

Chapter 7

Reducing Gender Gaps Through Gender-Responsive Budgeting in Davao City, Philippines

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Introduction and Rationale

The Millennium Development Goals are the most broadly supported, comprehensive, and specific development goals the world has ever agreed upon. These eight-timebound goals provide concrete, numerical benchmarks for tackling extreme poverty in its many dimensions. According to the UNDP, these include goals and targets on income poverty, hunger, maternal and child mortality, disease, inadequate shelter, gender inequality, environmental degradation, and the global partnership for development, (What are the Millennium Development Goals? 2010).

Among the countries in Southeast Asia, the Philippines stands out as a model for pioneering efforts in mainstreaming gender perspectives into politics and governance (Francisco 2010). The mainstreaming effort affirms gender equality as a fundamental goal of broad policy decisions, institutional structures, and resource allocation (Giducos 2006). In effect, Republic Act 7192 otherwise known as “Women in Development and Nation Building Act” mandates agencies to allocate resources for gender mainstreaming including the institutionalization of enabling mechanisms and information systems as well as availability of gender database (Primer on Gender Mainstreaming 2002).

The GAD budget policy in the Philippines authorizes government agencies, offices, bureaus, state universities and colleges, government-owned and controlled corporations, and local government units (LGUs) to utilize at least 5% of their annual budget for GAD-related activities. It began as an expressed public financing commitment to the specific goals, services, and activities for women that had been

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identified in the Philippine Plan for Gender-Responsive Development (PPGD), 1995–2025, followed by a presidential memorandum issued to the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) by former President Fidel Ramos in 1996.

According to the Department of Budget and Management (DBM 2002), the GAD budget is the financial translation of the GAD plan. It reflects a 4-year budgetary cost that includes the following information: (a) actual costs incurred for the year just concluded, (b) the current year's budget, (c) the requested budget requirements for the coming year, and (d) the projected amount required to implement GAD activities for the year immediately following the budget year. Francisco (2010) added that it was initially aimed at the appropriations of government agencies to support their own GAD-related activities. Discretion on the fund's utilization was left to agency heads, in consultation with the agency focal points and/or committees. As originally stipulated, it was not a social fund, which women's groups had direct access to. On the positive side, however, the GAD budget ensured that funds could at least be set aside to support gender sensitivity training as well as services for females in the bureaucracy.

With the strengthening of the fiscal decentralization process in the Philippines, local government units were provided with more opportunities in terms of local level gender-responsive budgeting (LLGRB) and challenges as well. The devolution of basic functions like health, social welfare, and agricultural extension to the LGUs created more space for the local government units (LGUs) to incorporate the gender needs at the local level. Some of the LGUs have indeed used this opportunity to initiate gender-responsive policies at local level (Chakraborty 2010).

A local budget memorandum issued in 2000 by the DBM called for the application of the 5% GAD budget to the CY 2001 plans of LGUs. This was followed by Joint Memorandum Circular 2001–2003, issued by the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), the Department of Budget and Management (DBM), and the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (NCRFW), providing guidelines for integrating GAD in the local planning and budgeting system. Francisco (2010) highlighted that the expansion of the GAD budget into the realm of local government units effectively opened the public finance window to codetermination and access by ordinary women's groups. Local communities could now lobby for funds in support of their own projects, beginning from the lowest administrative unit (barangay) all the way to the provincial level. This has given a new significance to the GAD budget – it has now become an enabling mechanism for broadening the democratic and participatory governance process.

The National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (NCRFW) reported cases that indeed ordinary women's groups at the local level are benefiting from the allocation of funds in support of GAD activities, specifically by (1) providing small loans for women's livelihood projects; (2) conducting education workshops on women's human rights and gender issues; (3) establishing local women's centers that respond to issues of women's health and violence against women, including abuse in intimate and family relations; (4) formulating integrated women's development/GAD programs and continuing GAD advocacy at various levels; and (5) strengthening citizenship actions by local women's organizations. Government agencies, for their

part, highlighted the value of the GAD budget by increasing their staff capacity to mainstream gender into plans and programs. These benefits, however grand they may be, have some pitfalls. These include among others the following: (1) GAD activities remain susceptible to changes in administration or to the presence or absence of a GAD advocate; (2) amounts dedicated to GAD activities are inadequate; and (3) the real economic impact of small loans on poor women is uncertain.

