



# USAID's Growth with Equity in Mindanao (GEM-3) Program: Gender Action Plan

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**Prepared by:**

**Charles E. Feibel  
Michael G. Langsdorf  
Noel A. Ruiz  
Emma G. Salmani  
Alejandro Sundermann  
Renne P. Subido  
Carlos C. Tan**

**Submitted by:**

THE Louis Berger Group, INC.  
Engineers | Scientists | Economists | Planners  
Unit 3, 12/F, Export Bank Plaza Sen. Gil Puyat cor. Pasong Tamo  
Makati City 1200 Philippines Tel: (63-02) 812-1647  
Fax: (63-02) 818-8990

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## Introduction

The Statement of Work (SOW) on which the GEM 3 Program is predicated indicates that: *“USAID continues to seek new and more effective ways to incorporate gender concerns into its development activities, expand economic opportunities for women and provide equal access to resources, training, education and participation for both men and women. To the extent appropriate, GEM-3 will maximize the involvement of women both as participants and beneficiaries”*<sup>1</sup>

The Growth with Equity in Mindanao (GEM) Program is committed to ensuring that the benefits ensuing from all of its five major activities—Infrastructure, Workforce Preparation, Governance, Special Projects and Business Growth—are equitably distributed among men and women alike and that women and men have equal access to all GEM-supported activities, services and facilities. Achieving this objective requires that gender concerns be addressed, as appropriate, in the design and implementation of all GEM activities. To that end, “gender benchmarks”—representing this commitment—will be incorporated into the activities undertaken by all GEM components, and the achievement of the benchmarks will be monitored routinely as an intrinsic element of the program’s Monitoring and Evaluation activities. In their aggregate, the benchmarks as presented herein, represent a “Gender Plan of Action” as stipulated in the SOW.<sup>2</sup>

**Progress made in relation to each benchmark will be included in each of GEM’s Quarterly Reports, and all program “impact” information will be disaggregated to ensure that the benefits of GEM’s activities to women can be identified, assessed and described. Further, GEM’s “Beneficial Use Monitoring (BUM) System,” which has been designed to assess the degree GEM-supported projects provide *intended benefits to intended beneficiaries*, will include the collection of information relative to the impact of GEM projects on women, and such information will be disaggregated by gender in each BUM report.**

The benchmarks proposed for each component, and the rationale for their inclusion, are described in the following sections.

### 1.0 Infrastructure

The infrastructure projects constructed by GEM are the most visible and the most concrete examples of the durable benefits of a stable peace, and tangible evidence of economic development. These projects also represent the largest portion of the GEM 3 budget. *GEM will ensure that women are represented equitably during all stages of project identification, design, construction and operations* and that the ability of all projects to meet the needs of women beneficiaries will be one of the criteria for the selection of projects and their design. Processes and procedures for ensuring gender equity throughout each stage of infrastructure identification and construction are described in the subsections that follow.

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<sup>1</sup> Statement of Work, paragraph C.6, subparagraph d, p. 35

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p. 35

## 1.1 Project Identification

All infrastructure projects constructed by GEM are identified in consultation with MEDCo, the ARMM Regional Government, and provincial and municipal authorities. The identification process is based largely on the priorities of these government units as reflected in their development plans and programs. Any project identified by GEM for potential design and construction must be reflected in these prioritized plans. The latter are generated through a “bottom-up” consultation process—from individual barangay plans that are consolidated into municipal development plans, that in turn are consolidated into provincial development plans *It is highly likely that women, including representatives of women’s groups, participated in the development of such plans, and that their concerns were incorporated in the plans, given that, throughout Mindanao, women are active members of both legislative and local development councils.* Given the participation of women throughout every level of the planning process, it is reasonable to assume that LGU priorities and plans have incorporated the perspectives of women.

