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Enhancing Women's Representation in Local Special Bodies Toward a Gender-Responsive and Performing Local Governance in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao

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Introduction: Consolidating Gender-responsive Policies Towards a Better and Fairer Governance in Muslim Mindanao

In 2015, the United Nations' Development Plan (UNDP) identified gender equality as one of its fifteen Sustainable Development Goals. Yet, governmental and non-governmental actors did not wait until this date to start elaborating methods destined to improve the condition of women and achieve equality between them and their male counterparts. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which was adopted by the United Nations' General Assembly in 1979, can be regarded as the pioneering text in that domain. It was followed in 1995 by the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The declaration includes a set of recommendations which was endorsed by the United Nations as the organization's framework for the promotion of women's rights. More recently, efforts have focused on the development of *gender-mainstreaming* as a method to correct structural inequalities and address the specific issues facing women. According to the European Institute for Gender Equality, gender mainstreaming involves the "integration of a gender perspective into the preparation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, regulatory measures and spending programmes." [1]

The necessity of systematically adopting a *gender perspective*, which would help assessing "whether the needs of women and men are equally taken into account and served by [a] proposal" [2]**, is justified by the fact that "policies focused on the general public often impact women and men differently. (…) It is necessary to take into account the different needs and interests of women and men, to identify gender inequalities in access to and control of resources, to consider the impact of gender based stereotypes and traditional gender roles, to anticipate different effects on women and men, and to ensure gender equality."** [3] **Policies based on the outcomes of such a gender-sensitive analysis would supposedly be *gender-responsive* or *gender-sensitive* (here used interchangeably.)**

[1] EIGE, What is Gender Mainstreaming? online: http://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/what-is-gender-mainstreaming (consulted on April 28, 2016).
[2] EIGE, Concepts and definitions, "Gender perspective", online: http://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/concepts-and-definitions (consulted on April 28, 2016).
[3] EIGE, What is Gender Mainstreaming? *op. cit.*

The gender aspect of a policy can take several forms. It can first be embodied by some provisions in a policy oriented toward the general public which would try to balance the particular effects generated by the said policy on women – or on the contrary compensate a policy which would not sufficiently affect the female population. An example could be measures of affirmative action aiming to facilitate the employment of women, which would be incorporated into a broader reform of the labor legislation. A second facet of gender-responsive policies would be a program whose beneficiaries would only be women. This is for instance the case of the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security – although the whole nation is the secondary recipient of such a policy.

Indicators show that most policies in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), are not gender-sensitive, especially at the sub-regional level. The results of our research in fact point out a difficulty, if not an impossibility, to even develop a women's agenda, which could serve as the basis for the elaboration of gender-responsive policies. This difficulty is, at the same time, due to and illustrated by the absence of a women's vote in the ARMM – *i.e.* women prefer voting for men, even when female candidates are running[4] – and a generalized lack of knowledge about gender issues, by both the constituents and the government.

It is true that a number of initiatives have been conducted since 2008 to pursue gender-mainstreaming and the protection of women, particularly those leaving in situation of armed conflict. Recent examples include the inauguration of five Women's Centers in all the provinces of the region, a successful first ARMM Bangsamoro Women Leadership Summit, or the operationalization, at the regional level, of the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. Several factors explain the increase in the attention given to gender and women. First, the nomination in 2008 of a sectoral representative for women among the regional legislators (Ms. Samira Gutoc, 8th Assembly) was shortly followed by the adoption of a Gender and Development (GAD) Code, which establishes the guidelines for the Regional Government's policy on gender. Second, the nomination of Ms. Mutin as Chairperson of the Regional Commission on Bangsamoro Women (RCBW) induced a shift in the policies conducted by the institution until then.[5] The relatively favorable environment created by the administration of Governor Hataman and the adoption of the GAD and Administrative Codes moreover facilitated a "rejuvenation" of the Commission and the adoption of a number of ambitious policies. The installation of the Commission in an entirely new and functional Regional Women & Peace Training Center is perhaps one of the most significant symbols of this re-organization.

[4] Emphasized during the Consultation forum on women's representation in the ARMM, March 1, 2016, Alnor Suites, Cotabato City.
[5] Interviews with XXX (Woman of the OES, who used to work for the RCBW in 2001), March 2, 2016, Cotabato City.

The outcomes of such efforts can certainly be felt at the regional level. Nonetheless, gender-responsivity at the local level (*barangay*, cities, provinces) is not yet ensured. During a consultation forum which we conducted in Cotabato City on March 1, 2016, RCBW's Chairperson Ms. Mutin notably mentioned important difficulties to obtain feedbacks on the implementation of a GAD Budget, in spite of a legal obligation for local government units (LGU) to report on this to the regional institution.[6] Without more material, an interpretation of this declaration would indicate, at worst, that such budget is not allocated at all, and, would, at "best", denote a tendency of LGUs not to comply with the law. The participants of our consultation, who were mainly members of women's civil society organizations and can thus be considered as representative of their communities, more generally confirmed the relevancy – if not the urgency – of our advocacy, which is to increase gender-responsivity through women's political participation.

With regard to such information, it seems safe to affirm that gender-responsivity, although improving at the regional level, is still not a reality at the LGUs' one, or is at least not generalized nor systematized.

Yet, the mainstreaming of gender-responsive policies at all levels would immensely benefit the socio-economic development of the region, as well as increase the resilience of the communities, by ensuring that no one is left behind or discriminated against by local plans. With regard to the unstable situation of the ARMM, gender-responsive policies are particularly sought in the domain of Women, Peace and Security – notably through the localization of the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. They would also have a considerable impact on the principal issues faced by the women of the ARMM which are, according to ARMM Executive Secretary Atty. Masuhod-Alamia, the "mortality rate of mothers during childbirth, young women deprived of opportunities such as education, exploitation and abuse, and the significant rate of trafficking incidence."[7] Addressing such issues would undoubtedly positively affect the entire population of the region.

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[6] MMAA No. 280, s. 2008, "*ARMM Gender and Development Code*", Chapter XVI, Sec. 89: "The Autonomous Regional Government and the Local Governments Units (LGUs) shall annually formulate their respective Gender and Development (GAD) plans and budget, and shall submit the same along with their accomplishment reports to the Office of the Regional Governor (ORG) through the Regional Commission on Bangsamoro Women (RCBW) and concerned recipient agencies." and Sec. 90: "In line with the requirements set by RA 7192 for 5% fund allocation to support Gender and Development (GAD) concerns, the Autonomous Regional Government and the Local Governments Units (LGUs) shall strictly implement their respective GAD plans and budgets. With said apportionment, they shall address gender inequality issues and support programs and projects for women. The Regional Commission on Bangsamoro Women (RCBW), in partnership with the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), Commission on Audit (COA) and Commission on Human Rights (CHR), shall be tasked to monitor the implementation and utilization of GAD plans and budget in the different Local Governments Units (LGUs)."

