



With CEDAW, What Now?

As signatory to various international commitments, the Philippine government has taken strides in promoting, fulfilling and protecting women's rights. With the ratification of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1981, our government is bound to protect Filipino women from inequalities and discrimination in the civil, economic, social, political, and cultural realms.

In 2000, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly adopted the Millennium Declaration, which eventually led to the development of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)¹. The MDGs aim to address global development problems and address poverty by 2015 and explicitly recognize the promotion of gender equality and women empowerment as a vital element for addressing global concerns.

However, even with the UN CEDAW, MDGs, the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA), other international commitments and national laws as a fitting foreground for the promotion of gender equality, much remains to be done to fulfill the State's obligations for women's empowerment. A quarter of a century from the ratification of the CEDAW, the facts and figures on the status of women in the Philippines show gaps that need to be addressed to carry out our commitment to promoting, fulfilling and promoting women's rights.

In the area of **labor, employment and poverty alleviation**, government and private sector institutions should develop and strictly implement gender-fair policies that protect women workers, as well as promote opportunities for women's economic empowerment. The government's agenda of jobs generation should also be actively pursued, with key sectors contributing to the creation of financially viable and stable jobs for women and men so that they would not have to seek opportunities abroad.

In the area of promoting **women's health rights**, women and men should be provided with access to information and options for planning the number and spacing of their children. Interventions to promote women and girl-children's health, as well as to prevent incidences of **violence against women** should be actively pursued, especially by local government and civil society organizations.

In the **civil, cultural and political spheres**, laws and practices that discriminate against women and limit their capacities and opportunities for development should also be reviewed. Documenting such practices will help us understand the context of such, and facilitate the challenging task of eventually repealing such laws and practices.

Resources should be allocated for the sex-disaggregation of data so that progress in addressing development concerns could be easily tracked and remaining areas for action, easily identified. The availability of such data will also provide valuable support for advocacy on gender and development concerns. The government's policy of requiring the allocation of resources for gender mainstreaming and development concerns should be further strengthened and refined, with rights and results-based perspectives at its core.

The development of strategic partnerships with civil society, the private sector, media, academe and other institutions should also be part of government's agenda. Such partnerships are crucial, especially in a context where resources are scarce, and women's lives are at stake.

Twenty-five years after CEDAW, women in the Philippines have come a long way. But greater strides are to come if we work in unity towards respecting, protecting and fulfilling women's rights.

¹ Pathway to Gender Equality: CEDAW, Beijing and the MDGs (UNIFEM)



- The number of overseas Filipino workers is generally increasing for both sexes. A survey on overseas Filipinos conducted in 2004 revealed a 34% increase in the number of Filipino overseas workers between 1995 and 2004.
- There is almost an equal level of participation between women and men in overseas work but the context of their participation is very much different. In 2004, women accounted for 51% of the total number of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) yet their average monthly cash remittance represents only 57% of the PhP 74,267 average monthly cash remittance of Filipino men. This is because Filipino women are likely to end up in jobs that are low-paying and often unprotected. The 2004 survey showed that 56% of women who went abroad for work are laborers and unskilled workers, while 28% of their male counterparts worked in trade and related work and 27% worked as plant and machine operators/assemblers. Common destinations of female workers abroad are Hong Kong, Saudi Arabia, and Japan.



Source: Survey on Overseas Filipinos (SOF), National Statistics Office, 1995-2004



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1145 J. P. Laurel St., San Miguel, Manila, 1005, Philippines
Tel. No.: (632) 735-4955 / 735-1864
Fax No.: (632) 736-4449
E-mail: edo@ncrfw.gov.ph / board@ncrfw.gov.ph
Website: <http://www.ncrfw.gov.ph>



- There are different trends in the number of violence against women cases from different government agencies. The number of VAW cases reported to the police increased six-fold, from 1,100 in 1996 to 6,505 in 2005. The highest recorded number of VAW cases in the police department peaked in 2001 at 10,345.
- The social welfare department, however, saw a general decline in the number of women in especially difficult circumstances (WEDC) cases served – from 7,763 in 1999 to 5,608 in 2002 and to 5,389 in 2005.
- Both the 2005 police and social welfare records show that physical injuries/battering and rape are the most common types of reported VAW cases. One in every three reported cases to the police were battering / physical injuries while 17.2% accounted for the rape cases. Similarly, the social welfare department served a total of 1,217 cases of physical abuse/battering or 28.8%, while sexual abuse cases accounted for 6.8%.



