
Gender equality in selected Philippine agrarian reform cooperative management: the women-members' perspectives

Samantha Geraldine G. De Los Santos*,
Blanquita R. Pantoja and Florita P. Rañeses

Community Innovations Studies Center,
College of Public Affairs and Development,
University of the Philippines Los Baños,
Laguna, Philippines

Email: sgdelossantos@up.edu.ph

Email: brpantoja@up.edu.ph

Email: fpraneses@up.edu.ph

*Corresponding author

Abstract: Despite being a developing country, the Philippines is the most gender equal country in Asia. Nonetheless, women's involvement in leadership positions still needs improvement since gender gap in leadership roles continue to persist. As such, this paper analysed the perceptions of women on leadership and management in agrarian reform cooperatives (ARCoops) to determine gender gap in leadership roles in cooperatives. Leadership and management structures of ARCoops provide equal opportunities for women-members to lead. However, they still believe that men are for critical leadership positions while women are for positions that require care and detailed work. Women still see themselves unfit for positions that hold power and make significant decisions. While gender gap in ARCoops seems to be closing, much is still needed to empower and increase women's awareness regarding their capability to lead. Continuous cooperative management and gender-and-development trainings are still needed to encourage women to take over leadership posts.

Keywords: gender; development; cooperatives; agrarian reform; cooperative management; the Philippines.

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Biographical notes: Samantha Geraldine G. De Los Santos is a university researcher at the Community Innovations Studies Center at College of Public Affairs and Development, University of the Philippines Los Baños. As a young researcher, she worked on projects related to sustainable management of farmers' organisations, climate change adaptation and gender and development.

Blanquita R. Pantoja holds a university researcher position at the Director of Community Innovations Studies Center, where she is currently the Director. She is also the incumbent Research Coordinator of the College of Public Affairs and Development. Her main research focus includes agrarian reform, agricultural economics and rural development. Additionally, she teaches agrarian reform courses at the University of the Philippines Los Baños.

Florita P. Rañeses is a University Research Associate at the Community Innovations Studies Center, College of Public Affairs and Development, University of the Philippines Los Baños. Her research projects are on agrarian studies, agricultural coops and rural credits are some of her involvements.

1 Introduction

Filipino women hold their own niche in the Philippine society, empowered by education, access to health services, participation to economic development, and participation in politics. This is verified by its consistent upper tier ranking in the World Economic Forum's (WEF, 2020) gender gap index (GGI). WEF evaluates the gender gap using four indicators: economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment. As a developing country, the Philippines performs well in inching the gap between men and women in these indicators as it consistently belonged in the top ten since 2006, with its highest spot being 6th from 2006 to 2008. In 2018, the Philippines' ranking dropped although it still ranked 8 out of 149 countries, closing 80% of the gender gap (WEF, 2018). The country's rank in 2020 slipped further to 16th out of 153 countries due to a small decline in its index score, particularly on political empowerment thereby bridging only 78% of the difference. Still, the Philippines showed improvements in all indicators since 2006 and have continuously maintained gender parity in educational attainment and health and survival. It also remained as the most gender equal country in Asia, and the second most gender equal country in the East Asia and the Pacific region next to New Zealand (WEF, 2020).

The level of gender parity in the country and its continuous improvement in any of the indicators is a result of the recognition of women's roles in nation building in the Philippine Constitution (Section 14, Article II). Consequently, it paved the enactment of Republic Act No. 7192 (RA 7192), the 'Women in Development and Nation-Building Act' and Executive Order No. 273 that approved and adopted the Philippine Plan for Gender-Responsive Development (PPGRD) 1995 to 2025. These policy developments resulted in gender mainstreaming using the gender-and-development (GAD) approach in government agencies, departments, bureaus, offices, and instrumentalities, including government-owned and controlled corporations, at the national, subnational, and local levels. All government entities were also directed to allocate at least 5% of their budget on gender-responsive projects. They also formed GAD focal programs, projects, and initiatives to address GAD concerns in their respective mandates (Ani and Casasola, 2020).

Years after the implementation of the PPGRD, several other policies protecting women were enacted yet the importance of women in Philippine society was cemented further with the enactment of Magna Carta of Women (RA 9710) in 2009. It aimed to eliminate discrimination against women by recognising, protecting, fulfilling, and promoting their rights in conformity to the Philippine constitution and other women's rights recognised internationally. It protected women from any discrimination, whether done by public and private entities or individuals. It guards women from 'gender stereotypes and images, and outlawing the expulsion, non-readmission, prohibiting enrolment and other related discrimination against women students and faculty due to pregnancy outside of marriage' (PSA, 2010). Policy frameworks such as the PPGRD and

RA 9710 enabled the incorporation of GAD approach in planning for projects in both public and private sectors. These helped the Philippines become one of the most gender equal countries in the world despite being a developing country. Only a 22% gap exists; with the need to improve women's economic and political empowerment. Lesser number of women involved in politics compared in previous years also resulted in lower GGI ranking for 2020 (WEF, 2020).

