

# An Evaluation Study on the Institutionalization of Gender and Development Programs in Selected Local Government Units of Bulacan Province, Philippines

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**Abstract** - *This study discusses the Gender and Development (GAD) institutionalization at the local level. It aims to explore the practices of the Local Government Units (LGUs) in relation to how they respond to the gender needs of the people. This specifically aims to analyze the institutionalization of GAD by conducting policy, program, and structure evaluation in three selected LGUs in Bulacan, Philippines. This was made possible by looking at the three important dimensions of GAD: the process, outcome, and structural dimensions. The data for evaluation were gathered through interviews with the LGU key officials, review of the LGUs' GAD Plan and Budget, GAD Accomplishment Reports, and GAD Code, and focus group discussions with the participants of the selected Gender and Development programs. This evaluation study found out that the GAD that is being institutionalized in the LGUs is still far from the true idea of Gender and Development. The programs fall short of empowering women and addressing inequalities and discrimination. In two of the three LGUs, non-GAD programs outnumber and outweigh GAD programs in terms of budget allocation. The inadequate understanding of GAD among key government officials and implementers and the absence of appropriate organizational arrangements contribute to the institutionalization of GAD that does not fully address strategic gender needs of the community.*

**Keywords**– *Evaluation Study, Gender and Development, Institutionalization, Local Government Units, Women Empowerment*

## INTRODUCTION

The Philippine society is facing various issues affecting the economic, social, and cultural rights of Filipinos. A number of these are centered on poverty, illiteracy, violence, and marginalization or discrimination of certain groups of people, and these problems have been disturbing the state of the nation for many decades. These are also some of the reasons why inequality is still an enormous concern in the country.

One of the notable inequalities existing at present is gender inequality. The issue of dominance and higher status of men creates greater problems that impede community development. A number of literatures back up the idea that in the Philippines, men are dominant; however, the gender situation in the country has improved due to the existence of rights given to women. Women's advancement is seen

in various areas such as in politics, education, and in the labor force.

Gender issues and the invisibility of women in various sectors have been given attention. From Women in Development (WID) in 1970s, which focused on integrating women in various aspects of development, it was transformed to Gender and Development (GAD) in the 1980s. GAD reflects a change in outlook from that of mere acknowledgement of women's lack of participation in the productive sector to the recognition of the differences of both men and women in all aspects of development. It focuses not only on enhancing the role and participation of women but also on innovating initiatives or programs that would promote the welfare of both genders. GAD has its roots in Socialist Feminism which recognizes that the social construction of production and reproduction are the

basis of women's oppression. It also questions the validity of roles attached to men and women in different societies [1]. In adopting Gender and Development perspective, men and women are seen as having equal contribution to and thus, must equally benefit from development.

The promotion of gender equality has been one of the priorities of the Philippine Government. According to Rikken, the country has made significant progress in promoting women's empowerment and gender equality in the country. This is evident on the positive scores that the country receives on global gender equality indices [2]. A huge step in promoting gender equality was finally done in August 2009 when the RA 9710 or the Magna Carta of Women (MCW), a comprehensive women's rights law, was passed in the country. This law seeks to eliminate discrimination against women by recognizing, protecting, fulfilling, and promoting the fundamental rights of Filipino women as expounded by the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) [2]. National policies and frameworks that seek to eradicate gender-related issues have already been established at the national level, and the MCW also aims to expand its full implementation down to the local level. All municipalities in the country are, thus, mandated to enact its own Gender and Development Code. Further, the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) has issued annual budget circulars since 1997 that demand the allotment of five percent of the Local Government Unit's budget for GAD.

