

# *GREAT Women Project*



## *Transforming Crab Paste Processing* *Development of A Women-Led Economic Enterprise* *In Metro Naga (Camarines Sur)*



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# Transforming Crab Paste Processing

## The Development of a Women-Led Economic Enterprise in Metro Naga

### Case Summary



The riverside community of Cagbunga of the town of Gainza, Camarines Sur depends on crab paste processing as an alternative source of income for its 1,600 residents. The Bicol River has an abundance of small freshwater crabs which the people learned to prepare as pre-processed crabmeat in the mid-1980s. The crabmeat was sold to Pampanga, more than 500 kilometers away, where it is processed into finished products.

Despite the rich source of raw materials, the processors, particularly the women, were dependent on the price dictates of their buyers, and continued to struggle to find ways to improve their system of processing and sell higher value products. Their ultimate goal was to increase their income, and to free themselves from their largely impoverished state. They formed organizations to pool their resources and avail of government assistance but had enjoyed limited success in this regard.



After more than twenty years of striving to improve their lot, their experiences and the ongoing aid from their LGU and other government agencies have become valuable foundations for a potential breakthrough into a processing and entrepreneurial system that will give them higher income and a better life. Such preconditions only needed a catalyst to help empower the women entrepreneurs, create a supportive political and social environment, and harmonize the support from government agencies. This was the role of the Great Women Project (GWP) in Metro Naga for the women entrepreneurs engaged in crabmeat pre-processing in Cagbunga.

The GWP not only encouraged the development of a gender responsive LGU through its capacity development activities but it also directly addressed the technical and economic needs of the WMEs by sponsoring an extensive business planning series of workshops for the Food Processing and Services Center of Gainza. The series of workshops served as the venue for channeling and harmonizing the assistance of the LGU and other government agencies, such as the Department of Trade & Industry (DTI), Department of Science & Technology (DOST), Food & Drugs Authority (FDA), Bureau of Fisheries & Aquatic Resources (BFAR), and the Department of Environment & Natural Resources (DENR). Because of the support catalyzed by the GWP, the Center is fast becoming a reality, with concrete commitments from its network of partners. Moreover, the GWP is preparing the WMEs and their husbands to eventually manage the processing center through capacity development trainings in crab paste processing, and entrepreneurship, under the newly organized Cagbunga Crab Paste Producers Association of Gainza.

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The town of Gainza is located less than five kilometers southwest of Naga City, the economic and educational hub of the province of Camarines Sur. Historically, Gainza used to be a barrio of Naga City then known as “Ciudad de Caceres,” until it earned its independence as a municipality in 1866. Gainza is situated along the Bicol River, with a generally flat and low-lying terrain, making it part of the tidal flood plains of the province. Such topography makes the land prone to seasonal flooding, and is said to be a limiting factor in the full development of its agriculture, particularly rice farming. In fact, in 2006, more than 81% of its land area of 1,821 hectares was devoted largely to rice production which served as the main source of income of 65% of its population of about 9,600.<sup>1</sup>

**Gainza: At the Periphery of the Heart of Bicol**

Gainza’s vulnerability to the overflowing of the Bicol River, coupled with overdependence on chemical farming has resulted in the decline of agricultural productivity. However, some of its residents have learned to cope with the situation by engaging in micro-entrepreneurial ventures such as trading of goods sourced from Naga City. Some enterprising folks rely on a natural resource that is abundant in this kind of ecological system – the small freshwater crabs. These people are from the rural and flood-prone barangay of Cagbunga, one of the town’s eight barangays.

The fragile agricultural economy of Gainza has pushed most of the women to engage in micro-enterprises to augment family income. Most engage in retailing and ambulant vending of dry goods bought from the Naga City Market to be sold to their neighbors, and produce from their backyard gardens or other ventures to be sold to the city buyers.

**A Profile of the WMEs and the Community**

In 2006, some 1,650 individuals lived in the riverside community of Cagbunga of which 48.6% were female.<sup>2</sup> The low level of agricultural productivity was reflected in the fact that income from agricultural activities comprised only 4.5% of the community’s total income in the same year. Fishing from the river contributed only 7.5% to the total income. The bulk of livelihood income or 38.3% was derived from small businesses, which was valued at Php.5.34 million as of 2006.<sup>3</sup> This included the business derived from crabmeat pre-processing.

