

COALITIONS FOR CHANGE STORIES: GENDER, INCLUSION, AND SAFEGUARDS

STORIES

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COALITIONS for **CHANGE**

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COALITIONS FOR CHANGE
STORIES:
**GENDER, INCLUSION,
& SAFEGUARDS**

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And to all our interviewees for trusting us with their stories.

Introduction

For six years (2012 – 2018) Coalitions for Change (CfC), in its first phase of implementation, worked with a multitude of stakeholders in the Philippines to create spaces for collaboration to bring about transformative change.

Often an abused cliché but change is indeed never easy. Most of the processes around change are met with scepticism, resistance, and sometimes even denial. Behind the successes of Coalitions for Change are motivated groups and individuals who, armed with technical knowledge, networks, and guts, helped usher in reforms that contribute to sustainable and inclusive development.

This compendium started with gender in mind: highlighting stories of women who are influencing, leading, and benefiting from reforms that CfC supported. While crafting the publication, it became apparent to us that these reforms led to significant changes not just in gender equality, but also in social inclusion and safeguarding.

Inclusive practices result in empowering outcomes for disadvantaged individuals and groups. By taking on an adaptive approach, CfC was able to respond and adjust according to the needs and the environment, enabling reforms to take root. CfC shows that when projects include and account for disadvantaged groups, including youth, women, and persons with disabilities, these individuals can make meaningful contributions to pushing for change that improve lives.

Featuring first-hand experiences, the stories of *gender* show women taking the lead in driving reforms, while stories on *inclusion* and *safeguards* show how policy changes benefit women, youth, and persons with disabilities.

We are proud to have worked with committed and passionate men and women who took advantage of the opportunities offered – applying local knowledge, wielding their influence, and engaging with relevant individuals and organizations – to move forward necessary reforms. We thank everyone who has been, and still are, part of CfC’s journey in expanding and broadening the reach and the impact of reforms on the lives of Filipinos.



SAM CHITTICK
COUNTRY REPRESENTATIVE
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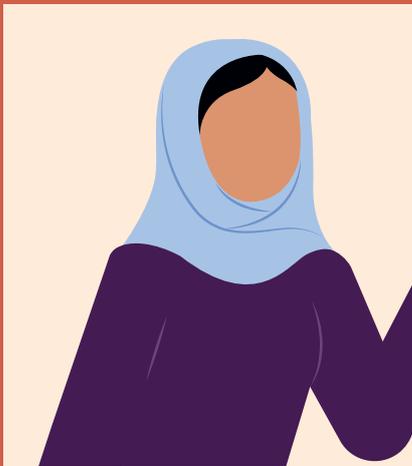
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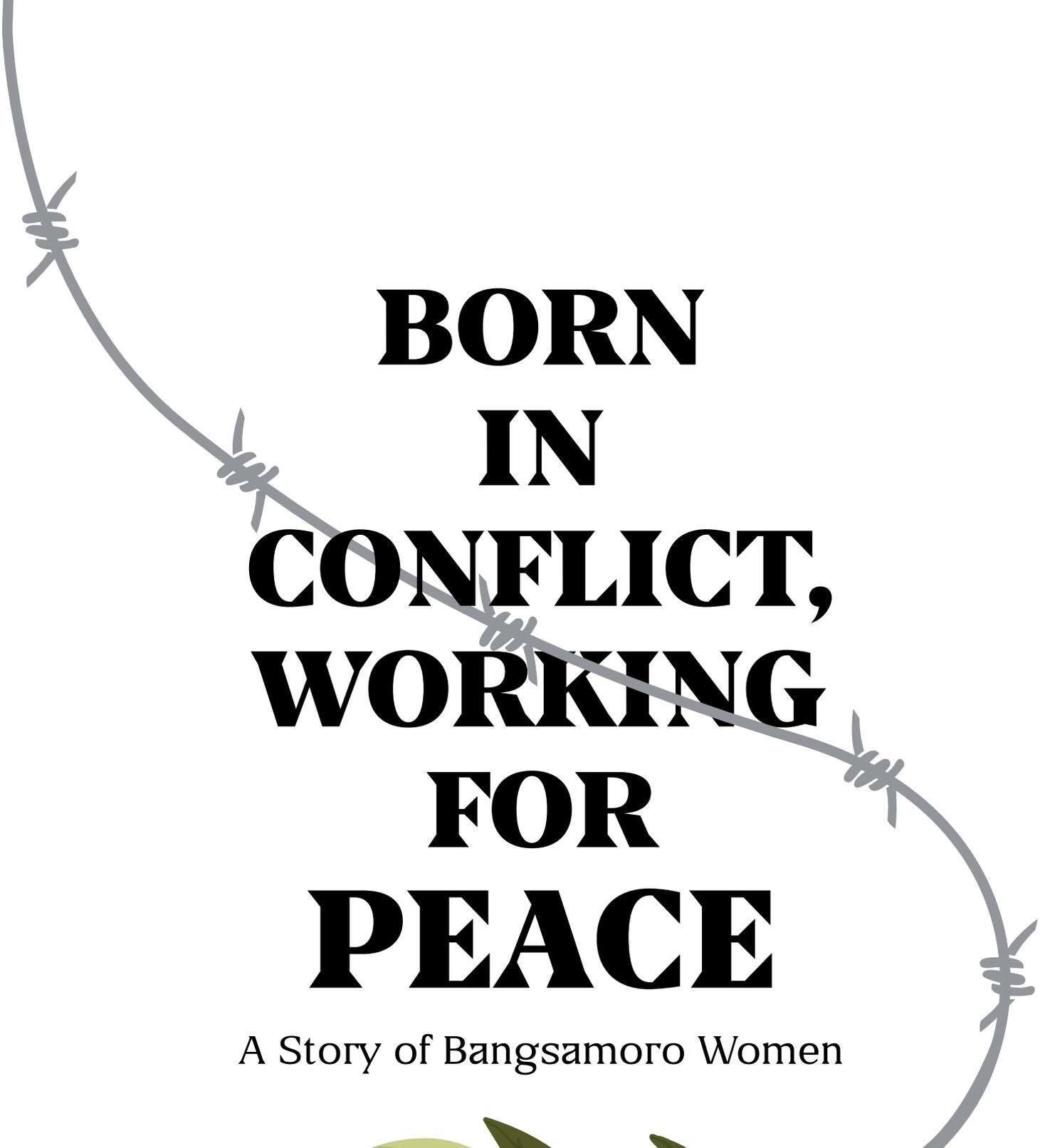
When "No" Means Freedom: Making Election Service Optional

GENDER

COALITIONS FOR CHANGE (CFC)

CREATED A VENUE FOR WOMEN TO DRIVE REFORMS THAT ADDRESS DEVELOPMENT ISSUES THAT ARE MOST IMPORTANT TO THEM AND THEIR COMMUNITIES. CFC LIKEWISE GAVE INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS THE SPARK AND PLATFORM TO MAKE CHANGES IN POLICY WORK, PARTICIPATE IN POLITICS, INCREASE ACCESS TO EDUCATION, OR PURSUE THEIR PROFESSIONAL OR CAREER DEVELOPMENT.





**BORN
IN
CONFLICT,
WORKING
FOR
PEACE**

A Story of Bangsamoro Women



WOMEN IN MINDANAO, BOTH MORO AND CHRISTIAN, HAVE MANY STORIES TO TELL ON HOW CONFLICT HAS AFFECTED THEIR LIVES. Mothers, sisters, and daughters who live in conflict areas share the same experiences with men who have suffered not only loss of life and property, but also loss of access to basic services and missed opportunities to lead peaceful and productive lives.

The effort to liberate Marawi from militants is an example of such conflict. The five-month crisis in 2017 exacted a heavy toll on its people, economy, and infrastructure. The once lively city center was decimated, and more than 350,000 residents or 72,000 families¹ were displaced. Aside from limiting access to necessities and damaging properties, the conflict wrought a psychological toll on the survivors.

The situation in Marawi is just one of the many reflections of the Moro people's long history of armed struggle. The decades-long conflict inspired a few Moro women leaders from both the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) to work for lasting peace.

WOMEN'S VOICES CALLING FOR PEACE

Bainon Karon, the wife of a former MNLF commander and a former combatant herself, is one of the powerful voices calling for fellow women to work towards peace. As a respected woman leader from the MNLF, she has previously served in the government and the community. Still, it never occurred to her that she will be joining in legislative advocacy.

When the Philippine Government and the MILF signed the landmark Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro in 2014, it opened more opportunities for women to be involved and represented in the creation of a new autonomous Bangsamoro region. Coalitions for Change (CfC) helped a group of Moro women organize themselves into an all-women party-list group called the Bangsamoro Women United Party (BWUP).

Led by Bainon, this group intended to usher in change and better represent women's needs in their community. BWUP participated in capacity building activities

that enabled them to successfully craft their charter and refine their engagement strategies with different groups that have a stake in the peace and development of the region. Looking forward to the promise of the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL),² BWUP's early work was directed towards increasing membership, fund-raising, and encouraging members to exercise their right to vote for their party-list group in the event of the BBL's passage.

WOMB: BORN FROM POLICY WORK

At around the same time, CfC was also working with a group of women from the MILF who engaged in policy work, advocating for the BBL in the 16th Congress (2013 to 2016).

Engineer Aida Silongan, the lead convener of the Women Organization Movement in the Bangsamoro (WOMB) and member of the MILF's Central Committee, recalled how their advocacy was barely heard during the 16th Congress. As newcomers in engaging with legislators, WOMB's advocacy activities were sporadic and uncoordinated, even with capacity-building support from CfC.