On the 16<sup>th</sup> of September, 2009, the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) issued Memorandum Circular No. 2009-1 to all Provincial Governors, Vice Governors, City/Municipal Mayors, City/Municipal Vice Mayors, Provincial Councils, City Councils, and Municipal Councils, and other concerned organizations. The circular contains the guidelines on the formulation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of a Gender and Development (GAD) Code. It defines GAD Code as a comprehensive piece of local legislation or ordinance to support the LGU's efforts in promoting, protecting, and fulfilling women's human rights towards the attainment of women's empowerment and gender equality in the locality. The Code has three major objectives. The first one is to affirm and operationalize the national and international mandates and frameworks on gender equality and women's empowerment, women's

human rights at the LGU level through local legislation; second is to harmonize local development efforts with national and international commitments on GAD; and third is to guide and support the LGU in the identification, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of GAD-related programs and/or services. There are six essential elements that should be seen in the GAD Code. These are the following: title, legal mandate, GAD principles, policies and strategies, definition of terms, development areas and GAD-related interventions, and penal provisions. All agencies to which this memorandum is addressed should adhere to the policy guidelines stipulated in it. This code should include the initiatives and programs of the LGU in promoting gender equality [2]. This also serves as a guide of the LGUs and agencies in institutionalizing and implementing their GAD programs.

The institutionalization of programs related to Gender and Development is the main interest of this research. This study intends to explore how the Local Government Units (LGUs) respond to gender-related issues and adhere to the guidelines provided by gender-related agencies in designing programs. The institutionalization of GAD programs reflects the priorities of the LGU and their administrators. It also shows the values of the community. As defined by [3], institutionalization is the process through which a set of activities, structures, and values becomes an integral and sustainable part of an organization. This process also means that people know what needs to happen to provide quality assistance and they know how to make it happen by maximizing the available resources. In institutionalizing GAD programs, it is important to focus on three dimensions: 1) the process dimension, which includes the policies; 2) the outcome dimension which includes the program goals and activities, and delivery services; and 3) the structural dimension which includes the agencies involved and the budget or resources for every program. By looking at GAD institutionalization in terms of these dimensions, this research will be able to show the practices of GAD institutionalization at the municipal/city level.

The National Government mandated the LGUs and gender-related agencies to promote gender-responsiveness, however, there is still a need to evaluate specifically the institutionalization of GAD programs since there is none in the country, particularly, at the municipal/city level.

One literature that can be of great help in understanding GAD institutionalization is the process of institutionalization in relation to the implementation of Quality Assurance (QA) for the improvement of the quality of healthcare [3]. It is mentioned that QA is institutionalized when it is formally and philosophically integrated into the structure, functioning, and culture of an organization. The process of institutionalization becomes more understandable by examining its essential elements identified by the QA Project. These elements are grouped into three. The first is the *internal enabling environment* which includes the *policies* that support, guide, and reinforce QA, *leadership* that sets priorities, promotes learning, and cares about its staff, core organizational values that emphasize respect, quality, and continued improvement, and adequate *resources* allocated for the implementation of QA activities. These four elements are important for this internal enabling environment to have its full impact. The second group is the *organizing for quality* which includes the *structure* or the clear delineation of roles, responsibilities, and accountability for the implementation of QA. The third group is the *support functions*. Three elements are included in this group: the capacity building such as training, supervision, and coaching for healthcare providers and managers; information and communication for the purposes of sharing, learning, and advocating for quality; and rewarding and recognizing individual and team efforts to improve quality. Each category of elements is important and all of these should work together to facilitate and ensure institutionalization [3].

#### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

This study aims to explore the practices of the local government in relation to how they respond to the gender needs of the people in the LGUs. This specifically aims to analyze the institutionalization of GAD by conducting policy, program, and structure evaluation in three selected LGUs in Bulacan.

#### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The study conducted a policy, program, and structure evaluation. This evaluation research on the institutionalization of the Gender and Development Programs at the municipal/city level utilized a number of methods that are appropriate in exploring and understanding how the LGUs deal with gender issues. The ten core elements of gender-responsive program enumerated in the Harmonized Gender and

Development Guidelines were part of the evaluation tool designed by the researcher in ensuring that the programs to be institutionalized will be useful and beneficial to all stakeholders. This evaluation tool required the involvement not only of the coordinators and administrators but also, of the GAD Programs participants who directly experience the effects of the programs.

