

Crafting policies and programs for women in the agriculture sector

Connie Bayudan-Dacuycuy

To achieve the goals set in the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) and the *AmBisyon Natin 2040*, the government's 25-year long-term vision to end poverty, the country has to harness the productive capacity of its widely available resource—labor. It likewise needs to recognize that women, who comprise 50 percent of the population, have an equal role in steering the country toward the achievement of these goals.

This *Policy Note* revisits the country's efforts to achieve gender equality focusing on the rural and agriculture sector. It likewise recommends measures to enrich the policy narratives on women in the context of rural and agricultural livelihoods.

What has been achieved thus far

Substantial progress has been achieved in terms of gender equality in the country. Efforts to make governance gender responsive are promoted through legislation, such as the Magna Carta of Women, which promotes women's participation in policymaking and program development across various levels. The law also mandates the allotment

of at least 5 percent of the budget of all agencies to gender and development.

Meanwhile, the PDP incorporates gender issues and acknowledges that women's labor force participation has barely improved through the years. For this, it has outlined several strategies to encourage their labor force participation, some of which have already been translated into policies.

In 2017, President Rodrigo Duterte also signed Executive Order No. 12, which backs the full implementation of modern family planning programs. The Congress has also done its part by filing bills on maternity benefits, including those that aim to extend the women's leave period to at least 100 days in both public service and private sector.

Lastly, the country has already achieved the Millennium Development Goal on gender parity in education at all levels. Based on the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA 2015), females' functional literacy in the Philippines in 2013 became even higher than that of males.

Figure 1. Female vulnerable employment in Association of Southeast Asian Nations in 2015
(% of female employment)



Source: World Bank (n.d.)

Areas of improvement

The *2017 Global Gender Gap Report* indicates that the country has already closed the gender gap in health and survival (WEF 2017). While data from the World Economic Forum (2017) indicate a declining maternal mortality rate (MMR), from 152 to 114 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births from 1990 to 2015, these rates, alongside with that of Indonesia's, are one of the highest in the region and are still below the Sustainable Development Goal target of 70/100,000 MMR.

Vulnerable employment, which refers to employment as family workers and own-account workers, among women likewise remains prevalent in the Philippines. Its rate is one of the highest in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (Figure 1).

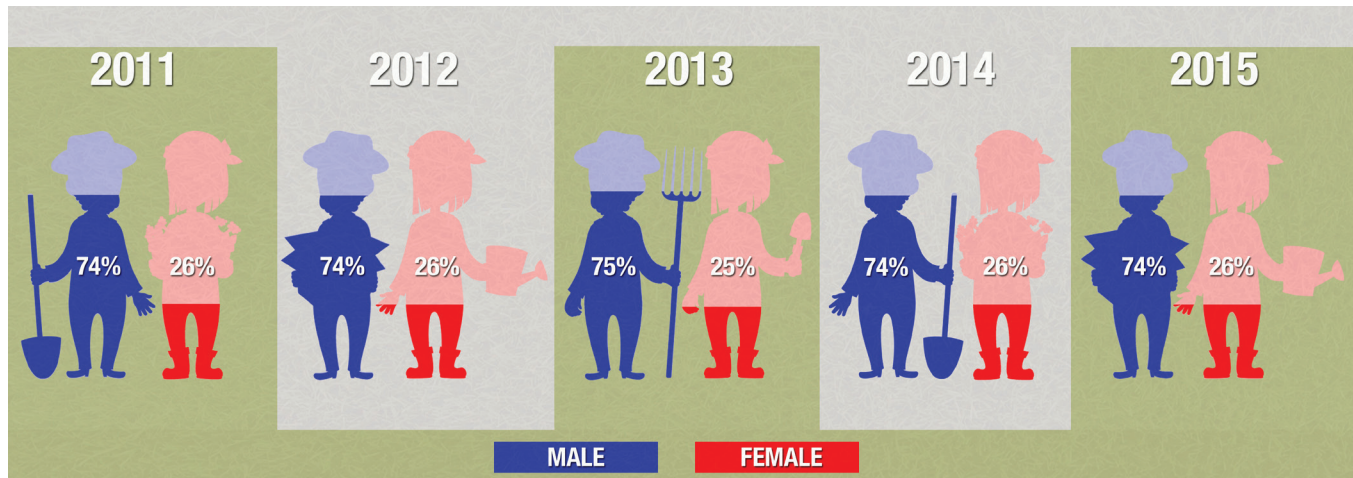
In terms of political representation, Filipinas remain "sorely underrepresented" in decision-making positions in the government (David et al. 2017, p. 2). Nonetheless, based on the World Development Indicators (WB n.d.), they enjoy a higher proportion of representation compared to their ASEAN counterparts and the said proportion has increased since 1990 from 9 percent to 30 percent in 2017.

Despite the country's significant advancements in education parity, its female labor force participation has remained low. Based on the World Development Indicators (WB n.d.), the said participation is at 50 percent in 2015, or a mere 2-percentage point improvement from the 1990 figure. Women likewise continue to experience gender wage gap. The United Nations Development Programme (2015), in a report, noted that the female's income per capita in the country remains just half that of male.