[7] RCBW, GroupAid Support Systems, Inc. (prepared by) (2016). *First ARMM Bangsamoro Women Leadership Summit (Documentation report),* Cotabato City.

In the case of the ARMM, gender-responsive policies are not only key to resilient communities but also to sustainable institutions and political practices, as they will strengthen gender-responsive governance, and establish a viable and engendered fabric of local institutions, which would be solid enough to support a possible future Bangsamoro political entity. The participation of women as early as during the political transition, here between the ARMM and a Bangsamoro, is furthermore considered as particularly crucial, because it will "institutionalise [in the long-term] the role of women in governance and decision-making bodies and ensure agencies adopt a gender sensitive approach."[8] Conversely, UN Women affirms that "failing to protect women's rights and employment opportunities can threaten sustainability of governance reforms and community stability."[9]

A direct involvement of women in politics could moreover have an impact on the quality of the debate and the policies which would be adopted. RCBW's Chairperson Mutin mentioned during the consultation in Cotabato that women are culturally regarded as better negotiators than men, mainly because, when men deal with each other, they do not hesitate to resort to violence, whereas violence against a woman is considered as a deadly sin in Islam. Women are also considered as traditional arbiters in both Moro and indigenous cultures. Thanks to this, women are considered as able to moderate a heated debate and mitigate political violence. Ms. Samira Gutoc, former Regional Assemblywoman and an active representative of the civil society, moreover affirmed during the ARMM Bangsamoro Women Leadership Summit organized by the RCBW in Cotabato that "men have always controlled politics and therefore corruption and the only way to temper corruption is for women to enter and change things."[10]

Gender-responsivity is definitely needed at the local level of the ARMM and tools have to be elaborated to address this issue. An examination of the factors impeding the adoption of gender-responsive policies by LGUs' instances should therefore be conducted, in order to identify the most interesting levers and obstacles to activate or remove.

1 Explaining the Low Level of Gender-Responsivity: Assessing and Understanding Women's Participation in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao

[8] Conciliation resources (2015). Research report: *Operationalising women's "meaningful participation in the Bangsamoro; political participation, security and transitional justice*, London.
[9] UN WOMEN (2012), *Gender and Post-Conflict Governance: Understanding the Challenges.* New York.
[10] RCBW, GroupAid Support Systems, Inc. (prepared by) (2016), *op. cit.*

How can we explain the lack of gender-responsivity at the local level in the ARMM? According to most countries' experiences, an absence of gender-sensitivity generally coincides with a deficiency in women's representation and participation in political instances. Indeed, it is often stated that a gender perspective can only be brought by a woman, which thus necessitates their physical presence in decision-making bodies.

Women's political representation is the indicator used to assess the presence of women in decision-making bodies, such as legislative assemblies, ministries, etc. The more women will seat in these bodies; the highest rate of representation will be achieved. Women's representation, to reflect the composition of the world population, should supposedly attain 50% of the membership of all decision-making bodies. Moreover, women's representation, even when high, does not automatically translate into women's participation. Participation, or, in the feminist jargon, "meaningful" participation, corresponds to the ability of women to effectively influence on decision-making processes. This might depend on both the women's capacities and the opportunities which they are offered.[11]

Women in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) accept these definitions and recognize the necessity to ensure women's participation in public instances. A representative of the Moro Women Development and Cultural Center (MWDECC) shared during our consultation that her organization believes that women are partners of men in the government. RCBW's Chairperson Mutin furthermore declared that the consideration of a "women's perspective can only happen through women's representation."[12]
In spite of this, several studies indicated that Bangsamoro[13] **women – and women in the Bangsamoro – suffer from political exclusion, supposedly resulting from discriminative social structures. A research report released by the Philippine leg of the UK-based organization Conciliation Resources attested that, although "women in the Bangsamoro have a strong desire to become more engaged in community governance to improve women's representation", there were prevented from doing so by "lack of confidence and education, cultural beliefs and traditions that brought about unequal rights and discrimination, poverty and social difficulties." The respondents of the cited research acknowledged the "urgent need to address systems of discrimination, correct stereotypes, and to educate and build the capacities of the next generation of women leaders."**[14] **Similarly, a factsheet drafted by the Women's Peace Collective, an emanation of the Women and Gender Institute of Miriam College, Quezon City, reported that "women [in the Bangsamoro] occupy a lower**

[11] Jayal (2005). *From Representation to Participation: Women in Local Government*, New Delhi.
[12] Consultation forum..., March 1, 2016. *op. cit*.
[13] The originally proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law, defines the Bangsamoro identity as follows: "Those who at the time of conquest and colonization were considered natives or original inhabitants if Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago and its adjacent islands...". House Bill No. 4494, "*Bangsamoro Basic Law*", Article 2, Section 1. Bangsamoro can also be understood as the land, the region, of the Moro.
[14] Conciliation resources (2015). *op.cit*.

status than men, which is also reflected in their weak involvement in governance, leadership, and other community roles."[15]

The outcomes of our consultation nonetheless tend to portray a much more complex situation. In fact, it seems that the social and political roles of the women in the Autonomous Region challenge the usual frameworks for political representation and participation. Indeed, while the most common issue concerning women in politics is generally to find ways to transform representation into participation, it appears that, in the ARMM, forms of political participation exist without the need for political representation.

We named this phenomenon "shadow" or informal representation, which corresponds to the ability of women to influence on decision-making processes through non-official consultations. This capacity derives from their roles as community organizers and their status according to the Islamic and indigenous cultures.