Engineer Ruby Andong, WOMB's co-convener recalled, "There were 10 of us representing six organizations (who) lobbied for the BBL at Congress. We were very nervous and wondering how we will even do the lobbying. For me, as someone very shy, I wondered: *Bakit ako napasama sa lobbying na ito* (What was I thinking involving myself in lobbying)?"

QUELLED AT FIRST ATTEMPT

The initial BBL advocacy efforts of BWUP and WOMB suffered a major setback because of the Mamasapano incident on January 25, 2015. Originally a police operation which aimed to capture a Malaysian terrorist, it ended in the violent killing of 44 members of the Philippine National Police's Special Action Force, 18 rebels, and seven civilians. It led to public outrage which inevitably turned the tide of public opinion against the BBL. The fear of loss of government control over Mindanao and the hesitation, if not direct opposition, from lawmakers given the upcoming 2016 national elections led to the bill's eventual failure to be passed.

¹ Cabato, R. (2018). Remembering the Marawi crisis. CNN Philippines. Retrieved from <https://cnnphilippines.com/news/2018/05/22/remembering-marawi-crisis.html>.

² The BBL incorporates the essential points of the Framework Agreement of the Bangsamoro (FAB) of 2012 and the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB). Lawmakers on both Houses have filed several versions of the BBL since it was first filed 2014.

“Advocates have to work even harder **not only to pass the bill but also to ease the doubts and mistrust that might lead to further violence in Mindanao.**”

nawala at ang mga namuhunan (ng pagod) para sana maipasa ang BBL [They did not even give value to those who lost their lives, and the people who tirelessly worked for the passage of BBL],” she lamented.

STAKES ARE HIGH

After the Mamasapano incident, advocates have to work even harder not only to pass the bill but also to ease the doubts and mistrust that might lead to further violence in Mindanao.

“Most of us are mothers and wives who fear that extremists capitalizing on frustrations may recruit our family members, and highlight the insincerity of the government to solve the Bangsamoro problem,” says Aida.

Bainon shared this fear. Some Moro women used to approach her and confide: “*Sabi ng mga anak namin: Ang tagal niyo na diyan (in a peace pact with the government), tumanda na kayo diyan, niloloko pa din kayo ng gobyerno.* [Our children told us: You have been in a peace pact with the government for so long, you have gotten old, and yet the government is still playing with you].”

The frustration with the government and the rumors of financial rewards for joining make the youth easy prey for extremist groups, the most prominent being the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Fear for their children motivated the women of the Bangsamoro to step up efforts to raise awareness on the importance of keeping the peace.

SECOND SHOT: 17TH CONGRESS

With the future of their children at stake, the women of the Bangsamoro refused to let their disappointment from the stalled legislation consume them. They turned their attention to the urgent and more important task at hand: addressing the frustration of Moros on the ground.

BWUP continued to advocate on the BBL and its importance to Moro communities. Nawira Rasdi, who was in charge of coordinating advocacy work in the island provinces of Basilan, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi, believes this activity was crucial, as there were still some misgivings about



▲
Women supporters hold up placards in support of the BTC version of the BBL.
Photo by WOMB

Both WOMB and the BWUP were disappointed with this outcome – it was as if all their work has been for naught. “*After Mamasapano doon namin naramdaman at nakita ‘yung hatred at discrimination. Especially sa Congress, bigla talaga nag-shift* [After Mamasapano that was when we felt and saw hatred and discrimination. The shift in Congress was particularly sudden],” said Ruby, recalling their lobbying back in 2015.

For Ruby, the fight for the law’s passage had been personal. “*Hindi man lamang nila binigyang halaga ang maraming buhay na*

the law. Some believed it will only serve the MILF's interests. To these doubters, Nawira patiently explained, "*Wala naman nakasulat sa BBL na ito ay for MILF lamang. Ang nakasulat sa BBL ay it is for the Bangsamoro. At lahat tayo, kasali sa Bangsamoro* [There is nothing written in the BBL that it is for the MILF only. What is written there is that it is for the Bangsamoro. And all of us belong in the Bangsamoro]." WOMB, meanwhile, organized peace summits and continued their dialogues with communities and even other religious groups, to gather more support for the law.

The 17th Congress saw WOMB and BWUP, together with other peace advocates like MNLF and MILF leaders, Mindanao-based business groups, and civil society organizations, ramp up their advocacy for the BBL to galvanize support from both houses and the public. This time around, WOMB and BWUP, who have made the legislative rounds in the 16th Congress, were invited to actively participate in public hearings conducted in 2018. They engaged legislators, like Maguindanao and Cotabato City Representative Bai Sandra Sema, to convey their support for the Bangsamoro Transition Commission (BTC) version of the BBL.

Bainon recalls BWUP and WOMB's second shot at lobbying for the BBL: "*Sa hirap at ginhawa... magkakasama kami (MILF*

“**Ang nakasulat sa BBL ay it is for the Bangsamoro. At lahat tayo, kasali sa Bangsamoro.**”

and MNLF) sa lobbying. Naglalakad kami papunta sa Congress, maya-maya naman, tatakbo na kami sa Senate [In hard times and in good times, we (MILF and MNLF), were united in lobbying. One moment we were at the Congress (House of Representatives), and just a bit later, we were off to the Senate].”

STANDING TOGETHER: SIGN BBL

To further the cause, the two groups allied with other like-minded civil society and grassroots organizations in Mindanao. They called the movement Sustainable Initiatives of Grassroots and Networks for Bangsamoro Basic Law (SIGN BBL), which sought to broaden understanding for the BBL as a legitimate path to peace. The Bangsamoro women, working with Moros, Christians, and Lumads alike were well-positioned to facilitate support for the BBL version and the upcoming plebiscite.

Ruby and Bainon join fellow BBL advocates in a public consultation on November 25, 2017. Photo by Iskak Dianal





The Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) ushers in the creation of a new Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM).⁹⁹

WOMB, BWUP, and other peace partners such as MNLF and MILF leaders, business leaders, religious leaders within and outside of SIGN BBL, were optimistic when the Joint Committees of the House of Representatives approved the adoption of the BTC version of the BBL (House Bill No. 6475) on April 16, 2018. It was clear that the concerted efforts of the government and civil society to increase support for the BBL paid off. On July 25, 2018, keeping true to his promise to support the law and the peace process in Mindanao, President Rodrigo Roa Duterte signed the BBL. The Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) was then ratified on January 25, 2019, ushering in the creation of a new Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM).

In the months leading up to the Bangsamoro plebiscite to determine which areas will belong to the BARMM, Aida recalled how SIGN BBL conducted Mindanao-wide campaigns “from the cities down to the remotest areas, including barangays outside of the former ARMM (Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao).” She said they even included areas that did not apply for BARMM inclusion.

BANGSAMORO WOMEN IN GOVERNANCE

The ratification of the BOL and the adjunct creation of the BARMM signaled the culmination of the Moro's, especially the women's, decades of struggle for autonomy. To date, BARMM's creation rests primarily on a transition government body called the Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA). It holds the Bangsamoro region's legislative and executive powers and is expected to create a transition plan to lay the foundations of the new Bangsamoro.

On February 22, 2019, Bainon Karon and Aida Silongan took their oath as part of the BTA. They are among the 16 women out of the transition body's current 98 members.³ Aida is in the Parliament and will be serving as Minister for Science and Technology. She aims to focus on passing legislation related to technology advancement, such as digitization and improvement of Halal programs. She will also continue to work with vulnerable groups, including women and children, wanting to seek out women who are qualified to be part of the bureaucracy "so they can be part of (Bangsamoro) governance."

Bainon, meanwhile, serves as the Chairperson of the Regional Commission on Bangsamoro Women (RCBW), the counterpart of the Philippine Commission on Women. She wants to "level up" the RCBW and has drafted a bill for the creation of a Ministry for Women, Youth, and Family Development. Bainon wants to focus on gender and development guided by Islamic perspectives so that "it will be more acceptable with the community." She is also thinking of ways to bring the newly created ministries 'closer' to the communities. For her, BWUP should continue its work to be the women-focused party-list for future Bangsamoro elections.

