



ACTION FOR ECONOMIC REFORMS

# Data-driven Gender Equality, Disability, and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) Development Approach

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# Data-driven Gender Equality, Disability, and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) Development Approach

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ACTION FOR ECONOMIC REFORMS

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Achieving true equality requires recognizing and addressing the unique needs of various groups, including men, women, girls, boys, seniors, persons with disabilities, LGBTQ+ individuals, and others. By incorporating this perspective into all development plans and program implementations, societies can move closer to social inclusion, fostering a more equitable society. It may even start by putting up more toilets designated for women and LGBTQ not only in public places but more so in evacuation centers, recognizing women's greater role in the agriculture value chain, to having more Bahay Pag-asa or shelter homes for abused women and children in urbanizing centers. But all these need to start with data—understanding the current situation—so that proper responses and programs may be crafted.

## Introduction

Gender Equality, Disability, and Social Inclusion (GEDSI)-specific variables are often the exception rather than the rule in integrating data-driven development or 3D as an ideal approach. The aim of 3D is to foster a culture that is receptive to data and evidence, which will serve as the basis for responsive local governance and active citizen participation. This is precisely why incorporating GEDSI into the 3D process is essential, as it further reinforces and completes the objective. By collecting and analyzing data that consider GEDSIs, policymakers can better understand the needs and experiences of marginalized communities. This understanding enables the development of evidence-based interventions to address their specific challenges.

Data collection and analysis have focused on determining the human poverty index, studying economic growth and forecasting trends, often neglecting or providing limited data on women and other marginalized groups. For instance, unpaid care and domestic work remains to be a fundamental challenge in capturing the full contribution of women to the national economy. In the case of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs), the national government does not have a

complete database of all PWDs. Even at the local level, systematic collection of this data is difficult to pursue due to lack of interoperable data systems among hospitals, local health facilities and local government units.

The limited or inaccessible GEDSI data has constrained women's and other marginalized groups' visibility and thus impedes plans aimed at fostering growth in specific sectors. Though there has been some progress in gathering and incorporating gender variables, the state of affairs is far from comprehensive. Indeed, the lack of systematic information on and access to GEDSI data is a major obstacle to inclusive economic growth.

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sage, and disability disaggregated data (SGADDD). They must be considered when collecting and integrating data. Accordingly, increasing diversity in data by integrating gender variables is likewise essential in finding a long-term solution to gender issues and, more importantly, in addressing the already deeply-rooted inequalities. This could further reinforce the development of appropriate evidence-based policies and initiatives to address the issues and concerns of women and other sectors.

It is also crucial to incorporate gender and intersectionality<sup>1</sup> variables with an intent to further understand the nuances of GEDSI in different contexts and develop appropriate solutions with the involvement of stakeholders from the concerned sectors. This has the potential to greatly aid the pursuit of gender equality and social inclusion at present and in the near future. Gender and intersectionality are relevant factors that must be taken into account in every aspect of society to complete a picture of people's lives and needs.

Local governments can better ensure that their policies and programs are inclusive and equitable by incorporating GEDSI in the 3D approach. In addition, demonstrating a commitment to fairness and openness builds trust between citizens and their government. The inclusion of GEDSI into 3D can bring about more sustainable development outcomes that benefit the entire community.

## What is GEDSI?

Gender equality, disability, and social inclusion (GEDSI) is a systematic approach in addressing key issues that are critical to eliminate gender disparities and barriers to social inclusion because it opens up discussions on relevant national and international frameworks that protect, promote and fulfill human rights, especially to those who belong to the marginalized and disadvantaged members of society.<sup>2</sup>



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<sup>1</sup> Cambridge dictionary defines intersectionality as the way in which different types of discrimination (unfair treatment because of a person's sex, race, etc.) are connected to and affect each other

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Interagency Rehabilitation Programme (UNIRP) [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Gender%20Equality%20and%20Social%20Inclusion\\_1.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Gender%20Equality%20and%20Social%20Inclusion_1.pdf)

## Important Dimensions



### Gender disparities

means that barriers among individuals of various identities will be diminished.