For an effective implementation of community development projects in the Philippines, most agencies gather people in the community to form an association or cooperative. The Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR, n.d.) who oversees the implementation of the agrarian reform program enables the formation of ARCoop for agrarian reform beneficiaries (ARB) in agrarian reform communities (ARC) so that they could provide focused support services on a specific geographic area. They employ the GAD approach for it in compliance to the Philippine Constitution and the PPGRD and it resulted in an almost equal membership between men and women in ARCoops in 2016 (Philippine Commission on Women – PCW, 2021). DAR upholds equal rights for women in fishing and farming communities covered by the comprehensive agrarian reform program (CARP) as it seeks for:

- 1 equal opportunity, access, and control of CARP
- 2 equitability in responsibilities, decision-making, and participation in the CARP implementation as well as in benefits derived for both genders.

Women ARBs can own and control land, receive a just share, and be represented in advisory or decision-making bodies 'independent of their male relatives and civil status'. They can also be members of cooperatives in their respective ARCs. DAR enables women to be on equal footing with men in ARCs and cooperatives as it implements programs in pursuant of Philippine policy frameworks. The partnership of DAR and ARCoops in rural development programs creates a close partnership that enables DAR to operationalise GAD approaches in ARCoop Management. In view of the efforts of DAR to empower women, this paper attempts to determine gender gap in leadership roles in ARCoops and whether or not this had been minimised.

2 Situation of Filipino women in the Philippines

With the high rank of the Philippines in the GGI, policy frameworks in place, women finding their place in economic and political arenas, and support of agencies towards GAD, it is interesting to see how this trickles down to the micro-level and affects the dynamics of men and women in organisations. Are Filipino women able to hold leadership positions in ARCoops? How do they perceive leadership posts in ARCoops? Do they see themselves leading cooperatives or do they see themselves more in posts that reflect their culturally identified roles?

Filipino women are, in reality, better educated and have better health resulting to longer life span compared to their male counterparts (Alcantara, 1994; Population Reference Bureau, 2020). They can vote and can conduct economic activities. Still, they are expected to attend more to the moral upbringing of their children rather than perform community and public service (Alcantara, 1994). A stereotype persists on a Filipino women's traditional role of being a mother, wife, and housekeeper and that a patriarchal

family structure still prevails. In agricultural areas, they are on the receiving end of unequally distributed household work that is unpaid which results in less time available to engage in economic activities (PCW, 2021). They are more involved in reproductive roles such as childbearing, childrearing and overall management of the household, particularly budgeting and expenditures. In contrast, the men are labelled as breadwinners even if their women partners earn more. Men are also known to dominate as decision makers (JICA, 2008; Alcantara, 1994). While the gender decision dynamic is changing in some agricultural areas in the country towards giving women the access and control of the household, the narrative in economic decision making has not changed. The men are still the ones with full access and control of the farm and the women had some control only (Parks et al., 2015). For the population in the labour force, the women were more likely to sacrifice their careers than men as they enter their peak childbearing age of 25 to 29 years old, resulting to significant decline in women's labour force participation due to marriage and childbearing (National Economic Development Authority, 2019).

The Philippines is the first to grant suffrage to women in Asia (ADB, 2013a). Still, it has room for women to fill in the political arena despite having two women presidents and a higher number of elected women in government positions over the years. Male dominance in decision making continues to infiltrate the government. The men are still recognised for leadership roles and women are identified more as the supportive partner of their husbands in position:

- 1 a muse for socialisation and charity work
- 2 a mother to raise the next generation of political leaders in the family.

Perceiving women this way normalises 'glass ceiling' in Philippine politics (Hega, 2003). Moreover, the most common route to enter politics is for a woman to be a member of a political family and be allowed by her father or a husband to run, win the elections and maintain their political legacy (Vermonte, 2014). Even though the GGI from 2006 to 2020 indicated that more women have become involved, there is still a 64.7% gender gap in politics. It remains to be seen whether Filipinas will become political figures independent of their family background (WEF, 2020).

In contrast, economic participation of females and opportunity in the Philippines seems brighter as there is only 20% gap left despite of the stereotyping that Filipino women are still facing. Women already exceeded the number of men in senior and leadership positions, as well as in professional and technical professions. The country was also able to rank 5th on gender wage equality around the world (WEF, 2020). Better programs for women's economic empowerment enabled them to access capital, technology, information, market, and training, and equip them in addressing the negative impacts of globalisation on their livelihood. Together with RA 9710, other policies¹ recognise that women are contributors to the economic growth and development of the country. Women were capacitated on small-scale enterprises which involved hog-raising and processing of agri-fishery products. There were also microfinance institutions (e.g., Negros women for tomorrow foundation) that prioritise helping women farmers and entrepreneurs grow their business (ADB, 2013b). Through the availability of greater financial assistance for women in rural communities via NGO initiatives, coupled with capacity development, economic empowerment of women is occurring although the path to tread towards full realisation is still long (Ani and Casasola, 2020).

