



# **BARMM WEE Strategy**

**Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao  
Women's Economic Empowerment Strategy**



**November 2021**

# PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGY

---

This strategy intends to contribute to the meaningful and sustained economic empowerment of women in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM).

It builds on the work of the three-year Women's Empowerment for Leadership in Development and Peace in the Bangsamoro (WELD-Peace) Project Phase 2 which supports advocacies and initiatives that strengthen the women's agenda in the Bangsamoro. Recognizing that engaging key institutions and processes on women's economic empowerment (WEE) remains a challenge in the region, the project is investing in the development of this WEE strategy containing actionable areas that WELD-Peace partners and stakeholders may adopt and integrate in their policies, plans and programs.

It is also aligned to the directions of the Bangsamoro Women Commission (BWC) and its stakeholders, particularly the various women's agenda that have been recently drafted with support from development partners such as Oxfam Pilipinas and United Nations (UN) Women. It draws on key strategic documents and programs developed by these agencies which aim to promote WEE.

The strategy further recommends WEE strategic actions that can be pursued by different BARMM stakeholders. While the strategy includes some metrics for measuring success, it does not aim to provide detailed guidance for specific program design and implementation.

# DEFINING WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AND WEE

---

Women's empowerment is a process whereby women's lives are transformed from a situation where they have limited power as a consequence of gendered norms and barriers, to a situation where their power is equal to that of men. Women's economic empowerment or WEE contributes towards women's empowerment as it focuses on women's ability to gain access and control over productive resources and be recognized as fully participating economic actors.

But economic participation alone is not enough to guarantee women's broader empowerment. This requires additional approaches that challenge the structural barriers that keep women from achieving all the dimensions of women's empowerment: economic, social, political and personal. These dimensions are interconnected; positive change in one dimension of women's lives is unsustainable without progress in the others. Thus, in order to achieve WEE, women must also have the autonomy and self-belief to make changes in their own lives, including having the agency and power to organize and influence decision making, while enjoying equal rights with men and freedom from all forms of violence. It will be imperative to address the structural barriers to the full realization of women's rights, including supporting the transformative leadership of women in their communities and their organizations. The key structural barriers that women face in BARMM are shared in the subsequent section.

# BARMM CONTEXT

---

Mindanao is the second largest island in the Philippines, with a population of 21.5 million people covering an area of 37,657 square miles. Although Christians are an overwhelming majority in the Philippines, Mindanao has for centuries been home to both indigenous peoples and Muslims called *Moro* (from the Spanish word “Moor”) or Bangsamoro (the “Moro Nation”). While the Moro share a common identity as Muslims, they are also quite diverse with 13 different ethnic groups, four each speaking their own languages.

BARMM and the rest of Mindanao has a long history of conflict which dates back to the colonial era, continued on to the Spanish and US colonial regimes and remains today. There are multiple armed combatant groups operating in Mindanao, including the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), the communist New People’s Army (NPA) and the *Rebolusyonaryong Partido ng Manggagawa sa Mindanao* (Revolutionary Party of Workers in Mindanao or the RPMM). The Abu Sayyaf terrorist organization also poses a threat to local residents. In 1996, after prolonged negotiations and 26 years of war that cost some 120,000 lives, the government of the Philippines signed a Final Peace Agreement with the MNLF, the cornerstone of which was the reinvigoration of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) as a semi-autonomous territory within the framework of national sovereignty. However, a number of splinter factions within the organization resisted the call to disarm. The MILF, which split from the MNLF in 1981, rejected the 1996 agreement in favor of a push for full Bangsamoro independence, and has been engaged in separate negotiations with the government since 1997 (The Asia Foundation (TAF), 2012).

The ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) or Republic Act (RA) No. 11054 in January 25, 2019 is the latest procurement of the administration to attain peace in Mindanao and end their long-time struggle for independence and self-determination. The BOL, now called the Organic Law for the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (OLBARMM), is made to establish a new autonomous political entity in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region (BAR). It aims to bring peace by addressing the grievances, sentiments, and demands of Muslims in the region.

The conflicts in Mindanao also need to be placed within their broader social and economic contexts. In Mindanao, poverty and a lack of social opportunity are both drivers and outcomes of conflict. Although the region is agriculturally fertile and resource rich, decades of conflict have left the area and its people (about 3.78 million in 2015, 91% of whom are Muslim) among the most impoverished in the Philippines. ARMM fares especially poorly on national economic indicators, with a

2006 official poverty rate of 55.3% and some 58.9% of ARMM women living in poverty. Both those indicators have worsened in recent years, with the BARMM poverty incidence in 2018 increasing to 61.3%. Life expectancy in ARMM provinces has often been at least a decade lower than in urban Manila, while 30.2% of women and 35.6% of children in BARMM belong to food poor families whose per capita income is less than the food threshold (PSA, 2018).

Economic deprivation, when coupled with a sense of injustice, often inflames conflict, and the difficult security situation in ARMM has hampered a broad range of normal economic activity. It remains clear to most ARMM residents that their poverty is not a natural condition, such as an outgrowth of barren land or inhospitable climate, but rather the result of political choices; local communities perceive wilful government neglect, encouraged by deep-rooted discrimination toward ethnic Moros and their adherence to Islam. Although there are many Christian civil society organizations working for peace and interreligious tolerance in Mindanao, a survey by the Social Weather Station found that a majority of ordinary non-Muslims felt little trust toward Muslim ethnic groups (TAF, 2012).