1.1 Women in Islamic Culture in the Bangsamoro

The participants of our consultation almost unanimously rejected the statements of Conciliation Resources and Women's Peace Collective pertaining to the alleged lower status of women compared to men. RCBW's Chairperson Mutin, for instance, clearly denied such allegations by stating that, "in Islam, women are given a high position in decision-making." She added that, "the most powerful mediators are women", and that "even if women are not at the forefront, they are always consulted by men."[16]

In the Bangsamoro, women's integration and empowerment seem to be accepted as social and cultural facts. For instance, it was mentioned during the consultation that "more women [than men] are educated, go to school, graduate, work as teachers."[17] Women are also able to organize influential associations of peacebuilders and pro-women workers, as illustrated by the lively network of women's groups in the region. More generally, women tend to be particularly active at the community level, where their role is recognized as important, notably in terms of conflict management. A document produced by the Women Engaged in Action on 1325 (WeAct 1325), entitled "*Women Speak: Perspectives on Normalization*", reports that: "Women have a large role in managing conflict … Another means by which women contribute is through the *dawah*, a manner by which Muslim women deal with conflicts … Women are involved in initiating consultations, dialogues and meetings of elders and heads of

[15] Women's Peace Collective (2016). *Gender Peace and Security, Infopack*, Quezon City.
[16] Consultation forum..., March 1, 2016, *op. cit.*
[17] *Ibid.*

family within the barangay, youth, women, families and concerned sectors."[18] The regional GAD Code easily reconciles gender and Islam[19], a reunion which would not be possible if cultural habits were antagonistic with women's empowerment. Finally, nothing in Islam prevents women from holding political positions. A hadith of the Muslim Prophet Muhammad affirms that "a nation which gives its leadership to a woman will not prosper." But the common interpretation of this saying is that it only refers to nations and women as heads of state. Women otherwise have the right to be leaders "as long as they carry with them the rules of Islam."[20] The ability of the women to participate in political affairs is furthermore accepted by all in Maguindanao, Basilan, Tawi-tawi, Cotabato.[21,22]

1.2 Women in the Indigenous or Lumad Culture in The Bangsamoro

A kind of informal participation of the indigenous women (IP women) in the ARMM can also be acknowledged. As stated by a representative of the ARMM Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG-ARMM), "women [from the indigenous peoples' communities] are very much consulted by the husband/brother in position."[23] The "Women Speak" report similarly affirms that, "in the traditional sense, IP women had very many important roles in the community and society. A few examples from those presented are women as stewards of the land, spiritual healers, protector of the lives of women, and the most relevant being, "libunkefedewan" or justice officer, arbiter. These women handle both minor cases (gossip, damage to property) and heinous crimes (murder, adultery, rape, land grabbing, kidnapping)." The text also states that "IP women perform rituals and vigils to end violence."[24]
In reality, the common assumption according to which women are not empowered in the ARMM is based on the fact that a traditional gender roles are still prevalent in the region – e.g. women are primary considered as family caretakers. The "Women Speak" report, in a chapter dedicated to "Women in Islamic and Indigenous

[18] Women Engaged in Action on 1325, Castro (ed.) (2014). *Women Speak: Perspectives on Normalization*, Quezon City.
[19] MMAA No. 280, s. 2008, *op.cit.,* Chap 1, Sec. 2. Declaration of Principles and Policies. – "The Autonomous Regional Government of Muslim Mindanao adheres to the Islamic way of life and endeavors to establish and implement Shari'ah inspired legislations. To achieve these ends, the Autonomous Regional Government shall formulate and develop mechanisms to strengthen existing structures promoting equity and equality, and to address issues on discrimination, marginalization and inequality in the economic, political, social or cultural life of women and men as well as boys and girls in the Autonomous Region."
[20] Speech of Ms. Ustadza Albaya Badroden, cited in RCBW, GroupAid Support Systems, Inc. (prepared by) (2016), *op. cit.*
[21] The people of Marawi City however responded that Islam prohibits participation of women in the political sphere. RCBW, GroupAid Support Systems, Inc. (prepared by) (2016), *op. cit.*
[22] *Ibid.*
[23] Consultation forum..., March 1, 2016, *op. cit.*
[24] WeAct 1325, Castro (ed.) (2014), *op. cit.*

Traditions in the ARMM", for instance affirms that "traditional conceptions of femininity and masculinity do not look favorably upon women, placing them in a weaker position, reinforcing ideas that their place is in the home."[25] This particular statement however goes beyond the simple description and adopts a judgmental position, which fails to acknowledge or even question the degree of acceptation of these cultural habits by the concerned women themselves. It rather uses – imposes? – a supposedly universal conception of what women's empowerment should be.

Yet, empowerment cannot be considered in a unique and exclusive manner, and has to be understood in relation to the women's cultural environment. As long as women's human rights are guaranteed, their individual and collective attachment to traditions and religious beliefs must be respected. Finally, it should be reminded that the "traditional conceptions of femininity and masculinity" which are denounced by this report are the legacy of a culture which these women have been trying to safeguard from assimilation since the 16th century.

2 Complementing Women's Informal Participation with Representation

This being said, informal participation – or the capacity of women to influence the decision-making processes through non-official consultation – cannot be regarded as fully satisfying. Indeed, it does not provide the woman with a direct hand on public matters, but rather introduces an intermediary – the man – between her and the decision-making instances. We identified this practice of participation as one of the main sources of the lack of gender-responsivity at the local level of the ARMM. Indeed, without proper representation, the influence of women on politics remains limited to the expression of individual interests – those of the wife, sister, daughter, etc. of the man in post – and can hardly lead to the consolidation of a collective consciousness on women's issues and the construction of a women's identity as a sector. Women, through informal representation, are furthermore only provided with the opportunity to influence on issues that are proposed or accepted as relevant by the men in post. The current inability to bring up women's issues in the public sphere is illustrated by the absence of a women's vote in the ARMM, a lack of knowledge, by the constituents and the government, about specific gender issues, and, consequently, by limitations regarding the adoption of gender-responsive policies.

[25] *Ibid.*

2.1 Promoting the Development of a Women's Constituency and Agenda Through Women's Mandatory Representation

For this reason, we consider that an independent and direct participation of women through representation should be encouraged. Indeed, gender mainstreaming in local politics in the Autonomous Region can exclusively be achieved through women's representation. At the international level, it has been observed that the representation of women in decision-making bodies and the consolidation of a women's collective identity are mutually reinforcing. Women's representation is indeed generally supported by the existence of a solid pro-women constituency – the phenomenon of the "women's vote." Corollary, women candidates and/or representatives – who are not backed by their families or clans – have an electoral interest in augmenting the demand for addressing women's issues as they will use them as a platform to create and attract this women's vote. They would consequently tend to be more pro-active to reach out women in the communities and to emphasize on gender issues, thus providing the conditions for the strengthening of a women's sector.