In partnership with local and provincial governments, GEM will construct up to 1020 individual infrastructure projects during its five-year duration.<sup>3</sup> The projects will be constructed throughout conflict-affected areas of Mindanao. The sheer number of projects and their dispersal over a large geographic area preclude the possibility of consulting separately with women’s groups during the identification stage of each project. However, to ensure that “generic” women’s perspectives are represented, GEM will conduct four or five extended focus group discussions with women’s groups in Mindanao. These discussions will focus on the following:

1. The types of small infrastructure projects—from among the “typical” categories of economic infrastructure constructed by GEM—considered most useful by women, regarding expanded economic opportunities and improvements to the overall quality of life.
2. Factors that should be considered for incorporation into the design of such projects to maximize their value to women. Such factors might include, for example, the length of pump handles, in the case of community “hand pump” water projects, or the height or stair risers in the case of community centers, boat landings and foot bridges, or the inclusion of toilet facilities in the case of community centers.
3. The location of various types of projects in relation to residential areas.

*During the process of project identification, GEM will document achievement of the following benchmarks:*

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<sup>3</sup> Up to 1000 Barangay Infrastructure Projects and up to 20 Regional Impact Projects will be constructed.

- 1. The Environmental Screening Review (ESR) Reports of GEM have incorporated the results of community consultations that included women's groups.**
- 2. The issues and concerns reflected in GEM's focus group discussions are considered in identification and selection process.**
- 3. The incorporation of "intended benefits to women" into all project rationales and requests for concurrence sent to USAID.**
- 4. Information regarding "project portfolios"—representing all projects to be constructed by GEM within a given province or municipality—are disseminated to provincial or municipal authorities and made available for perusal by women's groups, among others.**

## **1.2 Project Design**

Virtually all projects constructed by GEM—whether Barangay Infrastructure Projects (BIPs) or Regional Impact Projects (RIPs)—are designed for utilization by all members of the community or region, including men, women and children. Ease and equality of access has been and will remain a primary design criterion; a stipulation that will ensure gender equity regarding project accessibility. In addition, and as described above, during GEM's focus group discussions with women's groups, design elements identified by and considered important to women will be noted and, as possible, will be incorporated into the designs of all GEM projects.

Design factors will naturally vary according to project type. Some types of projects, such as farm-to-market roads, bridges, culverts and boat landings are for the most part "gender neutral," and will not likely raise gender-related concerns relative to design. Other types, such as water projects and community and trading centers will likely raise more design-related issues.

*For the process of project design, the following benchmarks have been established:*

- 1. Women's concerns will be reflected in the design of all projects as appropriate and feasible. Such concerns will include project location and ease of access and use by men and women.**
- 2. Final designs will be furnished to provincial or municipal authorities and made available for perusal by women's groups, among others.**

## **1.3 Project Construction**

The construction of infrastructure financed, in large measure, by GEM, will generate several thousand construction jobs that will be created and managed by GEM's construction subcontractors. Though many skilled jobs will be filled by full-time contractors' personnel, most of the general labor jobs will be temporary, and will be provided to local residents to ensure that the latter derive maximum economic benefits from the construction activities. *GEM will ensure that the majority of the general labor construction jobs created by or related to the issuance of construction contracts are equally accessible to men and women as mandated in construction contracts awarded by GEM.*

*For the periods prior to and during construction, the following benchmarks have been established:*

1. All construction contracts issued by GEM and approved by USAID will contain a “Gender Equity Clause,” stipulating that contractors will make the majority of all temporary common labor construction jobs created by or related to GEM-financed works, equally accessible to men and women.
2. Contractors will be required to report on the number of women employed on the construction work crews and the percentage of women in relation to the total work crew, for each construction milestone or period for which invoices are submitted to GEM.
3. Construction supervisors, during their periodic site visits, will verify contractors’ claims regarding the number of women employed, by: checking contractors’ work rosters, and by counting the number of women on site. Supervisors will document women’s participation in the site order book, the information from which will be included in GEM’s Quarterly Reports.
4. In the event of non-compliance with contractual gender equity mandates, contractors will be notified that unless they comply with such mandates, they may be delisted in bidding on future contracts.

#### 1.4 Operations and Maintenance

The allocation of responsibility for the operation and maintenance of infrastructure projects varies as a function of project type. Responsibility for road maintenance, for example, is typically ascribed to local DPWH offices or to municipal road maintenance departments. In some cases however, responsibility for project operation and maintenance is allocated to specific personnel within barangays or municipalities. In such cases, individuals responsible for project operation and maintenance are often compensated for their time and effort. GEM will ensure that any employment, whether part-time or full-time, created by or as a result of completed infrastructure projects is accessible equally to men and women and will further ensure that an “equal accessibility” provision—ensuring that women have access to all jobs created as a function of GEM infrastructure—is included in the Memoranda of Understanding between project proponents and the GEM Program.

