothers are abandoned or widowed they have the means to continue supporting themselves. Improving the quantity of female participation should, based on the current statistics, still be a priority for intervention. Government should conduct studies to understand the main reasons for women not being in the workforce, in addition to the burden of housework and care responsibilities, and design interventions to address any systemic barriers. As for quality of female participation, there is clearly a large gender gap in certain industries, a gap in favor of men in the proportion of "unpaid labor" being rendered, and also a dearth of female leadership in higher level positions and certain disciplines.

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<sup>15</sup> [http://www.senate.gov.ph/press\\_release/2016/1122\\_hontiveros1.asp](http://www.senate.gov.ph/press_release/2016/1122_hontiveros1.asp)

If the extended paid maternity leave legislation is enacted, it would improve support to mothers in formal employment, however, this only applies to regularly employed individuals and do not extend to those who are on contractual arrangements in the private sector or those who are paid daily. Employers are mandated to provide additional support to new mothers through breastfeeding rooms and daycare facilities. Still, according to the women leaders interviewed for this study, these are usually not the helpful policies. When in the beginning years of starting families, mothers are better able to stay in their employment status when they have flexible working hours and flexible family leave practices. Although the evidence is limited, testimony of these women indicates that when offices are dominated by men there is pressure to stay long hours in the office and an expectation to prioritize work (even outside of working hours) over family, while in workplaces run by and dominated by women the day-to-day policies are more accommodating. The Domestic Worker's Act (R.A. 10361) or *Batas Kasambahay*, is a major step forward toward securing the working conditions, decent employment, and social protection of many vulnerable women. The law prohibits practices such as debt bondage and invasion of privacy of *kasambahays*. Expeditious implementation of the law, especially the requirements for employers to provide fair compensation and legally mandated benefits for regular salaried workers, is necessary for the law to effect real improvement in the lives of (often) very poor women and girls.

Empowering women economically will require empowering men in the home. The vast majority of proposed policies and laws for the advancement of female economic participation are aimed at helping women do their work and care for their family. Women with domestic partners can gain more benefit from sharing the home responsibilities, rather than scaling back on professional ones. Males who take on domestic work, either in part or in full, should be similarly encouraged to do so. Empowerment of women toward participation at all levels of economic activity, from the first-line jobs to the top positions, must be enabled by empowerment of men in responsibilities in the home. Connected to this is the broader environment of reproductive rights and access to contraceptives, which remains a major barrier to female participation in the workforce.

Full implementation of the Reproductive Health Law is yet to be realized; a serious and well-supported push for implementation will lead to gains in not only female empowerment through economic empowerment, but also an overall reduction in poverty for future generations of women and girls. The relative absence of the full range of reproductive health services, from education of children in reproductive health to the provision of products and services to poor women, is a form of and a factor that perpetuates violence. The rise of teenage and child pregnancies in the country, in the face of overall declining fertility (albeit gradual) is a violence against girls that puts them on a lifetime trajectory of chronic poverty and vulnerability.

While the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint 2025 aims for a more inclusive and resilient community through social protection for women and other vulnerable groups, most ASEAN member-states, including the Philippines, still have no specific legislation on equal compensation for men and women for equal value of work as well as nondiscrimination on gender in hiring. Such policies are needed to equalize opportunities for employment between men and women, especially in sectors that have traditionally been gender imbalanced either by overt discrimination or by social stereotyping.

Protections and programs against sexual harassment in industry are in keeping with the law, but the implementation in offices is punitive rather than preventive. For the most part, outright

formal sexual harassment complaints lead to the termination of the offender. Still, women in high-level positions experience sexual harassment but do not end up complaining, either because the procedures are tedious and unpleasant, or the behavior is tolerated by and is common in male-dominated workplaces.

Recent research in the US has found that traditional sexual harassment policies and training can backfire by reinforcing gender stereotypes<sup>16</sup>. Prevention of harassment is achieved through the “[creation of] a culture in which women are treated as equals and employees treat one another with respect.<sup>17</sup>” Some more effective interventions include empowering bystanders to report incidences of harassment and encourage reporting, train on gender sensitivity frequently, and most importantly, promote more women. Empirical research in other countries has found that companies with more women in high positions have less sexual harassment<sup>18</sup>.