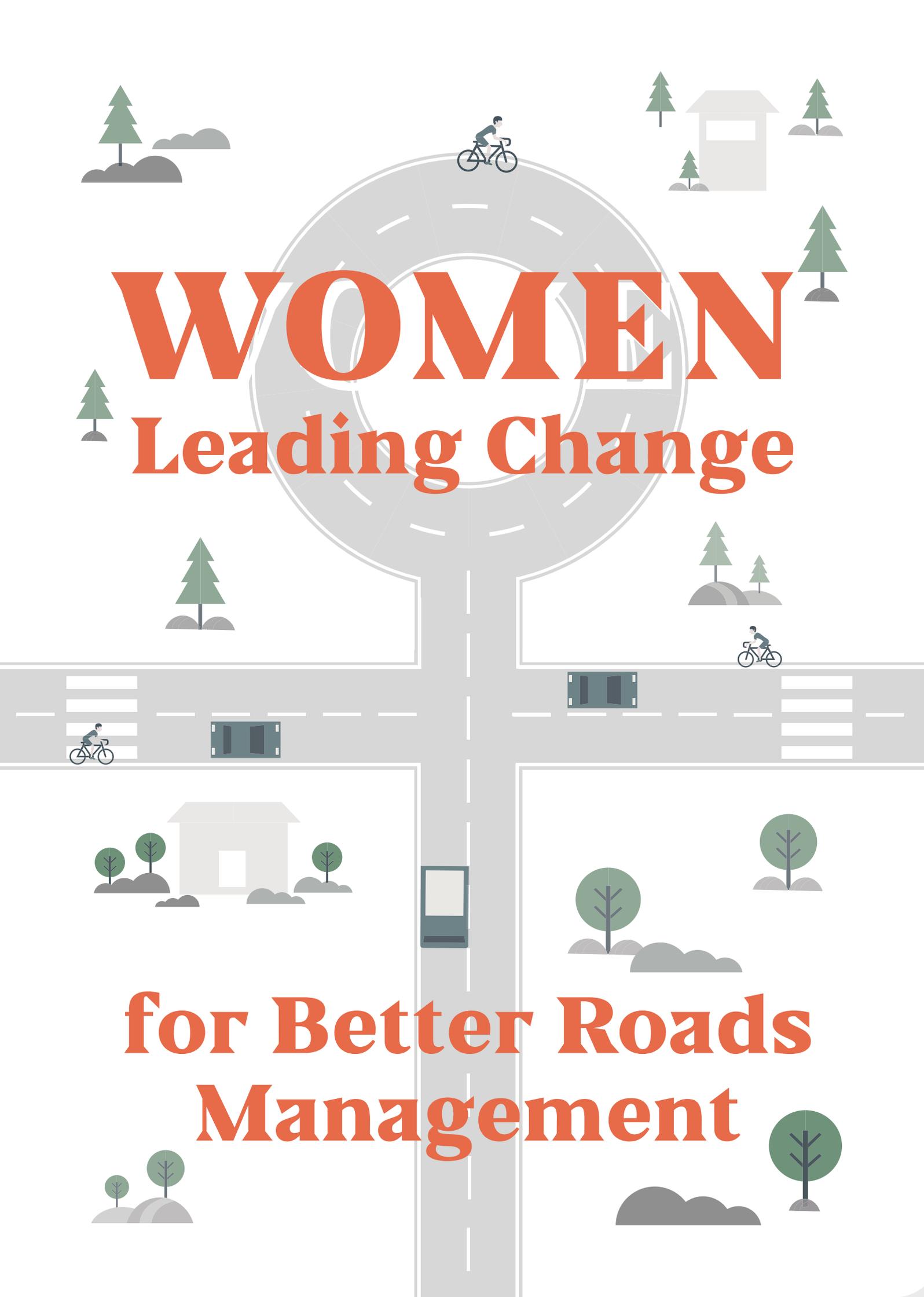
Both contend with the challenges of being BTA members. For Aida, mobilization is a challenge as the funds have yet to be made available for the Parliament. She is also trying to find the right balance among her responsibilities at the Parliament, WOMB, and other advocacies.

For Bainon, while it also seems like she has come full circle having served as ARMM Social Welfare Secretary in the early 2000s, she cannot help but feel apprehensive. "*Nung una, natatakot ako. Kaya ko pa ba ito? Pero sinabihan naman ako ng mga kasamahan ko, kaya ko daw. Kaya excited ako na natatakot.* [At first, I was scared. Can I still do it? However, my friends told me 'yes, you can do it.' So, I am both terrified and excited]."

Aida notes that there are still some extremist groups and skeptics, waiting to see how the BOL will be implemented. This skepticism drives her to do her best. Bainon is buoyed by the successful passage of the BOL and how they can now "lay the foundations of the future generation. *Mahirap na ang ating pinagdaanan* [we have been through much hardship], but if we remain passionate with what we want to achieve, *may mangyayari* [something will come out of it]."

The journey of the Bangsamoro women has yielded promising outcomes. The work of WOMB and BWUP, combined with the efforts of the Moro community, has brought more cohesion not only among the Moro groups, but also for peace advocates in general. Through women leaders like Bainon Karon and Aida Silongan, the aspiration of Moros – both men and women – to chart their path towards peace may soon become a reality. ■

³ Arguillas, C. (2019). Women in the Bangsamoro Transition Authority: only 16 of 98 but a powerhouse cast. MindaNews. Retrieved from <https://www.mindanews.com/peace-process/2019/04/women-in-the-bangsamoro-transition-authority-only-16-of-98-but-a-powerhouse-cast/>.

The background features a central grey road intersection with dashed white lines. A large, semi-transparent grey circle is centered over the top of the intersection. The scene is populated with various icons: a person on a bicycle at the top of the circle, a house and trees to the right, another person on a bicycle to the right of the intersection, a person on a bicycle and a bus on the left side, a house and trees on the left side, and a person on a bicycle and a bus on the right side. The overall style is flat and minimalist.

WOMEN

Leading Change

for Better Roads Management

WOMEN REPRESENTATION AND/OR EMPLOYMENT IN THE TRADITIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE SECTOR SUCH AS ROADS AND

TRANSPORT REMAINS LIMITED. For instance, as of 2018, only 153,000 women compared to 6.5 million men have been employed in the fields of construction and transportation in the Philippines.¹

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), in an issue note released in 2017 related to Gender Equality and Sustainable Infrastructure, considers the participation of women as one of the pillars for sustainable infrastructure. It states the need to “engage women in the design of infrastructure strategies and plans and in implementation, as well as due consideration of the well-being of female employees along infrastructure supply chains”.

The following stories showcase the work of Coalitions for Change with women leaders to pioneer an evidence-based, private sector-led road management program called the Coordinating Roads and Infrastructure Investments for Development (CR+ID). These highlight the experiences and learnings of women on being part of local road planning and management.

PRIVATE SECTOR INVOLVEMENT IN PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE

In 2012, CR+ID started working with local business associations, provincial governments, and regional and national agencies and councils to help improve investment decisions on where and what roads should be developed using available resources. The project aimed to provide technical information to decision-makers in the government and local councils to help identify crucial road projects to drive local economic growth.

Capitalizing on the business sector’s up-to-date, practical knowledge on the flow of goods, services, and people, CR+ID involved local business associations in the province and city planning process, including the identification of roads that should be built or rehabilitated. The project engaged men and women champions within local business associations, increasing their awareness and encouraging their membership and representation in Regional

Development Councils (RDC), Provincial Development Councils (PDC), and other local special bodies. These champions not only helped shape the objectives and strategies of planned investments; they were also able to leverage funding.

These business associations, however, are generally not fully aware of the extent to which they can participate in, and even initiate, changes in policies or strategies to further spur development.

In Western Visayas (Region VI), Lea Lara, Executive Director of the Iloilo Business Club (IBC) shared, “*Parang foreign sa kanila ‘yung concept na ang private sector ang nag-te-take ng lead over the identification of road projects* (the concept of the private sector taking the lead in identifying road projects is foreign to them).” Local business groups were used to just listening to local government officials identify what projects will be prioritized. “*Parang gulat na gulat sila, pwede pala ‘yun na mag-advocate kami ng mga roads na kailangan* [They were surprised that it is possible to advocate for a road that they believe is needed)].”

Lea has been instrumental in ensuring that business organizations participate in road project identification and decision making. Using her years of knowledge and experience in dealing with both local government bodies and the business sector,

¹ 2018 Gender Statistics on Labor and Employment, Philippine Statistics Authority.

Parang gulat na gulat sila, pwede pala ‘yun na mag-advocate kami ng mga roads na kailangan [They were surprised that it is possible to advocate for a road that they believe is needed].⁹⁹



she worked with the rest of the IBC to map key road and infrastructure projects for Iloilo. Lea likewise helped guide business associations in Guimaras, Aklan, Capiz, and Antique on how to be more involved in the project identification and budgeting process. Lea was also proud of the opportunity to mentor Guimaras Chamber's President, Neptune Pittman, in registering the latter's organization under the Securities and Exchange Commission. The said registration helped the Guimaras chamber to be eligible to apply for membership and representation in the local development and infrastructure councils.

With IBC's help, provinces in the region are now more capable of discussing vital road projects with the local government. As one good practice, the local road projects recommended by local business organizations now have accompanying resolutions to ensure that these are included in the Annual Investment Program and the Regional Development Investment Program. This way, the road projects will be assured of appropriate resourcing in the budget cycle.

DATA FOR DECISION-MAKING

Making decisions on which infrastructure projects should be prioritized is not easy – these need to be informed and backed up by

robust, evidence-based data. Cebu's case shows how the transition from using a hand-drawn map to a geographic information system (GIS)-based map for provincial development planning had been a tough but worthwhile endeavor.

May Ybanez, Executive Director of the Cebu Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI), is one of the women leaders who pushed for evidence-based infrastructure planning. At first, May had trouble learning the GIS-based technology system and initiating the mapping activities with local government units. However, she was resolute in mapping her province, driving the rest of the CCCI and using her network to get the job done amidst changing political leaders and their staff.

Even if GIS was hard to understand and mapping is a tedious process in general, the output – a comprehensive map for Cebu City - helped May convey the importance of road planning. "It is very subtle but essential. When you show the map, it gives the speaker credibility," she explained.

May carries a long-term vision for Cebu's further development. She believes that driving commerce, through improved road connectivity, is a crucial ingredient to make this happen. Her vision, complemented by hard work, a good relationship with the local government nurtured through the years, and healthy competition with other provinces, led to municipalities in Cebu understanding the value of road and infrastructure prioritisation and completing the mapping process at the municipal level.

Now, Cebu's map is a common denominator for all provincial government development projects, be it in agriculture, environment,

You will only be able to influence policy-makers if you have a good project and a good plan.

fisheries, or tourism. The provincial government now also considers CCCI an invaluable partner in discussing infrastructure projects for the province. “You will only be able to influence policy-makers if you have a good project and a good plan... a plan is very attractive and can generate support if it has very good data,” says May on her key takeaway from their CR+ID mapping experience.