*For projects requiring the assignment of operations and maintenance personnel the following benchmarks have been established:*

1. The Memoranda of Understanding signed by proponents acknowledge that employment as operations and/or maintenance personnel will be open equally to women and men;
2. An equitable and reasonable percentage of the jobs created by or as a result of completed GEM infrastructure projects will be filled by women;
3. The barangay chairs and/or municipal mayors are aware that failure to comply with this requirement may result in being excluded from future GEM activities in all areas of the program.

#### *Beneficial Use Monitoring*

GEM has implemented an extensive and effective Beneficial Use Monitoring (BUM) system that assesses whether the infrastructure projects are providing intended benefits to intended beneficiaries. BUM is an integral component of GEM’s overall Monitoring and Evaluation activities. The system relies on regularly-scheduled visits to completed infrastructure sites. GEM has also developed an effective system for rectifying problems identified during the monitoring

process. One critical criterion for assessing beneficial use—about which information will be collected during every site visit—is the extent to which GEM infrastructure projects provide intended or unintended benefits to women.

*In this regard, the following benchmarks have been established:*

- 1. In the case of each infrastructure project, the benefits of the project to women will be identified through discussions with women and women’s groups in the beneficiary communities.**
- 2. In the event that individual projects are failing to provide intended benefits to women, rectification plans will be developed and implemented—in collaboration with project proponents—and the implementation and outcomes of these actions will be assessed.**
- 3. As feasible and appropriate, the benefits provided to women by the projects will be quantified. Thus, for example, if community water projects benefit women in part by saving them several hours a day that would have otherwise been spent locating and carrying water from distance sources, the *economic and/or social value* of the time saved will be estimated.**
- 4. Projects and project-related practices that produce significant and perhaps unanticipated benefits for women will be highlighted and circulated to the proponents of other, similar projects, as examples of “best practices.”**

The continuous assessment of GEM’s Infrastructure activities in relation to the benchmarks proposed herein will ensure that women’s participation and issues are incorporated into virtually all phases of Infrastructure development and utilization.

## **2.0 Workforce Preparation**

In their aggregate, GEM’s Workforce Preparation activities and programs are designed to enhance employment opportunities for young people throughout conflict-affected areas of Mindanao; in some cases by providing vital resources to students and teachers to enhance the quality of education in individual schools, and in other cases by providing direct assistance to students through scholarships and internships.

All of the resources and assistance provided by GEM in the area of Workforce Preparation will be equally available to women and men, as indicated by the benchmarks and procedures described below for each sub-program of the Workforce Preparation Component.

### **2.1 Computer Literacy and Internet Connection (CLIC) Program**

Working with the PTCAs of individual schools, the CLIC program provides computers, high speed Internet connections, a local area network, a printer, software, and teacher training to schools throughout conflict-affected areas of Mindanao. Once resources have been provided, they are available equally to male and female students and teachers. In the case of students, access to computers is a function of total enrollment at the school and, in most cases, grade level. Gender is never a factor.

*To ensure equitable access to all resources provided by and through CLIC, the following benchmarks have been established:*

1. The resolution by which individual PTCAs agree to assume responsibility for the payment of Internet subscriptions and computer maintenance costs will be amended to include a clause ensuring that female and male students and teachers have equal access to all resources provided by CLIC.
2. The position of “CLIC Laboratory Manager” will be open to male and female applicants, and at least fifty percent of all laboratory managers will be women.
3. The training for teachers provided by CLIC—often through partner organizations—will be available equally to men and women teachers, and, overall, at least fifty percent of the teachers trained will be female, and training reports provided by GEM will disaggregate gender data to verify the number of men and women participants.
4. Overall, the percentage of female students accessing CLIC resources will be at least equal to the percentage of females in the student body and the percentage of women teachers accessing these resources will be at least equal to the percentage of women on the school faculty.

## 2.2 Teacher-CLIC

Under this program, selected central elementary schools will be provided with two computers, a high speed Internet connection, a printer and training for teachers. The computers will be utilized primarily by teachers to access information from the Internet that can be integrated into classroom instructional materials and lessons.