### Barriers to inclusion

entails the elimination of social barriers towards increasing participation among various social groups.



### Improved services

refers to the services that cater to individuals with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity, gender orientation, and sex characteristics or SOGIESC and persons with disabilities on the one hand; this also pertains to the efficient and transparent services given to them by the government and the private sector, including civil society organizations (CSOs).



### More inclusive policies

means more programs and policies should be crafted for them. This refers to policies that are gender transformative since they provide the opportunities and possibilities to challenge gender norms and power disparities among persons of diverse sexual and gender identities.



### Change in mindsets

refers to the capacity of people to change their mindsets, especially their values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors towards others. This also entails a change in culture. Changing mindsets and behavior introduces changes in the values system, beliefs, attitudes, and practices.



### Increased representations

calls for the equitable participation and representation of persons of diverse sexual and gender identities in policy making and implementation of various development programs, projects, and services.



### Socio-ecological change

refers to the changes expected to happen in the different sectors of society, such as in the family/household, community, school, government, and others resulting from the change in values, norms, and attitudes about people of various sexual and gender identities.

## What is Data-driven development or 3D?

Data-driven development (3D) is an approach where decisions are made based on data analysis rather than assumptions.

Stakeholders collect and analyze data on a particular development challenge that they see, for example, on agriculture, health, environment, etc. to inform their decisions in crafting policies, allocating resources, and developing systems for better governance. From the perspective of Action for Economic Reforms<sup>3</sup>(AER), 3D is essential to cultivate a culture of collaboration among stakeholders and openness to new information, particularly in the form of digitized data and evidence. Managed efficiently, digitized data enhances data quality, resulting in improved decision-making and better insights.

It is necessary to provide resources to build local capacities and put in place systems with GEDSI as an overarching frame that promote data collection, sharing, and analysis for policy and decision-making. This means in the overall design of the survey questions and research methodology, GEDSI should be primordial.

In the context of policy development, 3D offers several benefits. First, it helps policymakers identify areas where interventions are most needed such as in analyzing data on gender-based violence, violence against women and children, and street harassment.



Second, 3D aids policymakers design and implement more effective and just policies. By collecting data on the impact of existing policies, policymakers can identify what works and what does not, and make adjustments accordingly. With digitization, or even by simply converting data gathered via pen and paper into Excel formats, storing and making it accessible to researchers and interest groups, data analysis is faster and can be tested with different policy options which can help determine those that are likely to be most effective.

Finally, 3D supports policymakers in evaluating the impact of, and improving their policies over time. By regularly collecting and analyzing data on key indicators, policymakers can determine whether their policies bring about the intended outcomes or not and make adjustments as needed.

Overall, data-driven development can be a powerful tool for policymakers and program/project implementers to make evidence-based decisions and improve the effectiveness of their work.

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<sup>3</sup> A Philippine non-government organization engaged in research and advocacy. It launched its Data-Driven Development (3D) Program to promote a culture conducive to data and evidence and make them the foundation for responsive local governance and active citizen participation.

## Status of GEDSI and 3D in the Philippines

In the Philippines, GEDSI is often missing in data-driven development. For instance, many women's issues and concerns are not captured in poverty statistics and other government data. To illustrate, the incidence of gender-based violence (GBV) and violence against women and children (VAWC) is underreported because of stigma, lack of feminist care and support, or simply a dearth of information on reporting. Furthermore, women accessing abortion services or supporting the choice to have one are disregarded because it is illegal under Philippine law. The status and needs of the LGBTQI+ population are not reflected in the census or community-based monitoring systems (CBMS) because the survey design does not provide a space to identify those belonging to the sector. The household surveys, for example, do not reflect who has control of the resources or who performs reproductive work. These are only a few examples of how existing government data and poverty statistics fail to fully capture the conditions of people at the margins.

