

GREAT Women Project



**Creating A Local Enabling Environment
for Women's Economic Empowerment**
Results of Partnership with PALMA+PB Alliance



Philippine
Commission
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Summary The case study examines the initial results of partnership between the Philippine Commission on Women-GREAT Women Project and PALMA+PB Alliance in North Cotabato, which aimed toward creating a local enabling environment for women's economic empowerment (WEE).

GREAT Women Project and PALMA+PB Alliance The partnership of the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW), under the GREAT Women Project, was with PALMA Alliance, initially composed of five municipalities in the first district of North Cotabato namely, Pigcawayan, Alamada, Libungan, Midsayap and Aleosan. This partnership was later on extended with the Municipalities of Pikit and Banisilan which joined the alliance in 2009 and 2011, respectively. The Alliance was called PALMA+PB Alliance in 2011.

PALMA+PB Alliance, then known as P PALMA Alliance, had an existing partnership with Local Government Support Program on Local Economic Development (LGSP-LED). The LGUs perceived that GREAT Women Project offered a new ingredient to governance, women's economic empowerment or WEE. Philippine Commission on Women positioned women's economic empowerment as being an important element in local economic development (LED). While PALMA+PB LGUs had long supported women's groups in terms of livelihood opportunities and various skills trainings, they did not have very concrete awareness of the contribution of WEE to LED. With the GREAT Women Project, PALMA+PB LGUs improved in various areas of gender-responsive governance alongside local economic development.

Several interventions were undertaken by the Alliance to create the local enabling environment for women's economic empowerment:

Levelling-off of concepts on gender, local economic development (LED) and women's economic empowerment (WEE). At project onset, a series of gender sensitivity trainings (GST) with concepts on local economic development (LED) and women's economic empowerment (WEE) (training was coined as GST++) was provided to the staff of the PALMA Management Office (PALMA-PMO), technical working group (TWG) members, local chief executives and legislators of the PALMA+PB Alliance. After the local elections in 2010, another round of GST++ was delivered to the newly-elected local officials and newly appointed technical staff of the Alliance in September.

The trainings were followed by a training on local communications planning in May 2008, which capacitated LGU officials on communication strategies and approaches for popularizing gender, LED and WEE among its constituents.

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Mainstreaming gender and WEE in local policies and plans. A baseline study was conducted to map the gender and WEE capacities, policies, programs and services of the Alliance's local governments as well as the women in microenterprises, women-owned and -led enterprises as well as women workers in microenterprises. Its results served as bases for formulating the Alliance and individual LGU project workplans with programs that support women in microenterprises.

The LGUs then developed and implemented various interventions to support women in microenterprises: Libungan undertook a duck-raising project, Alamada conducted skills training on corn husk twine and braid making, Midsayap underwent soap making training and training for fisherfolks relative to the development of a pangasius farm, and Pikit and Midsayap conducted basic entrepreneurship training.

In 2009, using the GREAT Women Project's Performance Measurement Framework (PMF), the Alliance's second project workplan provided clearer outcomes and targets in mainstreaming of gender and WEE in local policies and plans, noteworthy of which were the integration of gender and WEE in the LGUs' Comprehensive Development Plans (CDP) and the formulation of local Gender and Development (GAD) Codes.

A two-day workshop was led by the PALMA-PMO Project Manager and the local area coordinator in May 2009 to steer the local TWGs to revisit and assess the gender- and WEE-responsiveness of existing LGU comprehensive development plans and to formulate local GAD Codes. Such workshop resulted to the issuance of policies (Executive Orders) in March 2010, which created technical working groups for the formulation of CDPs and the enhancement of the existing GAD Code of Alamada.

Enhancing capacities towards gender-responsive local policies and plans. The training of technical advisers on gender analysis (TOTAGA) and the training on Mainstreaming Gender in the Comprehensive Development Plan, both conducted by the Philippine Commission on Women, served as foundations for the formulation of gender-responsive CDP and GAD Code in PPALMA. Gender analysis tools such as the Harmonized GAD Guidelines (HGG), the Gender Mainstreaming and Equality Framework (GMEF), Gender-Responsive LGU (GERL) Ka Ba?, and the CDP Supplemental Guide were shared to the LGUs as basis for reviewing their local policies and plans.