The said observations mirror the situation of women working in the Philippine agriculture sector. Based on PSA (2016), females occupy merely 26 percent of the agricultural employment in the country, and this figure has barely moved since 2011 (Figure 2). The male agricultural real wage rate, or the money wage deflated by the consumer price index, is likewise PHP 15 higher than that of female in 2015 (Figure 3).

Such gap likely reflects the difference in the type of agricultural work men and women engage in. Women are more likely to be involved in weeding and harvesting jobs, which are known to be less profitable

Figure 2. Male and female agricultural employment (% of total agricultural employment)



Source: Philippine Statistics Authority [PSA] (2016)

than men’s traditional jobs in agriculture, such as plowing and cultivation of fodder.

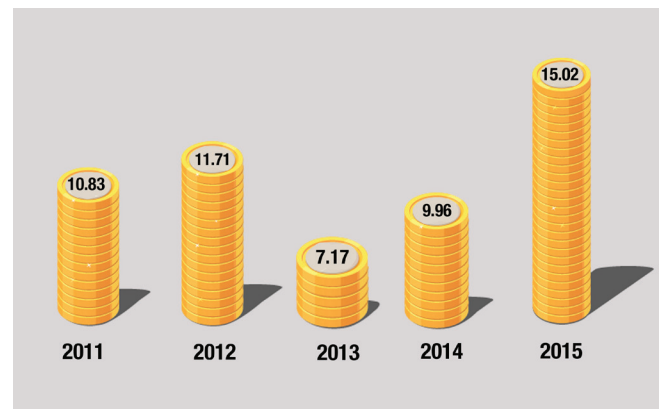
Moreover, despite the declining trend in female’s unpaid employment in the crop and animal production, hunting, and related activities, around 35 percent still remained unpaid in 2016 (Figure 4). This is substantially higher than the proportion of unpaid male in the sector, which is merely 12 percent. In addition, Gender and Land Statistics (FAO n.d.) show that only 1 in every 10 land titleholders is a female in 2002.

Challenges threatening women’s livelihoods in rural areas

Traditions and norms

One of the challenges that women face involves age-old traditions and norms, which assign specific roles to gender and adversely affect women’s bargaining position in the household. With the traditional assignment of women as nurturers and men as providers, women shoulder a disproportionate burden of the care economy in the form of housework and taking care of children, the sick, and the elderly.

Figure 3. Difference between male and female agricultural daily real wage rate in the Philippines (in PHP)

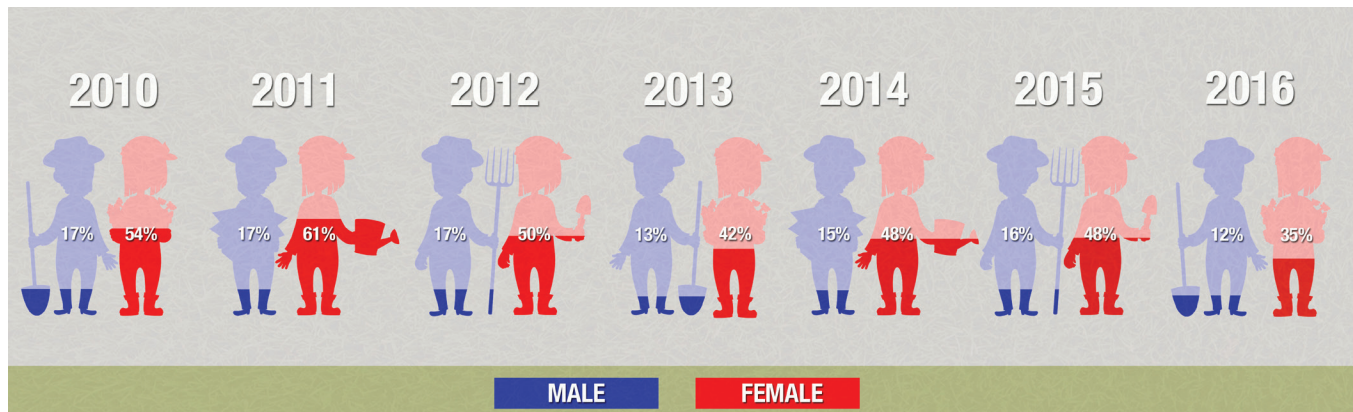


Source: PSA (2016)

The extent of time women devote to the care economy results in time poverty, which hampers their ability to pursue economically productive and welfare-enhancing endeavors. This then leads to women’s low development outcomes in education, nutrition, health, and mobility. Such inadequacy in skills and human capital further results in discrimination in terms of access to economic activity and representation.

While the discussion above holds for women in general, the degree in which the elements of discrimination work against women is more

Figure 4. Unpaid workers in the crop and animal production, hunting, and related activities (% of total male and female employment)



Source: PSA (2016)

pronounced for those in rural areas, where fewer economic opportunities exist and where folks are more traditional and more observant of norms.