*To ensure that female and male teachers have equal access to the resources provided by the Teacher-CLIC program, the following benchmarks have been established:*

1. The resolution by which individual PTCAs agree to assume responsibility for the payment of Internet subscriptions and computer maintenance costs will be amended to include a clause ensuring that female and male teachers have equal access to resources provided by CLIC.
2. The training for teachers provided by CLIC—often through partner organizations—will be available equally to men and women teachers, and, overall, at least fifty percent of the teachers trained will be female, and training reports provided by GEM will disaggregate gender data to verify the number of men and women participants.

## 2.3 Education Awareness Support Effort (EASE)

The EASE Program works with PTCAs by providing grants that match, peso-for-peso, funds raised by those organizations for the improvement of specific school activities or programs. Most of the PTCAs apply for grants to establish or expand libraries, science laboratories or multimedia centers. Male and female students attending EASE partner schools have equal access to the resources provided under the aegis of EASE grants as do men and women teachers.

*To ensure that male and female students and teachers enjoy equal access to and use of the resources provided through EASE grants, the following benchmarks have been established:*

1. The Letter of Undertaking between PTCAs and the GEM Program, which defines the responsibilities of both parties, will be modified to include a clause ensuring that female and male students and teachers have equal access to all resources provided by or related to the EASE grant.
2. The training for teachers provided by EASE—often through partner organizations—will be available equally to men and women teachers and, overall, at least fifty percent of the teachers trained will be women, and training reports provided by GEM will disaggregate gender data to verify the number of men and women participants.
3. Overall the percentage of female students accessing CLIC resources will be at least equal to the percentage of females in the student body.

#### 2.4 Scholarship Program

Under the scholarship program, approximately 150 students will be assisted annually in meeting the costs, or some of the costs of their education. A broad spectrum of students—including those enrolled or wishing to enroll in secondary, post-secondary vocational and tertiary institutions—will be assisted, and the program will be open equally to men and women.

*To ensure that young women and young men have equal opportunity to apply for and be awarded scholarships, the following benchmarks have been established:*

1. Materials publicizing the program, and sent to educational and training institutions, and the public media will emphasize that scholarships will be available to both male and female students.
2. The selection process, which will be overseen by GEM, will be “gender blind,” and based exclusively on need, student potential and selected course of study.
3. Overall, the percentage of scholarships awarded to women will be at least equal to the percentage of female students applying for scholarships.

#### 2.5 Business Internship Program

Under this program, approximately 25 recent college graduates per year will be afforded the opportunity to intern, with selected international and local companies, for three to five months. The internships will be open equally to women and men.

*To ensure that young women and young men have equal opportunity to apply for and be selected into the program, the following benchmarks have been established:*

1. Materials publicizing the program, and sent to educational institutions, and the public media will emphasize that internships will be available to both male and female students.
2. The selection process, which will be overseen by GEM, will be “gender blind,” and based exclusively on applicants’ potential, ability and interest.
3. Overall, the percentage of women selected for the program will be at least equal to the percentage of female students applying.



## 2.6 Employment Qualifying English Language Training Program

For graduating college and university students, the opportunities for lucrative, permanent employment are often constrained by the lack to students' proficiency in English. This is particularly true for those occupations—including BPO operations, nursing and maritime trades—that may require reasonable capabilities in written and/or spoken English. To help students interested in employment in sectors requiring substantial proficiency in the English Language, GEM will assist ten colleges and universities throughout Mindanao, to establish English training programs using computer-based software designed to increase language skills rapidly. Every such program at every participating university will be open equally to women and men.

*To ensure that male and female students are provided with equal access to the English Language Training programs, the following benchmarks have been established:*

- 1. The Memorandum of Understanding signed between the GEM Program and participating universities will contain a clause stipulating that the program will be open to all students pursuing degrees in relevant fields of study, regardless of gender.**
- 2. The percentage of women enrolling in the English Language courses supported by GEM will be at least equal to the percentage of women enrolled in the relevant degree courses included in the program.**
- 3. The percentage of women instructors who will be trained to assist students in the utilization of the program will be at least equal to the percentage of women instructors teaching in the university English Department.**

## 3.0 Governance

The objectives of GEM's Governance activities focus—for the most part—on the design and initiation of programs to improve selected services and practices of local government units (LGUs), and are less readily quantifiable—in terms of participation of and impact on individual beneficiaries—than most of the GEM Programs being implemented by the other components.