WOMEN AT WORK

Like Lea and May, Joy Dominic Chan is one of CR+ID’s private sector representatives providing the needed leadership and support towards road reforms. Joy is the Executive Director of the Siquijor Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI). While CR+ID is completely different from what she was used to as an entrepreneur, Joy used what she knows about roads, local economy, and the province “to convince and inspire” the people involved. She appreciates her role as one who unlocks the potential of major and minor actors – from those within the SCCI, to the local chief executives, and their respective staff – so they can, in turn, contribute to and influence Siquijor’s development. Joy does not shy away from hard work, joining mapping sessions and brokering presentations with local government executives so they can better understand the broad objective: providing robust evidence base to inform infrastructure-based priorities.

The hard work, however, does not rest on the shoulders of these local businesses alone. The role of the local government, particularly the engineering and planning offices, is integral to roads reform.

In Bohol, the participation of women from the local government mobilized data-gathering and mapping activities. Andresita Alo, Municipal Engineer of Baclayon with two decades of government service, almost single-handedly mapped the municipality of Baclayon with a borrowed GPS unit and a motorcycle. When the roads became too rough for a motorcycle, she would walk on her own so she could map new roads and check the condition of previously mapped roads. She conscientiously attended the CR+ID’s training and coaching sessions to make sure she did the road surveys correctly. She also encoded road data. All her outputs fed into Bohol’s Roads Database and are now used to prepare land use plans,

road project proposals, and in determining disaster risk management plans for the local government.

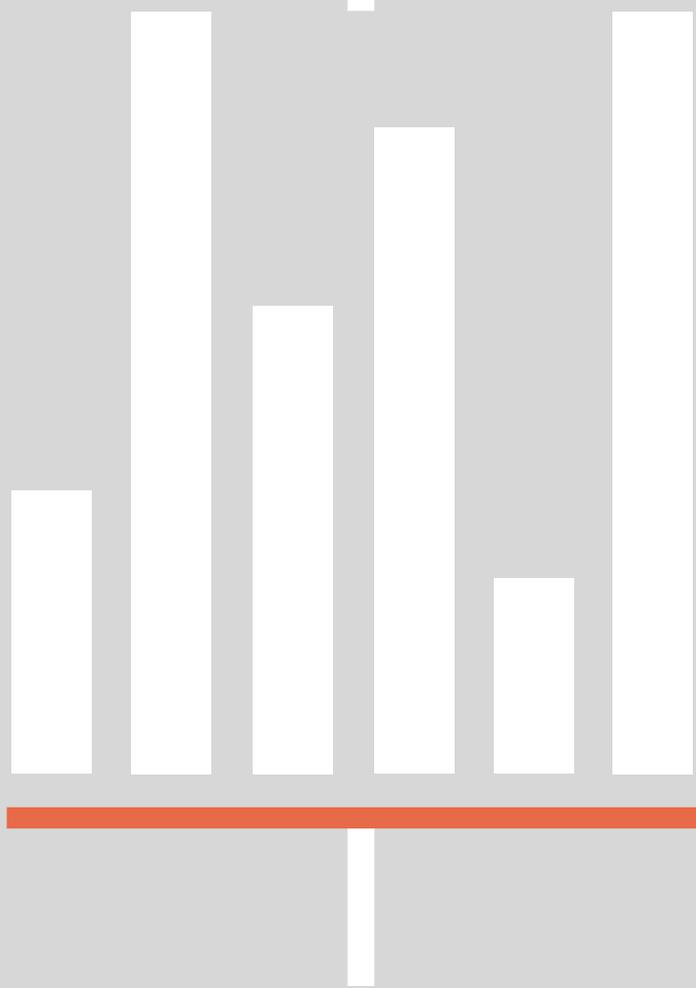
In Surigao del Norte, Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction Management Officer Engineer Marilyn Pono pushed to involve more women in actual project implementation. Knowing that it would give women greater earning potential, at the same time considering physical risks, she pushed to hire more women in road construction and project monitoring.

Working with these dedicated women and adopting a gender lens in roads planning, the provinces that CR+ID engaged with now have more road projects that not only offer access to commercial establishments, but also consider the access of women and children to social services such as public schools, health centers, and barangay and municipal halls.

By the time the project concluded in 2016, CR+ID had worked in 15 provinces and helped local governments and business associations to work together to successfully leverage a total of Php 98 billion (AUD 2.5 billion) to fund roads and other infrastructure projects. Many of these projects have been led by or involved women, proving that transport infrastructure is no longer just men’s domain. ■

The provinces that CR+ID engaged with now have more road projects that not only offer access to commercial establishments, but also consider the access of women and children to social services such as public schools, health centers, and barangay and municipal halls. ⁹⁹

The Gender Metric



Caraga and its Gender Criterion in Roads Selection

S TUDIES SHOW THAT WOMEN AND MEN DIFFER IN TRAVEL NEEDS AND PATTERNS¹. Men are more inclined to travel for employment. They cover more direct routes with relatively longer distances. Women, on the other hand, have more complex routes and destinations due to their multiple roles, emanating from household and childcare duties. These include routes to health care and education facilities, as well as shops and markets.

But how exactly do you go about considering gender in the selection and prioritization of road projects? The Caraga Administrative Region's² experience under the Coordinating Roads and Infrastructure Investments for Development (CR+ID) program shows how.

¹ Toolkit for Making Road Infrastructure Projects Gender Responsive. (2011). Department of Public Works and Highways. Retrieved from <https://www.dpwh.gov.ph/dpwh/sites/default/files/GAD/home/attachments/toolkit%201.pdf>

² Caraga is comprised of the provinces of Agusan del Norte, Agusan del Sur, Surigao del Norte, Surigao del Sur, and Dinagat Islands in Mindanao.

CONSIDERING DIFFERENT NEEDS

CR+ID considered how women’s needs could be taken into account in infrastructure planning and construction. CR+ID’s partner, Carmencita Cochingco, was the first to suggest the development of a gender criterion to assist government planners. As someone who used to work with the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), she knew that including gender criterion in a road development plan is a small but essential step that helps ensure local governments will put it to use.

Through Carmencita, the CR+ID team, the Surigao Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI), and the local government zeroed in on the criteria for prioritizing roads that provinces are already using to determine which road projects will be funded. The said criteria were used during consultations with the province’s technical working group (TWG), composed of local government heads. In these meetings, roads are assessed based on the said criteria, with corresponding weights. Hence, inserting a gender criterion means that proposed road projects benefiting more women will receive a higher score and have a bigger chance of being prioritized (see Table below).

Soon after, guided by a confluence of women representatives from local business associations and the Provincial Planning and Development Council (PPDC)³, other provinces in Caraga likewise incorporated the gender criterion in road planning.

A gender criterion means that the larger the population of women to benefit from a proposed road project, the higher the score given, and the higher the probability for a proposed road project to be prioritized. 99

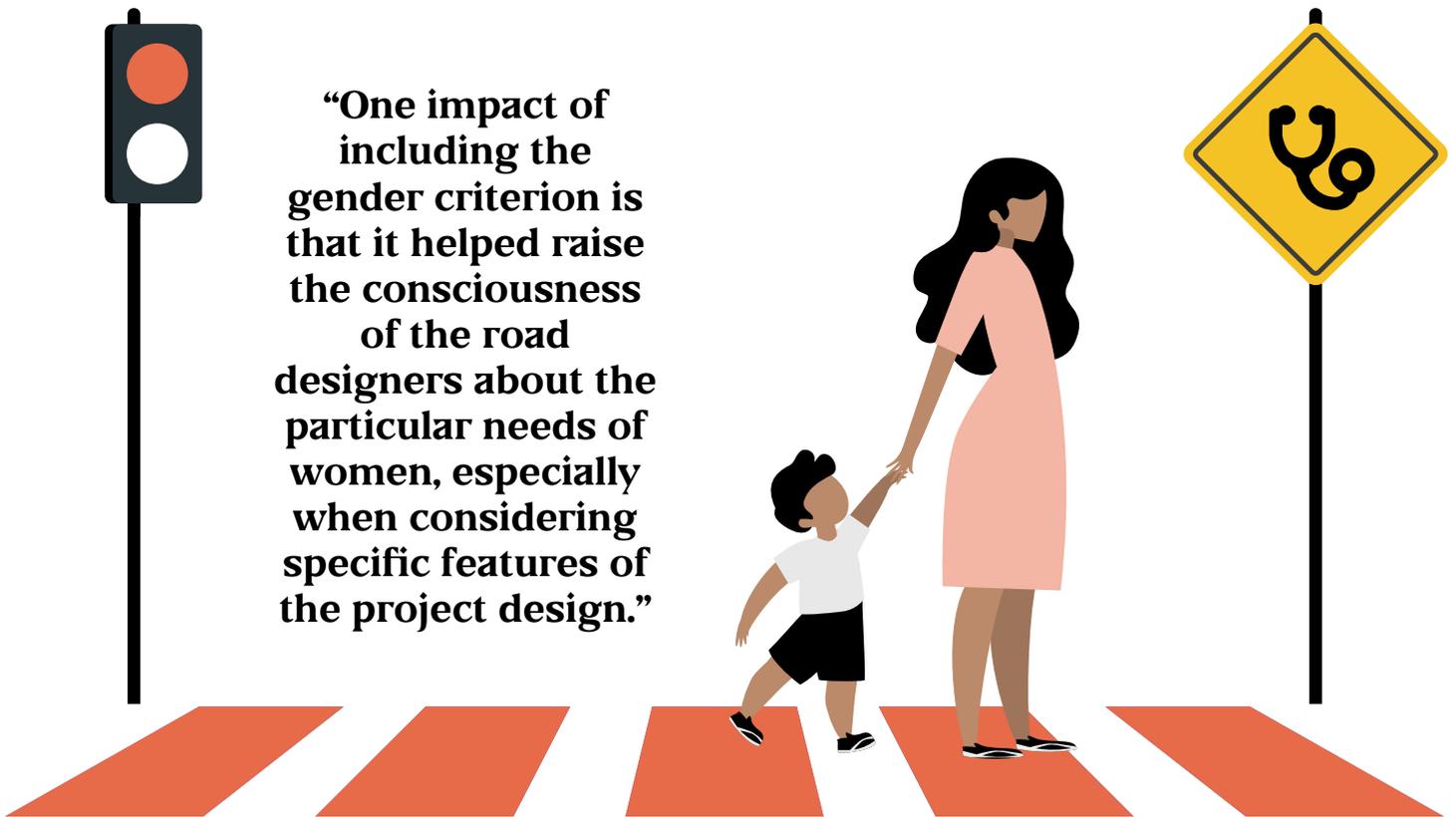
In terms of participation, these CR+ID provinces ensured that both men and women were involved in consultations and workshops. In deciding which roads to include in their development list, the participants were asked: how would these roads and other infrastructure affect men and women?