Local coalitions such as the Gender and Development Council and governments have limited knowledge in collecting GEDSI statistics because as an approach, it is not yet used in the mainstream national and local data-gathering tools. Integrating the GEDSI lens in data-driven development will help policymakers address gender issues and barriers and ensure that development is for all.

GEDSI data can be used as evidence by policymakers to promote inclusive, gender-sensitive, and gender-transformative policies that will allow girls, women, persons with disability, and other excluded people to achieve their full potential.

Additionally, by using the Gender and Development (GAD) budget policy, which was first introduced in 1995 as "The Women's Budget" through the General Appropriations Act (GAA), local government coalitions and governments can implement GEDSI activities and initiatives.<sup>4</sup> This provides resources to support the implementation of gender advocacy and women's empowerment-focused programs and projects on the ground. This policy directs all government departments and agencies to allocate at least five percent (5%) of their total annual budgets to gender-related projects, initiatives, and programs. It is an essential component of the annual GAA and has been bolstered by the Magna Carta of Women (RA 9710).

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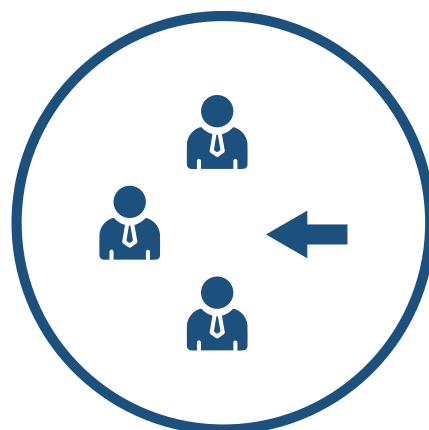
**“Integrating the GEDSI lens in data-driven development will help policymakers address gender issues and barriers and ensure that development is for all.”**

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<sup>4</sup> Gender and Development Budget. (n.d.). <https://pcw.gov.ph/gad-budget-report/#:~:text=This%20policy%20directs%20all%20government,gender%20programs%2C%20projects%20and%20activities>.

The five percent allocation makes sure that the development process at the local level does not overlook gender equality and women's empowerment. Numerous programs, including initiatives to end gender-based violence, access to healthcare for women and girls, and training and education for female entrepreneurs have been made possible through this policy. The Magna Carta of Women, which demands equal opportunities for men and women in all spheres of social, economic, and political life, strengthens this policy even more.

There are some local coalitions and GAD councils, though, that fail to properly use the five percent (5%) allocation because instead of using it for gender-related activities, the fund has been used for other matters such as production of paraphernalia and organizing of events. While some of these may contribute to promoting the GAD advocacy, the misuse fails to maximize the available but limited resources for programs that would directly improve the wellbeing and quality of life of women. For instance, instead of conducting talks and workshops with free T-shirts, funds may be better used to support pregnant and



lactating mothers as part of the first 1,000 days initiative to prevent stunting and malnutrition among children.

By ensuring that the five percent allocation is used for its intended purpose, local coalitions and governments can create an enabling environment for women to thrive in various sectors such as education, health, and entrepreneurship. Additionally, it is crucial to involve other socially excluded groups in these efforts to promote diversity and inclusion, as they are also key stakeholders in achieving sustainable development goals.



According to the **Philippine Commission on Women (PCW)**, some of the best practices of Philippine local government units on gender and development (GAD) budgeting and utilization are:

- **Aligning GAD plans and budgets with the national and local development plans and priorities;**
- **Ensuring meaningful participation of women and other marginalized sectors in GAD planning, budgeting, implementation, monitoring and evaluation;**
- **Establishing or strengthening GAD mechanisms such as GAD Focal Point System, GAD Code, GAD Council, GAD Database and GAD Resource Center;**
- **Allocating at least 5% of the total budget for GAD programs, projects and activities; and**
- **Conducting regular GAD audits to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of GAD interventions.**

One example of a Philippine local government unit that practices Gender Equality, Disability, and Social Inclusion is the Quezon City Local Government Unit. The city has a Gender and Development (GAD) Office that implements various programs and projects to promote the rights and welfare of women, persons with disabilities (PWDs), senior citizens, indigenous peoples (IPs), LGBTQIA+ and other vulnerable groups. Some of the initiatives of the GAD Office are:

- **Providing livelihood opportunities, skills training, financial assistance, and legal aid to women and other marginalized sectors;**
- **Establishing a Women’s Crisis Center, a PWD Resource Center, a Senior Citizens’ Home, and an IP Cultural Center;**
- **Conducting gender sensitivity training, disability awareness seminars, anti-discrimination campaigns, and human rights education; and**
- **Forming partnerships with civil society organizations, academe, media and other stakeholders to advocate for gender equality and social inclusion.**

You can learn more about the GAD Office of Quezon City on this link: [Quezon City GAD Office Website](#).



Another program that the Quezon City Local Government Unit has institutionalized is the QC Protection Center (QCPC), a one-stop crisis center that provides the needs of survivors of gender-based violence and abuse using a multidisciplinary approach. Established in 2011, the center uses the GAD budget for its operation with plantilla positions. It provides the following services:



**Social work intervention**



**Medical treatment/  
Medico-legal**



**Legal & Psychosocial  
counseling**



**Safety/Policies assistance**

Among the innovations of the program is a database system that provides the monitoring information on the interventions rendered to the survivors, a profile of the survivors and perpetrators, and a reporting output for policy making and improvement of services.

In Magallanes, Cavite, notable GAD-related legislative measures were passed as ordinances through the efforts of Councilor Aina Mari M. Sisante that ensure sustainability of gender-based programs of the municipality. These are: the Safe Spaces Ordinance of 2022, Revised GAD Code of 2022, and the Solo Parent Ordinance that among others, mandates the inclusion in the budget of the Solo Parent program to all barangays of the municipality.

While in Mabalacat, Pampanga, a Gender-Responsive Early Childhood Care and Development (GR-ECCD) Program of the City provides a full range of health, nutrition, early education, and social services programs for the basic holistic needs of young children from age zero (0) to four (4) to promote their optimum growth and development. It also encapsulates concepts on Gender and Development (GAD) aimed at fostering inclusivity and eliminating gender-bias among parents and their children.

The GR-ECCD Program is an upgrade of the already existing ECCD Program that was implemented by the city in 2014. The upgrade ensures that the Program embraces not only the principle of providing developmentally-appropriate activities but also gender-responsive precepts. This program was recognized by the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) last March 8, 2019, as a certified gender-responsive program and was hailed as GAD Local Learning Hub of Region III. It was again re-certified as such last March 2022.

Civil society and international organizations are also in the forefront in recognizing the differentiated needs of various sectors in humanitarian and disaster response.

Oxfam's documentation of the May 2017 Marawi Conflict in responding to the needs of internally displaced persons strongly took into account differentiated needs of various sectors, specially the marginalized.<sup>5</sup> All very immediate, but requiring gender and social

<sup>5</sup> <https://philippines.oxfam.org/latest/policy-paper/gender-snapshot-marawi-crisis>. 09 May 2018

inclusion lens are aspects on water, sanitation and hygiene, food security, livelihood and cash, gender violence, sexual and reproductive health services, shelter and non-food provision, legal assistance/identity, family reunification, management of the dead and missing, information on humanitarian aid and responses, education, and psychosocial needs.

### A Gender Snapshot: the needs of women and men displaced by the Marawi conflict



*During a Family Conversation session with Al-Mujadilah Development Foundation (AMDF) at Saguiaran, Lanao del Sur. Women were given a moment to 'breathe' by sharing their stories and reflecting on life inside the evacuation center and community-based shelters. (Photo: Genevive Estacaan/Oxfam)*

Eight months after the conflict erupted in Marawi, the pursuit of recovery remains a long-term endeavor. While needs of displaced families are continually being addressed by government and humanitarian actors, a big number of the displaced population continue to face difficult conditions. One of the key issues identified as needing urgent attention is how interventions made by the government and non-government humanitarian organizations addressed the differentiated needs, both at the immediate and strategic levels, of women, men, girls, and boys, specifically those staying in evacuation centers and community-based shelters.