### End Notes

<sup>1</sup> Socio-Economic and Physical Profile of the Municipality of Gainza, Camarines Sur (Summary).

<sup>2</sup> Barangay Tally Sheet, Cagbunga, Gainza, Camarines Sur, Local Enhanced and Automated Databank, 2006 (Benchmark).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

Women entrepreneurs, however lamented that because of the prevalence of unpaid credit sales and undercapitalization, their ventures could not earn enough to tide them



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over.<sup>4</sup> Statistics show that more than seven out of ten (72.9%) of the households had incomes below the poverty threshold, while about half of the households (50.6%) had income below the food threshold.<sup>5</sup> The Cagbunga WMEs, however, considered themselves at an advantage because they were “patient, persevering, hardworking and had the courage to engage in business even without the support of their spouses.”<sup>6</sup>

### Development of Crabpaste Processing

The development of crabmeat processing, and the evolution of the Cagbunga Crabpaste Producers Association of Gainza (CCPAG) as a women’s entrepreneurial organization took on three dimensions: a) technical and economic levels of growth of the crabpaste industry in the community, b) the creation and development of the entrepreneurial

Success story of Gainza Women Microentrepreneur: Teodora Aquino



Mrs. Teodora Aquino exemplifies the struggle of the Gainza womenfolk to support their families. A migrant from Mindanao, she married a local farmer, and like many others, helped in the farm work. After learning to pre-process crab meat, she invested her hard-earned cash in the enterprise and started to sell her products to a major buyer in Pampanga. Her determination to pull her family out of tenancy and poverty led to her success in her small business. This, in turn attracted the attention of government agencies which supported her and the other women in her community. One of the requirements for availing of government assistance was an active women’s group.

Mrs. Aquino worked for the formation of the Samahan ng Inang Manggagawa (SIM), or Organization of Worker-Mothers in 2003. As president, she had to devote much of her time and energy to the paperwork and other requirements for government assistance, so much so that she had to set aside her own family’s business. Her sacrifice paid off when the SIM was given a grant of Php70,000 by DOLE as a revolving credit fund for the members.

Once the SIM had gained a firm organizational footing, she returned to her family business to support her growing children. She established the Everlasting Food Products which she registered with the DTI. This qualified her for the DTI’s assistance in product development and marketing. The continuing success of her venture showed the way for the other women in Cagbunga to devote their efforts to crabmeat processing, eventually turning it into the town’s special product under the DTI’s One-Town-One-Product program.

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>4</sup> Survey of Business Related Problems and Constraints of Enterprises, Gainza, from a Baseline Study of WMEs in Metro Naga. The other problems mentioned were “High cost of inputs”, Lack of proper equipment, Low price of crab paste (products), and “many competitors.”

<sup>5</sup> Barangay Tally Sheet.

<sup>6</sup> Survey of Business Related Problems and Constraints of Enterprises, Gainza, from a Baseline Study of WMEs in Metro Naga.

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organizations related to the industry, and c) the extent and level of cooperation of the agencies and organizations supporting the endeavor.

Being part of the Bicol River's flood basin is both a boon and bane to Cagbunga's economy. Apart from the destruction caused by the region's recurrent typhoons, the seasonal flooding provides fertile alluvial deposits to the rice fields, but frequent flooding also limits the number of cropping seasons. Their proximity to the river and its creeks and swamps, however provides families with an alternative form of livelihood – the gathering of small freshwater crabs. Traditionally, these were either retailed directly by the gatherers, or passed on to ambulant vendors. The main market outlet was Naga City, which was less than five kilometers away. This simple process of gathering and selling crabs had been the economic mode for as long as the community could remember. Sometime in 1986 however, a Cagbunga crab gatherer, Efren San Juan, decided to explore ways to increase their family's income by looking for wholesale buyers of crabs. Crabs were especially abundant in the area from August to December, so much so that the local retail market could not absorb them all.

Pampanga, some 500 kilometers away which was, and still is, known for the production of crabpaste as a major industry was Mr. San Juan's target market. He found an interested entrepreneur who pursued a higher-value economic mode of purchasing crabmeat instead of live crabs. The buyers from Pampanga sent eight laborers to Cagbunga to semi-process the crabmeat before bringing them to Pampanga. This system which effectively reduced transport costs, reduced spoilage and maximized the availability of the live crabs in Cagbunga became the more profitable economic mode for both the buyers and the community. The venture resulted in the transfer of the technology for extracting and semi-processing crabmeat to the community. This opened up the market in Pampanga to the Cagbunga products.