The team also made sure that participants represented the different local economic drivers in their areas, such as agriculture, commerce, and tourism. The outputs of these CR+ID consultations and workshops were “strategic road links” – road segments that connect important economic locations,

³ As one type of Local Development Council (LDC), the others being city or municipal, the PPDC is a policy-making body that defines the content and direction of local development. Among its functions is the formulation and evaluation of investment programs to be funded that will promote economic and social development. Source: Rationalizing the Local Planning System. (2008). Department of Interior and Local Government. Retrieved from https://dilg.gov.ph/PDF_File/reports_resources/dilgreports-resources-2017110-f8d1a2db06.pdf

TABLE ON PRIORITIZING ROADS CRITERIA

CRITERIA	PERCENT
Increase in economic activity (increased employment, no. of businesses, volume of production, and tax collection)	25
Increased Efficiency (reduced travel time, transport cost, and cost of doing business)	20
DRR considerations (reduced vulnerability to disasters)	20
Connectivity and Accessibility (from major routes)	15
Population Size (no. of people served or influenced by the project)	10
Gender Sensitivity	5
The volume of traffic (traffic count)	5
TOTAL	100



“One impact of including the gender criterion is that it helped raise the consciousness of the road designers about the particular needs of women, especially when considering specific features of the project design.”

regardless of administrative classification (e.g., national or provincial roads). With SCCI at the forefront, other Caraga business association representatives worked with their PPDC and endorsed the province’s list of road links to local and national government agencies for funding.

BENEFIT: AWARENESS TO GENDERED NEEDS, ACCESS TO SERVICES

Assistant Provincial Engineer Eleunesto Dumagan of Surigao del Sur highlighted the benefits of local government factoring in gender in the selection of road projects. “One impact of including the gender criterion is that it helped raise the consciousness of the road designers about the particular needs of women, especially when considering specific features of the project design,” he said.

Engineers Deanna Fudalan and Charyll Rosario, from Agusan del Sur and Agusan del Norte, respectively, affirm that the gender criterion helped them consider women’s and children’s needs for greater mobility and access to social services. “A good road can bring greater comfort to women and children,” says Fudalan.

Through CR+ID, the business sector also learned how important it is to be

inclusive and ensure equal access to those opportunities. For instance, Vivian Otaza, Board Member of the Butuan City Chamber of Commerce and Industry, saw the significance of designated comfort rooms along the highway for women, especially breastfeeding mothers. Concepcion Paqueo, former President of the SCCI and now Regional Governor for Eastern Mindanao of Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry, meanwhile recognize the need to prioritize gender-sensitive roads that improve access to health services and quality of care for mothers and children.

With CR+ID and its gender metric, local planning bodies have become more mindful of how infrastructure design affects men and women differently. More than that, as of writing, Caraga has proposed 22 Strategic Roads and Infrastructure Investments, all of which were assessed and prioritized using gender sensitivity as one of the criteria. Of these, 45 percent (10 projects) were funded, amounting to Php 15.1 billion (AUD 41.2 million). These investments are expected to benefit an estimated 2.7 million people in the next three years.

Caraga Region’s case shows that keeping vulnerable sectors, especially women and children in infrastructure development, in mind may ensure an optimum return of investments. ■

INCLUSION

INSPIRED BY THE GLOBAL CALL TO LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND, **COALITIONS FOR CHANGE** HELPED YOUNG LEADERS PURSUE REFORMS THEY ARE PASSIONATE ABOUT. CFC ALSO ADVOCATED FOR GENDER NEEDS TO BE CONSIDERED IN CRAFTING AND ASSESSING EDUCATION INTERVENTIONS.



A Young Woman's Advocacy on **INCLUSION**



PAULA BIANCA LAPUZ KNOWS FIRST-HAND THE DIFFICULTIES THAT PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES FACE – from mobility constraints to being deprived of social and economic opportunities, to experiencing discrimination.

As a person who has paraplegia, Bianca uses a wheelchair for mobility. However, this situation did not deter her from getting quality education. “I was told that I should probably not continue attending school anymore because I would not get far in life considering my medical condition,” she revealed.

Bianca knows that she can change perceptions of people with disabilities like her. She persisted in finishing her college degree, thankful that her family made sure that she gets all the support she needs. Going to school and attending classes were not easy, though. Apart from the financial strain, she also had to contend with the lack of proper facilities for people with disabilities. For example, in university, she

was fortunate to get classes mostly located on the ground floor, but she still had classes located on the higher floors. In such instances, she and her walking device had to be carried so she can get to class.

Bianca let her passion for helping marginalized people, especially individuals with disabilities, fuel her. While finishing her degree, she organized a national campaign for electoral reform. She also managed projects for civil society organizations and worked for the Commission on Elections (COMELEC). At COMELEC, she became very active in improving the voting experience of people with disabilities with the help of the Fully Abled Nation (FAN) campaign¹.

In 2017, Bianca completed her Master of Arts (MA) degree in Development Policy. Her thesis? Something close to her heart: the Philippine experience in terms of implementing Republic Act No. 10366 or the Accessible Polling Places Law during the 2016 national elections.

¹ See Reform Story No. 10 - Fully Abled Nation: Making Elections for Inclusive. The Asia Foundation. (2018). Retrieved from <https://asiafoundation.org/publication/fully-abled-nation-making-elections-more-inclusive/>



I recognize that I should consistently work on creating a more equitable society, especially for the PWD sector.²⁹

Talking about her career track and work ethic, “I wished to transcend the minimum expectations people have of PWDs. At the same time, I do not want to be an exemption to the rule. I recognize that I should consistently work on creating a more equitable society, especially for the PWD sector.”

Bianca continues her advocacy on top of her being a full-time faculty member at the Far Eastern University, where she teaches political economy and social anthropology classes. She currently works with Coalitions for Change to find ways to make education

more accessible to children with disabilities. A 2018 monitoring of select public schools², for example, reveals that most school buildings do not have ramps or elevators that students with mobility impairments can use to access higher floors.

The Department of Education (DepEd) acknowledges that not all schools are compliant with Batas Pambansa 344 or the Act to Enhance the Mobility of Disabled Persons by Requiring Certain Buildings, Institutions, Establishments and Public Utilities to Install Facilities and Other Devices. As Bianca experienced, going to school became even more difficult because of narrow or unpaved roads, limited transport options, and lack of sidewalks and ramps. Guided by her experience and knowledge, Bianca works with the DepEd and disability sector representatives to spread the word about the department’s policy to make more schools accessible.

“My hope is that through our joint efforts, we can create better opportunities for children, especially girls, and people with disabilities, and in the long run, make them productive members of society,” says Bianca. ■

² Improving PWD Access to Public Schools. Executive Summary. (2018). Affiliated Network for Social Accountability in East Asia and the Pacific (ANSA).



A SEAT at the TABLE

Breaking Barriers to Youth Participation in Governance

YOUNG PEOPLE BETWEEN THE AGES OF 15 AND 29 – OR ABOUT 30 MILLION INDIVIDUALS – REPRESENT A SIGNIFICANT CHUNK OF THE PHILIPPINES’ ESTIMATED POPULATION IN 2019. This signifies a ‘demographic dividend’ which is defined by the United Nations Population Fund as “the economic growth potential that can result from shifts in a population’s age structure, mainly when the share of the working-age population is larger than the non-working-age share of the population”. It likewise presents a golden opportunity for the Philippines to unlock or yield even more benefits as long as it recognizes and harnesses the youth’s economic potential.

The youth plays a crucial role in the Philippine’s economic growth and sustainable development. Yet, challenges continue to hamper the youth from successfully advocating relevant governance reforms in the country. These include not being heard and/or recognised by key decision-makers in both the public and private sector, despite the empowerment that increased connectivity and awareness bring through technology, including social media. Young women in the labour force, for example, grapple with issues such as sexism, lower pay, and limited professional and/or leadership opportunities.

