



**A multi-country evaluation
for a more effective gender mainstreaming
approach in education and protection
projects
in Burkina Faso, Lebanon and the Philippines**

Executive Summary of the final report

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Asmae – Association Soeur Emmanuelle is a French international NGO created in 1980 by Sister Emmanuelle that supports partners in the fields of education and child protection, promoting a world that guarantees children are able to live and grow with dignity with their family and their environment, to become free men and women, active citizens in their society. With regard to gender mainstreaming, Asmae has no defined strategic guidelines or programming framework and has recently decided to **adopt a more proactive and systematic approach**. This evaluation is one of the milestones in this ongoing process.

Asmae initiated this gender study for different converging reasons, showing a general tendency for a growing interest in gender and a need for a formalized gender mainstreaming policy, enhancing more consistent gender practices. The different elements mentioned in the ToRs highlight that internal and external elements triggered this **process of strengthening gender** mainstreaming (marked by two internal awareness sessions/trainings in 2018 and 2019 and other initiatives, like a Gender section in the quarterly newsletter sent by HO Technical advisor).

The **direct objective** of this study was to analyze the practices and effects associated with gender mainstreaming in 3 projects. The recommendations are seeking to improve the quality of the assessed projects over the remaining duration, making the activities and the services offered more relevant and effective from a gender point of view. As a side effect, the study is supposed to contribute to strengthening the capacities of the Program teams on gender issues.

The **ultimate objective** is to foster a more proactive and systematic gender approach in Asmae: by sharing specific aspects of the study's recommendations across the organization, they are tailored to feed into a more global gender strategy, making it easier to develop a framework and tools promoting gender, accompanied by a suitable gender action plan.

The three involved projects cover **two of the five main themes of intervention** of Asmae: Early childhood care and education in Burkina Faso; Prevention and care of children at risk in the Philippines and Lebanon.

The three concerned countries embrace a **great variety of contexts**: Burkina Faso ranked 182 out of 189 in terms of Human Development Index (2018), belonging to the low human development category. The Philippines, ranked 106th and Lebanon, at rank 93, are considered high human development countries. They are very different also concerning the size of their population: Lebanon has an estimated population of almost 7 million, with 1 million Syrian refugees amongst them. There are about 20 million inhabitants in Burkina Faso, and more than five times as much (106.7 million) in the archipelago of the Philippines. The mean years of schooling are interesting to look at to get a glimpse of educational issues that are central to Asmae: 1.6 in Burkina Faso, compared to 8.7 in Lebanon and 9.4 in the Philippines.

When looking at this contextual information, Asmae's **intervention logic** becomes very clear: in Burkina Faso, the general situation of the education system is still critical and Asmae aims at enhancing structural improvements. In the Philippines and in Lebanon, Asmae strengthens partners working with the underprivileged, the refugees in Lebanon and children and adults in street situations in the Philippines.

The proposed **evaluation questions were restructured and partly reformulated**, as confirmed during the scoping meeting.

The **institutional dimension** focused on the way gender is understood within Asmae and its partners, how gender is dealt with at Asmae's level and at partners' levels, the principles common to the 3 countries on which Asmae could rely on to build a gender approach strategy,

the type of gender approach that seems feasible for the future and the way, intersectionality can be considered.

The evaluation questions about the **project dimension** covered how the projects have mainstreamed gender throughout the project's cycle and aimed at verifying that girls and boys, women and men, have the same opportunities to access the services offered by Asmae's partners. Furthermore, the gender knowledge and skills level of the teams involved was questioned, their practices and the related M&E processes, the formal or informal mechanisms, levers and obstacles or resources which have encouraged or limited the consideration of gender throughout the project cycle, as well as gender considerations in the messages and the facilitation methodologies during awareness and training activities. Finally, the study covered the gender-related stakes for each project and the mechanisms that should be in place at project development stage to ensure that national policies, strategies and laws related to gender issues are considered.

The **process of this study** was structured by different steps:

- Preliminary meeting (July 2019)
- Step 1: Refining the study approach and preparing its implementation (August – September 2019)
- Steps 2, 4 and 5: The field missions (Philippines: October 2019; Burkina Faso: November 2019; Lebanon: January 2020) followed a basic pattern that was tested in Step 2, adjusted in Step 3 (see below) and also adapted to each local context. All in all, 274 people were interviewed or have been participating in focus group discussions.
- Step 3: Adjusting the approach (October 2019) on the basis of the first field mission.
- Step 6: Finalizing transversal analysis and writing of the evaluation report (draft and final, February – March 2020)
- Closing and sharing workshops in France and in the three countries (still to be organized).

The **main findings from each country case study** are presented in the **country summary reports**.