Local chief executives as the area manager of the locality and the administrator of the local bureaucracy are the most strategic and effective champion to push for gender and development at the local level. Among others, the LCE must support GAD-related activities with a statement of policy followed through with appropriate plan and budget allocation (NCRFW 2002). Davao City was the first among the cities in the Philippines to draft the Gender and Development Code in (2002) through City Ordinance No. 5004. The conscious effort to localize GAD budget in the barangays stirs interest to track the implementation of various gender-related activities which are aimed to stimulate and empower women in the countryside. In this study, two central points are considered: (1) how do barangays perform in terms of GAD budget allocation? and (2) what gender-responsive initiatives were undertaken by the barangays to address local level gender concerns of women?

Theory Base

The theoretical underpinning of this study is hinged on the concept of gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) advanced by Bundleder 2006. This theory supported that government budgets and the policies and programs that underlie them address the needs and interest of individuals that belong to different social groups. Thus, GRB looks at biases that can arise because a person is male or female but at the same time considers disadvantage suffered as a result of ethnicity, caste, class or poverty status, location, or age. GRB is not about separate budgets for women or men nor about budgets divided equally. It is about determining where the needs of men and women are the same and where they differ. Where the needs are different, allocations should be different (Duterte 2009).

King's theory (2000) on gender mainstreaming is also considered relevant in this study. It suggests that the government itself stands to gain from adopting a gender perspective in the implementation of its programs. The theory lends credit to the argument of UNDP in 2002 that there is a strong connection between gender equality and development; thus, gender and development recognizes women as agents of development and not merely passive recipients of development assistance. Furthermore, the Beijing Platform for Action emphasized that gender equality is a must for sustainability; therefore, governments must promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programs so that, before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects of programs for men and women (Giducos 2006).

Methodology

Davao City, which served as the locale of the study, has 182 barangays. Of these, 12 barangays (6.6%) complied with GRB based on the criteria set as (a) availability of GAD plan, (b) presence of GAD-related activities, and (c) presence of GAD focal persons. These 12 barangays represented the three congressional districts of the city. The remaining 170 barangays (93.4%) have other pressing and priority concerns which hindered them from allocating 5% of their annual budget for GAD-related activities. Primary data were sourced out from the perceptions of the 1,426 women respondents and beneficiaries of the GAD programs. Their evaluations on how good the GAD programs have raised consciousness on gender sensitivity and raised awareness on violence against women and children, and the sustainability of livelihood activities was analyzed using the weighted mean. The secondary data on the GAD budget allocation per barangay and other pertinent data were sourced out from the Gender and Development Office of Davao City and from the offices of the barangays under study.

Gender-Responsive Budgeting: A Local Government Agenda for Gender Empowerment

The global concern for achieving gender equality and women empowerment takes its roots as the third of the eight international development goals that all 193 United Nations member states and at least 23 international organizations have agreed to achieve by the year 2015. This is based on the premise that every individual has the right to dignity, freedom, equality, and a basic standard of living that encompasses freedom from hunger and violence.

The Philippine government as a member state takes a positive stance to the declaration through the institutionalization of national bodies and legislations, thus the birth of the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (NCRFW) and the formulation of the Philippine Plan for Gender and Development (PPGD). NCRFW is an agency under the Office of the President, serving as the machinery for the advancement of women. Established on January 7, 1975, through Presidential Decree No. 663, it was mandated to “review, evaluate and recommend measures, including priorities to ensure the full integration of women for economic, social and cultural development at national, regional and international levels, and to ensure further equality between men and women.”