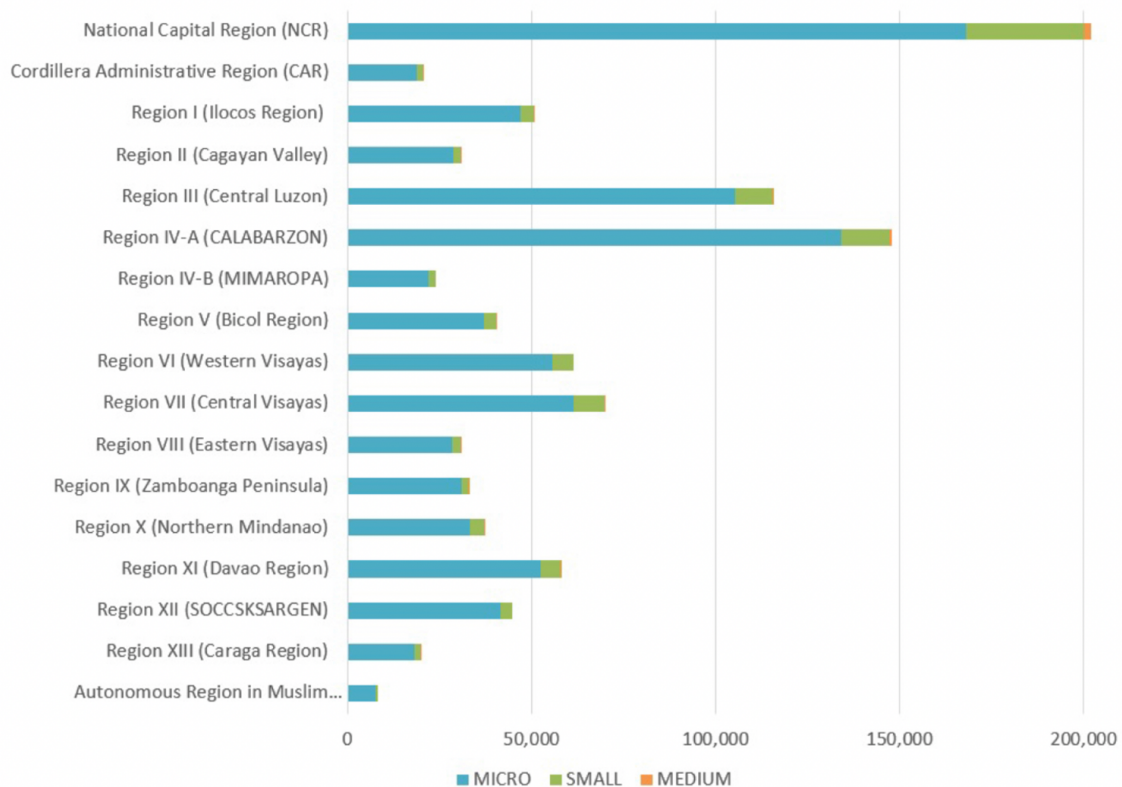
### *Economic drivers and challenges*

In 2019, BARMM ranked 2nd among the regions in Mindanao, posting a growth rate of 5.9% in terms of Gross Regional Domestic Product (GRDP). With 40.4% contribution, Service sector now has the largest share in the region's economic performance. However, most service-sector jobs are provided by the government. It is followed by the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing (AFF) sector with 34.5%, and Industry sector with 25.1 percent. Prior to this, BARMM had been operating mainly as an agricultural economy. Limited private sector participation and a large informal sector continue to keep income, investment and tax collection levels low in BARMM.

Despite its 5.9% growth rate, the region's contribution to the national economy remains the lowest at 1.3%. Efforts are also being made to ensure growth is inclusive, and that jobs offer higher productivity and pay. Designed to establish the foundations of self-governance until the end of the BARMM transition phase in 2022, the Bangsamoro Development Plan 2020-2022 aims to ensure the recovery and rehabilitation of areas long affected by armed conflict and transform them, including the former combatants, into a more productive communities and members of the society.

### Low number of registered enterprises

Sustainable enterprise development, particularly for medium, small and micro enterprises or MSMEs, can be an important catalyst for local economic growth, poverty reduction and social inclusion. While the Bureau of Trade and Industry, which is under the Ministry of Trade, Investments and Tourism in BARMM, recorded a total of 4,740 approved Business Name Registrations in the first quarter of 2021 (a 300% increase compared to the same period the previous year), the overall number of registered enterprises is still very low compared to the rest of the country. Regional concentration of MSMEs is largely associated with economic activity and population size.



*Distribution of Establishments per Region, 2020 List of Establishments, PSA*

One major impediment for the development of MSMEs in Bangsamoro is the presence of a strong competition with barter markets [1] and smuggled goods coming from neighbouring countries. With these, local MSMEs are put into a significant disadvantage and some have actually engaged in barter trade rather than developing their own based on local economic resources that the Bangsamoro has.