The three projects studied in three of Asmae's intervention countries highlighted the tremendous diversity of the contexts Asmae is working in, of the populations its projects are supporting and therefore also of the types of projects and activities the NGO is implementing via its partners. These **different situations, needs and constraints have to be considered for Asmae's future gender approach**.

Concerning the **country teams**, the level of gender awareness, gender knowledge, gender commitment and **gender competence varies**, linked to personal factors of the concerned individuals, but also to the way gender is accepted and integrated into the wider society.

The team in the **Philippines** is **very aware about gender issues and strongly committed, also on SOGIE issues**, but the available gender competencies to operationalize gender have not yet been fully employed in the studied project. In the absence of a clear institutional mandate the national Asmae **team is not identifies as a partner for strengthening on gender**.

In **Burkina Faso**, there is a **great variety in the comprehension of gender**, with little consciousness about processes of social construction and about the importance to consider both females and males in a gender approach. The accent is mostly on girls/women and/or on

treating everybody the same. The team is **open to strengthen their gender approach, but also reserved**.

In **Lebanon**, the team has a **fairly good understanding about the meaning of gender**. No reluctance about strengthening gender in their projects was perceived, but no strong enthusiasm either. On the one hand, in the current crisis, **gender is not seen as a priority**. On the other hand, some staff members consider that gender is integrated transversally. Pressure on the bread-winner role of men and to a growing extent also on boys is identified as a gender issue, as well as the difficulties to mobilize fathers on matters linked to their children.

For the studies projects, gender has not been amongst the **criteria for the choice of the partners**. In the **Philippines**, **Bahay Tuluyan** is making efforts to instore gender, CHAP and KSEM are not yet gender pro-active, whereas NCSD appeared comparatively as the most gender-blind partner. In **Burkina Faso**, ICCV has tried to address gender in some of its activities. The institutional partners from different divisions of the educational **ministry** (MENA) are **upholding the public policy about gender and education**. In **Lebanon**, the main project partners – **Jafrā and B&Z** – are **aware of gender differences** amongst the youth of the refugee communities. **Najdeh is a historical partner with gender experience** (developed largely independently from Asmae), but their gender expertise is not solicited in the AFD project.

The **findings concerning the institutional dimension** highlight **first achievements** of the ongoing gender process that has put gender on the agenda.

Asmae has not yet decided on a gender definition, has **not formalized a gender strategy** and there is very little mention of gender in Asmae's policy documents. Amongst the HO and CO staff members there is **no open reluctance against gender, but a very wide variety of understandings of gender** are observed.

The internal gender-sessions had suggested three **different options for Asmae's possible gender focus**, the first one looking at inequalities between men and women (2 genders) and discrimination against women, the second one including other genders and discrimination against gender minorities and the third one also including discriminations on the basis of sexual orientations. One element that is not covered by these options is the integration of the focus on socially constructed **masculinities**. **School-related gender-based violence** is not at all mentioned, even though it is an issue of international concern amongst educational actors. There is a **relatively weak consideration of intersectionality**.

All Asmae partners that have been included in the present study are **consciously striving for inclusion of children or youth from both sexes**, seeking a balanced participation of boys and girls and assuring access to the same services. This reflects **Asmae's long-standing stance of non-discrimination** and is a promising foundation for gearing up gender in the projects.

For the **Philippines**, the **AFD proposal included some statements about how gender could be integrated**, but the team does not perceive gender as part of their main work-line and respects partners' thematic demands for capacity building (where gender has not been raised up until now). The project in **Burkina Faso** is the one that **integrated gender most explicitly**, following a recommendation on gender in the evaluation of the first phase of this projects. Some elements of a one-shot gender training have been **reinvested in the adaptation of the picture tool and in some project specific tools**. In **Lebanon**, Asmae's partners are experimenting improvements of existing training modules about the gender dimension (amongst others) that are mainly supervised by other partners.

CO teams in the three visited countries are **disaggregating more and more systematically all collected data**, with some room for further improvement.

All three countries concerned covered by this study have **national gender policies** and engagements that can also be mobilized to adapt Asmae's gender approach to each country. The country office teams all have a certain **potential for strengthening gender which can be enhanced further through training**. They have clearly voiced that this upgrading of gender has to be **guided and supported by an institutional gender policy** which stipulates Asmae's standards and procedures in embedding gender into its projects and partnerships, including language and communication.

Despite their interest in gender and their openness about the topic, most of Asmae's implementing **partners** involved in this evaluation do **not have sufficient gender competence to integrate gender effectively into their activities**. Asmae has been trying here and there to respond to these needs, but their own command of gender is not yet consistent and operational enough, neither clearly framed (in absence of a gender definition and strategy), and the **support, guidance and capacity-building of partners on gender is not explicitly part of the ongoing projects**.

