

Chapter 1

Women Leadership in Environment Management: The Philippines' Challenge at the Grassroots Level

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ABSTRACT

The Philippines is among the pioneers of gender-sensitive policies that aim to neutralize the role of men and women in leadership opportunities in almost all sectors. From the '80s to the '90s, a bunch of policies were implemented, ensuring the women's participation in natural resource and environmental management; however, numerous populations of women have earned leadership in the regional and national levels but fewer opportunities at the grassroots level. In line with this, the study sought to investigate the state of women's leadership focusing on environmental management. Documentary evidence will be collected and interpreted to address the study objectives. Major findings revealed that at the municipal and barangay level, women have struggled to get education and knowledge to lead, are confined to male-dominated decisions, experienced poverty, and are often discriminated. Recommendations were laid that concerned government agencies and other stakeholders emphasized training and leadership enhancements at the grassroots and sustained until women leaders are raised.

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INTRODUCTION

Philippines is one of the strong catalysts of women leadership and management in the society and all sectors. The active role of women in the society becomes vibrant since Philippines has been regarded as the leader of the international women's right platform that enables the local women's populace movement that fights for gender equality and other related concerns (UN Women, 2014). Moreover, the Philippines has received an accolade of being the first nation in ASEAN region that approves the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women. The Government Service Insurance System (GSIS, 2021) has emphasized the implementation and sustainability of the Republic Act no. 9710 known as the Magna Carta of Women which focused on the Gender and Development Program (GAD) which aspires to obtain higher level of gender equality where women would be developed as active agents of the country's development. Accordingly, the mechanisms adopted by GAD actively supports the institutionalization of gender issues along the major country's national government environmental management agencies such as the Department of Agriculture (DA), Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), and Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR). The implementation of GAD is pioneered by the DENR with their program called United Nations Collaborative Program on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (UN-REDD) with preference to the role of women in the natural resource management sector (Philippine Commission on Women, 2023).

In 2010, an act was implemented called the Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act (RA 10121) through the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Plan (NDRRMC) from 2011-2028 and to be run by a council composed of the government and non-government agencies. This national plan was cascaded into the local city/municipality, and the barangay and village level. One of the recipients of the implementation NDRRMC is a Barangay in Tacloban City called Barangay San Jose, a susceptible location for major typhoons. In a barangay setting, the NDRRMC committee is ruled by officials and employees of the barangay including the barangay health workers (BHWs), barangay nutrition scholars (BNSs), and the barangay service point officers (BSPOs) wherein most of these workers are women (The Japan International Cooperation Agency, 2016). In addition, the barangay's initiative of forming the committee is in line with the Republic Act 10121 which declares that "disaster risk reduction and management measures should be gender-responsive, sensitive to indigenous knowledge, and respectful of human rights, focusing on the importance of the protection of women (p. 15)." With the aim of promoting women rights and equality, the budget allocation of the NDRRMC for women or GAD activities reached to five percent. Gender policies are integrated in the activities implemented by the NDRRMC.

On the other hand, the Department of Natural Resources (DENR) has established strong mechanisms to raise the voice of women's participation in the area of resource policy and management since 1989 which includes for instance the formation of the Technical Working Committee on Women (TWCW) for the purpose of serving the needs of women and ensure the implementation of DENR programs and policies that protects the welfare of its women workforce (PCW, 2009). In relation to promoting the Philippine Strategy for Sustainable Development (PPGD), women are empowered to make decisions and fully participate in activities that promote sustainable development. Nevertheless, even with the many policies that advances women interest and leadership, women are still struggling and are facing obstacles because of the country's male dominant culture (Philippine Commission on Women, 2016). Results from interviews from informants with higher socio-economic status revealed that, women encountered difficulties to lead in higher ranks in the environmental industry unless they have higher education status

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