Most of the programs and interventions designed by the Governance component will begin implementation during the second program year, and have as yet been neither fully designed nor approved by USAID. Ensuring that the benefits of such programs flow equally to women and men however, will be a key criterion in program design, and a key variable to be assessed as part of GEM's monitoring and assessment activity.

Though most of the Governance Programs remain in the “design” stage, two initiatives have been identified, and will be implemented during the first program year: the Congressional Internship Program for Young Muslim Leaders (CIPYML), and an Incentive-based program to help ten LGUs increase revenues collected through property and local business taxes. In both cases, men and women will have equal access to the benefits of the programs as explained more fully below.

### 3.1.1 CIPYML

CIPYML annually provides up to 70 young adults from conflict-affected areas of Mindanao, with opportunities to acquire skills in policy formulation, policy analysis, and the creation of legislation in support of key policies. Interns acquire skills in these areas by spending approximately four months working with committees and individual representatives in the House of Representatives of the Philippines. These experiences are augmented through exposure to academic training in Government provided by the Mindanao State University.

*To ensure that promising young men and women have equal opportunity to apply for and to be enrolled in the program, the following benchmarks have been established:*

- 1. All materials publicizing the program that are disseminated to the public and to the media will emphasize the equal access of men and women to the application process;**
- 2. Recruitment presentations held at Mindanao-based universities will stress the gender-blind application and selection process.**
- 3. The applications for enrollment in the program will emphasize that participation in the program is open equally to men and women.**
- 4. In assessing qualifications during the selection process, no consideration will be afforded to gender.**
- 5. Every effort will be expended to ensure that the group selected for participation in the program includes a percentage of women that is at least equal to the percentage of women applying.**

### 3.1.2 Incentive-based program to help ten LGUs increase revenues collected through property and local business taxes

This program, which is currently being designed, will provide specific incentives—in the form of additional infrastructure and/or computers for local schools—to LGUs achieving predetermined benchmarks measuring the collection of additional revenues. The additional revenues collected by the LGUs will be utilized to improve the scope and quality of municipal services. This program, once implemented, will have implications for gender equity in two respects: first, the incentives provided by GEM to the LGUs must be accessible equally to men and women. Second, the improved services to be provided by the LGUs and financed by the increased revenues should be designed to provide equal benefits. *To achieve Gender equity in both of these areas, the following benchmarks have been established:*

- 1. Incentives to be provided by GEM will be governed by the BIP and CLIC benchmarks as described in Sections 1.0 and 2.0 above.**
- 2. The MOUs to be signed by GEM with participating LGUs will include one or more clauses stipulating the range of additional and/or improved services to be provided by the LGUs and that such services will be designed to provide equal benefits to women and men.**

#### **4.0 Business Growth**

As is the case with the Workforce Preparation component, GEM's Business Growth initiatives include several activities, united by the common objective of seeking to expand economic opportunities in a manner that ensures that increased economic benefits are equitably distributed among the residents of conflict-affected areas of Mindanao. The "equitable distribution" of such benefits applies not only to Mindanao's geographic regions, but to gender as well.

Virtually all Business Growth initiatives are undertaken in conjunction with partner organizations, including chambers of commerce, producers associations and local cooperatives, and GEM will ensure that all of its partners are oriented to the importance of gender issues. The specific benchmarks and activities to be undertaken in each of the sub components of GEM's Business Growth activities are described briefly in the subsections that follow.

##### **4.1 Support to Business Support Organizations (BSOs)**

GEM provides financial and technical support to assist selected organizations attain multiple objectives including: financial self-sufficiency; increase the quality and type of services provided to members; advocate successfully for policies supportive of business in their geographic regions, and provide targeted training to their members.