This being said, it appeared that most of the women present during the consultation happened to be satisfied with the kind of (informal) participation which they were offered, mainly because it fits their culture and responsibilities as family caretakers. Based on this, we could conversely assume that women in the ARMM could express reluctance to participate in public life if participation purely happened through overt and full-time representation in decision-making bodies. Taking this into consideration, an effective participation of women in the ARMM cannot for the moment – and maybe never – happen without informal participation. **Women's participation through representation should then only complement informal participation, in order to fill out the current lacks in terms of promoting gender issues and gender-responsive policies**. If, and only if, participation through representation is deemed suitable and preferable by the women in the ARMM, they could consider promoting it to a wider extent.

Reflecting further on the women's right to political participation, it appears that this right is mainly understood as the right to participate in governmental offices and public positions[26], and, consequently, does not reflect the various and flexible forms which participation can take. Because of this, most of the policies pertaining to ensuring better women's participation do not consider the existence of alternative forms of participation such as the one we identified in the ARMM and would attempt to replace existing social frameworks without even questioning their actual efficiency

[26] The *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (CEDAW) (1979) for instance states, in its Article 7, that women's right to political participation entails their right "(a) To vote in all elections and public referenda and to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies; (b) To participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government."

and the consequences that such changes would induce on the composition of the social fabric.

3 Opportunities for change

After having demonstrated the necessity to improve women's representation and gender-responsivity in the ARMM, this study will seek to identify feasible policy changes which would have a high yet quick impact with regard to these objectives. It would indeed be best to implement reforms the soonest, so as to give way to the consolidation of practices of women's representation before a transition toward a Bangsamoro political entity happens. Perhaps even more urgently, the unstable security situation in some areas of the ARMM commands to act as early as now on the protection of women during conflict, especially through women's representation in peace and order councils.
Several parameters and propositions might answer these criteria of effectiveness and will serve as groundwork for further policy advocacy.

3.1 Women's Representation at the Local Government Level (Barangay, City, Province)

First, although we acknowledge the relevancy and necessity to promote women's representation in key national and regional decision-making positions, this study focuses on the local government unit (LGU) level in the ARMM. We chose this particular level based on the observation that, in Asia-Pacific, "women were more successful in gaining access to decision-making positions in local governments", mainly because "they fit easier their family responsibilities with work requirements" at this level.[27] We already demonstrated that in the case of the ARMM, achieving the right balance between family and community engagement is an important concern of the women. The LGU level is therefore the most relevant since it presents the best setting to facilitate women's representation.

Another reason why we decided to look into this particular level is due to the decentralized form of the Philippine state, which supposedly supports the most devolved form of political action.[28] As stated by the United Nations' Development Program, "sub-national institutions constitute one of the most important avenues for poor people, women and minorities to participate in the development of their communities and influence the decision-making processes that are directly relevant to

[27] iKnow Politics, *Consolidated Response on Women's Participation in Local Governments*, online: http://iknowpolitics.org/sites/default/files/cr20women27s20participation20in20local20governments20en.pdf (consulted on February 25, 2016), retrieved from UNDP (2010). *Women's Representation in Local Government; Asia-Pacific* (Status Report), New York.
[28] Constitution of the Philippines, 1987, Article X, Sections 2 and 3.

their lives."[29] We therefore believe that women's representation would have a more critical impact on the communities if women are part of local institutions.

3.2 Women's Representation in Local Special Boards

Within the LGU level, we decided to focus on women's participation as appointed members of local special boards. This would be peace and order councils, local health boards, local school boards and local development councils.

As already mentioned, according to ARMM Executive Secretary, the specific needs of women must be particularly addressed in the domains of peace and security, (reproductive) health and equal access to opportunities such as education. Progresses in these fields would, from our perspective, be more efficiently achieved through women's participation in dedicated boards.

We moreover consider these boards as the natural political extension for civil society organizations. This is principally due to their composition, which foresees, depending on the board, the participation of representatives from the civil society, non-governmental organizations, academes, and the religious and private sectors.[30] Women who would be appointed in these bodies would therefore probably be part of associations or sectoral organizations and would already be accustomed to political representation and gender issues.

A last reason to focus on local special boards pertains to the appointive nature of the membership, which allows us to avoid opening a debate on electoral reforms. Legislative processes in the ARMM do not prevent, *per se*, a rapid overall change of the electoral procedures. Yet, political considerations would certainly hinder any attempt of reforming the electoral system in the region. This being said, we believe that women's representation will be completely meaningful in terms of favoring the development of a women's agenda if women are given the opportunity to be represented in elective positions, and particularly executive positions. An aspect of the local political culture, which is also verified at the national level, is that the very notion of leadership is associated to the executive power, thus minimizing the role and consideration accorded to collegial instances such as legislative assemblies and para-legislative councils.[31] Women's representation would consequently have a higher

[29] UNDP, *Local governance, "Building stronger communities*", online: http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/ourwork/democraticgovernance/focus_areas/focus_local_governance.html (consulted on February 25, 2016).
[30] MMAA No. 25, s. 1993, "*ARMM Local Government Code*", Sections 94, 98, 108, and 119.
[31] Based on a discussion with Ms. Joy Aceron, Director of the G-WATCH/ PODER Program, March, 22, 2016, Quezon City.

impact if women were represented in executive positions. This is for instance illustrated by the satisfactory degree of gender-mainstreaming at the regional level, where women occupy an important number of governmental posts. However, this trend has yet to be replicated at lower levels. We identified that women's representation in executive positions in LGU can and must happen through electoral reform. A representative of MWDECC recognized during the consultation that there was indeed a need to reform the electoral system, which is "unfair."[32]

The following considerations can therefore be examined by the Regional Legislative Assembly for appropriate action.

The manner of election for all local legislative and executive bodies is stated in the Republic Act 9054 (Organic Act for the ARMM) and the Muslim Mindanao Autonomous Act 25 (Regional LGC). It appears when reading these corpuses that local legislative bodies in the ARMM should already have sectoral representatives, including one for women, in addition to their regular members. Indeed, Title 2, Chapter 1, Section 35 (d) of MMAA No. 25 reads as follows: "In addition thereto [to members of legislative bodies], there shall be one (1) sectoral representative from the women (…) as may be provided for by law. The Comelec shall promulgate the rules and regulations to effectively provide for the election of such sectoral representatives."