Still another example is a Cebu-based NGO called Research Group for Alternatives to Development Inc. (A2D), which has done a baseline report on people with disability in the context of disaster risk reduction and management using the Purok System approach.<sup>6</sup>



#### ENABLED Project Baseline Study

As disability is now increasingly being recognized as an important consideration in reducing disaster risks, pioneering initiatives to create disability inclusive disaster management and risk reduction programs are currently being developed, implemented, and advocated for. In line with this, A2D Project conceptualized and implemented the ENABLED Project, a community-based initiative aimed towards mainstreaming disability inclusion in local disaster risk reduction processes applying the Purok System. This report presents the findings of the baseline study conducted to aid the direction of project implementation.

<sup>6</sup> <https://a2dproject.org/reports/>

The existing laws on women and the GEDSI framework were strengthened by Executive Order 100, which was signed in December 2019, that institutionalized the government's diversity and inclusion program to advance and protect the rights and welfare of all Filipinos. Through this EO, a Diversity and Inclusion Program (DIP) was formed to serve as a national program to "consolidate efforts and implement existing laws, rules, and issuances against the discrimination of persons."<sup>7</sup> The EO also aims to "cultivate a supportive, collaborative, and inclusive environment to maintain equal opportunities and to recognize the diverse and empowered thoughts and perspectives of all persons."<sup>8</sup>

### **Absence of GEDSI in 3D**

One of the main gaps that has long been identified concerns leaders, especially policymakers, at the national and sub-national levels, who, having limited general knowledge of GEDSI can bring about plans and policies that grossly lack the GEDSI frame that may result in the following negative potential consequences:

- **Exclusion and discrimination**

Exclusion and discrimination of individuals and communities based on gender, ability status, and socio-economic status that manifest in various forms, such as unequal access to education, employment, and healthcare opportunities, and unequal treatment under the law.

- **Overlooking specific needs**

The specific needs of marginalized groups may be overlooked in policy formulation, implementation, and monitoring resulting in a failure to identify and address the unique challenges that these groups face in society.

- **Limited intercultural competence**

This can hinder the development of inclusive societies that honor human dignity and respect for diversity.

- **Under-utilization of talents and skills**

Underutilization of talents and skills of individuals from marginalized communities that results in limited opportunities for them to contribute to social and economic development in their communities.

- **Tokenism**

Collection of gender disaggregated data for mere compliance without a genuine and systemic understanding of GEDSI. This defeats the purpose and potential of leveraging data for better-informed policies, plans, and programs. This will also lead to

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/2019/12/19/executive-order-no-100-s-2019/>

<sup>8</sup> Ibid

initiatives that are not responsive and appropriate to the nuanced contexts of the marginalized sectors despite the presence of gender-disaggregated data that were gathered for compliance.

- **Inequality**

The limited GEDSI data-driven procedures can create inequalities in service delivery and decision-making processes. Without accurate and representative data on the population, certain groups may be left out or overshadowed in decision making processes.

- **Missed opportunities**

There can be missed opportunities for LGUs to leverage the potential of these marginalized groups as active contributors to social and economic development. Inclusive policies and programs can unlock the potential of these groups to drive growth and innovation.

- **Ineffective resource allocation**

Limited GEDSI data-driven approach may lead to ineffective use of resources. Resources may be allocated in ways that do not best meet the needs of diverse communities, leading to underutilized or inefficient expenditures.

- **Increased social tensions**

Limited ordinances can lead to social tensions and conflicts, as some groups may feel left out or discriminated against. This can lead to an environment of distrust, hamper social cohesion, and lead to low levels of civic engagement.

## Policy Recommendations

Gender equality, disability, and social inclusion are important issues that need to be addressed at all levels of government. Here are some policy recommendations to address the challenges:

### **Training and Capacity Building on GEDSI**

Policymakers at all levels should receive regular training on gender equality, disability, and social inclusion. This training should focus on issues such as unconscious bias, intersectionality, and inclusive policies and procedures. Capacity-building initiatives should be implemented to ensure that constituents have the skills and knowledge necessary to effectively implement GEDSI policies. This can consist of workshops on data collection and analysis as well as training on how to interact with diverse communities and stakeholders.