[1] Markets where the transactions are done purely through the exchanging goods and services

Finally, local conflicts also undermine any gains in establishing MSMEs. Businesses get disrupted when local conflict occurs. Some would in fact be adversely damaged by conflict. Even after the conflict has been resolved, businesses do not resume normal operation. Most businesses would have to start all over again from raising their capital to establishing their operation. Many would cease their operation for fear of further disruption and damages when conflict arise once again.

### *Women's participation in the labour force*

In 2018, about 46.5% of the population in BARMM were in the labour force or considered economically active. While the majority (96.2%) of this force are employed, most employed persons are male (74%) while only 26% are female. Females who are employed in the region are predominantly Managers (28.8%) and those with Elementary Occupations (26.6%). About 16.9% of employed females are Skilled Agricultural, Forestry and Fishery Workers; while 13.4% are Service and Sales Workers. In the same year, about 24.1% of all employed persons in BARMM were Wage and Salary Workers, while a significant 61.8% were Self-Employed Without Any Paid Employee. About 67% of all employed males and 47% of all employed females belong to the latter category. However, it should be noted that one in every ten employed persons in BARMM are Workers Without Pay in Own Family-Operated Farms or Businesses. This includes 6.5% of employed males and 23.7% of employed females — this means that there are four times more women than men who work for their family's business that do not receive any wage or salary.<sup>[2]</sup>

Persons not in the labour force (the remaining 53.5%) are comprised of 70% female and 30% male. These are individuals who are not looking for work because of reasons such as housekeeping, schooling and permanent disability. Examples are homemakers, students, disabled or retired persons.

WELD-Peace partners also shared that they have observed that the Maranao are good in doing business and trade as a family/clan and that women are very much involved. This is a nuance that is not captured by statistics; there may be others that a more comprehensive study could surface. Economic activities of the informal sector are also not accounted for here.

---

[2] <http://rsoarmm.psa.gov.ph/release/content/special/55302>

## Challenges and structural barriers to WEE

It is clear from the data that women in BARMM have much lower labour participation and employment rates than men. This is attributed to several barriers to women's economic empowerment as shared by WELD-Peace partners and other stakeholders, and as surfaced in a recent (October 2021) mapping study on the Role of MSMEs on Women Economic Empowerment in Mainland BARMM by Oxfam and the Institute for Social Entrepreneurship in Asia (ISEA).[3] These are broadly related to economic or business limitations such as access to markets and finance, but also disabling pervasive social and cultural norms such as unpaid care and domestic work, and poor access to health and care services which affects women's decision-making and capacity to be productive.

**Economic limitations: lack of access to markets and finance.** Many women in BARMM have poor access to markets; this has been further exacerbated by the pandemic. They also have limited mobility because of *mahram* where women need escorts when they go to market their products. Similarly, women lack access to credit and financing, and often lack the traditional collateral or documentation to take out a loan. Some banks still prefer the husband's signature or consent in financial transactions, and even demand that the male partner co-sign any financial contract.[4]

These observations are echoed by the mapping study where only 2 out of the 300+ enterprises examined have accessed the international market; the majority (87%) are operating in the municipal and provincial markets only. Among the female headed enterprises, only 4% are engaged in regional and national markets. Those who have been able to access markets also experience difficulty in sustaining their presence in their desired market due to lack of technical knowledge, which hinders them from participating in national and global value chains. Another factor may be the low compliance of MSMEs with national and international standards, such as quality and environmental standards, rendering them uncompetitive in the world market.

About 80% of the MSMEs respondents reported that they have not applied for a loan from any lending institutions. This is particularly true of female-headed enterprises that source capital from income coming from their previous or current

---

[3] *The mapping identified and examined a total of 312 MSMEs with headquarters and/or operations in the Provinces Maguindanao and Lanao del Sur. Most of the businesses are in processing, manufacturing and retailing of both food and non-food (i.e., handicrafts) products. It also captured the experiences, challenges/lessons learned, and opportunities gained by social enterprises through their engagement with LGUs/legislators in supporting women, women entrepreneurs or women-related initiatives.*

[4] *Insights shared by WELD-Peace partners during virtual consultations*



work, savings from working abroad, sold properties, or resources provided by family members. Currently, as provided under the law, there is a mandatory 10% lending allocation for MSMEs. However, in general, banks tend to prioritize larger corporate borrowers because of higher gains, perception of lower credit risk, higher repayment rates, and the availability of collateral. Also, access to financing from traditional financial institutions is limited due to the MSME's lack of credit information.

Many of the female-headed enterprises also reported that they had difficulty in registering their business because of repetitive, costly, and time-consuming processes.

**Unpaid care and domestic work (UCDW).** Heavy and unequal UCDW is one of the systemic barriers to women's engagement in the labour force, as it affects their productivity and can severely limit their opportunities to generate income. It consists of activities related to the provision of care services for the family and community (such as care for the young, elderly and the sick), as well as domestic or household work which are often unpaid, underpaid or undervalued, and predominantly taken up by women. Women's unequal share of unpaid care work has long been recognized by women's rights advocates as a key dimension of gender inequality; it is now increasingly recognized as a constraint to both economic growth and women's economic empowerment.<sup>[5]</sup>

Globally, women perform 76.2% of the total amount of UCDW, which is 3.2 times more time than men, while women from countries in Asia and the Pacific do 4.1 times more unpaid care work than men. In the Philippines, according to a study by the PIDS in 2019, the monetary value of the time women spent doing housework – from caring for children and the elderly, to cleaning, cooking, and washing – can make up about 20% of the country's gross domestic product (GDP). While no figures or estimates on UCDW are currently available for the BARMM region, it is highly likely that women in the region, while they are not homogenous, are experiencing a similar gender inequality.