Sources: Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) data, 1995-2005
Philippine National Police data, 1996-2005



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- Female labor force participation rate (LFPR) consistently lags behind the male LFPR in the past ten years. Across 1995 to 2005, female LFPR invariably registered only 50% while male LFPR was steadily above 80%, except in 2005 where it was slightly lower at 79.8%. Highest female LFPR was in 2001 (82.3%), while the lowest was in 2000 (80.3%).
- Gender-tracking in employment continues to hold true. As in previous years, data in 2004 show that Filipino women still dominate occupation groups that may be considered as extensions of their reproductive roles at home such as office management, and professional services while men are still largely located in mechanized and heavy industries.
- Filipino men are likely to be wage-and-salary and own-account workers and Filipino women are likely to be unpaid family workers. In 2004, 56% of unpaid family workers are women, while 64% of wage and salary workers and 67% of own-account workers are men. Among the employed women, however, 50% are wage and salary workers, 33% are either own-account workers (or self-employed or employee), and 17% are unpaid family workers.



Sources: Labor Force Survey (LFS), National Statistics Office (NSO), 1995-2004
Labor Force Survey, NSO, 2004
NSO Labor Force Statistics, 2005



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- Filipino women have higher voter turnout rate and are winning in elections but still continue to have little participation in politics and governance. During the 1998 and 2001 national and local elections, women voters' turnout rates were slightly higher. In the same election years, women comprised a meager 20% of the total number of candidates although the proportion of women who won the elections is also around 20%. This means that all of the few women candidates who ran for public office succeeded in securing public posts. Despite the high success rate in elections, Filipino women still have dismal participation as decision-makers in the public sector. In 2004, the average proportion of women in key elected posts was no more than 17%. In fact, the dismal performance of women in the 2004 elections registered a sharp drop after an increasing trend beginning 1995 (12%).
- The participation of women in the judiciary is another area for improvement. In 1996, only 15.4% of the total incumbent judges were women, although it increased to 17.7% in 1999 and to 23.4% in 2002. Shari'a courts, special courts for Muslim law, have remained all-male, except in 1996 when there was one (1) woman judge in the Shari'a Circuit Court. Currently, there are five women justices in the Supreme Court.
- Even as women dominate the bureaucracy especially the technical or second-level, they seem unable to break the glass ceiling. Based on the 2004 data of the Civil Service Commission, women make up the majority of the bureaucracy, accounting for 57.6% of the total 1.31 million government personnel. Women in the bureaucracy are likely to be technical personnel and men are likely to be clerks or managers/executives.
- A women's rights organization has secured party-list representation in Congress. Civil society/private sector organizations that carry the agenda of marginalized sectors vie for a limited number of seats in the House of Representatives. In 2004, a total of 16 party-lists were given seats in the House of Representatives, one of which is focused on women's concerns, the GABRIELA. Moreover, of the total 24 elected party-list representatives from 16 parties/ organizations, 4 are women.



Sources: Civil Service Commission, 2004
Commission on Elections, 1995-2004
Supreme Court, 1996-2004
www.supremecourt.gov.ph



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- The Philippines is among the most populous countries in the world, ranking 14th globally and 3rd in the Southeast Asian Region (United Nations Development Program (UNDP), 2005). Its population continues to balloon with an annual growth rate of 2.36%. The population size is estimated to be close to 84 million in 2005 and women comprise 49.6% of this total (National Statistics Office (NSO), 2000). The population census in 2000 yielded a sex ratio of 101.4, which means that for every 100 females there were 101 males.
- Although women marry at a younger age than men, women are slightly delaying marriage. Based on the 1995 population census, the average age at first marriage of women is 23.8 years and 26.4 years for men. The National Demographic and Health Surveys (NDHS) conducted by NSO indicate that the median age at first marriage of women aged 25–49 years is slightly increasing: 21.6 years in 1993, 22.1 years in 1998, and 22.0 years in 2003.
- Similar to the global trend, Filipino women with advanced educational attainment tend to marry at a later age. On the average, women who had no education at all marry at around age 18 while women who get to college marry about 7 years later.
- Filipino women live longer and are likely to be widowed. The projected life expectancy at birth of Filipino women in 2005 is considerably higher: 71.6 years for females versus 66.1 years for males. Moreover, according to the 2000 Census, for every widower, there are 3 widows.
- Between 1970 and 2003, the number of female-headed households increased by 50%. The population census and other household surveys reveal an increasing trend in the percentage of female-headed households: 10.0% in 1970, 12.2% in 1995, 13.5% in 2000 and 15.4% in 2003.
- In 1995, female-headed households on the average would have a size of 4 persons, male-headed households would have 5.2. In 2003, the average size of households was 4.8 persons.