Even at the household level, Filipino women play crucial roles in economic innovation and household income diversification. Eder (2006), on his study on gender relations and economic empowerment in the Philippines, revealed that women are effective managers of the household budget, making ends meet by finding new ways of doing things. As decision makers within the household, they have more control over earnings and the day-to-day household management decisions (Akter et al., 2017). Their role enables them to see new possible courses of economic action and learn to develop longer-term household planning skills than men. They plot plans to earn their own income for the family. Yet to successfully conduct any planned economic activity, a woman from fishing or farming household needs negotiation prowess to overcome the normative negativity and scepticism of a man towards her household economic plans. This does not mean that men do not like women to earn only that sometimes their plans are contradictory. Filipinas had to be insistent and sensible. In the end, they can prove to be essential partners to their husbands in improving the economic welfare of their households (Eder, 2006).

3 Gender norms, structuration and organisations

Anthony Giddens' structuration theory explains that the human agency and the existing structures in the society are connected. The agency reflects individuals' purposeful activities that satisfy their objectives and needs. On other hand, structure can be the existing rules and related resources in the society employed in conducting individuals' activities. Structuration presents the connection between the agency and structure: the micro- and macro- levels of society. Human beings are active and reflexive agents who are capable of continuously utilising their knowledge and abilities in the 'production and reproduction of the social world'. Repeated human actions can build social structures over time, existing as individuals act and interact (Johnson, 2008). Individuals' actions (micro-level) become the foundation for the structures of society (macro-level). Likewise, these structures shape how people will act.

As the people perform their roles in their community, the reflexive nature between the agency and structure can lead to the infiltration of the schema on women as a supportive figure. When women are seen as supportive figures to the 'leader husband', it will be natural for men to be seen as leaders even in community organisations. People in the organisation may unintentionally co-opt or adapt this practice in the organisational leadership, specifically cooperative management, acting as if the organisation is part of their daily practice or societal structure. Men will most likely be voted as the Chairperson, President, Board Members, and Committee heads. Women who are seen as supporters will fill in positions that are similar to wives who do the budget, take inventory of food and household supplies, file documents for their children's schooling, and attend to activities related to their children's education. As a supportive figure, they would likely land in positions such as the vice president or vice chair who is normally thought to support or balance the strong leadership of a male leader. Women would most probably be voted or chosen to be secretaries, treasurers, auditors, and salespeople, as well as other possible positions that fit a wife's character of being supportive, careful and detailed.

4 Methodology

In determining the women's involvement on cooperative leadership and their perspectives, a survey of 90 women-members from three ARCoops in Laguna Province, Philippines was conducted for this study (Table 1). The survey respondents were randomly selected from the lists provided by the Laguna Provincial Office of DAR and the membership lists of ARCoops. Selection of respondents was primarily based on their participation in the ARCoops' activities, including general assemblies, attendance to periodic meetings, share capital payments, patronage of products, services, etc. Their availability at the time of the survey was also a factor.

Table 1 Number of respondents, by agrarian reform cooperatives, Laguna, Philippines, 2018

Item	<i>Agrarian reform cooperative</i>							
	<i>ARCoop-A</i>		<i>ARCoop-B</i>		<i>ARCoop-C</i>		<i>All</i>	
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
No. of respondents	30	33.33	30	33.33	30	33.33	90	100.00

By principle, the GAD framework recognises the interdependence of men and women in society and aims for a development process that enables women to participate on equal footing with men (UNDP, 2001). As such, the survey respondents were interviewed regarding participation of men and women in ARCoop leadership and management. They were surveyed on the position they held, number of years in position, and benefits derived from the position they held. The women-members were also asked on their perception on who should hold a certain position in ARCoops. Lastly, they were asked whether men and women have equal opportunities to hold a position in ARCoops. Data from ARCoops on the gender of officers were also generated. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, frequency/percentage distribution, and means were used in analysing the survey data. Additionally, secondary data were utilised in this study.

5 Results

The women-members came from three different ARCoops, a type of community organisation composed mainly of agrarian reform beneficiaries (ARBs) who voluntarily organised themselves to pool their resources, engage in business activities and partake in rural developments programs and strategies of the Philippine government (e.g., land tenure, land development, land management) in areas covered by agrarian reform. They are partners of DAR and other agencies (government or non-government) in implementing several programs meant to improve farming practices and the economic status of the ARBs. Many ARCoops in the Philippines grew and became open for membership even for non-ARBs and non-farming members.