For women's equal access to paid work to facilitate sustainable development – without jeopardizing human well-being – it should be based on a comprehensive strategy that includes the recognition of the critical importance of unpaid care work, reduction of the drudgery associated with this work to increase its

---

[5] *Leaving no one behind: A call to action on gender equality and women's economic empowerment*, United Nations, 2016.

productivity and free time, and redistribution of the work between women and men within families and other institutions providing care.<sup>[6]</sup>

**Limited access to social and care services.** Access to essential maternal health services urgently requires improvement. BARMM is the only region in the country where the proportion of women that received antenatal care, at 52.8%, is lower than the national average of 95.4%. Facility-based delivery is exceptionally low at 12.3%, and only 20.4% of all live births are attended by a skilled health professional, such as a doctor, nurse, or midwife. Absence of maternal health services is a major cause of maternal mortality, with the vacuum being filled by reliance on traditional birthing by *hilot* (practitioners of traditional native methods). The ARMM also has one of the lowest rates of full immunization coverage at 29.4%.

Better social protective and health care for women can help accelerate gender equality and WEE through expanding opportunities for paid work, ownership of productive assets, and control over income. Conversely, women's economic empowerment also impacts their health decision-making. Gendered power dynamics within households affect health outcomes, with men often controlling decisions about their families' health, including their families' spending and use of health services.

**Gender-based violence and other cultural barriers.** In the Bangsamoro, most cases of gender-based violence (GBV) against women and girls go unreported because of a culture of silence. GBV constitutes a breach of the fundamental right to life, liberty, security, dignity, non-discrimination, and physical and mental integrity. It reinforces gender inequality and limits the participation of women in meaningful development, both social and economic.

Furthermore, pervasive norms, beliefs and perceptions of women in business, women as income-earners, women managing income, women in agriculture, women as leaders, etc continue to hinder their economic participation and recognition. Women entrepreneurs in BARMM have also expressed their lack of skills and ability to engage with the government in pushing for a women's economic empowerment agenda. They cited that they need to learn about their rights as women entrepreneurs and to access information regarding policies, programs, and services that can help them expand or sustain their enterprises.

---

[6] *Turning Promises into Action: Gender Equality in the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development*, UN Women, 2018.

# IMPACT OF COVID-19

---

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated many of the challenges and barriers to sustainable enterprise development and women's economic empowerment, heightening the need for immediate support to women and their families and communities. Results of a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)-supported socio-economic impact assessment of COVID-19 in BARMM covering the period March 2020 to March 2021 reveals the following key concerns:

1. Mobility restrictions continued to affect work and businesses that resulted in income declines among many of those affected. Restrictions through lockdowns and quarantines have led to work stoppages, reduced working hours or unemployment. Those in the informal sector were hardest hit, many of whom are women. Stricter restrictions were implemented in the urban areas compared to rural areas.
2. Food security was affected with a number of families coping by skipping meals. Access to food is made difficult due to lack of money and resources, high food prices, and shortage of food. Skipping meals is prevalent as part of a coping strategy.
3. Most residents had difficulty in accessing health care services, especially to hospitals and medicines. Already confronted with limited health care capacity even pre-pandemic, difficulty of access to health care services and supplies are more amplified during this crisis.
4. The pandemic had compounded effects on women and children. Women are more likely to bear the brunt of the social and economic consequences of the pandemic. They are disproportionately more in the informal economy, with majority as heads of single-parent households who have less access to social protections. On the other hand, children's education has been interrupted due to school closures or inability of households to provide for their school needs during the shift to online education.
5. Residents found ways to cope with the crisis in the short term, with many remaining optimistic about the recovery process. Household coping strategies during the pandemic include borrowing money, relying on cheaper food or reduction of food intake. Also, despite negative outcomes, majority still remain optimistic and expect recovery to happen within 6 months to 2 years.

6. Majority received aid and assistance (cash or in-kind, including Social Amelioration Program) mostly coming from the regional level and local government units (LGUs), with the highest positive impact indicated in Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao and Cotabato. Most were very and somewhat satisfied with the support provided.

These concerns are echoed by the majority of female-led micro-enterprises surveyed by the MSME mapping in mainland BARMM, who shared that it is difficult to remain in business during the COVID-19 pandemic. Community quarantines limit the opening of businesses and the mobility of employees and clients alike, resulting in drastically reduced sales. Many found it challenging to source materials and distribute their products with distributors shutting down, plus the rising costs and restrictions on logistics. In addition, there were fewer customers and competition from home-based startups, lack of credit access, and evolving government-imposed guidelines. Other challenges raised by women in scaling-up their enterprises include balancing responsibilities, fear of failure, limited funding and limited knowledge.



# ADVANCING WEE IN BARMM

---

Global studies attest to positive effect of gender equality on economic growth, and consistent and substantial income gains from women's economic empowerment. Supporting WEE is a "smart" business strategy as proven by a growing body of research that documents and measures the many ways that women contribute value to each link of the business value chain—as suppliers, leaders, employees, suppliers, customers, brand creators, and community members (UN Secretary-General's High Level Panel).