In addition, it is essential to provide policymakers with ongoing support and resources such as access to best practices and case studies from other LGUs/communities. By investing in training and capacity-building, constituents can develop policies that are truly inclusive and equitable to all by better understanding the needs of diverse communities. This will ultimately result in a more equitable and prosperous society for everyone.

### **Develop GEDSI Champions**

By champions, we mean having leaders who appreciate national and international laws and agreements on GEDSI as integral to inclusive and sustainable local development. Having local GEDSI champions will properly frame the importance of existing laws and agreements in the local context to highlight its necessity in pursuit of their identified social and economic development goals in their communities. This will ensure that genuine citizens' participation takes place and that efforts are geared towards a systems-wide approach to development and inclusion.

### **Promoting GEDSI Data-driven Processes**

Local government units should establish data collection and analysis systems to capture information on gender, disability, and social inclusion. This data should be used to inform policies and procedures and to monitor progress towards achieving GEDSI goals. By monitoring progress towards achieving GEDSI goals, local governments can ensure that they are making meaningful strides towards creating a more inclusive society. Promoting data-driven processes is essential for creating a more equitable future for all citizens.

## **Enacting and Implementing GEDSI Ordinances**

Local government units should develop, enact, and enforce GEDSI ordinances that mandate the integration of gender equality, disability inclusion, and social inclusion into all policies and programs. Here, the proper budget utilization of 5% should also be included so that adequate resources are allocated towards these efforts. These ordinances should also include provisions for monitoring and evaluation to ensure that progress is being made towards achieving GEDSI goals. Additionally, local government units should work closely with civil society organizations and other stakeholders to ensure that the needs and perspectives of marginalized groups are taken into account in the development and implementation of these ordinances.

Moreover, these ordinances should provide clear guidance and accountability mechanisms for implementing GEDSI policies and procedures. This will help create a more just and inclusive society where everyone has the opportunity to thrive. Ultimately, passing GEDSI ordinances is one of the important steps towards building a better future for all citizens.

## **Women, LGBTQIA+, persons with disabilities, and other marginalized groups should have seats at the table**

Institutionalizing GEDSI champions and stakeholders, particularly those lacking representation in the leadership structures, in the decision making process. Decision-making at the local level should involve GEDSI champions and under-represented groups who are committed to promoting GEDSI. They can provide valuable insights into the needs and concerns of marginalized groups in the community, and help ensure that their voices are heard, and their perspectives are taken into account. By involving them in decision making processes, local authorities, and various stakeholders can create more inclusive policies and programs that address the specific challenges that different groups encounter. This can include initiatives to promote women's empowerment, support for people with disabilities, and measures to combat discrimination based on race, ethnicity, and other social identities. One concrete example is the creation of a People's Council with 50% women representation or reserved seats at local development councils for women, LGBTQIA+, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, and other vulnerable groups.

A multi-pronged and systems-wide approach is needed to address the limited knowledge and lack of GEDSI champions, data-driven processes, and ordinances at the LGU level. Stakeholders in LGUs can learn more about GEDSI and how to address it if they are given the proper training and tools. Community and stakeholder involvement is also crucial for getting the word out and gaining support for these initiatives.

## Bottomline

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All government's efforts must be “GEDSI-fied” (for lack of a better term). GEDSI must serve as the foundation of all policies, plans, and programs. It is not limited to the use of the five percent GAD budget or other sector-specific budgets. The buy-in at the highest level of leadership—the National and Local Chief Executive—will definitely create an impact alongside other local officials and staff, and with ordinary citizens. GEDSI has the potential to provide a shared perspective among stakeholders across sectors to ensure that all policies, plans and programs are inclusive, be they be related to social, cultural, environmental, political, or economic initiatives and many other concerns that may come up in the future.