An ARCoop, like any cooperative, is composed of the general assembly (GA), board of directors (BOD) led by a chairperson, officers, committees, and management staff. The BOD is responsible for drafting policies that are approved by the GA, the highest decision-making body in a cooperative. The chairperson, together with the whole BOD, is also tasked to lead and manage the cooperative in accordance with the policies

approved by the GA. Meanwhile, the management staff is focused on the day-to-day operations of the businesses of the cooperative. The manager leads the management staff composed usually of a cashier who accept payments and a clerk who focuses on sales, inventory, and other documents related to the operation of the cooperative's businesses. The manager may propose new business for the cooperative or new ways of managing the existent business to the BOD which will then be presented to the GA for approval.

ARCoop-A which was comprised of 25 male (19.84%) and 101 female (80.16%) members, was led by a male chairperson but has most of its positions filled up by women. The Vice Chairperson, three members of BOD, secretary, treasurer and bookkeeper were all women. It has seven operating committees with three members each: audit, election, credit and collection, education and training, ethics, mediation and conciliation, and gender and development. Only 5 out of 21 are men and the chairpersonship of 6 out of 7 committees were held by women (see Table 2).

Table 2 Gender distribution of members and gender of persons occupying key positions, ARCoop-A, Laguna, Philippines, 2018

<i>Position in the coop</i>	<i>Gender</i>					
	<i>Male</i>		<i>Female</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Member	25	19.84	101	80.16	126	100.00
<i>BOD</i>						
Chairperson	1	100.00	-	-	1	100.00
Vice chairperson	-	-	1	100.00	1	100.00
BOD members	-	-	3	100.00	3	100.00
Secretary	-	-	1	100.00	1	100.00
Treasurer*	-	-	1	100.00	1	100.00
<i>Sub-total</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>14.28</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>85.72</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>100.00</i>
<i>Management staff</i>						
<i>Manager</i>						
Sewing business	-	-	1	100.00	1	100.00
All other businesses (CSF, loans, hog raising)	1	100.00	-	-	1	100.00
<i>Sub-total</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>50.00</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>50.00</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>100.00</i>
<i>Operating committees</i>						
Chairperson	1	14.28	6	85.72	7	100.00
Members	5	23.81	16	76.19	21	100.00
<i>Sub-total</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>21.43</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>78.57</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>100.00</i>

Note: *Treasurer and cashier positions are held by the same person.

ARCoop-A is in a municipality in the northern part of the province of Laguna, bounded by the provinces of Rizal on the west and Quezon on the north. Its members are engaged mostly in rice farming and hog raising. However, they also have members who are microbusiness owners, teachers or employees. ARCoop-A operates several viable businesses: microfinance and agri-lending business, hog raising project, common service

facilities (CSF) rental (e.g., hand tractor, floating tiller) and garments making/sewing business. They also have a savings program for members who were able to complete their share capital.

ARCoop-B is a well-performing cooperative located on the southern part of Laguna and had won awards as an outstanding organisation based on their organisational performance and records management. It is a recipient of various projects from the Philippine Government, including hydro tillers, hand tractor and agrarian production credit program (APCP). ARCoop-B derives its income from three different business:

- 1 provision of credit/microfinancing
- 2 CSF rental
- 3 agricultural inputs trading (e.g., fertiliser, pesticides).

Their successful management yielded them a total of 188 members, 43.09% of which are male and 56.91% are female. Most members joined the cooperative so that they could apply for a loan. Majority of the members are also engaged in tropical fruit farming, mainly pineapple, rambutan, and lanzones.

Table 3 Gender distribution of members and gender of persons occupying key positions, ARCoop-B, Laguna, Philippines, 2018

<i>Position in the coop</i>	<i>Gender</i>					
	<i>Male</i>		<i>Female</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Member	81	43.09	107	56.91	188	100.00
<i>BOD</i>						
Chairperson	1	100.00	-	-	1	100.00
Vice chairperson	-	-	1	100.00	1	100.00
BOD members	2	66.67	1	33.33	3	100.00
Secretary	-	-	1	100.00	1	100.00
Treasurer	-	-	1	100.00	1	100.00
Sub-total	3	14.28	4	85.72	7	100.00
<i>Management staff</i>						
Manager	-	-	1	100.00	1	100.00
Bookkeeper	-	-	1	100.00	1	100.00
Salesclerk	-	-	1	100.00	1	100.00
Sub-total			3	100.00	3	100.00
<i>Operating committees</i>						
Chairperson	2	28.57	5	71.43	7	100.00
Members	6	28.57	15	71.43	21	100.00
Sub-total	8	28.57	20	71.43	28	100.00

ARCoop-B opened the organisation to other types of members, including those living in nearby barangays (villages) who wanted to access their microfinancing services. In contrast to ARCoop-A, it had a fewer number of women in the BOD (Table 3). Only the

Vice Chairperson and one BOD member were women. Nevertheless, the manager, bookkeeper and salesclerk were all women. A total of 21 cooperative members were part of the seven functioning committees which are the same as ARCoop-A, and 15 of them are women. Moreover, 5 out of the 7 committees are chaired by women.