Agricultural policies with no gender perspective

In addition to norms and age-old traditions, some of the major agricultural policies in the country do not also have gender perspectives. These include the Agriculture and Fisheries Mechanization Law, which aims to modernize the agriculture sector and enhance its productivity and efficiency, and the proposed Free Irrigation and Reform and Restructuring Act, which makes free irrigation a government policy.

While these policies are well-meaning and look at the gains from a broader perspective, they still fail to address women’s limited command over labor, fewer options for buying and transporting external inputs, and the social norms that discourage women’s use of certain machinery (ADB 2013). As a result of these constraints, women may still prefer growing crops that use low external input techniques, such as those that do not need much fertilizers, pesticides, tractors, and mechanized equipment. Policies that can address these issues can help make women’s agricultural livelihoods more sustainable.

Climate change

A more recent development that poses significant threat to women in the agriculture sector involves climate change. Among others, climate change affects livelihoods in rural areas, where majority of people are engaged in agriculture and backyard production and enterprises reliant on natural resources. It also aggravates the disproportionate burden of care economy on women. Due to variabilities of rainfall and temperature, women and girls in rural areas tend to spend more time collecting firewood and water and less time in economically productive endeavors (Chikulo 2014). They may also have fewer options to adapt to the changes brought about by climate change because they have lower command over resources, such as land, credit, and information. Moreover, climate change can result in property crimes (Blakeslee and Fisman 2017) and crimes against women and vulnerable minorities (Sekhri and Storeygard 2010).

Recommendations

Integrate gender perspectives in the design of climate change adaptation and mitigation

Shocks affect men and women differently and they may have different perspectives on what adaptation

and mitigation should be. Women, as much as men, may have useful knowledge and information, which should be represented in the design and implementation of adaptation and mitigation project.

The integration of gender perspectives may start with the People's Survival Fund (PSF), an adaptation grant for local government units (LGUs). Currently, PSF funds forecasting and early warning systems, monitoring, controlling, and preventing of diseases triggered by climate change, institutional development for LGUs, and the establishment and strengthening of regional centers and information networks that support adaptation efforts. However, gender is currently not one of the strong points of these programs. With this, the technical evaluation committee for state-funded climate change projects should include representatives from the Philippine Commission on Women and the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD).

Encourage social enterprises

Social enterprises (SEs) are highly evolved in social awareness and adopt business solutions to social and environmental issues. They likewise create jobs and income-generating opportunities for marginalized groups and poor communities. Women in the agriculture sector can benefit from SEs not only through livelihoods but also through the ability of SEs to transform the communities they work in.

Mainstream adaptive social protection

Adaptive social protection (ASP), a concept developed by the Institute of Development Studies, refers to the cohesion of social protection (SP), climate change adaptation (CCA), and disaster risk reduction. The linking of these concepts is relevant for various reasons. While SP aims to improve the accumulation of skills and human capital, it does not address vulnerabilities arising from climate change.



This study notes that women still tend to be involved in weeding and harvesting jobs, which are known to be less profitable than men's traditional jobs in agriculture, such as plowing. To address this, it urges the government to promote social enterprises in rural areas, which can create income-generating opportunities for women. (Photo: Jaime Villafranca/Flickr)

Meanwhile, although CCA aims to reduce the risks associated with climate change, it does not address human capital and skills formation. The adverse effects of climate change can undermine what SP programs have achieved in building resilience and reducing vulnerability.

Women also tend to have lower resources to cope with short- and long-run shocks resulting from the vagaries of weather and climate. This issue provides the government another reason to make SP and CCA work together and make ASP a part of advocacies concerning men and women. ASP in the rural areas that can be further developed includes public works program and the weather-indexed crop insurance. In addition, the Sustainable Livelihood Program, one of

the DSWD's SP programs, can be explored to establish strategic partnership with SEs.

Invest in rural infrastructures that lessen the time spent on care economy

Some of the possible infrastructures that can be explored include the provision of childcare services, construction of pumps and solar power to improve access to water and electricity, as well as the construction of permeable paving and porous roads. In addition, flood protection measures should be in place to ensure minimal time spent cleaning up after floods and the prevention of vector-borne diseases.

Beef up research on the effects of climate change on men and women

Recent developments and their effects on men and women alike need to be analyzed to provide more convincing policy narratives. Currently, climate change studies are mostly done in Africa while studies in Asia are qualitative and mostly based on focus group discussions. In the Philippines, such studies are even fewer. Now more than ever, gender-disaggregated data need to be collected to make women's issues more visible in the policy space. 📄

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Contact us

Address: Research Information Department
Philippine Institute for Development Studies
18/F Three Cyberpod Centris - North Tower
EDSA corner Quezon Avenue, Quezon City

Telephone: (+63-2) 372-1291 to 92

Email: publications@mail.pids.gov.ph

Website: www.pids.gov.ph

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