

INTRODUCTION TO THE SUPPLEMENT

The Global Assembly on Everyday Life, Gender, and Sexuality

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ABSTRACT

The Global Assembly on Everyday Life, Gender, and Sexuality (GAELGS) gathered people from different walks of life around the globe who worked to advance gender and sexuality in several ways – film, research, educational programs, and services. The content organization was purposeful in creating a safe space for exchanging ideas and practices. The submission of materials for the conference, such as documentaries and short films, is more than research papers that reflect the desire of people to normalize sexuality as part of daily life more than a unique topic of intellectual discourse. However, the need to test practices and models to promote social change must be fostered by continuously offering safe venues for sharing and discussions, like GAELGS.

One of the key Sustainable Development Goals that ensures inclusiveness in social growth and development is Gender Equality (SDG#5). This is because of the premise that to have a more sustainable future for all is to eliminate prevailing gender-based discrimination, violence, and life-threatening consequences of limited access to essential services for quality life and safe reproductive health services in most parts of the world.

In recent years, there has been a global interest in the intersections of occupations (or everyday life), gender, and sexuality among stakeholders such as students, professionals, and organizations. However, sexual orientation and gender preferences are not freely discussed in public conferences, especially in a society where culture dictates that there are only two genders (binary). Therefore, there is the perpetuation of biases and discrimination because discussions about gender is taboo. Conferences tackling gender-related topics or issues are not popular in this kind of society. The lack of understanding that gender is about living life and most often contextualized in different preoccupations is what the Global Assembly on Everyday Life, Gender, and Sexuality wants to float for evidence-based and experiential discourse. Thus, the framework of the Global Assembly was to create a recognized international safe platform to discuss and exchange information, innovations, and development on occupations with a focus on gender and sexuality by partnering with an international organization — SexGen-OTOS. This organization comprises a global network of occupational therapists and scientists seeking social and occupational justice for people who are experiencing issues due to their sexuality and gender.

The conference involved speakers who are students, academics, personalities from the government, clinicians, and researchers in discussing different issues. The highlighted topics such as the Philippine SOGIE Bill, the intersectionality of education, gender, and sexuality during the COVID-19 pandemic, occupational justice, gender-inclusive workplaces, and feminist research reflect the intention to elevate the conversations on gender and sexuality.

Overall, the event became a gateway for artistic expression such as, but not limited to, film competitions, photography contests, and so on that revolve around championing the realities and proposed future of all people across the gender spectrum, also for research and policies which tackle important gender-related issues. It attracted participation from different countries, as shown in Table 1.

The challenges of delivering a Global Assembly like this using an online platform did not deter engagements from participants to surface common experiences, particularly on how to mainstream gender in education and research to increase the knowledge of individuals based on different contexts – school, workplace, government institutions, family, religious groups, and others.

The most underscored topic was the talk of Professor Carolyn Sobritchea, Chair of the Technical Panel on Gender and Women's Studies of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), on the experience of the Philippines in integrating gender topics in the educational system. The evolution of the intention of educational institutions to

introduce basic gender topics from a scientific perspective into the current curriculum-based sexuality education was described fully. The development was because of the recognition that concepts must be taught at an early stage of learning (primary school) to build up an incremental knowledge progression in the higher education institutions (HEIs) into a context-based and culture-sensitive gendered curriculum with the end goal of upholding the fundamental human rights of the people. The impetus for the facilitated implementation efforts was the enabling laws such as the Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Law (RA 10354) that allowed the inclusion of sexuality-affecting behaviors, health, and life in the educational system among the youth and courses in the K-12 curriculum (DepEd Order No. 31) as well as the holistic understanding, intellectual and civic competencies related to gender issues in the higher educational system (CHED MEMO 20-2013 and CMO 1-2015). A similar experience in Ireland was shared by Niall Kirrane, a health service executive of the National Gender Service of Dublin, where increased public interest and advocacies happened to reframe structures in different sectors such as education and health after the passage of the Transgender Rights Bill in 2015. Ireland is a prominently Catholic and Christian society that embraces gender-affirming health care.

Another critical perspective that captured the audience's interest was the appraisal of the gender-based policies of the educational system in the country by Dr. Sharmila Parmanand, a postdoctoral research fellow at the London School of Economics. While passage of enabling laws is the typical path for a whole-of-society approach to promote change, it can also be a deterrent when basic human need is neglected in the provisions. General observations from policy analysis show a significant gap between enacted laws with implementation policies. For example, legislative discussion constructs on sex and sexuality are that they are the source of risks and public

health problems. Therefore, the implementing rules and policies of these laws failed to recognize the principles that sex, sexuality, or gender is an integral part of the human experience. The implication of this is a fragmented and impractical implementation system which is happening with the recently enacted Safe Spaces Act (RA 11313). The observation is that the educational systems are not ready to handle complaints of gender-based harassment because of inadequate support mechanisms like referral pathways, management guidelines, and competent human resources.

There seems to be a long way to go to create big ripples of change in our society on gender issues. It is recognized that sexuality and gender are being tackled in many ways depending on the socio-political contexts of countries. But what is common to all views is education's significant contribution to normalizing discussions about gender and sexuality. This approach can be executed in several ways to increase people's awareness and understanding, from informal discussions on social media platforms to formal discourse in global assemblies. However, a fresh perspective that gender and sexuality are part of the human experience can encourage more multisectoral engagements to advance societal development towards gender equality.

Collating the proceedings of the Global Assembly into this supplement publication of the Philippine Journal of Health Research and Development is vital to the University of the Philippines Manila Center for Gender and Women Studies' (CGWS) goal to create an evidence-based framework to unify actions towards policy recommendations that any health professional education institution can use. In this era where information is accessible to everyone, there is a need to curate and collate these data to make them more useful in the advocacies of the CGWS so that its educational programs, research endeavors, and services are practical and relevant to the people it serves.

Table 1. *Distribution of conference participants*

Category of Participation	Number	Countries
Registered participants	648	Australia, Brazil, Canada, East Timor, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Myanmar, Pakistan, Philippines, United Arab Emirates, United States, United Kingdom, Taiwan, Rwanda
Film Submission	602	India, Islamic Republic of Iran, United States, Brazil, United Kingdom, Spain, Italy, France, Turkey, Russian Federation, Philippines
Research Abstract	16	Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, Taiwan, United Kingdom