A legal debate has until now prevented the Commission from taking actions to enable sectoral representation at the local level. In short, while the Constitution of 1987, the LGC of 1991 and the MMAA No. 25 of 1993 envision that "legislative bodies of local governments shall have sectoral representation", Comelec commissioners argued that an enabling law must be enacted before the Commission can organize such elections. This position is based on a provision of the Republic Act No. 7887 of 1995 which states that "the Commission shall promulgate rules and regulations to effectively implement the provisions of law which may hereafter be enacted providing for the election of sectoral representatives." The authority to call the election would therefore be subject to a legislation posterior to 1995, which is not the cases of the aforementioned pieces of legislation.

Although some "espouse and advocate the position that there is sufficient legislation that empowers Comelec to call the elections today"[33] and other adopts the "doctrine laid out in the case of Supangan v. Santos [in which] the Supreme Court ruled that the use of the phrase "as may be provided by law" does not and cannot, by its very wording, restrict itself to the uncertainty of

[32] Consultation forum..., March 1, 2016, *op. cit.*
[33] Agra (1997). *Local Sectoral Representation, A Legal Analysis.* Quezon City.

future legislation"[34], the reality is that, as of now, none of these "rules and regulations" has ever been promulgated by the Comelec, either in the ARMM or in the rest of the country, and consequently, no election of sectoral representatives was ever organized.

The issue here pertains to the non-enforcement of the law and not to a missing point in the law itself. Policy makers and sectors' representatives should therefore push for the fulfilment of Comelec's constitutional and legal mandates, in the perspective of sustaining participative and inclusive communities for the well-being of their inhabitants. Yet, the process has been delayed for almost 40 years now, and there are only few chances that it will progress in the forthcoming years.
Then, why not amend the MMAA No. 25 to directly include the modalities which will apply to the election of sectoral representatives, without any mention of the Comelec? Indeed, the Constitution envisions that sectoral representation "may be prescribed by law", a provision which enables the legislators – even regional – to enact any relevant regulations on that matter.

Some would nonetheless argue that the dispositions of the MMAA No. 25 should be compliant with (read: should not differ from) those of the LGC of 1991, which also state that "the COMELEC shall promulgate the rules and regulations to effectively provide for the election of such sectoral representatives." This assertion is however refuted by two arguments. Firstly, the R.A. No. 9054 provides the regional government with the power to "adopt a policy on local autonomy" and a related code. The regional assembly is therefore the main organ in charge of deciding on the electoral modalities that will apply in the region and can perfectly adopt a system that would be different from the one exposed in the national LGC. Secondly, the sole limits to this competence is that the regional policy for local autonomy shall be "consistent with the Constitution" and does not reduce "the powers and functions already vested upon (…) by Republic Act No. 7160, the Local Government Code of 1991, to provinces, cities, municipalities, and barangay in the autonomous region." In this case, an amendment of the dispositions related to the election of sectoral representatives would not in any manner reduce the powers of the LGUs and would even help fulfilling a constitutional mandate.

A reform of the electoral system might then be considered as a way to promote women's – and more generally sectors' – participation in local legislative assemblies. Such a reform would also be the only means to incorporate mechanisms that would promote women as elected officials in executive positions such as barangay *punong*, mayor, governor and their vice-counterparts. As of now, the electoral system is based on individual candidacies,

[34] *Ibid.*

with no condition of being pre-validated by a party, which does not provide for any pro-women affirmative action measures.

Coming back to local special bodies, the DILG-ARMM however found out that such organs were not functional in an important number of LGUs in the region. This state of things poses an important challenge to the viability of our advocacy, as promoting women's representation in bodies which do not exist appears like a vain cause. Nonetheless, framing the problem differently, measures aiming to harmonize and systematize the appointment of the members of such bodies might have a positive impact on their actual creation. For those which already exist but are not able to perform, the participation of women in local boards might also help improving their efficiency.[35] Finally, citing an assessment which was conducted for the year 2014, two representatives from the DILG-ARMM explained during an interview that a correlation could be found between non-functional local special bodies and non-functional LGUs.[36] Consequently, the consolidation of local special boards through our propositions might have a positive impact on the general governance of the LGUs. During a first piloting phase, the systematization of women's representation might also be limited to performing LGUs, in order to assess the viability and results of such a policy.

3.3 Factors Favoring or Preventing Women's Representation in Local Special Boards

Once our focus on local special bodies at the LGU level has been established, we have to examine how women could be represented in such boards and what are the factors would support or on the contrary prevent women's representation.

RCBW's Chairperson Mutin explained very clearly that women's representation cannot, for the moment, achieve 50% of the composition of local special boards and that 30% would already be a difficult target to attain. One of our first assumptions regarding this affirmation was that women were barred from participating in public life because of discriminative social structures. As already developed, this supposition was partly refuted during the consultation: although cultural practices have shaped a particular kind of informal participation, it cannot be said that Islamic beliefs by themselves impede women to occupy political positions nor keep them in a state of submission.[37] However, informal participation and traditional gender roles have *de facto* resulted in lowering the interest of women to participate

[35] See *supra* on how women can enhance the quality of debate in political instances.
[36] Interviews with Mr. Civiles, Chief, Project Development Mngt Unit at DILG-ARMM and Engr. Dumagay, Chief, LGDD at ARMM-DILG, March 2, 2016, Cotabato City.
[37] This affirmation was many times emphasized during our consultation, and during the ARMM Bangsamoro Women Leadership Summit, as written in: RCBW, GroupAid Support Systems, Inc. (prepared by) (2016), *op. cit.*

in public affairs through political representation.[38] Because of this, women are not aware of their ability or are not willing to become part of political bodies. They are furthermore not particularly encouraged to do so, and their interest might just need to be awaken, particularly through examples of other women participating in political positions.

To this state of things can be added the fact that, according to RCBW's Chairperson Mutin, **women in the ARMM also lack opportunities to be represented in political positions**. This might be explained by the following factors:

- There is no support of women for other women – no "women's vote" – which implies that the mayor, who is the person in charge of appointing the members of local special boards, will not be politically enticed to appoint women over men.
- Civil society and other sectoral organizations' representatives must propose one representative to the mayor, who will then appoint him/her to the concerned board. But CSOs at the local level are either not consolidated, mainly composed of men, do not pursue a women's agenda, or do not have a gender-sensitive perspective. Because of this, the assembly would less likely consider the option of systematically proposing female representatives.
- Women are particularly active at the local level but lack the resources (exposure, money and connections) to reach higher levels (cities, provinces).
- The political system is confiscated by families/local clans and do not leave much space for outsiders, men and women included. This phenomenon can however surprisingly provide spaces for women's representation and participation. Indeed, there are in the ARMM cases of representation without participation, which correspond to the election or appointment of women as token representatives for their husbands/brothers/fathers/etc. Their representation can however be turned into actual participation, once they are educated to political and gender matters. This strategy is pursued by the RCBW which tries to create gender champions out of token representatives.