The technological advances in processing resulted in a corresponding increase in income for the community. Whereas the simple gathering-retailing system earned for them P5.00 per kilo, pre-processing the crabmeat provided them an average net income of P90.00 per kilo.<sup>7</sup> This spurred the community, including Mrs. Teodora Aquino, to devote their full time to crabmeat extraction. While many families retained a household level production system, the increasing demand for crabmeat led to the development of more organized production systems.

### Technological and Economic Development



#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>7</sup> A plastic pail of crabmeat, weighing about 24 kilos, could earn them from Php2,000 to Php2,500. From FGD with WMEs of Cagbunga, 9 July 2010, Cagbunga Barangay Hall, Gainza.

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During peak gathering seasons, the extraction of crabmeat had to be done as quickly as possible to prevent spoilage. This required as many as 50 individuals working together to process the meat for packing and selling to the ready market in Pampanga where there was a demand for semi-processed crabmeat for the final processing, packaging, and marketing by the Pampanga-based firms. One of the largest crabmeat buyers and producers in Pampanga were the Navarros' who started buying Cagbunga's crabmeat products in 2002. A local market in the province and the Bicol Region for processed crabmeat also existed. The assistance of the DTI and the Gainza LGU in promoting the product, which started in 2005, also helped provide greater market exposure to the product.

In terms of supply, the area seemed to have an abundant and continuing supply of crabs. Even the droughts caused by the El Niño and climate change had ironically benefited the area. Longer dry spells resulted in a higher crab population.<sup>8</sup> The availability of a ready market and the rich supply of crabs, led to the idea of pursuing a full production and packaging system to generate greater incomes for the families. The basic question then was how to go about this technological breakthrough.

### Organizational Development: SAMACA, SIM, and SIAM

After a DTI sponsored study tour in Pampanga for the OTOP sometime in 2006, Ms. Cristeta Chica, Gainza's Municipal Planning and Development Officer, reported that the answer to their problem could be a Common Service Facility (CSF) for the crab processors of the community.<sup>9</sup> The CSF would remove the obstacles to the development of the industry that included the dependence on only one buyer and the lack of proper equipment.<sup>10</sup> The target was not only to provide infrastructure and equipment for more efficient processing, but also to pass the standards of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). This meant aiming for products of high standards for greater marketability and sales.

The rise of the crab industry in Cagbunga in the late 1980s as a viable alternative form of livelihood led to the increase in the number of families engaged in the venture. Recognizing the potentials for higher economic returns given the proper equipment and facilities, the workers formed the Samahan ng mga Magtatalangka ng Cagbunga (SAMACA). This was composed of menfolk who pooled together their resources to procure a small fishing boat for gathering crabs, and a jeep to transport their pre-processed crabmeat to their buyers in Pampanga. The SAMACA identified the establishment of a storage facility for their products as critical to the development of their industry. They needed about Php800,000 for this structure which could ensure higher earnings with

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>8</sup> Focus Group Discussion, 9 July 2010, Cagbunga Barangay Hall.

<sup>9</sup> Interview with Gainza LTPI, October 2009, for the PDR for Metro Naga GWP.

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the capacity to sell preserved crabmeat at a higher price during the peak season. After falling short of finding funds to achieve this target, the organization became inactive.<sup>11</sup>

Meanwhile, the pre-processing of crabmeat continued at the household scale. The system was mainly a family affair, with children involved from the gathering of crabs along the river and swamp areas, up to the extraction and semi-processing of the meat. In 2003, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) helped develop a system to minimize the undue burden of producing crabmeat to their children in order to comply with the child labor law. This was initiated in the Aquino family business, but Mrs. Aquino sought the same assistance for the other families and the mothers.

One strategy to qualify for assistance was the formation of the Samahan ng Inang Mangagawa (SIM). Mrs. Aquino at this point sacrificed her family's business to focus on the development of the SIM and became its president. The group was registered with the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE). Recognizing the group's efforts to improve their economic condition, and at the same time comply with child labor laws, the DOLE allotted a grant of Php70,000 to serve as a revolving fund for the capital needs of the members.