Enhancing Capacities Towards Gender-Responsive Local Policies and Plans

The PPALMA TWG members, who participated in the trainings, echoed their learnings in their respective LGUs. Alamada, for one, rolled-out gender analysis tools to its heads of offices and staff. Libungan, on the other hand, conducted an orientation on gen-

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der analysis during the formulation of its Local Development Investment Plan (LDIP) *cum* situational analysis workshop. Pikit and Aleosan conducted orientations on gender analysis, with the assistance of the GREAT Women Project Local Area Coordinator (LAC) which resulted to the use of GERL Ka Ba? and HGG tools to assess the gender-responsiveness of its existing livelihood and farm-to-market road projects in Pikit. Pigcayawan and Midsayap also used gender analysis tools in its respective Comprehensive Land Use Plans (CLUP).

Developing PPALMA CDPs and GAD Codes. In October 2010, PPALMA Alliance held an orientation on the crafting of GAD Code. Participating LGUs then developed their respective action plans in view of GAD Code formulation, which included the conduct of sectoral focused group discussions (FGDs) that will gather gender issues and possible interventions, alignment of the municipal GAD Codes with that of the provincial GAD Code, and the inclusion of provision which sets the GAD Code as the basis for formulating annual LGU GAD plans and budgets.

The succeeding month, the project Local Area Coordinator and the Municipal Local Government Operations Officers (MLGOO) served as facilitators in the roll-out of the training on Mainstreaming of Gender Perspective in the Comprehensive Development Plan to the TWG members.

After the trainings, the LGUs made progress in applying their learnings in actual policy and plan formulation:

- Pigcawayan involved 17 local women's groups in the formulation of its GAD Code through barangay or lupon meetings. It likewise mapped women enterprises and services for women as part of developing the economic and social sectors of its CLUP. While its GAD Code was largely patterned after the provincial GAD Code, Pigcawayan ensured that their GAD Code was customized to its local situation by conducting its own research and gathering inputs from different LGU departments and the local GAD Council.

"We, the LGUs in PALMA+PB Alliance, are now gender-responsive in the planning, programming and budgeting. With the local enabling environment of LGUs, we make sure policies are in place in support of our women micenterprises as the backbone of local economic development."

Mr. Orly Maraingan
Project Manager
PALMA+PB Alliance

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- Alamada has an existing CDP prior to the entry of the GREAT Women Project, which is effective until 2012. The LGU claims that the role and concerns of women are partially integrated in the sectoral parts of the plan.
- Libungan had its previous CLUP and CDP approved in 2009. Its CDP, then, in particular, had existing programs and projects for women especially those related to livelihood. Given the project interventions, Libungan integrated gender and WEE elements in its Annual Investment Plan (AIP), which included barangay development plans which were based on consultations with women and contained a section on women.
- Midsayap involved women's groups, LGU department heads and local government agencies, mostly members of the Municipal Development Council (MDC), in the crafting of the CDP.
- Aleosan ensured that the results of the baseline study were integrated in the GAD Code and the CDP. Consultations and focus group discussions were likewise undertaken with Kalipunan ng Liping Pilipina (KALIPI) and Rural Improvement Clubs (RICs), women groups supported by the Municipal Social Welfare and Development Office (MSWDO) and the Municipal Agricultural Office (MAO), respectively. Through these consultations and focus group discussions, the LGU's TWG gathered various issues and concerns of women in microenterprises as well as gaps in the programs, projects and services implemented for women's groups to be considered in the formulation of the GAD Code and the CDP. Women's groups likewise participated and were heard in the conduct of public hearings for the approval of the local GAD Code.

Developing programs, projects and activities to promote women's economic empowerment. Aside from the formulation of GAD Codes and CDPs, short-term initiatives were also developed and included in the local Annual Investment Plans (AIP) and GAD plans and budgets to support the creation an enabling environment for WEE. Programs developed were primarily geared towards greater access to credit and finance and wider markets for women microentrepreneurs' products.

Pigcawayan. The LGU prioritized the lack of access to credit and financial resources for market vendors

"The enabling environment makes us more progressive in terms of women participation and those women that are doing business in the locality. Back then, we just go on with our business without looking on needs of businesses and on how the sector is generally managed by owners. But today that we are to able improve programs and services, enabling us to open up many opportunities in support of these women entrepreneurs."

Mayor Loreto Cabaya
Municipality of Aleosan

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through the creation of a lending project, *Araw-arawan* Financing Project. Vendors pay a small amount daily and such payments are pooled as a fund which can be loaned for capital.