*To verify that GEM's support is equitably available to men and women, the following benchmarks have been established:*

- 1. When working with business support organizations to draft charters and operating guidelines, GEM will expend every effort to ensure that such documents include one or more clauses ensuring that: (i) membership in the organization is open equally to men and women, and (ii) all of the organizations' activities are accessible equally by women and men.**
- 2. All training provided or supported by GEM will be available equally to men and women members of the organizations, and training reports provided by GEM will disaggregate gender data to verify the number of men and women participants.**
- 3. Participation in any trade fairs, exhibits or conferences sponsored in whole or in part by GEM will be open equally to men and women and GEM will work with the organizations sending representatives to identify an equitable number of qualified women to participate in such conferences.**

##### **4.2 Targeted Commodity Expansion Program (TCEP)**

GEM works with producers and producer associations to introduce new, high-value crops and mariculture species with high export potential, and assists such organizations in expanding their market share of such products. These objectives are attained, in large measure, through the provision of highly-focused training, through participation in trade fairs and exhibits, and through "matching" producers and exporters.

*To make the benefits of GEM's support equitably available to men and women, the following benchmarks have been established:*

1. When working with business support organizations to draft charters and operating guidelines, GEM will expend every effort to ensure that such documents include one or more clauses ensuring that: (i) membership in the organization is open equally to men and women, and (ii) all of the organizations' activities are accessible equally by women and men.
2. All training provided or supported by GEM will be available equally to men and women members of the organizations, and training reports provided by GEM will disaggregate gender data to verify the number of men and women participants.
3. Participation in any trade fairs, exhibits or conferences sponsored in whole or in part by GEM will be open equally to men and women and GEM will work with the organizations sending representatives to identify an equitable number of qualified women to participate in such conferences.

#### **4.3 Provision of Pre and/or Post-Harvest Facilities to MNLF Communities**

GEM will provide facilities to 50 communities inhabited by large numbers of former MNLF combatants. The facilities provided will be equally accessible to men and women engaged in agriculture and, as is the case with other infrastructure provided by the program, the concerns and perspectives of women will be considered in the identification and design of the facilities. Further, any employment related to the operations and maintenance of such facilities will be open equally to female and male applicants.

*To ensure that the benefits of GEM's support are equitably available to men and women, the following benchmarks will be achieved:*

1. The information to be collected during the "Infrastructure Focus Groups" as discussed in Section 1.0 will be utilized to ensure that women's perspectives regarding the identification, design and location of the infrastructure are given due consideration.
2. The MOUs to be signed between LGUs or cooperatives and the GEM Program will contain a clause mandating gender equality in access to and use of the pre and post-harvest facilities. The MOUs will also contain a clause ensuring that any employment pertaining to the operations and maintenance of the facility will be open equally to men and women.
3. Any training provided by or on behalf of the GEM Program relative to appropriate utilization of the facilities will be open equally to female and male members of the cooperatives or residents of the beneficiary community and training reports provided by GEM will disaggregate gender data to verify the number of men and women participants.

#### **5.0 Special Projects**

This component has been designed to ensure that GEM retains the capability to respond to emerging needs during the five-year life of the program. The need for additional sub-programs may be identified by USAID, by GEM staff, by MEDCo, or community-based sources and it is not feasible at the outset of the program to determine the size and scope of these initiatives. However, GEM will ensure that, regardless of the focus of the initiatives, the latter incorporate

mechanisms for ensuring the equal distribution of services, facilities and benefits to women and men alike. Gender benchmarks will be developed for these programs during their design, and the measurement of such benchmarks will be incorporated into GEM's Monitoring and Evaluation activities.

### **6.0 Summary**

As indicated in the sections presented above, GEM is committed to ensuring the equitable distribution of program benefits to men and women throughout the conflict-affected areas of Mindanao within which the program operates. Thus:

1. Gender equity benchmarks have been designed for and incorporated into each major program activity;
2. Information relative to the benchmarks will be disaggregated by gender and will be reported quarterly as part of the GEM Quarterly Report;
3. GEM's Beneficial Use Monitoring System will routinely collect information, during project site visits, regarding the benefits accruing to women from individual projects.

The GEM Program has been designed by USAID to contribute significantly to sustaining and expanding the peace in conflict-affected regions of Mindanao, and to ensure that the economic benefits associated with peace and order are *equitably* distributed to the residents of the communities in which the program operates. Ensuring that both men and women benefit equally from GEM's initiatives is an integral aspect of this commitment.