In March 2018, Bea Orante, then a 24-year-old development worker from the Local Government Academy (LGA), saw an announcement in a Facebook



Being a woman, it may not be easy to have a seat at the table, especially when you are young. Optimizing my existing network helped get something done.⁹⁹

group about a workshop on Development Entrepreneurship (DE) organized by the Coalitions for Change (CfC) program.

Bea was looking for professional development opportunities that would further enhance her skills in working with the public sector, and the announcement came at an opportune time. Bea recalled thinking back then, “it will enhance my skills and did not have any specific requirements, like age or education.” Being excluded is not a foreign concept to Bea. She has experienced her views being disregarded not because it lacked merit but because it came from her – a young woman.

CfC has been taking steps to involve the youth in reforms, understanding that they often have limited or no access to career enhancement opportunities. CfC conducts DE trainings with an inclusive selection process that allows individuals from all age groups – including young professionals with limited work experience – to participate in these one-day workshops.

For Bea, CfC’s DE workshop was a valuable opportunity. It affirmed her thinking that doing reform work is a real challenge. At the same time, it helped her gain insights on how to manoeuvre within and around the sector she is working in to advance her advocacies on better governance and youth development.

The workshop likewise enabled her to be more practical with her approach. “One has to be realistic when pushing for reforms. It is important to consider that smaller reforms still contribute to a broader reform agenda,” she said. At the same time, the workshop also taught Bea how to identify stakeholders, influential actors, and decision-makers who

may play a crucial role in the reform that she supports.

She also learned the value of using her existing networks and connections. “Being a woman, it may not be easy to have a seat at the table, especially when you are young. Optimizing my existing network helped get something done,” she shared. This is an important lesson that Filipinos – especially women – must keep in mind. Having a network is a valuable resource for potential leaders – and women report that their lack of connections with influential people is one barrier to career advancement.¹

Through her connections, Bea initiated a meeting with a Commissioner from the National Youth Commission, who gave her ideas on how to get a budget allotment for her proposed program. She wanted to help build the youth’s capacity to lead local-level initiatives in Quezon City, Ilocos, Naga, and Cagayan de Oro.

The challenges faced by young women leaders remains. However, Bea continues to be inspired. She is continuously exploring how her networks, the existing policies, and her reform idea can intersect and, hopefully, yield better results. A year after she participated in the DE workshop, she joined the Development Academy of the Philippines and was able to secure funding from a local non-government organization to implement her project.

Through CfC’s inclusive practices in creating learning venues for development practitioners, a diverse set of individuals, including young women like Bea, learn to leverage their strengths and move forward reforms they are passionate about. ■

¹ Ibarra, H., Ely, R., and Kolb, D. (2013). Women rising: the unseen barriers. Harvard Business Review.

LACK OF INTEREST

Understanding Low Academic Motivation Between Boys and Girls

IN THE PAST DECADE, THE PHILIPPINES HAS UNDERTAKEN SIGNIFICANT REFORMS NOT JUST TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN THE COUNTRY, BUT ALSO TO INCREASE FILIPINO STUDENTS' ACCESS TO EDUCATION TO HELP THEM BE MORE GLOBALLY COMPETITIVE. These reforms sought to increase student participation and ensure that they stay and finish school.

The high rate of school dropouts is one of the main challenges of the Philippine education system. The country's case is unique, however, as more boys are dropping out of school than girls.

The Department of Social Welfare and Development's (DSWD) Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) compliance monitoring shows that one of the reasons why beneficiaries fail to continue sending their child to school is the latter's 'lack of interest'. Most of these are male students who dropped out of elementary and secondary school. Reports likewise show that girls perform better

than boys – a disparity more prominent in secondary (high school) education. In a 2015 cohort study, for example, the retention rate of female secondary students was at 83 percent, compared to 73.5 percent for male students¹.

In an analysis of CCT children beneficiaries for 2014-2015, gender was also a prominent factor in school survival, with more boys dropping out of school at 67.1 percent, and with enrollments and dropouts occurring the highest in Grade 11, followed by Grade 7².

Coalitions for Change, together with individual researchers and the De La Salle University's Social Development Research Center, sought to help the Department of Education (DepEd) and the DSWD better understand this possible gender concern and what "lack of interest" means for both boys and girls. With out-of-school youth, students, parents/guardians, and teachers as respondents, results show the complexity of factors that influence the "lack of interest" of students to stay in





Education reform should address not only access and parity, but also ensure that education remains relevant and adaptive to the needs of all students.⁹⁹

school. It was found that dropping out of school is influenced by diverse and complex factors such as financial, parental, or school-related issues.

Unsurprisingly, economic constraints drive students to stop going to school and look for work. As one male respondent said, “*Nahinto na po ako, nag-work ako sa Tutuban, kailangan nang magtrabaho.* [I stopped (going to school). I worked in Tutuban (a commercial hub) because I needed a job].”

A female respondent also said, “*Nakakatamad nang pumasok ‘pag wala kang pera, kasi wala kang pambili ng project.* [I feel too lazy to go to school because we have no money. I cannot buy (materials for school) projects].”

Aside from financial concerns, respondents said dropping out of school was also influenced by family-related factors, such as lack of support from parents and the responsibility of taking care of siblings, which usually fall on females.

There were also school-related factors, where some mentioned issues of safety and security. One said, “*Nagkainitan kaming mag-tropa. Simula noon, hindi na ako nakakapasok.* [I fought with a friend. Since then, I have not been back to school].”

Other factors that contribute to dropping out of school include geographical distance, illness (of the student or a family member), and internal migration. The latter refers to children moving towards areas where there is a high demand for unskilled labor.

There are indications that if boys and girls stay in school at Grade 7, there is a higher likelihood of them continuing up until the time they will decide to enter Senior High School. The data underscores the importance of designing interventions that ensure this actually happens.

For the CfC-supported research, an assessment tool was developed to help identify students who are “at-risk” of dropping out. The aim is to help guide the school personnel with appropriate interventions on monitoring students’ performance and improving school and teacher-initiated activities. The tool has garnered interest from the DSWD, who saw value in possibly testing it with the CCT beneficiaries. DSWD has likewise incorporated the DepEd system’s Learner Reference Number (LRN) to efficiently monitor their beneficiaries’ performance under CCT’s education conditionality³. With this, the CCT can trace enrolment and attendance data of children beneficiaries.

There is more work needed to understand participation and retention rates in school, and how to directly apply such an understanding on the design and execution of education policies and programs.

The research findings affirm how education reform should address not only access and parity, but also ensure that education remains relevant and adaptive to the needs of all students.

For women, evidence shows that “better-educated women tend to be healthier, participate more in the formal labor market, earn higher incomes, have fewer children, marry at a later age, and enable better health care and education for their children, should they choose to become mothers⁴.”

Keeping the youth in school should be considered a strategic economic priority. Rather than focusing on the reason for dropouts, a preventive approach may be a better option. Interventions in education must be formulated to consider the needs, innate differences, and motivations of each gender.

For DSWD and DepEd, this means taking steps to increase enrollment and ensuring children complete their education — eventually breaking the cycle of poverty. ■

¹ Philippine Education for All. (2015). Review Report. Retrieved from: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000230331>

² Oplás, Ma. Ella. (n.d.). Rethinking the State of Poor Boys in School: A Policy Paper to Promote Gender Equality in 4Ps Child Beneficiaries.

³ Department of Education Memorandum No. 90 s. 2018. “Learner Reference Number Validation Forms for Enrolled Pantawid Pamilya Beneficiaries”.

⁴ World Bank. Understanding Poverty Topics. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/girlseducation>

Securing Land Titles



IN THE PHILIPPINES, WOMEN AND MEN HAVE EQUAL RIGHTS TO LAND OWNERSHIP. The cumbersome process of land titling, however, discourages many men and women as this takes substantial time away from their other responsibilities.

The Residential Free Patent Act of 2010 helped change this by introducing a more efficient land titling process. The law enabled the City or Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office and the Registry of Deeds to process land titles within 125 days, whereas before, it may take years. From an average of 4,000 titles issued annually, the law ushered an average of 57,000 titles per year.

To further promote land titling, Coalitions for Change and the Foundation for Economic Freedom (FEF) explored ways for the government to improve the law's implementation. Among these are partnerships between the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)

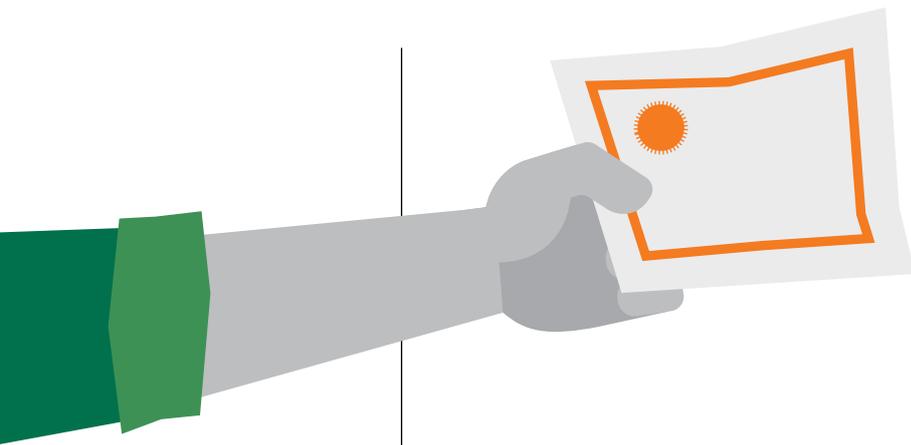
and local government units to integrate land information systems to assist in titling, real property tax collection, and valuation, and land use planning.¹ Local governments took the initiative to speed up the titling process and increase awareness about the land titling service.

