

# GREAT Women Project



## Developing Local Government Capacities on Women's Economic Empowerment

Stories of Metro Naga Development Council and PPALMA Alliance



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*Abstract* This case previews how various forms of capacity development under the GREAT Women Project enabled local government clusters or alliances such as the Metro Naga Development Council (MNDC) and the PPALMA Alliance to mainstream gender and development and women's economic empowerment.

### *The Metro Naga Development Council (MNDC) in Camarines Sur*

The Metro Naga Development Council (MNDC) is a partnership governance mechanism of 15 local government units in the Province of Camarines Sur. These LGUs are Naga City, Bombon, Bula, Calabanga, Camaligan, Canaman, Gainza, Magarao, Milaor, Minalabac, Ocampo, Pamplona, Pasacao, Pili and San Fernando. It covers a total of 317 barangays out of the 1,003 barangays of Camarines Sur.

The MNDC is represented by the Mayors of Naga City and the 14 municipalities, national government agencies with offices in the province, and private sector and non-governmental organizations. As a cluster, MNDC aims to provide adequate social services, promote employment and improve the quality of life of its constituents using an integrated area development framework.

In 2007, MNDC signed a Memorandum of Agreement with the PCW for eight of its 15 member LGUs – i.e., Naga City, Bula, Gainza, San Fernando, Milaor, Pili, Pasacao and Magarao, and Bonbon was added as a partner municipality in 2010. The Council conducted a baseline survey of its local enabling environment, women micro-entrepreneurs (WMEs) and women workers in microenterprises, which will become the basis of their project design. The baseline studies were completed in November 2008, in partnership with the Ateneo Social Science Research Center (ASSRC).

The GREAT Women Project in Metro Naga committed to four (4) components:

- policy development,
- establishment of service infrastructures for women microentrepreneurs,
- provision of social protection, and
- capability-building for LGUs.

Project implementation began with the formation of local teams, conduct of capacity development interventions along the line of developing business plans for common service facilities (CSFs), and initial linking with national government agencies.

Relative to policy development, MNDC LGUs committed to formulating and integrating women microenterprises sector development plans into the local annual investment plans. The Local Teams for Project Implementation organized the WMEs in each municipality/city and ensured WME concerns are considered in the policy development processes.

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On service infrastructure for WMEs, MNDC established One-Stop Women Enterprise Development Desks (OSWEDDs) and common service facilities (CSFs) for participating LGUs, in partnership with relevant national government agencies.

For example, Milaor secured DOST and DTI assistance in reviewing plans and assessing their CSF for footwear making. The DTI and the Metro Naga Chamber of Commerce trained Milaor footwear producers on pattern-making. Consequently, *agas* footwear production improved with new dyes, patterns, designs, and prototypes, and tried water lily as a new raw material. Capacity development activities led to the organizing *agas* footwear producers in five barangays. Product promotion was likewise undertaken through participation in trade fairs.

On social protection, MNDC promoted social protection of WMEs to reduce their exposures to risks, vulnerability and insecurity. Such include protection from gender-based violence and other labor law violations; skills development (training and re-training women); linking supply with demand for labor; and occupational safety and health promotion.

On capacity building and convergence building for LGUs, LGUs built capacities on the following: gender sensitivity and awareness; gender mainstreaming; policy and legal framework for women and MSMEs; GAD and micro-, small, and medium-enterprise (MSME) development; good/best practices in creating and enabling the local environment for women's economic empowerment, which includes formulating gender-responsive policies, plans and programs, and developing monitoring and evaluation systems for women's economic empowerment; training on occupational safety and health; and orientation on work values; partners' forum with DTI, DOLE and DOST; business counseling; strategic marketing; financial management services; and mentoring. As LGUs built capacities in these areas, they in turn developed customized trainings for women entrepreneurs.

Various LGUs noted positive changes due to the project's capacity building interventions:

- For **Naga City**, results-based management training aided project implementers to easily assess the performance and contributions of different sectors to women's economic empowerment. Naga City project implementers and local government staff also deemed training on integrating gender in comprehensive development plans as another important training, insofar as sharpening advocacy from purely women's empowerment to women's economic empowerment, with more focus on women's opportunities to contribute to society.
- The **Municipality of Bula** cited capacity development in WEE raised consciousness that development plans impact women and men differently. 'Handholding' sessions

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in preparing business plans built capabilities of the municipality's local team on project implementation.



- The **Municipality of Gainza** said that the project changed their mindset from looking at enterprise development as 'providing livelihood assistance.' Enterprise development should take the approach of building capacities of LGUs as enabler for women entrepreneurs. Hence, after LGU's built its own capacities, it organized the crabpaste producers and provided various training to women microentrepreneurs, such as good manufacturing practices, occupational safety and health practices, among others.



- The **Municipality of Milaor** articulated that the capacity development activities enabled them to develop their community-based monitoring project and administer the baseline survey using gender tools. On the basis of baseline data, Milaor developed its gender-responsive comprehensive development plan (GR-CDP). Gender sensitivity training, which Milaor cascaded to barangay officials and LGU employees, yielded other outcomes including reduction in violence against women and children (VAWC) cases.



- Partnerships with national government agencies likewise enabled LGUs to initiate WME-directed programs, services and enabling mechanisms. Naga City, for example, developed "*Growing Opportunities for Wealth*" or "*GROW Negosyo*" program, which harmonized all livelihood programs and services of barangay-based enterprises to give its needed leverage. The *Barangay GROW Negosyo* Program developed and promoted barangay-based enterprises and industries to produce quality products that can compete in the market. It developed barangay-based products through technology, capacity development, micro-financing, and marketing support, while creating supply chains for raw materials and complementary industries. The city fostered partnership with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), making *GROW Negosyo* a registered trademark. Such partnership boosted an increase in the number of *GROW Negosyo* beneficiaries.