#### **Locale of the Study**

The province of Bulacan in Central Luzon is one of the areas in the Philippines that take huge effort in promoting gender-responsiveness. According to the May 2000 census, there were a total of 2,234,088 Bulakenyos, making Bulacan the fourth most populous province in the country. It is also the fifth most densely populated province with 851 people per square kilometer [4]. It is chosen for this study mainly because it established the first Provincial Commission for Women in the country which was created by Executive order 94 - 02 in 1994. It is the first commission for women in the country.

The United Nations Human Settlements Programme states that the law in the Philippines stipulates that five percent of total funds are to be allocated to Gender and Development. In case of the Province of Bulacan, more money has been allocated to projects benefiting women. The Provincial Government increased the GAD budget from five to 10% in 2003, and doubled it to 20% in 2004. The Provincial Government of Bulacan has recognized the importance of the role of women and supported their participation in various activities of their communities, thus, Provincial Commission on Women was established. This was made possible through the Executive Order and a Provincial Legislation. A number of the municipalities of Bulacan also have already established their own Commission on Women[5].

#### **Selection of LGUs as Cases for Evaluation**

Three cases were selected from the 21 municipalities and three cities of Bulacan. These cases were chosen due to the following reasons: 1) these were adjudged by the Provincial Commission on Women as best practices in terms of the existence of Konsehong Pang-lungsod/ Pangbayan para sa Kababaihan; 2) the existence of GAD Code; 3) the existence of GAD Programs; 4) the existence of novel gender and development activities; and 4) submitted

GAD Plan and Budget and Annual Accomplishment Reports.

These three cases include two municipalities and one city. The researcher prefers not to indicate the names of the LGUs since anonymity is one of the ethical considerations in this study. This is to ensure that the only intention of this research is to assess the GAD institutionalization at the local level and not to create a positive or negative impact to any city/municipality and its administrators. For the purpose of this research, the cases will be addressed as LGU 1, LGU 2, and LGU 3.

### **Evaluation Tools**

The researcher evaluated the institutionalized GAD of the LGUs by looking into three dimensions: Process, Outcome, and Structure. This evaluation tool was adapted from the work of Wankeand his colleagues, *Building a Stronger Foundation*[6]. The researcher modified it by categorizing the Ten Core Elements of Gender-responsive Program into those three dimensions. The process dimension seeks to answer the question “*How was the GAD Program conceived and institutionalized?*”, the outcome dimension provides answer to the question “*What is the intent and content of the GAD Program?*”, and the structural dimension explores the answer to the question “*What is the structure and how are the requisites to program implementation secured?*”.

### **Data Collection Methods**

Various methods of data collection were employed. The researcher conducted document reviews, qualitative interviews and focus group discussions.

*Document reviews.* In this research, the GAD Code of the selected cases were gathered and reviewed. The officers-in-charge were asked for the necessary documents and files needed for a thorough understanding of each LGU’s GAD Program. Other important data for this study were the GAD Plans and Budget, and the GAD Annual Accomplishment Reports. The researcher also coordinated with the Provincial Commission on Women of Bulacan and asked for the GAD-related documents relevant in her study.

*Qualitative interview.* In evaluating the GAD Programs, the researcher conducted an interview with Gender Officers or MSWDO Head, City and Municipal Mayors, Vice Mayors or Councilor in-charge of the Gender and Development Committee,

and with the Barangay Captains or Organization Heads, to serve as the key informants.