Aleosan. A bagsakan (drop-off) center cum product display center was established to draw in more buyers for women's products, redounding to higher incomes for WMEs. WME products showcased in this bagsakan center ranged from nito products; organic soap made from calamansi, cucumber and guava; native bags from buri; products made of recycled materials to processed food products.



It also established training centers from which WMEs could learn from the LGU's or national government agencies' trainings to develop their enterprises. So far, WMEs from PPALMA have learned how to improve packaging and labelling of products such as organic soaps and processed foods from the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and the Department of Science and Technology (DOST). The municipality also developed a loan scheme, through the Aleosan Credit Cooperative, which can provide start-up capital for WMEs. It encouraged WMEs to avail of loans through this scheme, instead of going to informal lenders with exorbitant interest rates. Over a year of operation, the cooperative's membership increased from 10 to 20 WMEs.

Libungan. The municipality allotted Php500,000 or roughly 90% of its economic development fund for the Community Fund for Agricultural Development (CFAD), where most beneficiaries are women engaged in livestock, poultry, vending, and food production. The CFAD program is committed to provide non-interest bearing loans and livelihood funds to organized women.

Alongside this, WMEs of Libungan continued to benefit from the funds of the Mindanao Rural Development Program (MRDP), a project jointly funded by the World Bank, Department of Agriculture and the LGUs which seeks to improve rural incomes and achieve food security through agri-fisheries infrastructure, livelihood enterprise, and biodiversity conservation projects. The LGU developed a sustainable minibank scheme from the MRDP funds to benefit more women in other barangays. Funds are loaned at 3% monthly interest; a guideline was developed to enable women to enjoy a share in the interest incurred from the fund.

The LGU likewise ensured that the WME products, such as handicrafts, plants, processed fruit, *chorizo* products and bamboo products, are present in trade fairs within the area and in nearby municipalities and provinces.

It also supported product development for its fruit processing and bamboo craft industries; budgets for product development training were incorporated in the local economic devel-

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opment plan. It is likewise considering a legislative proposal to establish a multi-purpose center that could also serve as a training center for WMEs and a display center for WME products.

A thriving livelihood in Libungan, a "backyard" piggery is present in many households tended by women. Their livestock are sold to nearby municipalities and provinces in Mindanao including Davao, Cagayan de Oro and Zamboanga.

Midsayap. The LGU revitalized its support to WMEs by setting-up a training center for women members of the Rural Improvement Club (RIC) and a display center for their goods within the municipal hall compound. It also purchased machines and equipment for baking, and conducted baking training for the women RIC members. It also supported the formation of an organization of WMEs, which had its oath-taking in December 2011.

Responding to credit availability issues for WMEs, the LGU launched its *Araw-Araw, Piso-Piso* project, where WME vendors in transport terminals save a peso a day. The collected amount is deposited in the Rural Bank of Midsayap to be used in providing microloans to the women vendors to prevent them from resorting to exorbitant lenders. The LGU is in the process of crafting a loan policy for WMEs.

Pikit. DOST, in partnership with the local government, rolled out a series of trainings to improve fish processing technology in Pikit this year. The municipality also worked towards the improvement of product packaging of processed fish such as bangus and pangasius. It is also developing its coconut industry with its coco vinegar product.



Concerns of PALMA+PB Women Microentrepreneurs

Some WME enterprises in PALMA+PB face distinct problems and issues that need local government assistance. For example, Aleosan's organic soap making is confronted with stiff market competition with cheaper-priced soaps. As the WMEs use expensive raw materials for soap-making, they could not afford to bring down the price of the organic soaps they produced. Aleosan LGU also admits that there is still more to be improved from WME products such as recycled materials, buri bags and others, in terms of design.

Another concern is that WMEs are confronted with the shortage of raw materials. Since nito is wild and could not be cultured, Aleosan is addressing the raw material shortage through a barangay-level information drive to preserve and continue to plant and grow nito trees. While this is so, bamboos are being explored as alternative raw materials.

About The Project

The Gender Responsive Economic Actions for the Transformation of Women (GREAT Women) Project is a governance and capacity development project that aims to promote and support a gender-responsive enabling environment for women's economic empowerment, particularly those in microenterprises.

The Philippine Commission on Women (PCW), the national machinery for the advancement of women in the Philippines, is the lead executing agency for the Project.

The Commission forged partnership with key national government agencies involved in micro-, small- and medium-scale enterprise (MSME) development and select local government units to create a gender-responsive enabling environment for women's economic empowerment. This project receives technical and financial support from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

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