

Abstract: This paper was delivered by Fleur de Lys Castelo-Cupino to focal persons on Gender and Development from the Division of City Schools in Quezon City under the Department of Education of the Philippines. It tackles the state of school children in basic education in relation to gendered social roles and expectations, as well as the problems and challenges children face. It presents a framework for action based on the Charter of Human Responsibilities.

Key words: gender and development, rights, responsibilities, education, children, women, LGBT

Women and Gender Rights and Responsibilities
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Please accept my deepest admiration to all Gender and Development (GAD) focal persons for accepting a challenging post in school that promotes the rights, welfare and responsibilities of boys and girls, lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgenders (LGBTs), and for taking time to attend this training series to hone your knowledge, skills and values to be adept in gender and development work. The challenge of being a GAD lead person may be daunting but I know your passion will see you through.

First I would like to address the question, why engage in Gender and Development Work?

Gone were the days when women were not allowed to vote, were not allowed to study in university, were not allowed to enter military service or take out a bank loan without their husbands' signatures. We can now see more women in public service, and in other male-dominated professions like law, medicine, and engineering. In the education setting, there are more female principals in this generation compared to a generation ago even if majority of teachers have always been women. This indeed shows a marked improvement in the status of women in Philippine society.

But still, women are expected to take primary responsibility and care for our families (our children and/or husbands and/or parents) even in addition to the work we do outside the home as educators. This is called a women's double burden. We work to earn money for our families and at the same time, we put in additional hours to attend to responsibilities at home doing unrecognized or unpaid domestic work. Some call this the Second Shift of working women's workload.

This is not to say that we are unhappy doing our domestic work. In fact, caring for our families give us great joy and extreme pleasure. I speak for all of us women when I say that we will give anything and give up everything for the sake of our families' welfare. That we are unpaid is not the issue because we seek no compensation. Mothering is a responsibility we take to heart dearly. But it is also important for us to demand that society recognize and value the domestic work we do in caring for our families, allowing our husbands to be productive and earn money and our children to study, because in the process, we assume responsibilities in building our nation and our societies. One way for us to gain the recognition we deserve is for society to monetize the work we do such that this work becomes part of the gross national product (or GNP) and is not hidden and ignored.

In a sense, we who are "double burdened" are better off than women who are fulltime home caretakers. Society recognizes the work we do outside the home. We are teachers; our profession is noble and respectable and full of responsibilities. But women who are fulltime

home caretakers work from daybreak to midnight, nurturing children, nurturing the next generation of Filipinos, but they do not get the recognition they deserve. I am sure that during your teacher-parents' conferences, you meet a lot of mothers like them. When you ask these mothers what their work is, they answer: 'none' or 'just a housewife' or 'just in the house'.

Those women's feelings about themselves as 'small' and insignificant is echoed by their own families and by the whole of society. In fact, it was society who assigned women to our role, our social role, our gendered role, as nurturer of and responsible for family but at the same breath, took out the dignity of such work by giving premium to the 'breadwinner'. Society promoted the concept of the weak female and the strong male, the dependent female and the dependable male. This is still the prevailing culture. We have much responsibilities ahead of us if we are to attain full and genuine equality between men and women in social stature, in the economic and political spheres, in society as a whole.

Sometimes it is easier for society to close its eyes, but the 2008 National Demographic and Health Survey (Manila Statistics Office, 2009) is revealing about the state of sexual and physical abuse that women are still suffering from. One in five women aged 15-49 has experienced physical violence since age 15; 14.4 percent of married women have experienced physical abuse from their husbands; and more than one-third (37%) of separated or widowed women have experienced physical violence, implying that domestic violence could be the reason for separation or annulment. One in twenty five women age 15-49 who ever had sex experienced forced first sexual intercourse. One in ten women age 15-49 experienced sexual violence. Overall, 4 percent of women who have ever been pregnant have experienced physical violence during pregnancy. The incident decreases with women's education level and declines steadily with wealth. So education and income may be perceived as protections against physical and sexual violence. Emotional and other forms of non-personal violence are the most common types of spousal violence (23% of ever-married women). One in seven ever-married women experienced physical violence by their husbands while 8 percent experienced sexual violence by their husbands. Spousal violence tends to decline as husband's age increases, education increases, and wealth quintile increases. To emphasize, education and income of men are deterrents against spousal violence. On the hand, 16% of women reported having physically hurting their husbands when they were not being beaten or hurt. The phenomenon of women physically hurting husbands is a concern, too.

