

**59th CONFERENCE OF
DIRECTORS GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION
ASIA AND PACIFIC REGIONS**

*Cebu, Philippines
14 to 18 October 2024*

AGENDA ITEM 1: THEME TOPIC

**KABABAIHAN SA HIMPAPAWID (WOMEN
SOARING HIGH): PARTICIPATION AND INCLUSION
OF WOMEN IN THE AVIATION INDUSTRY**

(Presented by Philippines)

SUMMARY

The participation and inclusion of women in the Philippine aviation industry have seen significant progress in the Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines as well as in major airlines based in the Philippines. Women are increasingly taking on technical, managerial, and leadership roles, breaking down traditional gender barriers in aviation. Empowerment initiatives, such as training programs and direct participation in operations, have contributed to the confidence and effectiveness of women in the aviation sector.

However, challenges remain, particularly in terms of gender-sensitive policies and facilities. While the CAAP and airlines have made efforts to promote gender inclusivity, there is still a need for more comprehensive programs to institutionalize support for women employees. CAAP-operated airports must address the lack of healthcare personnel and gender-sensitive facilities, while airlines should work to improve gender-sensitivity training and provide alternative tasks for pregnant pilots and improve their facilities to support women.

The 59th DGCA can play a crucial role in advancing efforts to ensure women's participation in the global aviation sector. This conference can institutionalize the inclusion of gender components in all training programs, establish policies for the inclusion of women and LGBTQIA+, and set global standards to address the practical gender needs of women employees in aviation. Furthermore, it can strengthen and streamline the implementation of the ICAO Framework on Ethics, including enforcing a zero-tolerance policy for sexual harassment, and ensure this framework is effectively cascaded to all member states. By continuing to prioritize gender inclusivity and equality, the aviation industry can create a more supportive environment for women, ensuring their full participation and contribution to the sector's success.

KABABAIHAN SA HIMPAPAWID (WOMEN SOARING HIGH): PARTICIPATION AND INCLUSION OF WOMEN IN THE AVIATION INDUSTRY

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The aviation industry has long been known as a male-dominated sector, with gender biases deeply rooted in its history. Women have traditionally faced significant barriers to entry, especially in technical and leadership roles, whereas men have predominantly occupied positions such as pilots, air traffic controllers, and engineers. In contrast, women were often relegated to administrative and support functions. However, in recent decades, efforts have been made to promote gender inclusivity in aviation, with a slow but steady increase in the participation of women in various roles within the industry. The Women in Aviation International (2024) reports that women currently represent only six percent of the total pilot population, indicating that while progress has been made, there is a long way to go towards achieving gender equity.

1.2 According to the Institute for Women of Aviation Worldwide (iWOAW) (2017), women's involvement in the aviation sector remains low. As of December 2019, only 5.4% of certified civilian pilots in the U.S. were women, with 25,485 out of 466,900 being female. By December 2020, the percentage of female civilian pilots in Canada was 8.15%, and women held 18% of positions in the Royal Canadian Air Force. Globally, the average was just 3%. In 2008, women represented only 16% of the workforce in aircraft and spacecraft manufacturing. By 2014, women made up 25% of aerospace engineers. As of 2015, women held less than 6% of senior executive roles in airline companies (Center for Aviation, 2015).

1.3 According to ICAO's latest global survey on licensed aviation personnel by gender, the percentage of women serving as pilots, air traffic controllers, and maintenance technicians has grown globally from 4.5% in 2016 to 4.9% in 2021.

1.4 In the Philippines, female ATPL holders only make up only 3.61% while CPL holders are at 12.25%. Though still low, these are substantial growths from the less than 2% women representation in the 2015 CAAP data. In March 2024, Philippine Airlines (PAL) launched its "We Fly with Her" campaign with nine all-female pilots and cabin crews taking to the skies, and operating flights to various local and international PAL destinations. They also featured the largest number of all-female flight crews in a single week. In addition, one of the major airlines, AirAsia, also reported that women comprise 40% of its workforce in the Philippines, including 7 pilots and co-pilots, over 200 cabin crew members, as well as technicians, mechanics, ramp officers, and other key roles in ground services and operational support.