*Focus Group Discussion.* There were separate sessions of Focus Group for each municipality’s GAD Program participants. The FGDs were composed of participants who work for and benefit from the programs and they are identified by the program heads/implementers as active members of their respective organizations. A total of six FGDs was conducted; three in LGU 1, one in LGU 2, and two in LGU 3. Each FGD was composed of selected members from a particular program or organization. In LGU 1, separate FGDs were conducted for members of KPK, Bahay Kalinga, and KATROPA. In LGU 2, an FGD was held for members of UHA. In LGU 3, separate FGDs were done for the members of Solo parents Federation and Lingkod Populasyon sa Nayon. All FGDs, therefore, were homogenous in composition. This has ensured the active discussion and sharing of experiences among the participants of the FGDs.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **The Policy, Program, and Structure Evaluation of GAD Institutionalization in the Municipalities of Bulacan**

The three LGUs were compared in terms of the policy set, program implemented, and the structure formed for GAD. To substantially compare their GAD policy, program, and structure, a set of fundamental and substantial questions were raised. These are as follows:

1. *Policy.* What is the GAD policy that is stated in the GAD Code/proposal and what is GAD as expressed by the key LGU officials? What was the process that was undertaken in setting the policy and developing the GAD program in the LGU?
2. *Program.* What are the projects and their objectives as stated in the GAD Plan of the LGUs? Do they reflect what GAD should seek to achieve? What are the promising GAD projects in the LGU?
3. *Structure.* What are the structure and personnel assigned to GAD? Are they appropriate and capable of implementing GAD in the LGUs? Who monitors and evaluate the GAD program in the LGU?

**Table 1. Comparison of GAD institutionalization of the three LGUs**

	LGU 1	LGU 2	LGU 3
<b>Policy</b>	<p>1. Proposal for the creation of GAD Council (not a GAD Code) highlights the protection of women and their participation in development. It also includes the ideas of gender equality and equity, and women empowerment</p> <p>2. Key LGU officials stressed that GAD should achieve fundamental equality to be able to achieve gender equality, and protection of women's rights, active participation of women, and delivery of services and assistance to women.</p> <p>3. GAD policy and programs are not a result of identification of gender needs and concerns of the municipality. Only the CSWDO collects sex-disaggregated data for its services and programs.</p>	<p>1. GAD Code contains a focus on the rights, worth, and dignity of women, and elimination of all forms of discrimination against women. The creation of GAD-IAC and GAD Desk is also stated.</p> <p>2. Key LGU officials stressed that GAD should focus on dealing with women and children and in protecting their rights. Social welfare services are considered GAD programs.</p> <p>3. GAD policy and program are a result of community consultation and meetings. Issues and concerns of women and children are identified and projects are conceived to address them.</p>	<p>1. GAD Code contains a focus on the rights, worth, and dignity of women, and elimination of all forms of discrimination against women. It also involves the inclusion of women in community building (culture, mass media, and socio-economic rights). The creation of municipal GAD Council is also stated</p> <p>2. Key local officials stressed various programs in the municipality as part of GAD even if they are not GAD-related.</p> <p>3. GAD policy and programs are not a result of identification of gender needs and concerns of the municipality.</p>
<b>Program</b>	<p>1. Gives attention to women involvement and provision of assistance to women</p> <p>2. Most of GAD programs are services of the CSWDO given to different sectors-- a reflection of idea of achieving fundamental equality, not specifically gender equality; GAD-related project are very few.</p> <p>3. Promising GAD programs exist such as the KPK, BahayKalinga, and KATROPA</p>	<p>1. Gives attention to women involvement and provision of assistance to women</p> <p>2. Most of the programs are women-centered GAD Plan is not yet ideal because it is not 100% GAD.</p> <p>3. Promising GAD programs are KPK, VAWC programs, and UHA.</p>	<p>1. Highlights women as beneficiaries of the programs/projects</p> <p>2. Most of the programs are not GAD-related; the highest percentage of the GAD budget is allocated to engineering projects which should not be considered as GAD.</p> <p>3. Promising GAD programs are seen in KPK, LPN, and Solo Parent Federation</p>
<b>Structure</b>	<p>1. No existing GAD Council; GAD responsibilities are lodged with the CSWDO</p> <p>2. Adheres to DBM's mandate on GAD budgeting (5%)</p> <p>3. Lower budget is allocated to women-centered programs compared to other social services</p> <p>4. Lack of monitoring and evaluation tools</p> <p>5. Lack of coordination with PCW</p>	<p>1. GAD-IAC exists; No existing GAD Desk; most of GAD responsibilities are lodged with the MSWDO</p> <p>2. Adheres to DBM's mandate on GAD budgeting (more than 5%)</p> <p>3. Most of the GAD budget is allocated to women-centered programs</p> <p>4. Lack of monitoring and evaluation tools</p> <p>5. Lack of coordination with PCW</p>	<p>1. No existing GAD Committee; Unclear structural arrangements; GAD activities are facilitated by the MSWDO</p> <p>2. Adheres to DBM's mandate on GAD budgeting (more than 5%)</p> <p>3. Lower budget is allocated to women-centered programs compared to other social services and engineering projects</p> <p>4. Lack of monitoring and evaluation tools</p> <p>5. Lack of coordination with PCW</p>