In the economic sphere, women are also disadvantaged. The female labor participation rate in 2013 is 49.8% compared to men's labor participation rate at 78.1%. Proportionally, more working-age men are working compared to women. 30% of working-age women reported that household or family duties hindered them from working. More women are contracted to avoid regularization (MacPhail, 2015).

In the field of politics, only 29% of legislators from both houses in the 17th Congress are women. To put it in another way, while 50% of the population are women, only 29% of lawmakers are women (Bueza, 2016).

In the United Nations Development Program's Gender Inequality Index, the Philippines ranked 115 in 2014. Such ranking is characterized as Low Human Development (MacPhail, 2015).

Many would argue that compared to a century or decades ago, the situation of women in the Philippines has improved. Indeed, the women's movements have exercised their responsibilities to uplift their own status and fought diligently for the institutionalization of women's rights and welfare. The 1987 Philippine constitution upholds equality between men and women. Our government has been a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women or CEDAW since 1981. The Magna

Carta of Women was passed into law in 2009. There are other statutes promoting the rights and social protection of women like the Women in Development and Nation Building Act, the Anti-Sexual Harassment Act of 1995, the Anti-Rape Law of 1997, the Rape Victim Assistance and Protection Act of 1998, the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003, and the Anti-Violence Against Women and Their Children Act of 2004 (Republic of the Philippines, 2009).

In fact, the Philippines ranks 7th in the World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Index 2016, outranking New Zealand, Switzerland, Germany, France and the United States (World Economic Forum, 2017). To put these figures in context, the Gender Gap Index measures difference or parity between men and women and not levels of attainment. It measures gender equity and not women's empowerment. The Philippines ranks 1st in educational attainment and health and survival. It means the educational attainment and health and survival figures between men and women are almost even.

We should look more closely at what the Global Gender Gap Index is saying before we celebrate (MacPhail, 2015). Norway and Philippines tied in 1st rank in secondary education enrollment. However, in Norway, 95% of girls in secondary school age are enrolled compared to 95% of boys while in the Philippines, only 74% of girls are enrolled compared to 62% of boys. We only ranked 1st because the number of girls enrolled is almost equal (in fact more than) the number of boys enrolled despite the fact that 26% of girls and 38% of boys of high school age are out-of-school. This is not really something to be proud of.

But yes, 74% of secondary school age girls are enrolled compared to only 62% of boys. Proportionally more girls than boys are enrolled. The advantage of girls over boys in education does not end in high school. In the elementary level, 98% of girls are enrolled while only 96% of boys are enrolled. In college, 40% of the girls are enrolled compared to only 31% of the boys.

Girls also do better in NAT (UNESCO, 2016). The mean percentage score of females at the elementary level in SY 2012-2013 was 70.62 while for males, it was 67.15. At the secondary level, girls' mean percentage score was 53.52 compared to 49.04 for boys.

So inasmuch as more girls than boys are enrolled, can we say that we are on the way to creating a society wherein men and women are equal in social stature, the economic, political and socio-cultural spheres, are co-responsible in building the nation and society, and that the road to women empowerment has been smoothed?

As GAD focal persons, we still have many items on our plate. As we have seen in our earlier figures, women are still victims of spousal abuse, domestic violence, physical violence, sexual crimes. Millions of girls drop out of high school and do not proceed to higher technical or college education. Less than 50% of working age women are in the labor force, and many of women workers are victims of labor contractualization.