The efficient processing of titles brought about by concerted efforts of both the national and local governments eased this administrative burden, saving the applicants' time and limited resources. This has especially benefitted women as most of them fulfill administrative roles at home, including paying of taxes and processing of titles.

While they could only make small inroads, they still managed to encourage women to initiate the titling of their lots because the process is much simpler, faster, and does not take much time away from their other responsibilities. Having their homes or properties titled also provided a sense of security. With titles on hand, the fear of

¹ Partnerships for Land Rights and Governance. Foundation for Economic Freedom. Retrieved from: www.fef.org.ph/

While they could only make small inroads, they still managed to encourage women to initiate the titling of their lots because the process is much simpler, faster, and does not take much time away from their other responsibilities.”



losing property is diminished and women can start to consider maintaining and even upgrading their homes. They now have an investment that their children can inherit.

In Mabini, Batangas, Adelisa Mauhay, a food vendor and mother of 13, secured titles to nine plots of land that she and her family members owned. All nine titles were processed and released simultaneously through the Land Management Office (LMO) of Mabini. This type of success inspired the LMO to further improve its screening process. It is now part of the LMO's standard procedure to ask residents if they could refer family members who might also benefit from land titling.

Arlene Cabiso from Cordova, Cebu, is a widow with four children. As a local government employee, Arlene was already

aware of the land titling program of the LMO. She prepared her requirements and was completing the payment for the Registry of Deeds worth Php 2,000 (AUD 54). To her surprise, the Cordova local government covered first the cost to facilitate the complete processing of her land title. She will then pay back the amount in installments. Arlene said that having a land title gave her a sense of security. As an added benefit, they can use it as collateral in case they need to borrow money for family emergencies. She knew this because her family used another land title as collateral when her uncle got sick. The hospital held on to the land title as they completed the payment of their hospital bill. Arlene said she can also use the title to secure a bank loan should any of her siblings need money for applications to work abroad.

Gemma Morales is a resident of a barangay in Cagwait, Surigao del Sur. Based on her experience, completing the required documents for the application of the title took only a week, provided that all signatories of the various certificates and clearances were available. Now that she has her title, she plans to use it as collateral for a housing loan.

Like these three women, many others highlight the ease of the service and the support of the local government offices in the processing and issuance of land titles. Aside from its benefit to individuals, the improved titling process also brings in more real property tax revenues for local governments, which could be used to fund other basic services.

A former Mayor, Adelino Sitoy, from Cordova, Cebu said that the land title is equivalent to a medium of exchange, a source of economic power for both men and women. According to him, "Anytime you can go to the bank and borrow. Redeem it and borrow again. The equivalent of money, the title, is now in their possession"². While not all the women beneficiaries have utilized their land title in this manner, the DENR-LGU Partnerships that CfC and FEF helped establish made land as collateral an option readily available to them.

In the future, it may be interesting to see how women can leverage their land titles to secure their livelihoods and the well-being of their families. ■

² Experiences of Local Government Units on Public Land Titling. (2015). Foundation for Economic Freedom.

Note: This story is based from FEF interviews and other resources

SAFEGUARDS



FROM PROVIDING SAFE
WORKSPACES FOR YOUNG
STUDENTS TO GIVING CHOICES
ON ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION,
COALITIONS FOR CHANGE
DEMONSTRATED HOW POLICY
CHANGES SAFEGUARDS AND
BENEFITS THE VULNERABLE.





Providing Safe Workplaces for the Youth

FUELED BY IMPROVING TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS AND NEW TECHNOLOGIES, TOURISM HAS UNDOUBTEDLY BECOME A LOCAL AND GLOBAL ECONOMIC DRIVER. In Panglao, a small island in the province of Bohol, tourist arrivals ballooned from 400,000 in 2013 to almost 1.2 million in 2018¹. While classified as a low-income municipality, Panglao is a major tourism destination in the country.

Panglao’s booming tourism sector and the passage of Kindergarten to 12 (K-12) program (Republic Act 10533) in 2013 provided Coalitions for Change (CfC) an opportunity to work with the local governments of Panglao and Bohol, local tourism industry partners, and the Department of Education (DepEd) - Region VII on a work immersion program called ‘Turo-turismo’ (Teach tourism). The program aimed to enhance Senior High School (SHS) students’ tourism-related

specializations and improve their readiness for employment.

The K-12’s first year of implementation in 2017 saw 1.4 million Grades 11 and 12 SHS enrollees undergoing ‘Turo-turismo’. CfC worked to improve the program by involving the local industries to provide a simulated workplace experience for students. Through this initiative, students develop industry-based competencies, aimed at improving their employment prospects.

MINIMIZING RISKS THROUGH POLICY

Although tourism can lead to economic growth and thus open more job opportunities for SHS students, it also poses a few risks. Students, who are still minors by the time their immersion rolls in, would most likely be assigned to learn in resorts, hotels, and restaurants². Considering the large number of students and companies’ increasing demand for service, the industry

¹ DOT Region VII and Panglao Tourism Office cited in <https://www.rappler.com/newsbreak/in-depth/215274-panglao-bohol-riding-tourism-cash-cow>

² Worldwide, hotels and restaurants are considered high-risk sectors in tourism industry due to physical safety conditions, physically demanding work, high workload and stress, and violence and harassment. International Labor Organization’s (ILO) International Program for the Elimination of Child Labor (IPECL) Report: 2010 - 2016.

³ Edralin, D. (2002). Child Labor in the tourism industry. Notes on Business Education. Retrieved from <http://www.dlsu.edu.ph/research/centers/cberd/pdf/business/vol5/vol5no2.pdf>

⁴ In 2016, CfC conducted a situational analysis of students (a mix of boys and girls) through focused group discussions. Data from this activity has significantly aided the crafting of the DepEd SHS Immersion Guidelines. Experiences of select LNHS teachers in the Turo-Turismo program were also gathered in April 2018.

could employ young workers to serve as waiters/waitresses, cooks, janitors, dancers, or receptionists. Young workers, especially girls, are also vulnerable to sexual exploitation³.

To address this, CfC worked with the DepEd Central Office to issue a Child Protection Policy in 2015, supplemented with the Executive Order No. 30 s. 2017 or the Guidelines for Work Immersion.

CfC also worked with the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) on the issuance of two Labor Advisories (Nos. 8 and 9) that guide host establishments in ensuring safe workplaces for SHS students as they undergo the work immersion program.

Successfully putting in place these safeguards not only reaffirm CfC's perceptiveness of the policy gap, but also showcase its ability to identify the appropriate partners to provide safe learning spaces for SHS students preparing for future employment.

For instance, DOLE Labor Advisory No. 9 provided guidelines for companies on accepting students of minor age and how they should deal with students in the workplace environment. This policy included the identification of appropriate hours of reporting (nothing beyond 10:00 in the evening or earlier than 6:00 in the morning). For technology-based industries, such as the semi-conductor companies located in major industrial zones like Calamba, Laguna, this meant the identification of 'safe learning areas' as well as the provision of protective equipment and devices to comply with occupational safety and health standards.

Safe learning areas were modelled in a semi-conductor company in Calamba City, Laguna. The DepEd Division of Calamba and the company agreed to identify areas where students could observe and simulate work activities, minimizing the latter's exposure to hazards. In addition, CfC partnered with the ICCP Group Foundation to focus on safe spaces for learning in the semi-conductor industry.

Meanwhile, CfC partnered with Bohol and Panglao local government, the Bohol Association Hotels, Resorts, Restaurants, DepEd, and Lourdes National High School (LNHS), to put up a Tourism Learning Facility. This facility is designed to simulate a hotel, complete with guest rooms, kitchen, restaurant, and reception.

UNDERSTANDING IMMERSION RISKS

Turo-Turismo, in its pilot implementation, generated much learning and insights for CfC and its partners. Below are personal experiences and evaluation of SHS teachers and students from the Turo-Turismo's implementation in Panglao⁴:

Guidelines observance. Students and teachers interviewed before and after the guidelines were implemented noted differing levels of implementation with the companies in terms of the prescribed number of working hours of the students. "There was one incident that there were female students who were still working beyond 6:00 pm, which should not have happened. I informed the principal about it and it was agreed that the students should not be allowed to work beyond 6:00 in the evening," shared Michelle Guibone,



The company agreed to identify areas where students could observe and simulate work activities, minimizing the latter's exposure to hazards. ⁹⁹

a teacher from the LNHS. The school's immersion coordinators expressed their concern for those students who live far from the hotels and resorts.

Differing preferences. Some resorts and hotels preferred to hire more boys than girls or vice-versa, highlighting the need to build awareness on equal opportunity. "Regardless of the [student's] gender, they should hire them... they should look into the students' potential and not on the gender", said Charity Mijares, a teacher coordinator from LNHS.

Teachers and students are vulnerable. SHS coordinators have also observed the risks associated with being in the service industry since they accompany their students from application to completion of the immersion program. Some teachers and students reported being uncomfortable with the way tourists looked at them or talked to them, sometimes in a flirtatious manner. Michelle remarked that they do not feel protected and expressed the need to improve the immersion guidelines to help both teachers and students. "We don't have a policy that will protect us immersion teachers who will go to different industries to do the follow-up. We are not saying that it (sexual abuse) already happened, but we need to make sure it does not happen."

The policies per establishment also vary, while DepEd's template Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the schools and the companies are generic. Teachers who have undergone immersion training and have dealt with industry partners see the risk in establishments disregarding provisions in the MoU. They also encourage other schools to be vigilant in reviewing the agreements to protect the welfare of the students.