There are multiple private sector groups and NGOs that function as advocacy, research, and convening bodies for various industries, disciplines, and sectors. Some have specific female empowerment or gender equality committees, commitments, and goals while others do not. Coordination of these efforts to enable more effective engagement with policies and monitoring of developments will provide the sector with clear actionable goals, for which they can design interventions. Advocacy among industry groups to design positive workplace policies that would enable greater female participation in leadership, higher levels of retention of women during the age range of starting families, and to study the gender disparities across multiple sectors, industries, and levels of responsibility within those industries. Government agencies (e.g. DOLE, DTI) can serve as conduits and convening bodies to facilitate the codification and dissemination of best practices and workplace policy designs to promote gender-friendly policies and schemes to improve female representation at the highest levels of industry.

### *6.3. Participation and representation of women in government*

Filipino women remain sorely underrepresented in the highest positions in both the government and industry, where most important decisions are made, and directions are set. In the government, these positions include elective and appointive positions across the legislative, executive, and judicial branches. In the industry, they include chief-level positions, board memberships, and director positions. Among all branches, the judiciary has the most gender-equal distribution across the high levels. The lowest levels are in elected local government positions.

The virtual absence of women in, say, barangay captain positions is not a benign concern. Through mandates such as the Barangay Justice System, men dominate the frontline delivery of justice since they make up more than 80% of all Barangay Captains. This means that in practice, the decision-maker on whether the issuance of a Barangay Protection Order (BPO) against an abusive husband is often made by a male barangay captain. Girl and women victims of sexual violence and harassment who want to complain will have to do so to a man. The

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[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/249965142\\_How\\_Do\\_Sexual\\_Harassment\\_Policies\\_Shape\\_Gender\\_Beliefs\\_An\\_Exploration\\_of\\_the\\_Moderating\\_Effects\\_of\\_Norm\\_Adherence\\_and\\_Gender](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/249965142_How_Do_Sexual_Harassment_Policies_Shape_Gender_Beliefs_An_Exploration_of_the_Moderating_Effects_of_Norm_Adherence_and_Gender)

17 <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/11/upshot/sexual-harassment-workplace-prevention-effective.html?smid=fb-nytimes&smtyp=cur>

18 <https://hbr.org/2017/11/training-programs-and-reporting-systems-wont-end-sexual-harassment-promoting-more-women-will>

support they will receive, or the pursuit of their case will depend on a man. The dearth of females in elected local offices means also that there will be fewer females who can pursue higher elected offices, to mayorships and governorships.

Organizations, associations, or even loose groupings in networks and coalitions can help unite women in the legislature to work in concert on women's issues. Specific to the Senate and the House of Representatives, there are no specific groups of female elected legislators formed to support the agenda of gender equality. This has been successfully done in the Judiciary, where there is a longstanding organization (Association of Women Judges) of women in high-level positions working together to improve the representation of women. The complicating layer of party politics and the fact that many of the women Representatives are part of political dynasties makes it difficult to create an interest group for these issues. The legislators in Congress do not have specific platforms or positions that are issue-based since they all run for office on the basis of dynastic rule, which is true as well for many of the females. Only a handful of women in elective legislative offices are consistently pushing for measures to promote gender equality, and often party-list members representing marginalized groups work with them. Further challenging these moves is the dearth of gender-sensitive men in Congress and Senate; there are not enough women who would fight for the interests of women. Continuous education and advocacy from civil society and female legislators is critical, and the government and academe through empirical research and policy work, educational campaigns, and media outreach should support these efforts.

#### *6.4. Addressing gaps in government response to violence and trafficking of women and girls*

The long-term solution to violence and abuse of women is economic empowerment of women as well as the overall alleviation of poverty across the country. Poverty remains at the root of much of domestic abuse and battering in the home, for both women and children. The same way that poverty is the root cause of human trafficking and slave labor. Poor and rural women are more likely to be victims of violence, more likely to be financially dependent on their husbands, and more likely to have more children than their urban counterparts.

Again, as a consequence of the dearth of research about men, their beliefs, their norms, and their behaviors, the policy and programmatic responses remain incomplete. Men are not only perpetrators in VAW, they are also enablers of their peers' behaviors, they are among the frontline responders (barangay officials and police), and ultimately make up the majority of decision makers in the legislative and policy space (HoR and Senate). Changing beliefs and behaviors of men is necessary for the bigger project of female equality and protection to succeed; yet men are often not thoroughly studied and thus almost all interventions are aimed at women.