ARCoop-C is located in an adjacent municipality to the location of ARCoop-A. Most of the members plant rice or vegetables as a source of livelihood. AR-Coop C has four businesses, namely:

- 1 microfinance program
- 2 agricultural supply store
- 3 CSF rental
- 4 soap and dishwashing liquid production.

Its members joined because they needed access to microfinancing start their microbusinesses (e.g., community general merchandise store).

Table 4 Gender distribution of members and gender of persons occupying key positions, ARCoop-C, Laguna, Philippines, 2018

Position in the coop	Gender					
	Male		Female		Total	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Member	65	56.52	50	43.48	115	100.00
<i>BOD</i>						
Chairperson	1	100.00	-	-	1	100.00
vice chairperson	1	100.00	-	-	1	100.00
bod members	2	40.00	3	60.00	5	100.00
Secretary/treasurer			1	100.00	1	100.00
<i>Sub-total</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>14.28</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>85.72</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>100.00</i>
<i>Management staff</i>						
Manager	1	100.00	-	-	1	100.00
Bookkeeper/cashier	-	-	1	100.00		
<i>Sub-total</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>100.00</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>100.00</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>100.00</i>
<i>Operating committees</i>						
Chairperson	2	33.33	4	66.67	6	100.00
Members	6	33.33	12	66.67	18	100.00
<i>Sub-total</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>33.33</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>66.67</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>100.00</i>

The BOD of ARCoop-C is composed of the chairperson, vice chairperson and five members of the board (Table 4). Only three of the members were women. Meanwhile, only one person acted as a secretary and treasurer, and she is a woman. ARCoop-C functions with six committees only since it still has to establish the gender and development committee. Eighteen people compose the six committees and 12 of these are women. Four of the committees were also chaired by women. The manager of the cooperative was a male while the bookkeeper and cashier positions were held by

female members of the cooperative. The total number of members of ARCoop-C was 115, majority (56.52%) of which are male.

Table 5 Positions of respondents in ARCoops, by agrarian reform cooperatives, Laguna

<i>Position/number of years holding position</i>	<i>Agrarian reform cooperative</i>							
	<i>ARCoop-A</i>		<i>ARCoop-B</i>		<i>ARCoop-C</i>		<i>All</i>	
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Position in the cooperative								
Officer	8	26.67	9	30.00	13	43.33	30	33.33
Member	22	73.33	21	70.00	17	56.67	60	66.67
Average number of years holding position	5		4		5		5	
Chairperson								
10 years	1	3.33	-	-	-	-	1	1.11
6 years	1	3.33	-	-	-	-	1	1.11
Vice chairperson								
11 years	-	-	1	3.33	-	-	1	1.11
8 years	1	3.33	-	-	-	-	1	1.11
BOD member*								
13 years	1	3.33	-	-	-	-	1	1.11
6-7 years	-	-	-	-	3	10.00	3	3.33
1-3 years	-	-	1	3.33	2	6.67	3	3.33
Committee member								
18 years	-	-	-	-	1	3.33	1	1.11
6-10 years	2	6.67	2	6.67	2	6.67	6	6.67
1-5 years	4	13.33	4	13.33	6	20.00	14	15.56
Secretary								
6 years	-	-	1	3.33	-	-	1	1.11
5 years	1	3.33	-	-	-	-	1	1.11
Treasurer								
7-8 years	1	3.33	-	-	2	6.67	3	3.33
2-4 years	1	3.33	1	3.33	1	3.33	3	3.33
Manager								
1 year	2	6.67	-	-	-	-	2	2.22
Bookkeeper								
10 years	-	-	-	-	1	3.33	1	1.11
1 years	1	3.33	-	-	-	-	1	1.11
Messenger								
3 years	-	-	-	-	1	3.33	1	1.11
Adviser								
5 years	1	3.33	-	-	-	-	1	1.11

Note: *Multiple response.

5.1 Positions held in ARCoops and incentives

Out of the 90 women-members who participated in the survey, 33% held positions for an average of five years, the shortest was one year and the longest was 18 years (Table 5). Across all ARCoops, two women members were voted as BOD members served for one year (2.22%) and five were chosen as committee members (5.55%). One woman-member from ARCoop-C had been a committee member for 18 years. Meanwhile, ARCoop-A had managers who were hired for a year (2.22%). About 13% of them were committee members.

Only a few received monetary benefits for their position in ARCoops (Table 6). Most BOD members receive honorarium and incentives for attending meetings. Two out of 3 coops could provide travel allowances for officers that need to attend meetings outside their vicinity. Only ARCoop-C was able to provide Christmas gifts as well as incentives for loan payment collectors. Meanwhile, ARCoop-A provided commissions for the Manager.