Sources: Human Development Report, UNDP, 2005
 National Demographic Health Survey (NDHS), NSO (1998 & 2003)
 NSO, 2000





- Literacy rates of both sexes dropped significantly in 2003. Unlike the previous survey results, the 2003 Functional Literacy, Education and Mass Media Survey (FLEMMS) reported very low functional literacy rates for both sexes, although women still have a higher literacy rate as compared to men. In 2003, female literacy rate stood at 86.3 while the male literacy rate was 81.9. Simple literacy rates were registered at 95.5% for women and 94% for men.
- Filipino women are slightly faring better in terms of enrolment indicators. Looking at the net enrolment ratio (proportion of population aged 6–11 and 12–15 who are enrolled in elementary and secondary schools, respectively) for elementary and secondary education, women consistently have higher enrolment ratios. At the elementary level during the school year 2003–2004, the female net enrolment ratio (NER) was 82.6% while the male NER was 80.9%. For the secondary level NER for the same school year, the female NER was 51.2% while the male NER was 43.0%.
- Based on the completion rates for the same period, more women have been able to finish elementary and secondary education in accordance with the required number of years for each level. The elementary completion rate of females was 66.9% while the comparative figure for males was only 57.8%. On the same hand, the secondary education completion rate of females was 63.7% versus 48.8% for males.
- For tertiary enrolment during the school year 2003–2004, more than half of the total enrollees were females, accounting for a total of 55%.
- Enrolment for technical–vocational courses is higher for men, registering a 50.6% enrolment during the school year 2003–2004. The lower enrolment rate of men in university–based academic institutions possibly has an inverse relationship with the enrolment rate in vocational institutions.
- There are considerably more women licensed professionals. From 2000 to 2003, women accounted for 65% of the total passers in government–sanctioned professional board examinations.
- Gender–tracking in employment can be traced from gender–tracking in education. Women are likely to take courses in home economics, service trades, teaching, mass communications, medical and allied courses, among others. Men on the other hand are still concentrated in the areas of engineering and technology, architecture, town planning, and law and jurisprudence.



Sources: Commission on Higher Education, 2003-2004
Department of Education, 2003-2004
Functional Literacy, Education and Mass Media Survey (FLEMMS), NSO, 2003
Professional Regulation Commission (PRC), 2000-2003
Technical Education & Skills Development Authority, 2003-2004





- Progress was achieved in improving life expectancy, mortality and maternal mortality. Projected female life expectancy at birth rose by 1.4 years between 1995 and 2005, while the projected male life expectancy at birth rose by 1.2 years during the same period, but female life expectancy remains higher. The country has also reduced mortality for both sexes. The decrease in death rates had been greater for females, especially during infancy and at older ages. Maternal mortality rate also decreased from 209 in 1993 to 172 in 1998.
- The Vital Statistics Report of the National Statistics Office showed a different figure on maternal mortality. In 1995, the maternal mortality rate per 100,000 births was 90.5, then it increased to 96.7 in 1998, and to 108.1 in 2002.
- According to the 2004 Family Planning Survey (FPS), 49.3% of currently married women 15–49 years old have used at least one contraceptive method. Of these, 35.1% used modern methods while 14.2% used traditional methods. The pill was the leading contraceptive method used, followed by female sterilization, and the calendar/rhythm method. Condoms, even though widely distributed and easily accessible at health centers, accounted for only 2.1% of total usage.
- Maternal health services are increasingly being made available to women. The 2003 NDHS revealed an almost 2% increase in the number of women who sought prenatal care from doctors/nurses/midwives — from 85.7% in 1998 to 87.6% in 2003.
- Nevertheless, there are still health care delivery issues pertaining to pregnant women. The NDHS showed that 5% of pregnant women did not seek any prenatal care and 6.5% resorted to traditional birth attendants (71.8% of which come from the rural areas). While only a few women were assisted by traditional birth attendants for prenatal care, 1 in 3 pregnant women were assisted by traditional birth attendants during childbirth. In addition, 3 in 5 pregnant women opted to deliver at home.
- In the 2000 Census, some 942,098 reportedly suffered from one disability or another, an increase by 2.5% since 1995. Women with disabilities slightly outnumbered their male peers (50.2% versus 49.8%), a reversal of the 1995 trend when men accounted for 51.1% of persons with disabilities. There were more women among those with low vision, partial blindness and hearing problems.
- As of January 2006, the health department had received a total of 2,429 reported cases of HIV Ab Seropositives since it started collecting data in 1984. Of these, 886 were women. Out of the total HIV cases, 721 are AIDS.
- Sexual contact is the most common mode of HIV/AIDS transmission (85.8%). Majority of the transmissions came from heterosexual contact, while the others came from homosexual relationships.

Sources: Census of Population and Housing, NSO, 2000
HIV/AIDS Registry, National Epidemiology Center, DOH, 2005
Family Planning Survey, NSO, 1999-2004
National Demographic Health Survey (NDHS), 2003
National Statistics Office, 1990-2003



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