The findings in this paper highlight a growing concern within and outside of the issue of gender, the overburdened mandates of social workers and local governments without additional allocation. Across the magna carta of women and all other related laws to VAWC and trafficking, there are always provisions for care of the victim through counseling, shelters, health, livelihood, rescue, and a broad spectrum of holistic care. These services are supposed to be directly provided by either the municipal social workers directly, or through their facilitation (e.g. referring victims to health and counseling services). Local social workers are limited by their LGU funding allocations and are expected to respond to many other concerns

such as PWDs, the elderly, indigent families, and Indigenous Peoples among others. Systematic research should be done to consolidate and review the mandates various laws have placed on social workers in LGUs and to estimate the true costs of the services they are expected provide. Related to this are the overall human resources questions, are there enough social workers in the plantilla of local governments? What kinds of support are needed from the central office? There has not been a broad review of these concerns in the social welfare provision space, meanwhile laws are passed that add to their mandates without providing for additional resources.

Women and children-centered NGOs are a vibrant and active group of people who are engaged in multiple layers of many of the issues reviewed in this paper. There are groups doing legislative work, training of government frontliners, providing community-level support, rescue, and re-integration of victims of VAWC. They also serve as conduits between international and national practices in areas as varied as human trafficking, LGBT rights, and reproductive health. The wealth of knowledge, experience, and technical expertise in the civil society sector for women's and girls' rights should be supported and tapped by the government at all levels. Formal, meaningful, and sustained engagement between CSOs and government offices/agencies can lead to multiple benefits ranging from improved service delivery, more efficient provision of support through greater coordination between government services and CSO services, and also over the long-run, a higher likelihood that that procedures and policies emplaced are gender sensitive and enabling of female empowerment and participation.

#### *6.5. Recommendations on research and on addressing data gaps*

There are data gaps that need to be addressed if the government will pursue SDG5 targets effectively. Gender disparities can be observed in various spheres of the SDGs, beyond education and labor, such as monetary poverty, food security, nutrition, health, access to water, sanitation, technology, climate change. Gender mainstreaming of data operationally means providing sex-disaggregated data across indicators as a default in government reports. In addition, more detailed primary data may be needed to generate needed information such as time use surveys of extent and type of unpaid work rendered mostly by women (Encarnacion, 2017). About two decades ago, a time use survey was piloted in two barangays in the Philippines. A time use survey measures comprehensively how time gets allocated to different tasks by different individuals on a daily or weekly basis (Hirway, 2016). The results of this pilot time use survey provided the then national Statistical Coordination Board staff a mechanism to generating estimates of GDP by sex and "adjusted GDP" by sex (that account for unpaid house work of women and men). The PSA should find ways to conduct a National Time Use Survey not only to examine unpaid work in the home, but also to measure the extent of time poverty among women and among men.

Data challenges are present for many indicators in the gender sphere, in some cases because of the difficult nature of the problem such as human trafficking, slave-condition labor, VAWC, and prostitution. A review of proxy indicators and a consolidation of available statistics and data from law enforcement may be a good jumping-off point for designing a regular (e.g. every 3 years) reporting and monitoring mechanism for the prevalence of these more difficult gender issues to track.

A special study on gender dimensions and the unintended positive and negative impacts on women and girls in large-scale government programs may go a long way in the advocacy to

mainstream gender in governance. Frontline NGOs who extend services and assistance to abused women and girls witness increased vulnerability to trafficking, prostitution, and abuse after communities are hit with disasters. When large resettlement housing projects rise and are populated by urban poor communities uprooted from their livelihoods, schools, and other services from local governments, violence against women and prostitute tends to rise. These are preventable if program planners have the technical guidance of gender experts or are trained to build in mitigation measures to reduce factors that contribute to vulnerability. Building an evidence base to document experiences in communities and to estimate the impacts on gender inequality is a worthwhile long-term goal.

Finally, it has been 8 years since the Magna Carta of Women was passed. The sprawling law and its Implementing Rules and Regulations prescribes dozens of recommendations for targets, programs, and institutional mechanisms for protecting women and girls and promoting gender equality in the country. A review of the accomplishments thus far, and remaining targets unrealized, is in order. Some of the major goals in the law have been achieved, for instance the passage of the RH Law and the repeal of the Vagrancy Act. On the side of governance, the institutionalization of VAW desks, GAD funds, and others have been provided. Others such as the expansion of maternity leave benefits and adoption of divorce remain in process. A thorough review and update would provide strategic input for any action plans in government and the NGO sector for achieving SDG 5.

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