Table 6 Benefits derived by officers, by agrarian reform cooperatives, Laguna, Philippines, 2018

<i>Benefits derived as an officer</i>	<i>ARCoop-A</i>		<i>ARCoop-B</i>		<i>ARCoop-C</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Honorarium	4	50.00	5	83.33	1	25.00	10	55.56
Travel allowance	2	25.00	1	16.67	-	-	3	16.67
Incentives	1	12.50	-	-	2	50.00	3	16.67
Christmas gift	-	-	-	-	1	25.00	1	5.56
Commission	1	12.50	-	-	-	-	1	5.56
Total	8	100.00	6	100.00	4	100.00	18	100.00

5.2 Perception on positions in ARCoops

Most respondents (94%) felt that men and women members have equal opportunities. One respondent claimed that it depends on the position being vied for implying that several members still select officers based on gender biases and expectations. The women who believed there are equal opportunities for them reasoned that they perceived there is gender equality in ARCoops (27.78%). In addition, officers were mostly chosen by election in which any member, whether a male or female can be nominated (17.78%). They also believed that both men and women can be good managers (16.67%).

The critical positions in an ARCoop where leadership and high level of participation are needed are the following: chairperson, vice chairperson, BOD members, secretary, treasurer and manager (Table 8). Many of the women-members believed that a male is fit for a chairperson (52.22%). In contrast, they favoured that the vice chairperson be a female (41.11%). In the meantime, many answered that both men and women can be voted as BOD members (45.56%). For the positions of secretary and treasurer, they should be held by women (83.33% and 88.89%, respectively). Likewise, many favoured that a manager should be a woman (40.00%).

Table 7 Perceptions on opportunities for each gender to hold positions, Laguna, Philippines, 2018

Perceptions on opportunities	<i>Agrarian reform cooperative</i>							
	<i>ARCoop-A</i>		<i>ARCoop-B</i>		<i>ARCoop-C</i>		<i>All</i>	
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Male and female members have equal opportunities to hold positions</i>								
Yes	29	96.67	27	90.00	29	96.67	85	94.44
No	1	3.33	1	3.33	1	3.33	3	3.33
Depends on position	-	-	1	3.33	-	-	1	1.11
Do not know	-	-	1	3.33	-	-	1	1.11
<i>Reasons why men and women have equal opportunity</i>								
There is gender equality in the cooperative	6	20.00	5	16.67	14	46.67	25	27.78
Officers are chosen by election	6	20.00	4	13.33	6	20.00	16	17.78
Both men and women can be good leaders/managers	7	23.33	8	26.67	-	-	15	16.67
Women are capable of what men can do	3	10.00	2	6.67	3	10.00	8	8.89
Every member has the right to occupy a position	3	10.00	4	13.33	1	3.33	8	8.89
Both men and women can fulfil their duties and responsibilities	2	6.67	2	6.67	3	10.00	7	7.78
The person is qualified for the position	2	6.67	2	6.67	-	-	4	4.44

The women-members had reasons for their gender preferences for a certain position (see Table 9). They believed that a male chairperson stands on his convictions and has attributes that make him fit to lead. They also believe that men are better managers or leaders. Meanwhile, a female vice chairperson is believed to create balance in the leadership and ensures that women can be heard. They can also be the support the male chairperson needs and can be of help to him when needed. Also, a woman as a vice chairperson is believed to be devoted to her position.

For BOD Members, the women-members answered that any gender can be voted for it so long as the person knows how to lead or manage the ARCoop. Having a mix of men and women in the BOD would create a more balanced decision-making. They also believe that both men and women can lead.

The positions for Secretary and Treasurer were overwhelmingly believed to be for women. The women-members mentioned that women are fit for a secretarial post because they can manage paper works and keep records well. They also have attributes that make them fit to be a secretary, such as being diligent, approachable, efficient, and trustworthy. They are also believed to write clear and good reports. Likewise, women are

fit to be treasurers because, characteristically, they are believed to know how to manage finances well, be trustworthy, diligent, and careful in handling money.

Table 8 Perceptions on the gender that should hold key positions, Laguna, Philippines, 2018

<i>Perceptions on opportunities</i>	<i>Agrarian reform cooperative</i>							
	<i>ARCoop-A</i>		<i>ARCoop-B</i>		<i>ARCoop-C</i>		<i>All</i>	
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Chairperson								
Female	3	10.00	15	50.00	2	6.67	20	22.22
Male	19	63.33	7	23.33	21	70.00	47	52.22
Both male and female	8	26.67	8	26.67	7	23.33	23	25.56
Vice chairperson								
Female	19	63.33	10	33.33	8	26.67	37	41.11
Male	4	13.33	10	33.33	14	46.67	28	31.11
Both male and female	7	23.33	10	33.33	8	26.67	25	27.78
BOD member								
Female	16	53.33	12	40.00	10	33.33	38	42.22
Male	4	13.33	3	10.00	4	13.33	11	12.22
Both male and female	10	33.33	15	50.00	16	53.33	41	45.56
Secretary								
Female	24	80.00	27	90.00	24	80.00	75	83.33
Male	1	3.33	-	-	-	-	1	1.11
Both male and female	5	16.67	3	10.00	6	20.00	14	15.56
Treasurer								
Female	27	90.00	27	90.00	26	86.67	80	88.89
Male	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0.00
Both male and female	3	10.00	3	10.00	4	13.33	10	11.11
Manager								
Female	16	53.33	18	60.00	2	6.67	36	40.00
Male	6	20.00	5	16.67	19	63.33	30	33.33
Both male and female	8	26.67	6	20.00	9	30.00	23	25.56
No answer		-	1	3.33		-	1	1.11