As these accounts have shown, there is still a need for continued work and changes in all fronts.

TOWARDS A SAFER WORK AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

With these insights from teachers, students, education and training institutions, as well as the private sector, CfC looked for an opportunity to protect the welfare of interns.



Both education and employment institutions need to have a code of conduct in order to safeguard interns from sexual harassment.⁵

The opportunity arose in the latter part of 2019 when CfC worked on the implementing rules for the Safe Spaces Act (RA 11313). Working with the Safe Spaces Act Technical Working Group, CfC included a specific statement in its implementing rules to define whose jurisdiction the interns' well-being falls under. The said addition recognises that gender-based sexual harassment may occur in both education and training institutions and that both education and employment institutions need to have a code of conduct in order to safeguard interns from sexual harassment.⁵

The K-12 and SHS immersion program is a significant change in the Philippine education system. To adapt to this change, the government and the private sector showed that they could work together to enact policies that will ensure safer learning workspaces for young students. By effecting policy, senior high school and other learners can have the needed internship to enhance their skills in the workplace but with minimal risks from their exposure in the workforce. CfC's experience demonstrates that policies should be continuously improved to adapt to arising needs – such as providing safeguards for youth as they prepare to join the country's workforce. ■

⁵ The policy recognizes that coaches, trainers, and trainees can also commit gender-based sexual harassment in education and learning institutions (Rule 7, Sec 26) and that these institutions should develop a Code of Conduct within 150 days and may include a (Rule 8, Sec 32.a) prohibition against sexual harassment by (2) employers or employee in a company, office, or agency actin as a Partner-on-the-Job Training Institution to student interns; and (3) Student interns to employers, employees, or workers in a company, office or agency that is acting as a partner-on-the-job training institutions – both 2 and 3 are if the Code of Conduct covers the workplace.

WHEN
“NO”

MEANS
FREEDOM

MAKING ELECTION SERVICE OPTIONAL



EMMALYN CARPIO, A GRADE 5 MATHEMATICS TEACHER AT THE GENERAL T. DE LEON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN VALENZUELA CITY, RECALLS AN INCIDENT THAT STILL HAUNTS HER WHENEVER ELECTION DAY COMES. Years ago, supporters of a political candidate locked up Emmalyn and her fellow teachers inside a voting precinct for hours following a power interruption during the canvassing of votes. The candidate's supporters feared that the teachers would tamper with the results. "As if we are cheaters, that we will deceive the people. Of course, we will not do it! Why would I deceive them?" she said in frustration.

Emmalyn is just one of the more than 880,000 public school teachers (as of School Year 2018 – 2019) who have served during elections. Being at the frontlines during elections has made teachers, majority of which are women, more vulnerable and at risk of intimidation, threats, harassment, accidents, and even death while fulfilling their mandated duty – whether they are willing or not.

Driven by these accounts and the hope for honest and more participatory elections, the Coalitions for Change (CfC) through its election partner, the Legal Network for Truthful Elections (LENTE), and the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) embarked on a pilot project called Project Teacher in 2013, which paved the way for the passage of Republic Act (RA) No. 10756 Electoral Service Reform Act (ESRA). Project Teacher deployed non-public school teachers (private school teachers, community volunteers, and assigned uniformed personnel) during the barangay elections of October 28, 2013, to serve as election staff in 20 polling places nationwide. The project found out that: 1) non-public school teachers were as effective in serving as election staff; and 2) that there was already a widespread, albeit irregular, practice of appointing non-public school teachers for election duties.

The results of Project Teacher guided LENTE's pursuit to amend the Electoral Reforms Law of 1987. The amendments pushed for opening election service to non-public school teachers and introducing the criteria for determining eligible individuals to serve as election staff. LENTE later worked with a unified coalition of electoral

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stakeholders, teachers' groups, and champions within the government who backed up the ESRA from ratification to its implementing rules.

When ESRA was ratified into law in 2016, Emmalyn was relieved because they now have the right to decide whether or not they will render election duties.

GIVING OPTIONS TO THE TEACHERS

ESRA was first implemented during the Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan Elections on May 14, 2018 and was followed by the Midterm Elections on May 13, 2019. In 2018, some teachers in election hotspots¹ already took advantage of ESRA and chose not to serve during elections because of violence and armed conflicts². The Philippine National Police deployed 1,100 police personnel to serve as Board of Election Inspectors (BEIs) in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao, Bicol, and

¹ Election hotspots or "Election Watchlist Areas" are determined through the guidelines issued by the Commission on Elections (COMELEC), PNP, and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). Areas are classified from Categories 1 to 3 depending on the anticipated violence that may happen. Violence could be due to intense political conflicts, presence of armed groups, or proliferation of loose firearms, among others.

² Layug, M. (2018). Teachers in some Basilan barangays refuse poll duties. GMA News Online. Retrieved from <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/regions/653165/teachers-in-some-basilan-barangays-refuse-poll-duties/story>



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A more participatory election. Aside from making the election service optional and the improved benefits for electoral board members, ESRA allows a broader range of participation from other citizens during elections. ESRA sets selection criteria to prevent government employees from rendering partisan election service.

³ Aquino, L. (2019). 60% percent of Electoral Boards Already got Honoraria. Manila Bulletin. Retrieved from <https://news.mb.com.ph/2019/05/26/60-percent-of-electoral-boards-already-got-honoraria/>

Soccksargen (South Cotabato, Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, Sarangani, and General Santos). In 2019, the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) doubled this number and trained and deputized 2,838 police personnel nationwide as BEIs.

“This is for them (teachers in hotspot areas). Before, they cannot refuse to sit as BEI unless you have a strong reason for opting out. [With ESRA], they now have a choice,” says Teacher Joselyn Martinez. As National Chairperson of the Alliance of Concerned Teachers, Joselyn understands the potential violence present in hotspot areas for teachers. She has been teaching at Imelda Elementary School in Malabon City for 25 years and has been an active advocate of teachers’ welfare for 11 years. She has served as a poll watcher, a BEI member, and a monitoring volunteer in election hotspot areas.

For those outside COMELEC-identified hotspot areas, teachers may also opt-out of election service due to health conditions and age. Such is the case of Teacher Sylvia Nagal of Poblacion Elementary School in Lingayen, Pangasinan. At 61 years old, she is still actively fulfilling her duties as a public school teacher. With ESRA, Sylvia can now excuse

herself without “having to present a medical certification or being warned to serve or resign during elections.”

Even with ESRA, public school teachers are still on top of the list for possible election volunteers. However, now that it is voluntary, the teachers can refuse or confirm their election service to their school principals or other Department of Education (DepEd) officials. Should there be a lack of willing, able, and certified volunteer teachers, the COMELEC may instead appoint private school teachers, other government employees (excluding military officers), members of COMELEC-accredited citizens’ arms, any voter with competence and without political affiliations, and police. Deputized police officers are preferred in high-risk areas.

IMPROVED BENEFITS AND ASSISTANCE

For those who are still able to render election service, ESRA also offers tangible improvements in teachers’ welfare. Compensation for a BEI chairman increased to Php 6,000 from Php 3,000, while BEI members went up to Php 5,000 from Php 3,000. DepEd supervisors/officials will get Php 4,000, while support staff will receive

Php 2,000. They are also entitled to a travel allowance of Php 1,000, a welcome benefit especially for BEIs assigned to far-flung areas that may require the hiring of habal-habal (motorcycle) or other alternative modes of transport.

These provisions have encouraged some public-school teachers to still serve as BEIs despite its risks as these augments their meager salary. The COMELEC also ensured the timely disbursement of election duty payments in cash, a remarkable change according to the teachers, as they previously have to wait for weeks or even months. “It is disheartening – you are physically, mentally, and emotionally tired from a job that is mandated to you, and yet you are not being paid on time. Considering the very minimal fee they give to us in the previous years, the delays are (were) unacceptable,” Joselyn shared. Hence, she believes that the passage of ESRA is a good step towards improving teachers’ welfare.

Also, with ESRA, those who would face harassment or even legal cases from political candidates can take the services of lawyers and avail of the legal indemnification package. BEIs will also be offered medical assistance and death benefits when exposed to other election-related risks.

IN THE SERVICE OF THE COUNTRY

In the May 2019 midterm elections, 257,304 of the 526,686 or 49 percent of COMELEC-deputized DepEd personnel were teachers, demonstrating their willingness to serve still. “Teachers would still be in the frontlines of election service, even if it becomes voluntary. We are more than willing to help. We consider election duty as our patriotic duty,” Teacher Benjo Basas of the Teachers’ Dignity Coalition said. The coalition especially welcomed the increase in honoraria and the inclusion of other benefits, including the indemnification package.

DILG Undersecretary Jonathan Malaya, a strong supporter of ESRA, believes that the Philippines has come a long way in promoting the rights and welfare of teachers as far as elections are concerned. “This (ESRA) is good news to all our Electoral Boards. We congratulate COMELEC for coming up with this win-win solution for all of them. Election service is now voluntary to teachers, so those serving can make a personal choice, and they cannot be coerced to do so by the Commission,” he said.

The conduct of the two consecutive elections marked an improvement in the process, benefits, and assistance given to election volunteers. ESRA has given teachers the power to choose to continue serving the country – “without fear or favor.” ■

⁴ DepEd recognizes teachers, personnel for services in 2019 midterm elections. (2019). Retrieved from <http://www.deped.gov.ph/2019/05/17/deped-recognizes-teachers-personnel-for-services-in-2019-midterm-elections/>