In conclusion, lack of opportunities coupled with a relative "disinterest" of women regarding political instances, and a lack of encouragements for women to hold political positions, have led to the domination of men in such bodies.

3.4 Introducing Quotas to Boost Women's Representation, In Parallel to Enhancing Women's Knowledge and Interest in Participating in Politics

[38] But not to participate in the life of the community, through other channels.

Our proposition to remediate to the lack of women's representation in local special boards was, at first, to introduce a system of quotas. This is relevant regarding the aforementioned constraints imposed by a lack of opportunities. Quotas legally ensure that women will be systematically awarded a certain number of seats, regardless of the political/personal tendencies of the organs or persons in charge of appointing the members of a body. It therefore creates opportunities for women to be appointed, even at higher levels, since it opens spaces dedicated for them and lowers the competition with their male counterparts. Quotas will also produce encouragement for women to participate in political bodies since they are compelled to do so; and the participation of women in local special boards could in return inspire other women to get involved in the same bodies later, in other boards or to seek electoral positions.

Mechanisms other than quotas can also be used, such as alternation, reserved seats, gendered role distribution in executive and legislative bodies or mandatory placement of women in leadership positions. We however do not believe that such mechanisms would be relevant for local special boards, since they are only composed of appointed – and not elected – members.

A system of quotas might however not necessarily result in participation or even sometimes in basic representation. In some countries, quotas were circumvented to the point that women were outweighed by their male counterparts, kept apart from the debate, or manipulated. In the case of the ARMM, because of the phenomenon of informal representation, women could also decide not to attend the reunions. **Propositions such as gender quorums, mandatory participation of women in all committees, roll calls, etc., could then be examined as possible amendments to the organizational rules of local special boards.**

But even with such mechanisms, the system of informal participation, in itself, challenges the general relevancy of quotas. Indeed, because women are satisfied with this kind of participation, which fits their expectations, culture and responsibilities while providing them enough power to influence on decision-making processes, they would not necessarily accept or understand mandatory representation. In accordance with the RCBW's advocacy on that matter, **efforts should therefore be pursued to educate women on gender issues and to create a collective awareness about the need to have more women represented in political decision-making bodies, precisely to ensure that a gender-sensitive perspective will be adopted.**

In fact, education and, more generally, so-called "capacity-building" trainings were recognized during our consultation as the primary priority for women in the ARMM. Such activities are at the core of the RCBW's and DILG-ARMM's programs. This resembles international practices on women's empowerment and political participation which, most of the time, revolve around trainings aiming to capacitate

prospective women officials or women in post. Exercises generally cover a range of topics including knowledge on (future) official roles and responsibilities, functions of the local bodies and councils, advocacy, networking, planning and organization skills, as well as exercises related to leadership and public expression. In the ARMM however, although such kind of activities would certainly be useful, the priority must be given to educating the population and particularly the women on gender issues and women's political participation, so as to facilitate the consolidation of a women's sector and agenda.

The RCBW has been very active in promoting such programs during Chairperson Mutin's mandate. Their program on women's political empowerment for instance recently resulted in the organization of the first ARMM Bangsamoro Women Leadership Summit during which the initial phase of the Young Women Leaders Formation was launched. The Summit gathered 800 to 1000 participants from the five provinces of the Region. Members of the Commission however expressed concerns regarding the continuity of such programs, saying that there was no guarantee that they would be taken over by the next RCBW's Chairperson who will be appointed by the new administration in June 2016.[39]

As for the DILG-ARMM, they propose capacity-building training modules, available to all LGU officials upon request. They will also conduct trainings after the elections. More specifically regarding women's participation, DILG-ARMM Chief of the Local Government Department Engr. Dumagay shared during an individual meeting that they have an internal memorandum providing for the implementing guidelines of the ARMM GAD Code. The policy, for the moment, is however to devolve these programs to the LGUs, which will then supposedly implement them.[40]

Finally, quotas, even when combined with awareness-rising and capacity-building on gender issues and women political leadership, will not suffice if no arrangement is found to accommodate women's representation with their family responsibilities and with the hindrances deriving from cultural practices. Compensation and flexible measures should be sought, providing that they are compliant with both Islamic and traditional values, as well as with civil service rules. For instance, it was mentioned during the consultation that one logistical constraint imposed to women is the necessity for them to be accompanied by a *mahram*, a male employee who can serve as an escort and with whom a woman can never marry at any time in her life such as a brother, a father, a son, an uncle; or her own husband. However, the numerous women who are already holding positions as civil society leaders or in the ARMM government at the regional

[39] Interviews with XXX (Woman of the OES, who used to work for the RCBW in 2001), March 2, 2016, Cotabato City.
[40] See for instance MC2005-001, March 2005, "ESTABLISHMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF DATABASE OF LGUs GAD FOCAL POINT."

level can certainly provide for advice on how to find arrangements with this obligation. The ARMM GAD Code itself provides for the automatic entitlement of a *mahram* to women executives.[41]

3.5 Propositions

1- The proposition to establish quotas for women's representation in local special boards has been retained as relevant and was accepted by all the participants of our consultation. The feasibility of introducing such a measure was furthermore confirmed by the representative of DILG-ARMM, which assured that a legislative amendment of the ARMM Local Government Code was both legally and politically possible as future legislators would be open to that kind of propositions, especially if a sectoral representative for women is to be elected.[42] During our conversation with the members of the Office of the Executive Secretary, they also mentioned that, in the case where quotas could not be introduced through a legislative amendment, there could be a possibility to act on it through the issuance of an Executive Order. They affirmed that the current Regional Governor Mujiv Hataman, who is running for his own succession, is open to that kind of suggestions. It however appears that this option is not legally feasible. A legal opinion issued by the Office of the Attorney General of the ARMM indeed confirmed that the issuance of an executive order establishing quotas for women's representation can be considered as "a *de facto* amendment of the ARMM and can be subsequently struck down as invalid." Furthermore, "the Regional Governor only exercises general supervision over LGUs … The power to organize local special boards falls within the jurisdiction of the LGU concerned and the regional government cannot interfere with the affairs of the LGU as long as the same is not contrary to law."[43] Still, the political support of Gov. Hataman would certainly have a decisive influence on the legislative debate.