Effective economic empowerment for women occurs when women enjoy their rights to control and benefit from resources, assets, income and their own time, and when they have the ability to manage risk and improve their economic status and wellbeing. This entails building an economic mindset and system that does not systematically discriminate against women and is supportive of the choices they make over time. This is consistent with a key gender provision of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL), which commits to "uphold and protect the fundamental rights of women, including the right to engage in lawful employment, and to be protected from exploitation, abuse or discrimination". To achieve this, the following needs to be in place:

- Women's ability to participate and lead in decision making and collective action;
- Women's ability to maintain a job with a living wage, participate in or lead an enterprise, or retire with sufficient savings;
- The reduction and sharing of care responsibilities;
- Women's control over income, assets and natural resources in the household and vis-a- vis formal and traditional institutions;
- Women's ability to live a life free from violence with confidence, mobility, security (no harassment), agency and organization to access markets; and,
- Women's ability to build their resilience to external shocks, climate change and associated risks (Oxfam, 2017).

Some of these elements are supported by WEE-related strategies set out in two documents: the Bangsamoro Women's Agenda for Justice and Peace prepared and shared by Oxfam WELD-Peace project partners in November 2019, and the BARMM Women's Agenda prepared and adopted by the BARMM Commission on Women with support from UN Women in March 2019.

| <b><i>BARMM Women’s Agenda for Justice and Peace</i></b>   | <b><i>Women’s Agenda for BARMM (What Women Want)</i></b>   |
|--|--|
| <p><i>Socio-Economic:</i></p> <p>Develop inclusive gender- and culture-sensitive socio-economic and livelihood programs which women can readily access and enhance women’s capacities on entrepreneurship, financial management and recording as well as resource mobilization as integral components</p> <p>Strengthen/improve local employment opportunities and employment readiness of women workers (including women with special needs)</p> <p>Set up Islamic banking and microfinance programs that can be easily accessed by women</p> <p>Strengthen the <i>halal</i> Industry and ensure women’s access and participation in the development of such</p> <p>Provide tax incentives for giving of <i>zakat</i></p> | <p>Create sustainable livelihood and economic opportunities for women</p> <p>Develop a roadmap for women’s economic empowerment to include but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Context-needs- and resource-based analysis of livelihoods and economic opportunities for Bangsamoro women, including internally displaced women</li> <li>• Support for start-up women microentrepreneurs in the Bangsamoro and incentives for rising women microentrepreneurs</li> <li>• Inclusion of safety nets for women into livelihoods and microenterprises to protect them from socio-economic shocks such as armed conflict and natural disasters</li> <li>• Passage of laws or policies that will protect women from discrimination, abuse and harassment in the workplace</li> </ul> |

**This BARMM WEE Strategy is an opportunity to operationalize the socio-economic empowerment aspects of these agendas, particularly in light of supporting women and their families/communities recover from the pandemic. The two agendas also include other dimensions of empowerment (beyond economic) that are important to address, such as gender-responsive governance, women’s health and security, etc to ensure that women’s economic empowerment will be meaningfully achieved and sustained.**

The Bangsamoro Women Commission is the primary policy-making, coordinating and monitoring body of women, gender and development in the BARMM. The Commission has adopted and is implementing both agendas in collaboration with development partners and BARMM stakeholders. It is also in the process of drafting the BARMM Gender and Development (GAD) Code [7] in partnership with The Asia Foundation (TAF).

[7] A GAD Code is a local legislation that consolidates local ordinances related to women and gender equality and which guides LGUs in identifying local policies, plans and programs to address gender issues. The GAD Code integrates or is aligned to gender-related national laws and international conventions.

Among the few gender provisions that are reflected in the **Bangsamoro Organic Law** or **RA No. 11054** are the following:

### **Article VII. Bangsamoro Government**

**Section 8. Election for Reserved Seats for Non-Moro Indigenous People.** (h) Gender equality.

**Section 9. Regional Parties.** The Bangsamoro Government shall ensure the inclusion of women's agenda and the involvement of women and the youth in the electoral nominating process of the political parties.

### **Article IX. Basic Rights**

**Section 11. Participation of Women in the Bangsamoro Government.** Aside from the reserved seat for women in the Parliament, there shall be at least one (1) woman to be appointed to the Bangsamoro Cabinet. The Parliament shall enact a law that gives recognition to the important role of women in nation-building and regional development, ensuring the representation of women in other decision-making and policy-determining bodies of the Bangsamoro Government.

The Parliament shall create by law a commission on women and shall define its powers, functions, and composition.

**Section 12. Protection of Women.** The Bangsamoro Government shall uphold and protect the fundamental rights of women, including the right to engage in lawful employment, and to be protected from exploitation, abuse or discrimination, as embodied in the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

*RA No. 11054 otherwise known as An Act Providing for the Organic Law for the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, Repealing for the Purpose Republic Act No. 6734, Entitled "An Act Providing for An Organic Act for the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao," As Amended by Republic Act No. 9054, Entitled "An Act to Strengthen and Expand the Organic Act for the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao."*

# RECOMMENDED ACTIONS FOR ACHIEVING AND SUSTAINING WEE IN BARMM

---

The following actions are recommended per stakeholder group to help address socio-cultural and economic challenges and barriers, particularly those that limit the potential of women prior and as a result of the pandemic; as well as to operationalize the existing WEE agendas already supported by BWC.