1.5 A landmark law in the Philippines, the Magna Carta of Women (2009) emphasizes that there should be an increase in the number of women in third-level government positions, aiming for a 50-50 gender balance within the next five years, while ensuring that women make up at least 40% of all development planning and program implementation roles. Apart from that, women employees who undergo surgery due to gynecological conditions will receive two months of paid leave, provided they have completed at least six months of continuous service within the last year. Moreover, the Expanded Maternity Leave Law guarantees additional leave with proper benefits for female employees. Meanwhile, there will be no employment discrimination in military, police, or similar services, with women receiving equal opportunities for promotions, pay raises, additional benefits, and awards based on their competence and performance, just like their male counterparts. The Magna Carta of Women also prescribes that 20% are women in military and police academies and other training institutions providing entry-level trainings.

1.6 This research report explores the participation and inclusion of women in the Philippine aviation industry, with a particular focus on the roles women play within the Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines (CAAP), as well as major airlines such as Cebu Pacific, Philippine Airlines, and PAL Express. The report highlights the achievements and contributions of women in aviation, the challenges they face, and the steps that have been taken by organizations to promote gender inclusivity. Findings

from various airports were examined, alongside the experiences of female employees in technical and administrative roles, as well as the gender-specific issues they encounter.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 Women in the Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines (CAAP)

Despite the aviation industry's male-dominated nature, women employed by CAAP have made significant contributions to technical, managerial, and administrative functions. They play key roles in ensuring the smooth operation of airports and providing essential services. These women are actively involved in technical duties, such as air traffic control and airport operations management, challenging the traditional perception that these roles are exclusive to men. In some CAAP airports, women serve as Airport Managers and facility heads. At present, two of the twelve Area Center Managers are women.

Interviews with female employees indicate that they feel capable of handling the challenges that come with their positions. Many of them have participated in empowerment activities, such as Pride Marches, seminars, and training programs. These initiatives have contributed to their confidence and have provided opportunities for women to share their experiences with colleagues, fostering a culture of support and knowledge exchange.

Women's involvement in technical tasks, particularly in control towers, is one of the most significant advancements in CAAP. Traditionally, these roles were reserved for men, while women were limited to administrative duties. Currently, female employees are proving that they are just as competent in managing technical and decision-making responsibilities. Furthermore, female firefighters in CAAP airports are not only providing direct services but are also conducting essential training in first aid and life support. Their contribution highlights the increasing diversification of roles for women in aviation.

However, despite these advancements, women in CAAP airports still face challenges. One major issue is the lack of gender-sensitive facilities, particularly in some satellite airports. Many of these airports lack lactation rooms, child-friendly spaces, and other facilities that cater to the specific needs of female employees. Additionally, lesbian women report discomfort when sharing living quarters with men due to the lack of separate accommodations. This situation underscores the need for more inclusive policies that consider the diverse needs of women employees.

The shortage of personnel in CAAP airports also contributes to the challenges women face. In many cases, women are required to take on multiple roles, which can lead to overburdening. For instance, female firefighters with administrative skills are often tasked with bookkeeping or human resources responsibilities due to staffing gaps. While this demonstrates the versatility of women in CAAP, it also highlights the need for better staffing solutions to prevent employees from being stretched too thin.

2.2 Women in the Airlines

In the Philippine airline industry, women have made notable strides, particularly in roles as pilots and flight attendants. Airlines such as Cebu Pacific, Air Asia, Philippine Airlines, and PAL Express have female pilots serving as first officers and captains. Many of these women were trained in CAAP-accredited flying schools, and some came from the Philippine Air Force, equipping them with the skills and discipline necessary to succeed in commercial aviation. Their presence in the cockpit serves as a powerful symbol of progress for women in aviation and provides a role model for future generations of aspiring female aviators.

Interviews with female pilots reveal that they receive the same benefits and competitive wages as their male counterparts. This equity in compensation is a significant step toward promoting gender equality in the industry. Additionally, female pilots and flight attendants have access to gender-sensitive facilities, such as breastfeeding areas in airports, which support their needs as working mothers.