The SIM was later expanded in 2004 to include the menfolk, giving birth to the Samahan ng Ina at Amang Mangagagawa or SIAM. The continuing success of this organization, under the leadership of Mrs. Aquino, paved the way for an additional P1.0 million grant for the use of the members as a credit fund. Two years later, the SIAM was already a thriving organization. Mrs. Aquino, who by then felt that she had already contributed whatever she could for the group, decided to revive her own business to support her growing family.

In 2005, the community's growing enterprise attracted the attention of the DTI. With the encouragement of the DTI, Mrs. Aquino registered her business with the DTI as the "Everlasting Food Products." This qualified her for the agency's support in labeling and packaging. She was then able to sell crab paste to a major buyer in Pampanga.<sup>12</sup> The LGU, through the MPDO, assisted the crabmeat processing venture to become Gainza's product for the DTI's One-Town One-Product program. The DTI and the LGU provided support through market exposure, such as participation of the producers in trade fairs held in Manila. While there was only one entrepreneur directly assisted by the DTI, the overall recognition of crabmeat as the special product of the town of Gainza helped in

### FOOTNOTES

<sup>10</sup> Survey of Business Related Problems and Constraints of Enterprises, Gainza, from a Baseline Study of WMEs in Metro Naga.

<sup>11</sup> In 2000, the Metro Naga Development Council, through Philippine-Australian Governance Training for LGUs, promoted the SAMACA as a potential beneficiary for investment. However, due to deficiencies in the prerequisites for registration under the Cooperative Development Agency, the group was not able to avail of assistance.

<sup>12</sup> Testimony of Mrs. Teodora Aquino, PCW Partners' Meeting, February 2010. micro-enterprises (MEs); Objective 320 – LGU-Private Sector-Civil Society Partnerships for WEE; and Objective 330 – Support for the Gender Responsive implementation of PPS for MEs. Orgulyo kan Bicol (Ok Bicol) Trade Fair (Manila, October 2008), Panagbenga Trade Fair (Baguio, March 2009), and The 5th Bicol Business Week (Naga City, May 2009).



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drawing greater focus to this form of livelihood.<sup>13</sup> In fact, when the GWP was launched for the Metro Naga area in March 2007 and started to forge links with LGUs, Gainza was one of the eight partner LGUs partly because of the existence of an active women's entrepreneurial group in Cagbunga.

### *Institutional Support*

The technological and organizational timelines of the development of the CCPAG reveals the valuable role of government agencies and the LGU in its development. The DSWD helped organize the Samahang Inang Manggagawa to address child labor and poverty issues. The DOLE supported this effort by providing seed capital for the members. Later, the DTI helped in marketing, packaging, and related business needs of the women entrepreneurs. As a fifth class municipality with limited resources, the LGU of Gainza was not in a position to contribute substantial financial and material resources to the women entrepreneurs, especially during the early years of its development. One of the LGU's initial contributions to the WMEs was the provision of micro-credit through the SEA-K project of the DSWD. The LGU has been instrumental, nonetheless, in allocating human resources for the management and coordination needs of the activities held in partnership with other government agencies.

### *The GWP and Its Interventions*

After an initial technological and economic advance from the transfer of technology in crabmeat pre-processing in 1986, the women and men involved in crabmeat processing enterprise had been struggling for more than two decades to develop their livelihood. This struggle provided important foundations for the WMEs' hoped-for economic breakthrough – the grassroots experiences in organization building, the growing involvement of the LGU and other GAs through their own programs in enterprise and social development.

The implementation of the GWP in Gainza thus served as the catalyst that harnessed and harmonized the existing efforts on crab paste production in the community. It provided the much needed push for the technological development of crabmeat processing by initiating the planning process for the CSF in the last quarter of 2008. The GWP supported a twelve-month series of Business Planning trainings and workshops to develop a business plan for what would be called the Gainza Food Processing Service Center (FPSC) for Crab Paste Processing.<sup>14</sup> The CSF was intended to bring about better technology and substantial economic opportunities for the WMEs. The Business Plan, developed with the support of the GWP, could be considered as a launching pad to the technological and economic take-off of crabmeat processing and the WMEs of Cagbunga.

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>13</sup> This, however, was limited only to DTI-registered ventures, which at that time, was and still is only the Everlasting Food Products of the family of Mrs. Teodora Aquino.

<sup>14</sup> The production of this plan developed strategies – in technical, economic, managerial, and social welfare aspects, to ensure the profitability and increased incomes of the WMEs.



