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Beyond The Borders of Chores and Orders

When womanhood becomes UNICEF's initiatives for gender-inclusive education

The morning bell rings, and the campus slowly comes alive— chairs scrape against the floor, conversations overlap, and students settle in classrooms. At first glance, the scene is just normal, bustling with different faces and minds.

Yet within these familiar spaces, something more meaningful is taking shape. Beyond lessons and lectures, schools become places where values are formed, including the understanding of equality and inclusion that speaks on traditionalized gendered roles— a system of knowledge and acceptance that has yet to be felt for women in some parts of the world.

With National Women's Month's theme of "WE for Gender Equality and Inclusive Society" uplifting the presence of women as more than just a model of maternity, the United Nations Children's Funds (UNICEF) and its initiatives shift focus on the suppression of women in intellectual fields as a call to a growing concern of academic divide. In that, the myriad of changes in duties that the organization looks into may finally welcome anyone and exclude no one in the four walls of learning.

Education is a matter that comes to recognize the significance of gender equality; yet, opportunities arise to only those met with the privilege of experiencing it. UNICEF estimates 119 million girls are out of education as of 2025, with them carrying the surname of someone else rather than holding school supplies that have kept defining their everyday life deprived of such rights.

The international organization proclaims two severe reasons as to why women are given the short-end of such promising futures: Child marriages, and poverty. In the likes for aspiring girls who wish to lead a life with a professional streak, they are met with the reality of being the backburner of the family as boys are saluted off to the world of academic responsibilities.

"Poor families often favor boys when investing in education," stated UNICEF through their official website, in which the organization heavily emphasized the lack of acceptance for gender progressive initiatives in some countries.

Despite certain courses of action that may soon conceal the gap of gender-inclusive education, challenges still exist within these spaces. Subtle biases and stereotypes can influence how women are treated, sometimes causing them to feel excluded or unheard of. It is duly so because women are bound in culture that closes them into the four walls of their home, resorting to chores and wedded duties as the only part in their life families condition them to believe they can be good at

UNICEF's actions to fight against such ideas are tied to creating programs that ceases all the reasons for women to be deprived of education. By expressing their initiatives through government platforms and local communities, collaborative projects to provide easy access for women adhered to challenging settings establishes the core objective of the organization in removing barriers between them, gender, and education.

"Gender-equitable education systems empower girls and boys and promote the development of life skills – like self-management, communication, negotiation and critical thinking – that young people need to succeed. They close skill gaps that perpetuate pay gaps, and build prosperity for entire countries," As imploringly stated by the organization.

It is through the likes of UNICEF's campaign that they wish to impart the thought that gender inclusivity does not falter in a world that progresses with education, as women too are meant to lead and to know. With their objectives, the organization continues to advocate the bare essence of womanhood as an important presence in shaping the academe.

The idea of "WE" in the theme of National Women's Month reminds the world of education and the presence of society that inclusion is a shared responsibility. With UNICEF's initiatives to help women become a force in the world that they have yet to meet, it values the need for the walls of knowledge to not just teach lessons, but warmly home individuals regardless of gender who carry the values of equality beyond the campus and into society.

By: Jean Khian Villapando



When a woman becomes the 'man' that one needs

How maternity and liberty for women redefines the title of 'leadership' in society

Many assume that the roles and traditions of what it means to be a woman begins in adulthood; when in reality, they begin the moment a girl steps into the toy aisle for the first time. Long before girls even grow into who they are and what they are capable of, they know what is expected of them.

Society subtly trains girls at a young age to become the woman a man needs. A spark that faints as an act of obedience and a voice that becomes a whisper as a response to submission, for what is believed that women are to make men the model of handling 'masculine' roles— leading, delegating, empowering.

Despite these limiting expectations, many of today's women challenge these roles through balancing motherhood with careers. Breaking this barrier revolutionized society and shone a new light on women. As for Mrs. Dumalaon and Mrs. Mercado, stepping beyond the quiet expectations of their childhood toys and motherly duties, they are showing the world through the lives they lead and influence that they can be the 'man' in the 'woman' that one needs.

From her time in the Sangguniang Kabataan as the awakening of her desire to defy the rules of womanhood, and as the efficient president of her college's education club, to becoming Christian School International's current elementary principal, Mrs. Gem Dumalaon juggles the life of work and family as a testimony of her will to drive gender inclusivity towards the progressive direction. She advocates for gender equality that does not merely rely on textbook definitions, but a persistent course of action that allows women to express their own flair in steering leadership as more than just a manly principle.

"Leadership is not about perfection—it is about courage, integrity, and service," Mrs. Dumalaon emphasizes deeply during an interview, mentioning that when girls are encouraged early on, they learn that their voices matter too and can inspire others.