## **WELD-Peace partners & WEE Consortium<sup>[8]</sup> members:**

### **Capacity building**

- Capacitate women and men at the personal and household level, and on how the family can support women's economic activities (*mashwara*), including the adoption of shared responsibilities in the home and community.
- Capacitate individuals at the grassroots level on active citizenship that advance the equal rights of women and men, and explore and promote forms of dialogue, association and collective action that can provide the space for women's active participation and mobilization.
- Link communities to access WEE support (from NGAs, LGUs, private sector, etc). Capacity building needs identified by BARMM MSMEs include: trainings on adapting to the new normal; marketing and sales training, including e-commerce, food safety and food related skills; and digital and information and technology-related training.

---

[8] Also known as the Technical Working Group on Gender Mainstreaming for Women Economic Empowerment (TWG-WEE), the WEE Consortium is a coalition of BARMM ministries, CSOs and private sector that aims to transform the lives of women and girls by collectively working to mainstream WEE in the whole region through the formulation of relevant policies, meaningful participation, innovation, research and advocacy, social entrepreneurship, networking/ linkages, and human capital development. Furthermore, the TWG-WEE shall push for policies that allows the development of jobs and livelihood opportunities for women, reform discriminatory labor policies and attitudes and establish gender-inclusive workplaces where women and men have equal opportunities to contribute, benefit and advance their careers.



“Investment in digital technology starting with establishing the digital infrastructure is a major consideration for economic recovery. It will help ensure business continuity and deliver off-site public services, as well improve work-from-home arrangements and remote learning while at the same time, reduce the risk of virus spread. Harnessing the potential of the digital economy is the way forward in consideration of the current health situation. However, **the digital divide must be addressed to ensure that all of the population get equal access to this digitized economy.**”

*The Socio-Economic Impact Assessment of COVID-19 to the BARMM, UNDP*

### **Advocacy and network building**

- Advocate for WEE to BARMM ministries and LGUs by:
  - Increasing awareness and appreciation on international, national and regional policies and mandates on gender equality and women’s empowerment, i.e., Magna Carta of Women, Bangsamoro Organic Law, etc.
  - Establishing and communicating the “business case” for WEE (WEE can boost economic growth and contribute to stronger value chains)
- Lead in the advocacy and policy work to recognize, reduce and redistribute UCDW with various line ministries in the region and with LGUs
- Establish and nurture networks/coalitions, i.e., WEE Consortium, to engage government and the private sector meaningfully in GAD, UCDW and WEE
- Organize or strengthen women organizations for better access to enterprise support and markets

## **BARMM ministries & LGUs:**

### **GAD programming**

- Invest in gender sensitivity sessions for top management to champion women's agenda in order to create local and regional champions for UCDW and WEE from ministries, parliament and attached agencies
- Recognize the work of individuals and organization on UCDW and WEE through awards and incentives
- Harness and maximize the GAD fund by:
  - Establishing/strengthening Women's Desks
  - Ensuring women's leadership and representation in all committees/working groups of LGUs and regional offices
  - Investing in cooperatives that are supportive of women-owned/led enterprises
  - Supporting regular women gatherings, conferences and fora to share good practices, gaps and challenges and develop recommendations (beyond Women's Month celebrations)
  - Supporting Youth Development Programs (that engage young women and men) as preparation for productive work and in line with efforts on the promotion of peaceful engagement and community resilience

**“More significant social reform is needed in BARMM to combat existing gender stereotypes and ensure women’s meaningful participation.** Additionally, a more profound understanding in making it possible for women to substantially and broadly participate in the political arena is needed. Transition mechanisms in BARMM must seek to radically restructure current political orders — through a new electoral code or new foundational laws — and make them more gender inclusive, as this will allow women in political parties and civil society to join alliances and advocate for substantial legal changes and political commitments, including national or party-level quotas.”

#### **Access Bangsamoro**

([https://accessbangsamoro.ph/2021/05/04/the-future-of-womens-representation-in-the-bangsamoro-parliament/?utm\\_source=rss&utm\\_medium=rss&utm\\_campaign=the-future-of-womens-representation-in-the-bangsamoro-parliament](https://accessbangsamoro.ph/2021/05/04/the-future-of-womens-representation-in-the-bangsamoro-parliament/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=the-future-of-womens-representation-in-the-bangsamoro-parliament))