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In 2008, the GWP conducted consultations and trainings for WMEs of Gainza, particularly the women crab paste processors of Cagbunga. In addition to SIAM, which represented the small producers and had about 30 active members, there were also eight other producers who were not part of the group because they had enough resources to independently process their own crabmeat. To bring all these WMEs together, the LGU and the GWP supported the formation of the Cagbunga Crabpaste Processors Association of Gainza (CCPAG). At this point, the CCPAG was still an informal federation of all those involved in the crabpaste industry, but was used by the GWP and the LGU as a channel for their assistance.

### *Consolidating Community Organizations for Crab Paste Processing*

With GWP's focus on WMEs, consultative meetings were held with women where strategies and plans for livelihood development were discussed, particularly the planning for the CSF. The menfolk's interest led them to listen to the proceedings while they literally stayed outside the meeting areas. After a session where the women decided on the location of the CSF, the men joined the women after the meeting and shared their own ideas about the issue. The informal post-meeting consultation with the men underscored a perspective that apparently the women missed, and a new decision was made.<sup>15</sup> This incident sparked a growing discomfiture by the menfolk on what they perceived to be exclusivity for women of the consultations and other activities under the GWP. It may be recalled that their SAMACA preceded the SIAM and other groups, and they felt that they had the right to participate in the discussions. In a dialogue with the MPDO and the LCE, they claimed that while the GWP's efforts, especially the development of the CSF, were for the welfare of the women, the menfolk were still an integral part of the industry.

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>15</sup>The GWP-supported workshops not only increased the skill level of the key LGU participants, but also helped generate support from the LGU and partner agencies, such as the DTI, the Department of Science and Technology, the BFAR, DA, DENR, and other agencies. While the FPSC is considered to be LGU-initiated, and will be placed under the Municipal Agricultural Office, a "federation" consisting of the SIAM and other non-member crab-processors, would eventually manage the facility. The women decided to construct the facility in a property of one of the processors. The men pointed out later that this might create a situation where the owner of the land, who is also a processor, might dominate the use of the facility. It was then decided that the CSF would be established in a more "neutral" location.

The MPDO explained that while the GWP's focus was on women, this did not mean that men were excluded from the decision making process and other activities. In fact, the MNDC, GWP's partner, always advocated gender development through the adage that women and men should work hand in hand for development. The issue was resolved after this clarification, and the CCPAG was formally organized in July of 2009, with its members taking their oath during a special program on the OTOP launching in Gainza, and the menfolk fully supportive of the group.

What could have been a growing strain between the women and men was soon eradicated. In fact, the MNDC's slogan on partnership for development became a reality for the members after the conduct of the Basic Gender Sensitivity Training in the

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### Strengthening Institutional Support

community in late 2009. The participants testified that after the training, their husbands came to appreciate the value of working together and encouraged participation in the GWP's activities. While the GWP continued to provide technical training to the members of the CCPAG, what proved to be a critical turning point in the evolution of the organization towards a gender-responsive organization was the clarification and understanding of the roles both women and men play in their common goal to uplift their economic conditions.

When the GWP required the formation of the Local Team for Project Implementation (LTPI), the LCE cooperated and issued an Executive Order for the formation of the group, which included himself as the chair, and the MPDO and the MAO as the key members. The activities for Gainza were under the GWP Work Plan for the Metro Naga area. This was parallel to the GWP's Project Implementation Plan focusing on three major thrusts: LGU Capacity Development, the establishment of partnerships for the WEE, and support for gender-responsive PPAs for microenterprises.<sup>16</sup>

Some of the fundamental gender-responsiveness activities included the conduct of Basic Gender Sensitivity Training (BGST), and an Orientation on Violence Against Women and Children (VAWC). Guided by the objective to create a support network for WMEs, a Technical Working Group (TWG) for Gainza was formed. The TWG was composed of the Government Agencies (GA) actively involved in the development of the CSF for crabmeat processing, such as the DTI, DOST, and other agencies. The GWP's network of GA partners at the national level also provided additional support through MNDC and GWP's capacity development trainings and related activities. The DTI and the MNDC assisted in marketing and promotions, particularly through participation in trade fairs.<sup>17</sup> The DTI also sponsored seminars on Crabmeat Product Development in December of 2008.