2- The proposition to harmonize the internal organizational rules of local special boards did not gain momentum during the consultation. This was mainly due to a fear that harmonization would not be accepted or understood by the LGUs of the different provinces, which are all, according to RCBW's Chairperson Mutin, "a whole world in themselves" and are organized

[41] MMAA No. 280, s. 2008, *op. cit*. Chapter VI, Section 21.
[42] The Republic Act No. 9054 envisions the election of sectoral representatives, including one for women, but, as for the local assemblies, they were never elected, except during the term of the 8th regional legislature which was appointed by President Aquino.
[43] Office of the Attorney General of the ARMM (2016), *Legal opinion on the possibility to adopt a Regional Executive Order to establish quotas for women in local special boards*, Cotabato City.

according to local and tribal ways of doing. We however believe that the degree of harmonization which would be introduced only corresponds to the minimal basis needed to ensure that local special boards are effective. It would meanwhile exclusively pertain to specific technical dispositions such as the appointment of the members and the regularity of the sessions and not to the decision-making process *per se*. Such a proposition would be compliant with the LGC's objectives which strive to find a balance between local autonomy and effective and accountable local governance. As already evoked, a harmonization of such rules could furthermore have a positive impact on the efficiency of local special boards which are not created or not effective for the moment. Further consultations must nonetheless be conducted with local officials (including men and women) of the five provinces of the ARMM to assess the extent of harmonization which they would accept before pushing further with this proposition.

3- The proposition to conduct capacity-building and awareness-rising activities was unanimously accepted by the participants of the consultation. The current programs of the RCBW and the DILG-ARMM set a basis for future trainings, but their continuity or formal institutionalization must be ensured. Meanwhile, the leadership of state institutions on such trainings must be completed by a better partnership with local CSOs. We had the general impression during the consultation and following meetings that the government tends to partner more easily with international NGOs than with local organizations. Indeed, The Asia Foundation (USA) was cited by both the DILG-ARMM and the RCBW as the main co-implementer of their programs, whereas local CSOs which are nonetheless active in capacity-building activities seemed not to be involved in such programs. RCBW's Chairperson Mutin furthermore highlighted the existence of a phenomenon of "anti-government CSOs", which in fact refers to the inability of the regional government to reach out CSOs that are not pro-actively partnering with them. Finally, the partnership between the regional government and CSOs must not necessarily be headed the regional agencies, especially with regard the issues of the lack of continuity (and of funds) of governmental programs. However, local CSOs do not seem to be as pro-active with trainings and networking in the domains of women's political participation as they are in the domains of Women, Peace and Security.

4- The proposition to compensate women for their representation in local special boards was not discussed during the meeting. It might however be examined by the regional government and legislative assembly.

4 Recommendations

4.1 Introducing A System of Quotas for Women's Representation in Local Special Boards

4.1.1 Amend Sec. 94, 98, to introduce each time an (a) (4), Sec 108 to introduce a (e), and Sec.119 of the Local Government Code of the ARMM (MMAA No. 25).

Modalities:

- Ensure that the tri-people perspective is mentioned;
- Consider a compensation for female representatives;

Proposition of language/formulation:

"In compliance with the ARMM policy on gender, as enshrined in the ARMM GAD Code (MMAA No. 280, s. 2008), at least 30% of the members of the board shall be composed of women, i.e. *XX* persons (*depending on the board*), to be appointed according to the modalities which are relevant for each sector represented. This provision shall not be interpreted in any way as preventing the appointment of women to the remaining seats.
The composition of the board, including the seats reserved for women, shall, as much as possible, reflect the tri-people repartition of the society in the Autonomous Region (Bangsamoro, Christians and Indigenous Peoples).

The female members of the board shall be provided with a compensation, either in cash or in kind, which shall be used to assist them dealing with their double responsibility as community worker and family caregiver. The amount and nature of such compensation shall be decided by the concerned board during its first session. Women's vote in this specific decision might be accounted as 1,5 voices."

Remarks on the feasibility of the amendments:

On amending MMAA 25: In a legal opinion sent to us by the Office of the Attorney General of the ARMM, Atty. Adjuria Kusain Kansi raised the concern that the introduction of quotas for women's representation "in local special boards through an amendment of the LGC of the ARMM is against the principles of equal opportunity for all, since women are given preference." However, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), to which the Philippines is party, establishes the principle according to which "the adoption by States Parties of temporary special measures aimed at accelerating de facto equality between men and women shall not be considered discrimination as defined in the present Convention." (Article 4.) This principle was moreover transposed in Philippine law through the Magna Carta of Women ("Such temporary special measures aimed at accelerating de facto equality between men and women shall not

be considered discriminatory xxx" (Chap II, Sec. 4, g.) and in the ARMM law through the ARMM GAD Code which acknowledges the possibility of implementing preferential treatments through temporary special measures, including pieces of legislation (Chap II, Sec. 4, 15 & 48). The only condition set by these articles is that such "measures shall be discontinued when the objectives of equality of opportunity and treatment have been achieved." This precision can be very well included in the proposed legislative amendment. Actually, the national LGC, the LGC of the ARMM, as well as the constitution itself, envision the election of sectoral representatives in local assemblies, a measure which can already be considered as affirmative action. Our interpretation is that the possibility of establishing preferential treatment is in fact constitutionally and legally recognized.

On amending Sec. 108 of MMAA 25: Although nothing prevents the introduction of the afore-proposed modification, its implementation might face difficulties. Apart from one fourth of the board which is supposed to be composed by representatives of NGOs, all other members are appointed according to their positions in the concerned LGU (*e.g.* mayor, members of the local assembly, etc.) and which they obtain through elections. It is plausible that those representatives will most of the time not be female and therefore the 30 percent quota cannot be achieved. The introduction of a quota must consequently be focused on the one fourth reserved for NGOs' representatives.

On amending Sec. 119 of MMAA 25: The introduction of quotas for women's representation in local peace and order councils might be challenged by the fact that the composition of these boards is foreseen by a national Executive Order which is explicitly mentioned in this article. An amendment of the composition of the board might be interpreted as *de facto* amendment of the said Executive Order, which is beyond the legislative power of the Regional Legislative Assembly.

4.1.2 Simultaneously to the lobbying and legislative processes at the regional level, instill the idea of introducing quotas at the local level.