## **Gender-responsive livelihood and enterprise development**

- Design and budget for gender-sensitive livelihood support programs (agriculture, TVET, etc); develop/support economic opportunities for women in BARMM priority industries, i.e., *halal*, including accreditation of women's organizations (c/o Ministry of Labor and Employment (MOLE) and/or the Cooperative Development Authority (CDA))
- Support gender-responsive value chains and product development
- Provide opportunities and a more enabling environment to increase women's independence and participation in the labour force
  - Increase women's access to soft skills training and finance
  - Invest in transportation that reduce girls' and women's mobility barriers so that they are encouraged to continue their education and participate in the labour force
  - Create safe working spaces
  - Remove key challenges that prevent women from being promoted to managerial positions
- Provide incentives for women innovators and social entrepreneurs
- For the BARMM Ministry of Trade, Investment and Tourism in particular:
  - Provide technical assistance on business and entrepreneurship (including business planning, financial management, value chains, etc) for women entrepreneurs
  - Provide similar technical assistance and support for WEE enablers (like WELD-Peace partners and members of the WEE Consortium)
  - Integrate gender and WEE in Islamic financing program (in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance)
- For ministries with a loan program: improve the structure of loan packages that incorporate more robust sustainability aspects (e.g., business continuity management, energy/resource efficiency, renewable energy, quality and productivity, etc.) beyond cashflow bottlenecks. Loan packages also need to be designed to be inclusive, accessible by MSMEs that face the biggest challenges, such as microenterprises, to be youth-/gender-responsive, and to better meet the needs of the "missing middle", promoting sound MSME investment.

“Despite on-going challenges in logistics and strict health protocols, the **Enhanced Manufacturing of Protective Wear and Equipment for COVID-19 Response in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (EMPOWER-BARAMM)** project is in full throttle. Around 30 members from selected sewing groups in the provinces of Basilan, Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi were recently provided a series of trainings on how to manufacture various kinds of personal protective equipment (PPEs), while more than a hundred other seamstresses are learning the proper way of sewing them.”

**Source: UNDP**

(<https://www.ph.undp.org/content/philippines/en/home/stories/empowering-women-in-baramm-to-advance-through-the-pandemic.html>)

- Develop COVID-19 socio-economic recovery programs that are inclusive of women’s needs
  - Considering gender disparities have been magnified during the pandemic, design and implement a special stimulus package for women in the informal sector (many of whom have no access to social protection) to help start/restart their business and livelihood
- Integrate WEE indicators and targets in organizational key performance areas and other metrics

### **WEE-enabling partnerships**

- Support public and private sector collaboration for women by creating an environment for private sector participation
- Nurture partnerships with the academe, non-government organizations (NGOs) in skills development especially on information and communications technology (ICT) and e-commerce

### *Bangsamoro Commission Women:*

- Collaborate with BARMM ministries to transform legal, policy and social norms to create a sustainable impact on WEE, such as those that support and invest in:
  - Gender-responsive infrastructure
  - Gender-inclusive workplaces where women and men have equal opportunities to contribute, benefit and advance their careers
  - Equal redistribution of unpaid care and domestic work (collect and share data and information on UCDW in BARMM)
  - Reforms that address discriminatory labour policies and practices
  - Equal access to assets, land and employment/enterprise opportunities
- Support BARMM ministries develop gender-responsive economic plans, strategies, policies and social protection programs
- Develop GAD modules that integrate UCDW and WEE in the context of BARMM (that LGUs and NGOs can use in the capacity building and training programs)
- Establish a WEE pool of experts/communities of practice in BARMM (WEE Consortium members, GAD focal points of ministries, non-government actors and academe)
- Document and share WEE best practices/success stories in BARMM
  - Establish and promote WEE metrics – standards, collection, analysis, input into planning/programming

# MEASURING WEE

---

A simple set of key metrics have been developed based on the recommended actions to track the outcome level results of this strategy.

## *Proposed Key WEE Metrics (Outcome Level)*

### 1. Individual/community level

**Women are engaged in sustainable enterprises that provide diversified sources of income (enterprise)**

**Women and men have equal opportunities to contribute, benefit and advance their careers (employment)**

**Women and men are sharing domestic and care work responsibilities at home and in their communities (unpaid care and domestic work)**

### 2. Organization level (WELD-Peace partners and WEE Consortium members, BARMM ministries and LGUs, BARMM Commission on Women)

**Programs/projects target and achieve socio-economic benefits and services for women**

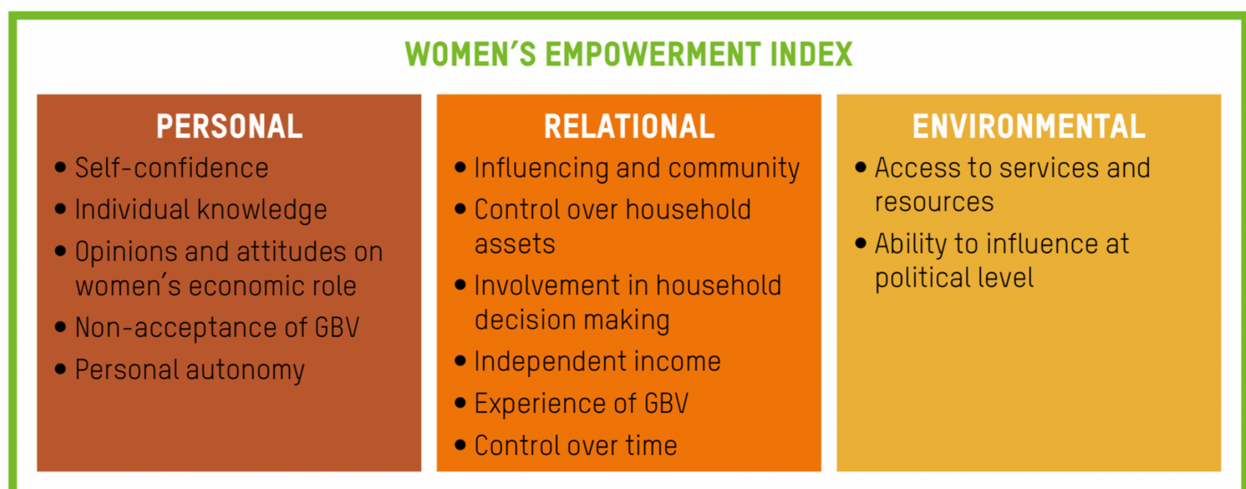
**Public and private investment are leveraged to support women entrepreneurs, women-led enterprises or enterprises that significantly benefit women**

It is recommended that these metrics be linked/aligned to Oxfam's Women Empowerment Index and to select Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) indicators developed and monitored by the Philippine Commission on Women.

