

Measuring women's empowerment and women's autonomy in the Philippines¹

By

Lina Castro

Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA)
The Philippines

Abstract

The Philippines is committed to improving the socioeconomic conditions for women. Based on the Global Gender Gap Report 2013² of the World Economic Forum, the Philippines ranks 5th out of 136 countries with the score of 0.783, succeeding Iceland, Finland, Norway and Sweden. The Philippines is the only country in Asia and the Pacific that has fully closed the gender gap, specifically, in education and health. However, despite the country's very high rank in the global gender gap, the Philippines ranks 77th out of 186 countries in 2012 with the score of 0.418 on the Gender Inequality Index³ (GII) of the Human Development Report (HDR) 2013 of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Further, in the 2009 HDR, the Philippines ranks 59th out of 109 countries with the score of 0.560 on Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM), which measures gender inequality from an economic and political perspective.

Given the above international rankings, the country continues to monitor the status of women and implement laws and programs to empower them and promote gender equality. In 2009, the Magna Carta of Women (MCW)⁴ was signed into law, which prohibits the discrimination against women and recognizes, promotes and protects their rights. Aside from the MCW, the Philippines also called for the inclusion of gender equality and empowerment of women as a stand-alone goal in the post-2015 development agenda at the United Nations. The country has very strong commitment to promoting gender equality as highlighted in the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) for 2011-2016. The PDP includes gender-related targets and strategies toward achieving inclusive growth.

Empowerment of women is essential for the achievement of sustainable development. The full participation and partnership of both women and men is required in productive and reproductive life, including shared responsibilities for the care and nurturing of children and maintaining the household. Further, women's empowerment raises the level of participation, which enable women to make decisions based on their own views and perspectives.

The National Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) explores women's empowerment in terms of employment, type of earnings, control over cash and earnings, and freedom of movement. These information are used to estimate women's participation in household

¹ A paper to be presented on the High-Level Panel: Use of data for monitoring effectiveness of gender equality and women's empowerment policies and programmes at the 5th Global Forum on Gender Statistics in Mexico on 4-5 November 2014.

² The Global Gender Gap Report 2013 benchmarks national gender gaps of 136 countries on economic, political, education and health-based criteria. It was developed in 2006, partially to address the need for a consistent and comprehensive measure of gender equality that can track a country's progress over time.

³ A composite measure reflecting inequality in achievements between women and men in three dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment and the labour market. A low value indicates low inequality between women and men.

⁴ It was signed into law in August 2009.

decision making and women's acceptance of wife beating. On the other hand, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) has data on women clients accessing entrepreneurial development trainings, accessing small and medium enterprises (SME) services and other DTI program related activities.

Gender equality in decision making at the household level by which resources are allocated is important for the family/household as well as for the society. Collection of these indicators should be done regularly to be able to assess if gender equality is achieved. Further, other areas of decision making and women's empowerment can be explored in the succeeding surveys.

This paper uses the results of the 2008 NDHS and existing administrative data on entrepreneurship to present the monitoring of gender equality in the household and women's economic empowerment done by the Philippine Statistical System (PSS) and the DTI. This paper aims to aid the policy- and decision-makers to implement programs to further promote women's empowerment and gender equality.

How data have helped the development of policies pro gender equality?
Some lessons learnt?

Keywords: *National Demographic and Health Survey, women's empowerment, women's autonomy, Magna Carta of Women*

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