While school leaders help lay the foundation of motivation for young girls to step up to the ladder of academic life, others are inspired to direct their advocacies to the state. Also making her start in the Sangguniang Kabataan, Mrs. Karen Mercado, a mother, the head of the Gender and Development (GAD) office in Los Baños and a member of the national GAD Resource Pool of the Philippines, dedicates her platform by advocating for policy enactment within the locality. With initiatives made such as aligning amendments with RA 9710, also known as The Magna Carta of Women, to elaborate the need for women to shine their lights on male-dominated fields.

"When we promote equality, we break down barriers that hold people back, allowing them to reach their full potential and contribute to society in meaningful ways. It's about creating a fair and just world where everyone can thrive," Mrs. Mercado implores fully.

Through their dedication and hard work, Mrs. Dumalaon and Mrs. Mercado committed the life of motherhood and leadership as a strike in challenging long-standing societal norms while opening doors for young girls to see leadership as something within their reach. In doing so, they wish to not just break barriers, but rebuild the standards of what women can achieve.

"Remember, in the Bible, God used many men and women, not because they were strong or famous, but because they had hearts willing to be used by Him," Mrs. Dumalaon softly states.

Two women who are more than bare mothers pave the way for the next generations to defy gender roles through leadership and advocacy. They continue to stand as proof that women are not confined to a single identity that corners them into coddling children or falling into submission, but are capable of leading, influencing, and shaping communities that makes them the true 'man' that society needs.

By: Corey Cortez and Halmira Almodiel



Power Beyond Perception: She Leads, They Judge

How Gabriela Silang Defines Leadership as an Act of Heroine Fashion

What does a leader look like and why is it still so hard for many to picture a woman in that role? Progress in gender equality may be evident, but for women in leadership, the battle was more on perception and never on ability.

As women wield their swords facing the world that has painted them incapable and invaluable, gender progress continues to become the merit that history has yet to celebrate. In the lines of narratives still asking where does leadership stand in the warfare of patriarchal beliefs, a woman armed with bravery and skills makes textbooks draw pages for her as a recognition of more than just her impactful leadership.

In a society still asking of a woman's worth in power, Gabriella Silang's presence in the passages of history breaks the noise of others defining leadership as just a man's job. With her stories on display and statues to her name, Gabriela becomes more than just a woman, but a hero who defined a woman's worth in the seat of authority.

Gabriela Silang— someone who had already defied expectations long before conversations about gender equality became widespread. After the death of her husband, she stepped into the limelight of revolution during a time when women were rarely seen in positions of power, let alone in the midst of national conflict.

Many people criticized her for involving herself in the Spanish-British war as it was only “suitable for men” in their eyes that associated war with combat, bloodshed, and strength— things that were believed for a woman to not simply hone. Though she was ready to lead, her authority was questioned and undermined simply because she was a woman— domestic, gentle, submissive, as one thinks.

These expectations that Gabriela had faced, and many women can find themselves agreeing, creates an invisible barrier—one that questions their authority before they even begin to lead. Instead of being recognized for their capability, they are often measured against stereotypes that limit their potential.

These perceptions often reveal themselves through the comments women leaders constantly hear. When a woman speaks firmly, she is labeled “bossy” or “too aggressive.” When she chooses to listen and collaborate, she is seen as “too soft” or “not authoritative enough.”

With these two opposing sectors, women are in an endless loop trying to figure out where they have to place in order to be “just right.” Once they do, their confidence is oftentimes mistaken for arrogance, and decisiveness is criticized rather than respected. In many cases, the same traits praised in male leaders are questioned in women, placing them under a double standard that limits how they are allowed to lead.

Despite facing such doubt, Gabriela honed what she knew best— become the hero no man can ever replicate. Against it all, she still chose to fight the odds through words and actions. Gabriella chose to live a life outside of the shadows a grieving widow resides in, becoming the heroine of the helm of more than 2,000 men and Tingguian fighters to battle and defeat the Spanish colonial forces.

Now inspiring others by being known as the first Filipina woman to lead a revolutionary army, Gabriela Silang created a legendary image that is still remembered to this day through the women's alliance “GABRIELA.” This non-profit organization's purpose to shine light on women, much like the namesake's, enables them to empower their community through law, language, and the arts, leading thousands at bay to a direction where leadership does not merely mean aggression and masculinity.

Gabriela's story is a breathing vessel today for female empowerment that proves that freedom and leadership is not predicated upon gender, but upon one's commitment to one's country. Her position in the world of men ridiculing women to rule is more than a chapter in the textbooks one reads, but a reminder that the struggle against stereotypes has long existed.

In the face of questioning a woman's worth in leadership, Gabriela Silang answers it through one word: Heroism. Her story and the impact ensures the seat that women rest upon becomes a platform of voices not just for themselves, but for others who are still finding the courage to rise.

By: Jada Largado and Ayesha Reyes

