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**Reality check: Gender mainstreaming in a JICA-funded disaster risk
reduction and management project in the Philippines**

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Abstract

The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) is one of the leading bilateral donor agencies which supports the Philippines in enhancing its resilience to natural disasters. Addressing human vulnerability is believed to be the key in strengthening community resiliency, and this includes minimising the disparate impacts of disaster on men and women. Linking these issues to the principles of aid effectiveness, this thesis explores how does one of the largest bilateral development actors, JICA, ensure that its disaster rehabilitation programmes are gender responsive? In particular, this research investigates how JICA mainstreams gender into a disaster risk reduction and management project in the Philippines.

This research used a qualitative approach—drawing on semi-structured interviews, document analyses, and a non-participant structured observation—to explore JICA’s gender mainstreaming framework, how it affects a Philippines’ disaster risk reduction and management project, and how the local partners influenced the mainstreaming of gender within the rehabilitation programme. It followed JICA’s gender mainstreaming framework starting from the formulation of the policy in its Headquarters in Tokyo, and to the adoption by JICA’s country office in the Philippines based on the local context. It then examines how the framework is operationalised in the programme, and finally, the contribution of JICA counterparts in the city government of Tacloban in mainstreaming gender.

The research found that JICA’s gender mainstreaming framework covers only its departments in Tokyo. It has minor impacts on JICA’s Philippines office and its operations. However, the local gender framework in Tacloban City was reflected in the bilateral programme, albeit with limitations. In examining the frameworks and mechanisms of JICA and Tacloban City, the study found that gender mainstreaming is inherently technical in nature, requiring expertise, resources, and processes to be in place in order to achieve its transformative potential. The research concluded that a gender policy alone is not enough to precipitate changes towards gender responsive operations and outcomes—it requires fundamental commitment to gender equality by agencies who aim to deliver equitable development outcomes. The research hopes to enhance understanding of how gender can be better integrated in the context of official development assistance and disaster-related interventions in the Philippines and elsewhere.

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