As shown in Table 1, LGU 2 and LGU 3 have an existing GAD Code that aims to promote the protection of rights and dignity of women while LGU 1 only has a proposal for the creation of GAD Council and is still in the process of crafting its GAD Code. This study found out that the presence or absence of a GAD Code does not determine the institutionalization of GAD. The policies indicated in the GAD Code of the Municipality or in the GAD mandate given by the national government are subjected to the key LGU officials' interpretation and implementation. These ideal GAD policies are also interpreted in relation to the priorities of the local governments.

Key officials of LGU 1 speak of fundamental equality, which means that all sectoral interests must be served. To them, achieving fundamental equality will lead to gender equality. Thus, in actual practice, sectoral concerns as proposed by different agencies of the LGU are reflected in the GAD Plan. Different is the view of the key officials of LGU 2, which prioritizes family, women and children's rights and welfare in the GAD Plan and Budget. Clearly, this has resulted to more women-centered and GAD-related programs. Hence, LGU 2 stood out as that municipality that has a better GAD Program among the three LGUs. About 70% of its projects can be clearly regarded as GAD while the remaining 30% are social welfare programs. Sad to note, LGU 3 where there are no clear GAD policy expressions from key officials, deemed that any project or program can be part of its GAD Plan.

The three LGUs talked of public consultations as an integral part of their GAD program conception. Among them, it was only LGU 2 that conducted public consultations and barangay assemblies to specifically talk about gender issues and concerns. This is one good practice of LGU 2 that resulted in GAD programs and projects delivered to the people. The other LGUs conducted public consultations to talk about the general concerns of the communities. Hence, as reflected in their GAD Plans, most of the programs address various problems that are not actually GAD-related but deal with different concerns of various constituents.

Most of the GAD programs in the three LGUs focus on women involvement or in providing assistance to women. In the main, with the exception of those in LGU 2, the program implementers commonly view GAD programs as simply programs that have women as participants and beneficiaries.

These programs need not be exclusively for women at all. It is also noticeable that most of the programs are essentially social welfare services programs. This is most likely due to the fact that GAD responsibilities are assigned and handled by the social welfare offices of the LGU. This study found out that among the three cases, the GAD Plan of LGU 2 focuses more on women issues and concerns and thus, is more in line with the concept of gender and development. However, its GAD Programs are still not considered ideal since there are some projects that focus on providing social services and assistance to different sectors of the municipality.

In terms of structure, the three LGUs adhere to the DBM's requirement of giving a minimum of 5% of the LGU's total budget to gender and development. As reported, LGU 2 and LGU 3 even allotted more than 5% of the total LGU Budget to GAD. However, the problem lies in the way how these funds are utilized. In LGU 2, a bigger percentage of the GAD budget is allocated to programs that have women as sole beneficiaries, that address the concerns of women, promote gender equality and capacitate women with knowledge and skills.