## *Women Empowerment Index*

WEE results should be measured at different levels, and require support to other dimensions of women empowerment (beyond economic) in order to be successfully achieved and sustained.

- The personal domain (relating to women's individual knowledge, mobility, attitudes and beliefs, and self-perception);
- The relational domain (relating to the attitudes and norms of people within women's lives and the enterprises they interact with); and,
- The environmental domain (relating to the broader social and political structures in the public space which impact women's empowerment).



Select Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (GEWE) indicators

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry</b></p> | <p>Number of gender-responsive policies and plans addressing empowerment of and reduction of gender-based discrimination against women farmers, agrarian reform beneficiaries and fisherfolks</p> <p>Proportion of women farmers (and fisherfolk) who are beneficiaries of agricultural programs</p>   |
| <p><b>MSMEs, Trade and Industry</b></p>           | <p>Proportion of micro and small enterprises established by women</p> <p>Number of women and men with business permits in the LGU and with business name registration</p>  |
| <p><b>Tourism</b></p>                             | <p>Number of community-managed projects (e.g., Community-Based Forest Management-Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CBFM-CARP), ecotourism, etc) participated in by women and men stakeholders</p> <p>Proportion of women workers in the tourism industry who have reported specific improvements in their situations, i.e., increased incomes, improved working conditions</p>  |
| <p><b>Formal labor</b></p>                        | <p>Proportion of seats occupied by women leaders, i.e., board members, chief executive officers (CEOs), in business and industry, etc</p> <p>Gender gap in wages, by occupation and age</p> <p>Proportion of time spent on unpaid care and domestic work, by sex, age and location</p>   |
| <p><b>Informal economy</b></p>                    | <p>Proportion of businesses in the informal economy formalized, by sex of owners</p> <p>Number of gender-responsive and culture sensitive programs/projects* implemented for empowering and eliminating discrimination of women in the informal economy</p> <p><i>*Includes sustainable livelihood, entrepreneurship, credit, capital, training and technology information, packaging, marketing, social protection, occupational safety, health programs and services</i></p> |



# REFERENCES

---

Oxfam's Conceptual Framework on Women's Economic Empowerment (2017)

Gender and Conflict in Mindanao, The Asia Foundation (2012)

<https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/Gender%20and%20Conflict%20in%20Mindanao.pdf>

Fast facts on the Bangsamoro Organic Law (news article)

<https://pia.gov.ph/features/articles/1018364>

What Women's Economic Empowerment Means for Companies & Actions for Companies to Advance Women's Economic Empowerment: A Brief, UN Secretary-General's High Level Panel (UN-HLP) on Women's Economic Empowerment

End of Project Report, OXFAM WELD-Peace Project

BARMM Women's Agenda for Justice and Peace (briefer), OXFAM WELD-Peace Project

What Women Want: Women's Agenda for BARMM (briefer), UN Women

Bangsamoro Commission on Women (website) <https://bwc.bangsamoro.gov.ph/>

2018 Gender Statistics in ARMM: Labor and Employment (PSA-BARMM)

Applied Political Economy Strategy for Social Enterprise Development in the Bangsamoro, a report submitted to the British Council under the EU-funded CSO-SEED Project, June 2016 (unpublished report)

The Socio-Economic Impact Assessment of Covid-19 in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, UNDP, March 2021

Women's unpaid work worth trillions of pesos – PIDS study

<https://www.rappler.com/nation/pids-expert-reveals-women-unpaid-work-cost-trillions-pesos>

Mapping of Social Enterprises, Inclusive Businesses and MSMEs in BARRM, July 2021 (draft report)

Virtual consultations with OXFAM and WELD-Peace partners, March-July 2021

# CONNECT WITH ISEA

---

**Address:**

Room 407, John Gokongwei School of Management Building  
Ateneo De Manila University, Katipunan Avenue, Quezon City  
1108 Philippines

**Contact Nos.:**

+632 4266001 local 4835 and 5507  
+639165464870

**E-mail:**

[inquiry@isea-group.net](mailto:inquiry@isea-group.net)  
[communications@isea-group.net](mailto:communications@isea-group.net)

**Website:**

[www.isea-group.net](http://www.isea-group.net)

**Social Media:**

@ISEA.Manila



@SocEnt\_Asia



Institute for Social Entrepreneurship in Asia





Produced by Institute for Social Entrepreneurship in Asia and Oxfam Pilipinas

With support from the WELD–Peace Project funded  
under DFAT Australia’s Partners for Peace Program  
implemented by Oxfam Pilipinas