Responsibilities provided to local governments to observe full-swing implementation of gender activities are mandated through the GAD budget policy. Local governments are clearly guided that attaining gender empowerment must be pursued as a means of broadening the potential of social capability building and enhancing greater people participation. Figure 7.1 outlines these arguments.

Difficult as it is to apply the GAD budget policy at the national level, the challenges are even greater at the local level, as reflected in the low compliance rate

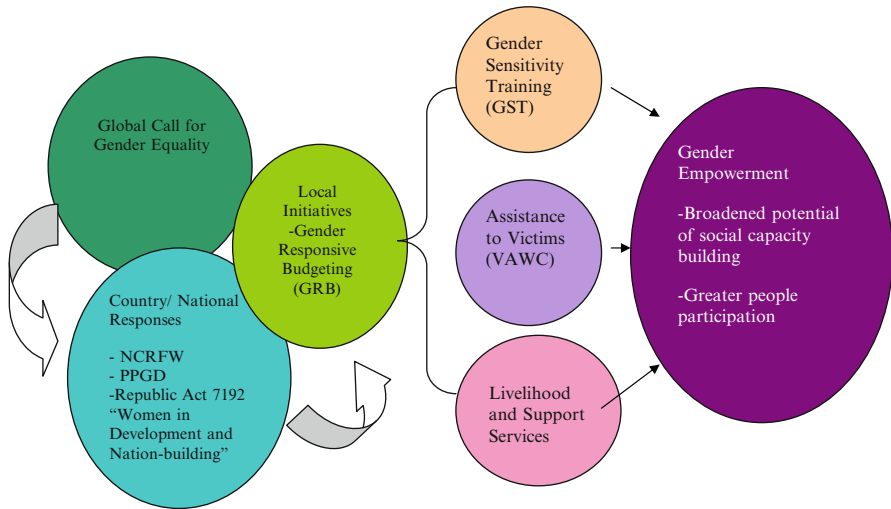


Fig. 7.1 Local governance agenda for gender empowerment

among local government units: of 1,894 local government units nationwide, only 214 (11.3%) submitted GAD plans in 2000 (NCRFW 2002). Other entry points for mainstreaming gender in local planning and budgeting include influencing the executive agenda and priorities of the local chief executive; lobbying the local council to move toward results-oriented planning and budgeting during the review process; increasing the capacity of LGUs to craft gender-responsive local development plans, particularly in conducting the situational analysis and setting targets and indicators for the LGU annual investment plan; and encouraging the involvement of interest groups in the review of budgetary proposals. Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) mandated that LGUs were to source GAD funding from their 20% development fund. This eventually became an impetus for local officials to pursue gender-related programs. Among other provisions, the GAD budget can be used for (a) salary of workers directly engaged in GAD, (b) maintenance and operating expenses for managing health project and training of women in nontraditional occupations, and (c) building of infrastructure such as women’s shelters or training centers (NCRFW 2002).

In Davao City, for example, only 12 barangays (6.6%) of the 182 barangays complied with gender-responsive budgeting. The remaining 170 barangays (93.4%) have other pressing and priority concerns which hindered them from allocating 5% of their annual budget for GAD-related activities.

Figure 7.2 below reflects that the 5% annual GAD budget of the 12 barangays ranges from Php170,000.00 (the highest) to Php 14,000.00 (the lowest), with the average close to Php 60,000.00. Further scrutiny of the internal revenue allotment of these barangays revealed that there is disparity in their allocation of 5%. This implies that most barangays are noncompliant to the law and issuances of GAD budget policy. This is affirmed in the report of the National Commission on the Role