- The **Municipality of Bula**, on the other hand, benefited from harmonization workshops with partner NGAs. It was selected by the DTI as a pilot area of their Rural Micro-Entrepreneurs Promotion Program (RUMEPP) which led into a series of training for WMEs in bamboo production such as bamboo harvesting, preservation and treatment, and on preparing bamboo slats/sticks. The Department of Science and Technology (DOST) and CIDA committed to provide equipment, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) assisted on bamboo nursery and plantation for sustainable raw materials, and the municipal local government donated the CSF.

- **The Municipality of Gainza**, in contrast, expanded its crab-paste production to other crab-based products and is currently tapping into new markets such as department stores and hotels. Moreover, expansion of support services became evident in the municipality as various divisions are not looking into women's concerns.

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PPALMA Alliance is an alliance of six neighboring municipalities in the first congressional district of North Cotabato Province, established in 2001. It is an alliance to pool resources for common infrastructure. However, at present, it is working on various programs such as environment, health, sports development, peace and on women's economic empowerment through the GREAT Women Project. Since 2008, PPALMA Alliance has been comprised by Pikit, Pigcawayan, Alamada, Libungan, Midsayap and Aleosan (PPALMA). Recently, the municipality of Banisilan joined the PPALMA Alliance, but not as a formal LGU partner of GREAT Women Project.

### *The PPALMA Alliance in North Cotabato*

The PALMA Alliance Development Board is composed of municipal mayors, municipal planning and development coordinators (MPDCs), Cotabato Provincial Planning and Development Officers (PPDOs), and municipal administrators, serving as the Alliance's policy-making body. It has a Project Management Office which serves as the coordinator, implementer and monitor of projects in the Alliance.

The PPALMA Alliance started its partnership with the GREAT Women Project in January 2007, through a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) signed with the Philippine Commission on Women. A Technical Working Group was formed, composed of MPDCs who steer project implementation within the Alliance.

The Alliance commenced its project implementation, similar to the MNDC, with the conduct of baseline studies. The baseline study on local enabling environment for women's economic empowerment was undertaken by the Integrated Development Services (IDS), while that of the women micro-entrepreneurs and women workers in microenterprises (WME/WWME) was undertaken by the Ateneo de Davao University (AddU). The studies were completed in 2008 and used as basis for crafting the Alliance's strategic plan for the project.

The PALMA Alliance Development Board, the Municipal Councils (*Sangguniang Bayan*), MTWGs, and the women microentrepreneurs themselves received Basic Gender Sensitivity Training (GST) and Gender Analysis. Local governments underwent trainings on integrating gender in comprehensive development plans, research utilization, local economic development, gender-responsive value chain analysis, and training in process documentation. With these capacity development activities, four areas of change became apparent: individual, organizational (PPALMA PMO), municipal LGUs, and among women microentrepreneurs.

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Project officers from the PPALMA PMO gained consciousness in assessing the participation and benefit of both women and men in projects and activities. They also now appreciate the importance of sex-disaggregating the database.

Among municipal LGUs, there has been greater adherence to GAD planning and budgeting. Given the project interventions, the local governments and different government agencies started assisting the women microentrepreneurs:

- In the **Municipality of Aleosan**, women's organizations were reactivated. Women from various barangays learned about soap making, herbal medicine plant mass production, fish processing, and nito processing. New sources of capital became available to women, including capital and training funds sourced from the local GAD Budget and the Department of Social Welfare and Development's *Hataw Negosyo* Project. Women likewise demonstrated upgraded skills in marketing and networking.
- The **Municipality of Pikit** trained women in three clusters: Rural Improvement Clubs (RICs), entrepreneurs from a WME group and an indigenous people's group. They trained on a variety of enterprises such as food and dried fish processing, and bag-making. The municipality likewise received funding assistance from the Mindanao Rural Development Project (MRDP). PPALMA PMO encouraged women enterprise groups to submit project proposals, and they, in turn, will mobilize partner government agencies for support.
- The **Municipality of Midsayap**, on the other hand, organized its fisherfolk to become a cooperative. This fisherfolk cooperative now produces supplies for a private company selling fish feeds, and has since grown their income. Midsayap is seeking Manila-based sources for income.
- The **Municipality of Libungan** profiled the women micro-entrepreneurs in its municipality and formulated their GAD Code.
- After the capacity development activities implemented in their area, individual women microentrepreneurstook immediate steps to starting enterprises. Some Pikit women started their food stands selling dried fish and native goods. Aleosan women now have a display center for mangoes. Alamada women are now managing a public market. Pigcawayan sourced capital from the GAD Focal Person to start their chorizo-making business.

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- PPALMA Alliance cited three major achievements under GWP. These are the establishment of Women's Economic Center (WEC) in Aleosan, Midsayap and Pikit to promote WMEs' products and services, development of gender-responsive policies and plans supportive of WEE, and involvement in DTI-led training for WMEs in agri-based enterprises. The WECs serve as a referral system on enterprise-related concerns, a multi-purpose area for microenterprise-related activities attended by women-led organizations and individual women microentrepreneurs.
- In support of gender-responsive policies and plans supportive of WEE, PPALMA Alliance was the partner site that tested and applied the gender and development-infused Supplemental Guidelines for Comprehensive Development Planning (CDP). PPALMA was the first of the project sites to be trained on the guidelines in integrating GAD in the Comprehensive Development Plan (CDP). PPALMA Alliance was involved in the DTI-led training for WMEs engaged in the DTI-led training for WMEs in agri-based enterprises. The Alliance was able to draft a common action plan for agri-based enterprises in the DTI's SMED Plan.



## 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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