Modalities:

- Focus on "performing" LGUs, as they are those which already have functioning local boards and, supposedly, would be more eager to adopt pro-women policies. A list of such LGUs can be provided by the DILG-ARMM officers.
- Engage with both executive officials and their female relatives. Local executive officials detain the power to issue local executive orders, but their wives, daughters, sisters, etc., due to the system of informal representation which we described, are able to influence them on pro-women policies.

This action will have several possible consequences. First, it will launch or expand the process of gender mainstreaming at the LGU level. Second, if targeted LGUs were to effectively adopt quotas, it would provide for a first experience in implementing such

kind of measures. It could then inform the regional legislative process (contextualization) as well as, in case of success, support the advocacy.

4.1.3 If and once the amendment has been passed, adopt a regional Executive Order aiming to implement the said legislative piece as well as to supervise its implementation.

Modalities:

- The E.O. should include a mandatory, documented and public monitoring of LGUs' compliance with this measure, which should be implemented by concerned institutions (DILG and/or RCBW).
- Consider the application of sanctions in case of non-compliance with the measure and with the monitoring process (fines, retention of budget, etc.).[44]

4.2 Enhancing the Knowledge and Capacities of Women of the ARMM Regarding Gender Issues and on How to Publicly Intervene in Decision-Making Institutions

4.2.1 Strengthening, institutionalizing and documenting existing governmental programs to avoid issues of continuity

Two sorts of governmental capacity-building programs already exist in the ARMM. On the one hand, the DILG-ARMM proposes trainings to newly elected or appointed local representatives. Activities of the same sort are also offered by the RCBW, which more specifically targets women in post. On the second hand, the RCBW has been organizing projects to encourage girls to take action and leadership in public affairs. In both cases, the sustainability of such programs and their long-term outcomes are threatened by the necessary turnover of administrative and executive officers.

Firstly, there is no guarantee, as of now, that the newly appointed administration of a given institution will uphold the policies implemented by its predecessor. Sometimes, even when there is the political will to pursue with former programs, the departure of the officers in charge thereof leaves the new administration with only limited resources to do so. To counter this, capacity-building programs should be carefully documented and turnover at the executive level should not automatically induce a renewal of the administrative/operational staff. An institutionalization, through law, of some programs or at least of their general modalities and objectives, might also be considered.

Secondly, the need to repeat training programs every time new representatives are appointed induces infinite costs and efforts. This issue can however be overcome by some changes in educational policies and the collaboration of CSOs (*see infra*.)

[44] This possibility was mentioned and advised during our consultation.

4.2.2 Tapping The Educational System: Encouraging Girls to Take Public Administration and Political Science Courses, Introduce Gender Issues in Curriculums

Although necessary, the activities of the RCBW, the DILG-ARMM or NGOs will always be limited in time and scale. A way to institutionalize gender awareness and women's representation on the long term and for all the population is to mainstream gender in schools' curriculums.

The capacity and desire of women to be represented in political instances will also be supported by an accrued enrolment of women in public administration and political science studies. For that purpose, specific encouragement from the educational establishments should be provided, for instance under the form of scholarship. Schools and universities should also consider and address the actual ability of female students to participate in such courses. For example, it might be difficult for some of them to attend mixed classes. A male-dominated educational team might also discourage some of the students.

The RCBW could initiate a partnership with the Regional Department of Education to work on such projects, to which Islamic instances such as schools and scholars should also be associated.

4.2.3 Exploring Partnerships with Local CSOs, Supporting a Pro-Active Stance of Local CSOs on Women's Representation, Particularly for the Creation and Maintenance of Women Representatives' Caucuses

The need to repeat training programs every time new representatives are appointed can be partly addressed by the creation and strengthening of horizontal networks – under the form of caucuses of women representatives (prospective, in post, formerly in post) or by an accompaniment by CSOs. Within these networks, women can benefit from the knowledge and support of other women or technical experts, before, during and after their mandate. CSOs furthermore provide important human, financial and community support which the government might lack.

4.2.4 Exploring Partnerships with Major Pro-Women Groups (International and National), Particularly on Lobbying Techniques

One of the recurrent comments during our consultation was that the women in the ARMM, even when organized in civil society organizations, lack the knowledge on how to engage with policy-makers, either when they are in or outside of decision-making instances. Because of this, the policies proposed by those women – both gender and non-gender-sensitive – are hardly taken into consideration. Groups or networks of Women's Rights Defenders at the national and international levels avail of the knowledge, experience and resource to organize trainings, write handbooks, etc. and to provide accompaniment to local CSOs in terms of lobbying techniques.

A partnership must consequently be envisioned, provided that the trainers do not predate the advocacy of the trainees and that the accompaniment remain focused on technical details. One important risk in our case is that international or national NGOs try to impose their own cultural understanding of women's empowerment and thus distort the original advocacy of local women's groups.

Pieces of Advice on How to Engage Policy Makers on Gender-Responsive Policies

*1- **Get allies***

a- <u>From the government</u>

- Identify women champions among female policy makers who can help gather all the other around the proposed advocacy.
- Get the most influential person in the government who they can help with the advocacy (specific commission, chief of department, etc.)

b- <u>Among the CSO communities</u>

- Identify and engage with (networks of CSOs) working on similar themes.
- Organize collective actions (public actions, speeches, press conferences to articulate the lobby points)

c- <u>From the public and other sectors (notably the academe)</u>

- Bring the matter to the knowledge of the public (conferences, press conferences, etc.)

d- <u>Engage with all actors</u>

*2- **Present a consolidated agenda***

- Get your information "from the ground." Maintain a continuous contact with your constituents. They are those who must articulate the main lobbying points. Your role is to accompany them with the technical details (language, networks, exposure, etc.)
- Get experts to join the advocacy.
- When engaging with policymakers, present a consolidated language together with a proposed formulation.

*3- **Be creative, present, persistent and positive***

- Be creative: "cute" and creative lobbying (e.g. use "cute" materials such as chocolate, fans, etc.)
- Be present: never miss a public hearing or committee reunions, get to know the people sitting in particularly helping boards and committees, etc.
- Be persistent: room-to-room visits to targeted policymakers, follow-up of the meetings through text messages, calls, emails, new visits, public interpellations (e.g. on social media, through the press), etc.

- **Be positive: affirmation whenever one of the targeted policy makers support one point of the advocacy. Corollary, avoid confrontation and reproaches.**

Based on an interview with Dr. Nario-Gallace, Executive Director of the Center for Peace Education in Miriam College March 7, 2016, Quezon City.

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