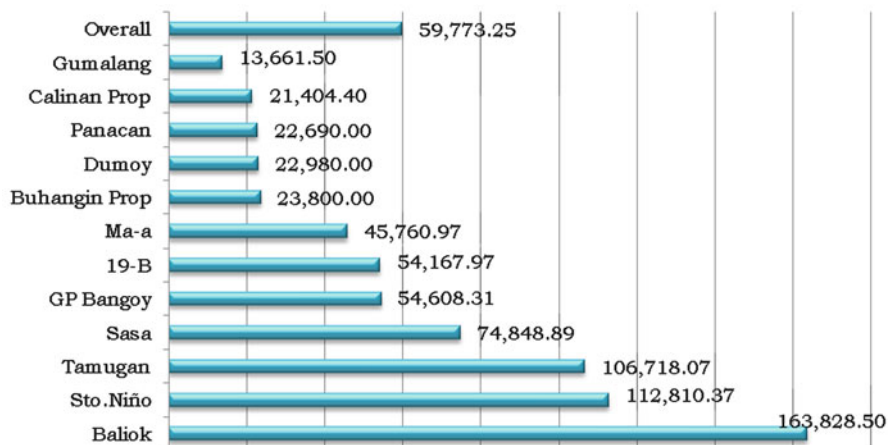


Fig. 7.2 GAD budget allocation by barangay, Davao City (Source: Duterte 2009)

of Filipino Women (2002) that compliance rate among LGUs is low. GAD budgeting is generally not yet integrated into the general planning and budgeting cycles of government agencies including local government units. Lack of political will and lack of technical skills have been identified as major reasons for this nonintegration. This implies that more local government units are not as yet resolved and immersed into the concept of gender and women empowerment. The practical advantage of allocating budget for gender and development has yet to be mainstreamed into the paradigms and mind-sets of local executives and policy makers.

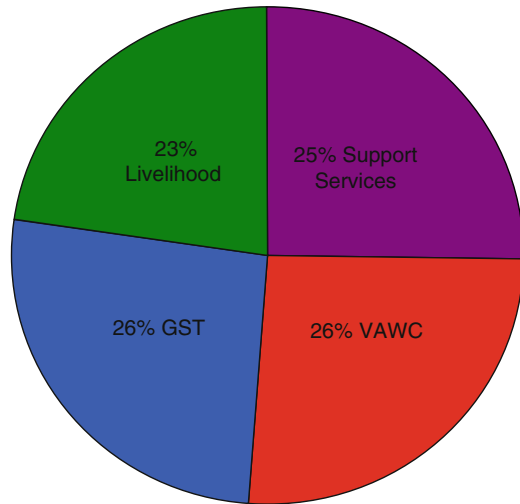
Gender and Development Initiatives

Gender-responsive and demand-driven activities undertaken include (1) gender sensitivity training (GST), (2) violence against women and children (VAWC), (3) livelihood, and (4) support services (Fig. 7.3).

Gender Sensitivity Training

Gender sensitivity training (GST) is an initial effort to show how gender shapes the roles of women and men in the society, including their role in development, and how it effects relations between them. It is given to those who have very little awareness or none at all. Basically, gender awareness is a prerequisite to empowerment and eventually human development. Taking women as a starting point and enhancing their appreciation of their roles would widen the broad-based potential for participation

Fig. 7.3 Percentage of GAD-related activities beneficiaries
(Source: Duterte 2009)



and access. GST makes it possible. It provides the opportunity to recognize gender issues and to recognize women's different perceptions and interests arising from their different social position and gender roles and envisioning a gender-fair society in its sociocultural, economic, political, and legal spheres (NCRFW, Philippine Machinery for Advancement of Women, Gender 10,123).

Violence Against Women and Children (VAWC)

Republic Act No. 9262 is otherwise known as the "Anti-Violence Against Women and Their Children Act of 2004." The state declares it a policy to "value the dignity of women and children and guarantees full respect for human rights. The State also recognizes the need to protect the family and its members particularly women and children, from violence and threats to their personal safety and security."

Today's local governments hold a vital role in maintaining an active social fabric which ensures a balance between family and societal relations – specifically the atomization of women and children. Local administrators who have the real power can more effectively address women and children needs as well as exercise a check on prevailing issues and concerns within their areas of responsibility. These issues and concerns are focused mainly on regular conduct of VAWC orientation, regular monitoring and timely responses to VAWC cases, and availability of intervention programs for VAWC victims. Institutional leadership is critical for creating a proactive environment that fosters establishing organizational strategies, structures, and systems to facilitate these initiatives. To develop such infrastructure, local governments need to observe three critical attributes: political will, flexibility and diversity, and transparency. Because when it comes to the conditions of women and children, one cannot leave these matters to mere chances and false hopes.