Finally, for a manager, the women-members believed that a woman is fit for the post because they have attributes fit for a manager: diligent, approachable, trustworthy, and patient. They are also meticulous, systematic, strategic, and knows how to keep records. Lastly, women are believed to be more available than men and have time for ARCoop activities.

Table 9 Top reasons for the gender of who should hold key positions in ARCoops, Laguna, Philippines, 2018

Reasons for choice per position	Agrarian reform cooperative															
	ARCoop-A		ARCoop-B		ARCoop-C		All		ARCoop-A		ARCoop-B		ARCoop-C		All	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Chairperson																
Male																
Has convictions (may paninindigan)	6	20.00	4	13.33	5	16.67	15	16.67								
Men have attributes that make them fit to lead (e.g., diligent, powerful, brave, thinks sharply, skilful, responsible, kind)	6	20.00	1	3.33	5	16.67	12	13.33								
Men are good managers/leaders	5	16.67	-	-	4	13.33	9	10.00								
Vice chairperson																
Female																
For check and balance; so that women can also be heard	9	30.00	-	-	3	10.00	12	13.33								
Supports the male chairperson; A woman vice chairperson will be able to help the chairperson well	6	20.00	1	3.33	3	10.00	10	11.11								
Women are devoted workers	4	13.33	2	6.67	-	-	6	6.67								
BOD member																
Both male and female																
So long as the person knows how to lead or manage the ARCoop	2	6.67	8	26.67	1	3.33	11	12.22								
For a more balanced decision-making	2	6.67	4	13.33	5	16.67	11	12.22								
Men and women can both lead	4	13.33	-	-	6	20.00	10	11.11								
Secretary																
Female																
Women can manage paper works and keep records well	4	13.33	8	26.67	14	46.67	26	28.89								
Women have attributes fit to be a secretary (e.g., diligent, approachable, efficient, trustworthy)	7	23.33	15	50.00	2	6.67	24	26.67								
Women can write clear/good reports	10	33.33	3	10.00	6	20.00	19	21.11								
Treasurer																
Female																
Women can manage finances well	15	50.00	12	40.00	15	50.00	42	46.67								
Women are trustworthy when it comes to money	3	10.00	6	20.00	3	10.00	12	13.33								
Women are diligent and careful in handling money	7	23.33	4	13.33	3	10.00	14	15.56								
Manager																
Female																
Women have attributes fit to be a manager (e.g., diligent, approachable, trustworthy, patient)	7	23.33	14	46.67	1	3.33	22	24.44								
Women are good managers (e.g., meticulous, systematic, strategic, knows how to keep records)	6	20.00	2	6.67	1	3.33	9	10.00								
Women are more available than men	3	10.00	1	3.33	-	-	4	4.44								

6 Discussion

A general impression on organisations in rural areas is that women are more actively engaged in its activities. In Southeast Asia, the Filipino women are known to be active members in various types of organisations (female-only, mixed agricultural, mixed non-agricultural) (Akter et al., 2017). The three ARCoops in Laguna were no exception. Women occupied more than half of available positions in the ARCoops – from the BOD to committees, occupying a significant proportion (32%) of positions. Men were thought of as breadwinners and prefer to work (Alcantara, 1994; Akter et al., 2017), as such they were perceived to be busy with farm work, business, or employment that they had less time for ARCoop activities compared to women. According to the women-members of ARCoop-A, the busyness of men was the primary reason they do not like holding a position in the cooperative.

Occupying posts, does not always mean there would be monetary benefits as only a few women-members were able to receive such. From the three ARCoops, only two could provide incentives to officers and management staff since their businesses were viable. ARCoop-C was able to provide Christmas gifts and incentives prior to this study. When their most viable business, a water refilling station, began to incur losses, ARCoop-C started faltering in providing incentives to the officers and management staff, except for their loan collector. Generally, most women who held positions in the ARCoops conduct their duties and responsibilities voluntarily. In particular, those who were members of committees serve without any compensation.

The women-members, being active participants in their ARCoops, perceive that gender equality is present in their respective organisations. They knew that both men and women may hold a position so long as they pass the qualifications written in the by-laws of the ARCoops. However, they personally feel that there were some positions meant for men, and some positions meant for women. This is evident as 52% viewed that men should be in Chairperson position while more than 80% perceived that women should act as Secretary and Treasurer. 40% also opted for a woman as manager. A deviation was observed however in ARCoop-B, where only a minority felt that a man should be the Chairperson. They already experienced having a woman chairperson who was able to fulfil her duties and responsibilities and manage the ARCoop well. This made them open to the idea that a female can lead an organisation. For other positions, the answers of the women-members reflected the need to balance the gender roles, such that even though they favoured a male chairperson, they would rather have a female vice chairperson. The BOD members could also be occupied by both male and female members.