Girl children are victims of trafficking, bullying by virtue of being a girl, subjected to sexual abuse including rape and sex-related or gender-related domestic abuse, gender-related bullying and cyberbullying, prey to early sex and early pregnancy, child trafficking, and discrimination, among others. Girl children, victims or not, need to find their voices, their bearings, their places as significant, respectable and responsible members of society, regardless of their socio-economic class, religion, or abilities. We, GAD focal persons, have to be there for them.

Having talked about why we should lend our hand to girls, now let us talk about boys. Recall our sex-segregated enrollment figures. More girls than boys are enrolled. Assuming that we are already satisfied with the 98% of girls and 96% of boys enrolled in the elementary schools, it is our challenge as GAD focal persons in the elementary and high schools to HELP catch the 24% of girls and the 34% of boys who do not proceed to high school as well as the 34% of high

school girls and the 31% of high school boys who do not proceed to college. How can we increase the school participation rate from one level to another? It is a question that we can think more about, knowing fully well that the problem is comprehensive - involving economic, political and cultural factors.

In fulfilling our responsibilities as GAD lead persons, let us be conscious that the problems of girls are only one of our concerns. We should also be sensitive to the problem of boys.

Why are there less number of boys enrolled than girls in all three levels of education? Torres (as cited in United Nations Girls' Education Initiative, n.d.) states that boys' underperformance in basic education results from "parents' and teachers' low academic expectations for boys, the economic viability of working, passive classroom experience, gender bias and stereotyping". Parents of poor families withdraw their boys from school to earn a living inasmuch as they have a number of opportunities compared to girls. The synthesis report from the four countries further states that "*the nature of the school environment* itself is not gender-neutral, and stereotypes impede boys' potentials and achievements" (ibid). Parents and teachers also tend to think that schooling is more suited to girls as they exhibited greater interest in school work and are more attentive to lessons. Boys are socialized to a rigid concept of masculinity that may lead to aggressive and violent behavior, leading to school delinquency. Boys who do not conform with the stereotype male may lead to being bullied.

Now that we are more aware of our possible gender bias (as teachers) against boys as well as the undue social pressure and gendered expectations on boys, we can be more understanding of their situation and be more sensitive and responsible in addressing their learning needs. Hopefully, our action points may lead to better participation, engagement and better performance of boys in basic education.

But let me clarify that said research also cautions that the underperformance of boys in basic education means that mean that girls are at an advantage.

When boys drop out of school or engage in the labor force, the burden of domestic chores and responsibilities significantly increases for girls and women, which in turn impacts on their access to, and the quality of, their education. In addition, we acknowledge that boys' underperformance is frequently not an outcome of discrimination, but is more the result of an underlying set of gender norms and socially determined, unspoken expectations concerning gender roles. (United Nations Gender Education Initiative, n.d.)

We want to keep boys in school to give them better education and better life opportunities, and assume greater responsibilities inside the home and in society. But we know, as well, that the higher the educational attainment of men, the less the tendency for them to inflict violence against women. Let us think of creative ways to motivate boys to continue their studies and be responsible citizens. What kind of guidance can we give them? How can we reach out to their families so they can assume greater responsibilities in furthering the education of their boy children? What other educational modalities can be offered to them so that they can earn as well as complete their high school education? How to smoothen the transition to these modalities?

But why depend on giving boys higher education as a deterrent to sexual and physical violence when we can develop them to give greater respect to girls and women in their young age, as preschoolers and elementary students so that they would grow up to be respectful of girls and women, a respect not born of the thinking that girls are the weaker sex or gender, but a respect borne from the recognition that of the rights and dignity of every person, irrespective of gender

or sex. As teachers, yes, we can educate our boys. We can call out on young boys taunting girls because they are girls, we can develop the value of respect despite differences, we can stop boys from whistling on girls or bullying a gay person, we can foster in them a responsibility for the other. The earlier that boys become gender-sensitive, respectful of and responsible for all genders, the better for society.