The **findings concerning the project dimension** highlighted the multiple contextual elements that refrain gender integration and its outcome in each studied country. Some evidence could be found for integrating gender into M&E.

One activity specifically geared to men, the ERPAT session KSEM is carrying out in Manila, is based on traditional social norms, reproducing gender stereotypes, but seems to have mobilized a stronger participation of fathers into their community activities, which suggests that there is an **interest for creating activities for men and spaces for exchange about their roles as husbands and fathers**.

There was some **evidence of effects of gender integration** in **Burkina Faso**, where the educators showed a considerable level of consciousness about "considering both sexes" in their learning centers. The mothers' focus group of ICCV beneficiaries has cited examples of **changed behavior of children**, which seems to be the fruit of gender sensitive activities that ICCV has carried out, independently of Asmae's tutorship.

The **recommendations** emphasize that Asmae's way of working through local partners imposes to **strengthen gender simultaneously on three levels**: 1) the **institution Asmae**, including the tools to frame interventions; 2) Asmae's **capacity building process of its partners**; 3) the **projects** implemented by the partners, with support of the country teams. In other words, inside a **clear institutional gender framework** and after **substantial gender training**, Asmae staff does not only have to **be convinced and competent** to integrate gender in their own work, but they also have to **be able to convince and strengthen the gender competencies of their partners, in an intercultural setting**.

The ambition to transversally strengthen gender must therefore be met by a whole **series of measures, discussed and co-constructed** with a wide range of staff members, combined with gender training, in order to create **effective ownership of gender inside Asmae**. These recommendations are most of all aimed at fuelling and enabling this essential process.

The **recommendations concerning the institutional dimension** highlight the importance of the careful framing of a **shared definition of gender, large enough** to capture the variations of understandings of gender, but which can be **"tailored" to fit each country of intervention**.

On this basis, a comprehensive **gender strategy** should be constructed and transposed into a **gender action plan**. The options proposed during the past two internal awareness-raising / training gender sessions towards the staff could be **enriched by elements on masculinity and intersectionality** and be presented as a general framework, with a focus on **equality of women and men** as the common base applicable everywhere and the other dimensions to be **acknowledged as factors of discrimination** (especially in countries where they are culturally challenging), even though they might not be explicitly integrated in the projects, in dialogue with partners, etc.

The aim should be that no Asmae project is gender blind, and to assure that all projects **pass from “gender neutral” to “gender sensitive”**, striving in the medium or long-term **towards a “gender transformative” approach, adapted to each specific context**.

To mainstream gender into Asmae’s activities, it is necessary to **integrate gender into its main operational tools**, the intervention framework and the different policies of its areas of intervention, highlighting when certain issues are stronger or different for one gender than another (especially in terms of obstacles and opportunities), adding elements that are specific to one gender, including considerations linked to preventing or reducing sexism and gender-based violence. The explicit **integration of gender into each country strategy** will assure contextualization of the gender approach.

In order to operationalize the gender strategy, it is not only necessary to strengthen the system of **focal points** – to be formally integrated in a **Gender Team** (or gender task force, or gender working group) –, but also to **raise the general level of gender knowledge** and competence amongst the staff, with emphasis on the technical advisor who occupies a strategic function. **Future recruitments** should require basic gender competences or otherwise provide a possibility to be trained after the recruitment. Furthermore, gender should also be integrated **inside the organization Asmae** (in the statutes and internal rules, through harmonization of inclusive writing style, anti-harassment prevention and signaling mechanism and other human Resources gender concerns).

The **recommendations concerning the project dimension** are first targeting the **three studied projects**. All of them have **underused opportunities to better integrate gender** that might be recoverable, some on a very short-term basis, others during the remaining project time. In all three countries, Asmae’s partners have expressed interest for strengthening their gender capacity. Some suggestions to **improve the studied projects for their remaining duration**, have been formulated, basically linked to training, gender mainstreaming in activities and linkages with gender pro-active actors.

Amongst the set of general project-oriented recommendations are the ones linked to Asmae’s **relationship with its partners**. The criteria for the choice of project partners have recently evolved including some gender aspects, and gender should also be integrated into all existing tools for partner capacity-building.

In order to make contextualization more relevant and enhance synergetic effects of the joint efforts of the multiple stakeholders engaged in gender in all the Asmae’s intervention countries, the Asmae country teams should **seek actively alliance with national gender expertise** through different options.

Gender has to be **mainstreamed through all stages of the project-cycle** (initial gender analysis, integration of gender into the project formulation and the gender dimension in the M&E mechanism). This could be framed by the adoption of a gender marker which can also monitor progress.