Policies regarding sexual harassment have also been implemented by airlines, creating a safer work

environment for female employees. Some airlines have developed reporting mechanisms, such as mobile apps, that allow staff to report incidents of harassment with utmost confidentiality. Human resources departments are proactive in monitoring such cases and ensuring that they are addressed appropriately through the dismissal and suspension of perpetrators; however, it is unclear if the survivors can access support outside if they intend to escalate the cases to Philippine courts.

Gaps remain in the airlines' approach to gender inclusivity, particularly in terms of gender sensitivity training. Many airline employees have not received orientation on how to address gender-related concerns in the workplace, leading to a lack of awareness of these issues.

Another significant challenge faced by female pilots is the lack of alternative tasks during pregnancy. While it is standard practice for pregnant pilots to be grounded outside the 16 to 32 weeks, many opt to discontinue their flying duties at the onset of pregnancy. However, they are not provided with alternative tasks or paid during their time away from flying. This leaves them financially vulnerable during pregnancy, which could be addressed by assigning them ground duties to allow them to continue working while ensuring their safety and well-being.

2.3 **Gender Issues in Airports**

Despite the significant progress made by women in the aviation sector, several gender-related issues persist in CAAP-operated airports. One of the most pressing concerns is the lack of healthcare personnel, particularly in satellite airports. Some airports do not have designated nurses or healthcare workers, which poses a significant risk to all employees, particularly women who may require specific reproductive health services.

Furthermore, the absence of gender-sensitive facilities, such as lactation rooms and child-friendly spaces, creates difficulties for female employees, especially those who are mothers. The lack of reproductive and sexual health facilities in airports also highlights the need for more comprehensive support systems for women in the aviation workforce.

The absence of recreational amenities to support men's and women's mental health in airports situated in remote communities is another crucial issue to be aware of. They struggle to deal with loneliness and boredom, particularly because work leaves are limited, and it is costly to visit relatives or go to the town proper.

Lesbian women employed at CAAP airports report discomfort when assigned to live in quarters with male colleagues due to the absence of separate accommodations. This situation underscores the importance of developing more inclusive policies that recognize and address the diverse needs of women employees, regardless of their sexual orientation.

Furthermore, staff members should be better familiar with the Committee on Decorum and Investigation (CODI), the body responsible for handling sexual harassment cases within CAAP, and the policy on sexual harassment. On the other hand, women employed by concessionaires and airlines inside airports are also not fully informed about where to go for urgent assistance, how to file complaints, or what channels to pursue if they wish to pursue redress. They are aware of the procedures for filing blotters at the police station, but they are unaware that they must notify the airport manager if the incident occurs in the airport.

3. **ACTION BY THE CONFERENCE**

3.1 The Conference is invited to:

a) **Institutionalize Mandatory Gender Sensitivity Training Across the Aviation Sector**

Establish gender sensitivity training as a mandatory requirement for all aviation employees, including airlines and regulatory authorities. This should be aligned with

global aviation standards to foster an inclusive culture, enhance gender awareness, and address unconscious biases, making the aviation workplace more welcoming to diverse genders;

b) **Mandate Gender-Sensitive Infrastructure in Airports**

Enforce international standards for gender-sensitive facilities across all airports, particularly in developing countries. This includes providing lactation rooms, child-friendly spaces, and reproductive health services in all terminals, ensuring that airport infrastructure supports the diverse needs of all employees and passengers, especially in under-resourced and remote locations;

c) **Establish Global Standards for Pregnant Pilots' Employment**

Advocate for international aviation organizations such as ICAO to implement policies that require airlines to reassign pregnant pilots to ground duties. These policies should ensure that pilots can continue contributing meaningfully while receiving full compensation and benefits during their pregnancy, promoting a balanced approach to gender equality in employment practices;

d) **Adopt Comprehensive Policies for Women and LGBTQ+ Inclusion in Aviation**

Develop and standardize global policies for the inclusion of women and LGBTQ+ employees in the aviation sector. These policies should ensure non-discriminatory accommodations and provide protections for specific needs, such as addressing separate housing or workplace concerns, to create an inclusive environment for all gender identities and sexual orientations in the industry.

e) **Further strengthen and streamline the implementation of the ICAO Framework on Ethics, including a zero-tolerance policy for sexual harassment and cascade it to all member-states**

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