In the case of LGU 1 and LGU 3, most of the GAD budget is allotted to social services and other programs that are not GAD in principle. In terms of structural arrangements, the study observed another good practice of LGU 2-- the existence of GAD-IAC whose functions are crucial in the institutionalization and implementation of GAD programs. There is a need, however, for LGU 2 to establish its GAD Desk as envisioned because it will surely help in GAD implementation, monitoring and evaluation. In the case of LGU 1 and LGU 3, the two LGUs do not have a GAD Council or a GAD Committee, or a GAD Desk. Also, the three LGUs do not conduct regular GAD program monitoring and evaluation, and do not coordinate with the PCW. A clear structure, assigned committed desk and personnel for GAD, conduct of monitoring and evaluation and coordination with agencies like PCW are of utmost importance in institutionalizing a real GAD program at the LGU level.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The conduct of policy, program, and structure evaluation of GAD revealed that the existence of GAD Code does not guarantee that ideal GAD programs will be delivered to the people. The local

officials, policy-makers, and program implementers interpret the formal rules and their interpretation and priorities are reflected in the kinds of programs that they institutionalize. Most of the programs that use GAD budget are not really gender-responsive initiatives. What is more alarming is the fact that these non-gender responsive projects are allotted with the higher percentage of the LGUs' GAD budget, particularly in LGU 1 and LGU 3. It was found out that based on the programs of the LGUs, the LGUs find GAD and "women participation" synonymous. This misunderstanding of GAD had led to the implementation of programs that are not in accord with what ideally conceived GAD should be able to attain. It was also shown that despite the existence of policies, the LGUs still have the tendency not to follow them due to their adherence to old practices. It was observed that the stronger initiative to promote gender equality and women empowerment was shown by the GAD programs of LGU 2. Most of its GAD budget is used for the protection and promotion of women's welfare. A number of areas still have to be improved in the three LGUs, mainly those that concern their GAD structure. Only LGU 2 has GAD-IAC and does public consultations to specifically talk about gender issues. The other two LGUs do have a blurry structure regarding GAD and conduct public consultations not to specifically talk about GAD concerns but the general concerns of the people. The evaluation revealed that the LGUs lack an evaluation tool, a GAD Desk, and coordination with the PCW. These are believed to be a hindrance in achieving the institutionalization of an ideal GAD. Most of GAD responsibilities are lodged to the local social welfare agency which also performs, at the same time, several other duties. It would take a GAD Council or GAD Desk composed of gender sensitive and committed individuals in order to promote the ideal GAD in the municipalities and cities.

The comparison of the three LGUs regarding GAD institutionalization revealed that the institutionalized programs are still far from the ideal GAD that aims to address both the practical and strategic needs of men and women of the community. With this, the study recommends the following towards the institutionalization of a real GAD at the LGU level: 1) more GAD seminars be given to the policy-makers and program implementers; 2) feminist or gender specialist policy-makers must be developed to guide the institutionalization of GAD program; 3) the budget appropriation of the LGUs be reviewed to

ensure that GAD budget is utilized solely by the programs that promote women empowerment and gender equality; 4) the program implementers should come up with innovative initiatives that would transform gender inequalities to opportunities that would address strategic gender needs; 5) GAD Desk and GAD Council should be established so that GAD responsibilities will not be lodged to social welfare units; 6) GAD programs must be properly evaluated to assess its progress and effectiveness; and 7) coordination with the PCW must be established so that LGUs will be guided in the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of the GAD programs.

This study implies that the Local Government must continue to exert more efforts and come up with more plans and initiatives that promote women empowerment and challenge the traditional view of gender. The key local officials and policy makers shall ensure that the rights of both men and women are given equal importance in their respective areas

#### **LIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

This evaluation study focuses only on the programs that include men and women and the opportunities and assistance provided to them by the Local Government; however, the LGBTQ and their participation in the community are not mentioned. It is also relevant to conduct a gender study that includes the LGBTQ members and the programs designed for them, if any.

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