The women-members' choice of gender per position reflects the character for which each gender in the Philippines is known. This is also where the structuration of gender roles is evident, co-opting into the cooperative management practices what men and women in households do. Men are known to be the 'husband-leader' and breadwinner. The women's reasons for choice reflect that the men in ARCoops are leaders who are diligent, powerful, strong, and good decision makers. For them, the men's attributes are what is warranted for an ARCoop. Specifically, in ARCoop-A, their male chairperson is held with great respect by the members for being wise and strict with the policies, which, for them, led to the success of most of ARCoop-A's projects and continuous increase in membership. Meanwhile, they believed women are skilled in positions that entail detail and care because their household roles involved budgeting, childcare, and detailed

household management. Likewise, they viewed themselves to be fit for roles that support leaders, a parallelism to the supportive role of wives to the husband-leader.

7 Summary and conclusions

The Philippines' work in closing the gender gap is evident in the ARCoops as DAR kept a close working relationship with them. Even though located in rural areas, Filipino women can hold leadership positions, as exemplified in ARCoops. The women-members even recognised the presence of equal opportunities for both genders in cooperative management. The high percentage of women actively participating in cooperative management evidently expresses that women fulfil significant roles in ARCoops.

Nevertheless, when it comes to occupying critical leadership positions, there exists preferences of which gender should occupy which. It reflects the longstanding traditional belief on the role of a man and woman in the household. They still believe that men are to occupy vital leadership positions and the women are fit for positions that support the leader as well as require care and detailed work. In co-opting the traditional roles of men and women in the cooperative management, this can lead to continuous normalisation of the division of labour among genders. While this can still positively affect the efficiency of ARCoops at present, this can become a bottleneck once the availability of men or women to actively participate in cooperative management becomes limited. One example is in ARCoop-A where their chairperson had expressed his intent to retire from duty due to old age. If the women continue to see that men are the ones fit for leadership, and the men continue to insist that they are busy with their economic 'breadwinner' duties, then ARCoops may face a vacuum in leadership. Women, even men, need to distinguish that cooperative leadership positions is not limited to a particular gender. As with Giddens' structuration theory, only when individuals act continuously will certain practices become structures for social action at the macro-level. As they start to recognise that it is possible for women to lead, members of ARCoops will start to elect women in leadership posts, as what occurred in ARCoop-B.

The study solidifies and at the same time reveals facets of gender equality in the Philippines. As the number one country in Asia that provides a lot of opportunities for women, leadership roles are not elusive to Filipino women in organisations. They are among the valuable members who could bring their expertise from the household towards the cooperatives. Concurrently, the study revealed that there is more to be achieved in closing the gender gap when it comes to cooperative management. ARCoops became an extension of the usual structure of a Filipino family: the control of the household assets to earn income (e.g., land, machineries, tools for farming) rests on the male agent, the husband, while control of household operations (e.g., household chores, budgeting, food) rests on the female agent, the wife. Gender equality as a principle has trickled down at the micro-level, however, there are still enduring structures and schemas on men and women that need to be modified. This can be done as in the example of ARCoop-B. When a woman is recognised for her leadership, people will naturally act according to the new structure where women are on equal footing with men in organisational management.

Hence, the GAD approach needs to be continually incorporated in program planning in rural areas, particularly in programs that work with community organisations. Through the context the study provided, it was able to capture where else can the Philippines improve in closing the gender gap. The structuration perspective will be useful in

analysing whether a country or community has closed the gender gap or is still far away from it. Additionally, it enables the identification of what micro-level or macro-level socio-cultural attributes are co-opted within an organisation. It will also be useful in designing appropriate gender intervention frameworks (Akter et al., 2017). Programs that help educate and reinforce the value of women as leaders shall help reshape gender roles and form new gender schemas in organisations. Women are present in cooperatives not just because they have time for it but because they can lead and fulfil their duties and responsibility well. What is needed is to continually create awareness and empowerment to enhance the knowledge and capability of women to lead organisations. To balance, organisations can start recognising that men may also fill in positions traditionally seen as positions for women. GAD Committees in each cooperative and their respective BODs, together with government agencies can play an active role in ensuring gender-equal operation of the cooperatives in rural areas where traces of patriarchal leadership still exists.

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Notes

- 1
 - a The Act Providing Assistance to Women Engaging in Micro and Cottage Business Enterprises) (RA 7882)
 - b Cooperative Code of the Philippines (RA 6938 amended by RA 9520)
 - c CARPER Law (RA 9700)
 - d Magna Carta for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) (RA 9501).