Turning to LGBTs, let me tell you two stories (USAID/ UNDP, 2014). In 2011, in the University of the Philippines, a transgender, Hender Gercio, filed a complaint because her teacher would not address her as female. The teacher explained that it is against her (teacher's) religious beliefs. The university sided with the teacher. In 2013, a second-year high school from Batangas committed suicide because of depression that got worse by bullying. Classmates said that said student was gay.

While LGBTs laud DepED Order 40, s. 2012 - Child Protection Policy (Department of Education, 2012) as a step towards their social protection inside schools, they seek firmer policies to promote respect for sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) like review of gendered haircut and uniform, review of existing curricula, and conduct of SOGI sensitivity trainings to educational staff and students.

It is clear, then, that the welfare of girls as well as boys and the different genders fall under the responsibilities of GAD focal persons because GAD or Gender and Development refers to:

...the development perspective and process that are participatory and empowering, equitable, sustainable, free from violence, respectful of human rights, supportive of self-determination and actualization of human potentials...It seeks to achieve gender equality as a fundamental value that should be reflected in development choices; seeks to transform society's social, economic and political structures and questions the validity of the gender roles they ascribed to women and men. (Republic of the Philippines, 2009)

Children are born male and female but it is society that ascribes the gendered roles and expectations from women and men, girls and boys. We have to be instruments in their liberation and empowerment.

Boys and girls, and children of all genders have to be gender-sensitive, aware of gendered social roles that hinders the rights and potentials of some genders, and actively engaged in creating a society respectful of human rights for all to attain full human potential. The journey towards gender equality and the empowerment and assumption of responsibilities of women and all genders need to involve children of all genders.

By way of presenting to you a framework for action, allow me to cite some principles taken from the Charter of Human Responsibilities (World Citizens Assembly, 2001) advocated by the Alliance for Responsible and Sustainable Societies.

1. "We are all responsible in making sure that human rights are affirmed in our ways of thinking and in our action." Women's rights are human rights. LGBT rights are human rights.
2. "Every person's dignity involves contributing to the freedom and dignity of others." As teachers, we can express our dignity by lending our hand in uplifting the dignity of girls, boys, and LGBTs, and liberating them from confining and discriminative gendered roles.
3. "Responsibilities include ensuring the fulfillment of human potential as well as obligations to support the common good." Let the potential of every student flower, regardless of gender.

4. “The full potential of knowledge and know-how is achieved through valuing different knowledge systems and ways of knowing, and applying them in the service of unifying solidarity and a pluralistic culture of peace.” Let us value specific and diverse knowledges of women, men and those of different genders and work together towards peaceful societies.
5. “The exercise of power is legitimate where it serves the common good, and if it is accountable to those over whom it is exercised.” As teachers, we are bearers of power and responsibility, which should be used towards the good of all.
6. “To face the challenges of today and tomorrow, uniting in action must be balanced with respect for cultural specificities.” People of all genders have to respect each other if our society has to move forward.

As GAD focal persons, let us take on the challenges not only of a humanistic education that aims for the development of the full potential and self-actualization of each and every child, which is already an integral part of the philosophy of DepED. This is already our K-12 objective: a holistically developed Filipino with 21st century skills (Department of Education, n.d.). At the same time, we can also move towards social reconstructionism, an educational philosophy and curricular framework that seeks to change the status quo from a society divided on the basis of gender, socio-economic classes, abilities, and regional and/or racial divides, to a peaceful, compassionate, sustainable and equitable society, respectful of differences and responsible for each other’s needs and welfare.

As the great Nelson Mandela of South Africa said to black high school students in Boston: Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world (Mandela, 1990).

So teachers and GAD focal persons, I know that children is where your heart is. Let us continue to make our schools, our communities and our society a better and more responsible place for boys, girls, and children of different genders.

Thank you!

Speech on Women and Gender Rights and Responsibilities
Orientation Program on the Use of Manual on the General Procedures in Handling GAD-Related Cases
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