Sustaining Livelihood and Income-Generating Projects

By local government code provisions, the vesting of duty, responsibility, and accountability among local government units in the Philippines is accompanied with provision for reasonably adequate resources to discharge their powers and effectively carry out their functions. Local governments are called upon to tailor solutions for local problems to local conditions and provide the opportunity for wider empowerment of its citizens which sets the tone and precondition for significant building up of human capital competencies.

The most remarkable effort in sustaining livelihood activities for women is the inclusion of income-generating projects in the annual local development plan. This provides assurance among the women group that there is enough budget and support from the local government unit as far as livelihood projects are concerned. The provision of technical support by the local governments provides women the ample opportunity to hone their skills and capabilities to venture into small-scale entrepreneurial undertakings. This is expected to eventually increase their income and support their daily sustenance. Increasing women access to skills training, provision of capital assistance, as well as technical support and guidance are few of the numerous assistances to sustain livelihood and income-generating activities for women.

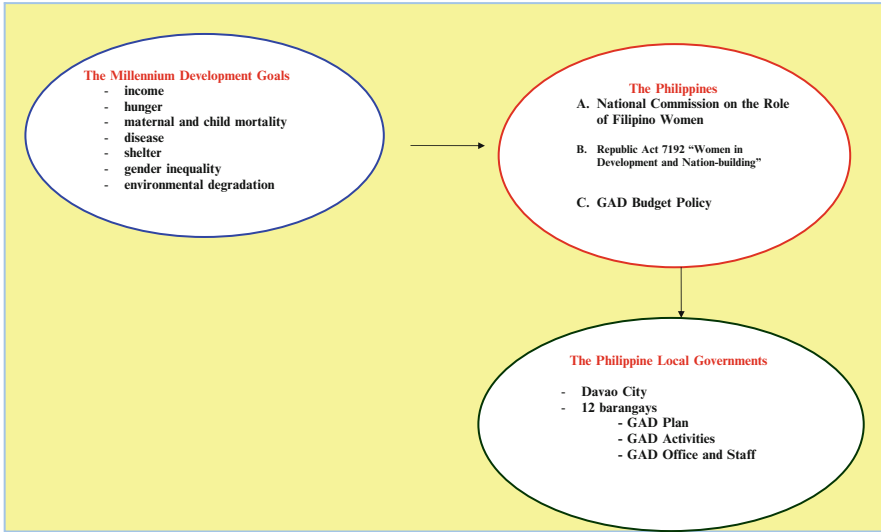
According to Richardson (1997), Good governance is far more critical to the well being of people and nations than either natural resources, or culture, or geographic size or location. The primary function of the government is to empower its citizens through an effective, sustained and a well-established legal framework, which encourages participation from various sectors. The major task of government is therefore to decide the mix of policies that produce the desired results, including, where it should be involved and the most effective and efficient manner to carry out its responsibilities.

Conclusions

In the Philippines where there is high level of participatory governance, local government units are potential entry points for implementing programs that promote gender equity along with poverty reduction and women welfare. Local governments play a crucial role in empowering women and children and ensuring their participation in development.

Heightening local government response to the 5% mandatory GAD budget is imperative. While a few LGUs have been benevolent, many have not done their share. Thus, gender-responsive budgeting can still be categorized under the “unfunded mandates” of the state.

Four policy implications are pointed out in this chapter – (1) how should we substantially benchmark efforts at improving the life of women and children? (2) how should we design gender-responsive budget so that programs and activities would



have remarkable impact on women? (3) how should we persuade local governments to seriously commit to the agenda of gender and development? and (4) how should we influence local decisions to design and implement policies and programs to ensure gender equity? These would eventually redesign the role of the state and an attempt to develop a paradigm of the satisfying participation of local governments in development.

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