Environmental awareness and environmentally responsible business practices were the objectives of Negosyo at Kapaligiran Puedeng Pagsabayin which was spearheaded by the DENR for all the MNDC GWP partners. The DENR also assisted in waste management by finding ways to convert crabmeat processing by-products into compost or animal feeds. The DOST, in coordination with the FDA, helped design the facilities for the CSF to comply with sanitation standards and ensure processing efficiency. The DOST's SET-UP program also earmarked Php 633,000 as its share in the establishment of the CSF.

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>16</sup> The objectives correspond to the GWP project components, thus at the LGU level, the three objectives for Metro Naga GWP were: Objective 310-LGU Capacity Development for gender responsive programs, projects, and services (PPS) for micro-enterprises (MEs); Objective 320 – LGU-Private Sector-Civil Society Partnerships for WEE; and Objective 330 – Support for the Gender Responsive implementation of PPS for MEs.

<sup>17</sup> Orgulyo kan Bikol (Ok Bikol) Trade Fair (Manila, October 2008), Panagbenga Trade Fair (Baguio, March 2009), and The 5th Bicol Business Week (Naga City, May 2009).

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The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) helped develop strategies to ensure the sustainable supply of crabs in the area; it facilitated the processing of the CCPAG's permit for utilization of marine resources. The DOLE through the Occupational Health and Safety Center conducted study visits and sharing of good practices among the Metro Naga partner LGUs, including Gainza, to promote cleanliness and safety in the workplace. Social Protection issues, including health insurance, were also brought up for discussion among the GWP participants.

The LGU for its part, rented a structure for two years to house the crabmeat processing equipment in 2009. The rented structure however was used for only one year because it did not pass the DOST and FDA standards. Cooking utensils were also contributed by the LGU for the use of the processors. Also in 2009, an Agricultural Technologist was designated as officer of Gainza's One-Stop Women's Entrepreneurship Development Desk to focus on the needs of WMEs.

With the heightened awareness of women's rights brought about by the activities of the GWP, the Women's Council of the Sangguniang Bayan that was formed at the time the GWP was introduced became more active. The GWP's sponsorship of a seminar series on gender-responsive governance in 2009 led to the development of a GAD Code for Gainza.

Meanwhile, the growing responsibilities under the GWP added to the workload of the members of the LTPI, just as the influx of different forms of assistance from the TWG also poured in. Recognizing the need to streamline the coordination and harmonization requirements of the LTPI and the TWG, the LTPI and the TWG were merged into the eLTPI, or the "expanded LTPI" for Gainza, and the other Metro Naga LGU partners during the planning process for the Work and Financial Plan for 2009-2010. This consolidated the support network established, harmonized, and developed by the GWP for the planned CSF, the CCPAG, and the WMEs of Gainza in general.

As a whole the GWP initiatives for WMEs in Gainza were in harmony with the three major objectives of Component 3, as developed by the Metro Naga GWP for its partner LGUs, namely: capacity development, partnerships and enhancement of enabling mechanisms.

Apart from activities supportive of gender responsiveness among the LGU leadership and the WMEs, the GWP has channeled resources for the development of the Business

*Lessons and  
Insights in LGU  
Implementation*



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Plans for Gainza's Food Processing and Services Center. The year-long series of workshops sharpened the skills for business planning of both LGU and WMEs participants. This was, and still is being complemented by gender responsive specialized training on crab paste processing and entrepreneurial and management training. For instance, an eight-module series on Gender Entrepreneurship Training "GET AHEAD" seminars on genderized management skills focusing on their planned CSF was held from March to May 2010.



The development of the CSF became the venue for direct and concrete support from the LGU and the NGAs. Each agency was able to channel resources from its programs on enterprise and social development for the CSF. As each partner's input was committed, the potentials for success increased proportionately, which in turn encouraged additional contributions from the other agencies. Such a positive feedback and increasing inputs from partners could not have been achieved without the development of the plan for the CSF.

The heightened gender awareness was generated by the GWP in both the LGU and WME levels. The GWP's activities stimulated gender sensitivity and responsiveness in both the grassroots and the leadership, creating a social and political environment that was ripe for the establishment of policies and mechanisms to support the WMEs. The Women's Council, formed in the same year as the GWP's entry, became more active to parallel the WME's efforts in the communities. The LCE responded by supporting the GWP's organizational and coordination needs. And through the GWP, a GAD Code for the municipality was finally developed and enacted.

## 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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