

GREAT Women Project



Upscaling Baybay's Pandan Weaving Handicrafts

Gender-Responsive Value Chain Analysis
of Pandan Handicrafts



Philippine
Commission
on Women

January 2013

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Abstract This case study features pandan handicrafts making in Baybay, Leyte. It describes the processes involved in pandan handicrafts making, the challenges faced by its weavers and potential areas that can be supported by various service providers. It likewise features the Uplifted Plaridel Women's Association for Rural Development (UPWARD), the association of women pandan weavers organized in Baybay.

Pandan Handicrafts-Making in Baybay, Leyte

Baybay City in Leyte is involved in farming and fishing while some are engaged in hunting and in forest activities. The most common farm products are coconut, rice, corn, abaca, root crops, fruits, and vegetables. Other cottage industries can also be found in the locality such as bamboo and rattan crafts-making, ceramics-making, dress-making, fiber crafts-making, food preservation, mat and bags weaving, metal crafts-making, furniture manufacturing and coconut oil milling.

Pandan-based handicrafts-making is a traditional home-based livelihood and considered as the most significant entrepreneurial activity involving women in Baybay. Local weavers produce traditional designs for mats, bags and other accessories to meet demand and earn additional household income. Over the years, this supplemental livelihood grew into enterprises upon improvement of roads and transport facilities, making trading brisk across towns.

After being assigned as Baybay's One Town, One Product (OTOP), pandan handicrafts-making shifted into becoming an organized business enterprise with larger-scale production. A woman-led organization, Uplifted Plaridel Women's Association for Rural Development (UPWARD), affiliated with Baybay's OTOP to boost pandan handicrafts-making enterprises.



The UPWARD Women Weavers

UPWARD was organized as a community association of home-based weavers in 1999. Its mission is to build capacities of its members, promote native products, and ensure livelihood sustainability for bag weavers of Brgy. Plaridel in Baybay. Its product line includes bags, mats, slippers, hats, boxes, placemats, giveaway items, shoe bags, cell-phone holders, and camera holders. Its immediate goal was to assist individual handicraft makers in addressing their common production and marketing concerns.

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The number of pandan weavers in Baybay City is estimated at 385: Brgy. Plaridel at 200 while barangays Maslog, Bitanhuan and Maitum at 50 each, Punta at 25 and Jaena at 10. There are 120 UPWARD members out of this number of weavers.

Women weavers are mostly middle-aged, ranging from 30 to 50 years old, living with their core family, and mostly working during spare time in their own houses. Some weavers are out-of-school women, ranging from 13 to 18 years old.

In a local study in 2004, these weavers produce a minimum of 1,000 pieces of pandan mats and 1,000 pieces of pandan bags monthly. About four-fifths of pandan woven products are produced in Plaridel and the rest are processed in Maslog, Bitanhuan, Maitum, Punta and Jaena.

Screw Pine variety of pandan plants serves as raw material for mats, bags, placemats, hats and other handicraft products. It is sporadically grown in the different western barangays of Baybay, specifically in Plaridel, Maslog, Bitanhuan, Maitum, Punta and Jaena. It is estimated that the aggregate plantation size of pandan in Baybay only spans to five (5) hectares.

Other major sources of pandan are found in municipalities of Cuatro Islas, Inopacan and Hindang, where the Baybay weavers purchase bundled and partially processed pandan strips. Pandan plants and leaves hardly have any monetary value in the community as these are considered as thorny, wild plants.

Suitable young pandan leaves are usually harvested by the landowner or relatives of craftworkers, beginning in September or October and ending in May or June, when local weather is conducive for gathering. Gathering and processing of raw materials are mostly done by women and, sometimes, with the assistance of their children to allow men to earn income through fishing and other means. Procurement of raw materials takes 13 working days from cutting of leaves until ready for transport and processing in usual destinations, such as Inopacan and Hindang.

Processing of raw materials takes another 11 working days. Harvesters and gatherers proceed to de-thorning, stripping to size, partial sun drying, straightening of strips and bundling. After which, weavers subject the volume strips to be colored or bleached, depending on the number of colors used in the final product design. The coloring or bleaching process involves pandan strips soaked in drums or big containers with boiled water-based colors, followed by air-drying. The colored pandan strips are then shaped

Pandan-Weaving Production Process



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into different standard sizes of bags, sleeping mats, place mats, hats, wine bags, slippers and jewelry boxes. Final color touch-ups and wax are applied to assure that products are of fine quality. An additional one to three days are designated for assembly or weaving, finishing touches such as torchings of rough edges, waxing or polishing, and attaching of handles. Quality checkup is done, after which, costing is drawn out.

Another half day is allocated to sort, bundle and pack finished products and another one to three days for delivery in distribution sites and selling of products to the target market.

Home-based UPWARD women weavers can finish one unit of single mat equivalent to two days (4-6 hours daily weaving) with pick-up value of P80.00, prepared pandan strips cost of P20.00 and water-based color purchasing cost of P10.00, making a net sale of P50.00 every two (2) days to the home-based women weavers and for sale at the OTOP Center at P100.00.

Pandan strips suppliers can prepare three (3) single units of mat equivalent materials every two days (4-6 hours gathering, stripping, initial sun drying), cost of P10.00 for blades splicers, making a net sale P50.00 every two (2) days.

Roadblocks to Upscaling



Though net sales is small per unit, if the 171,000 families "masa" market in the Provinces of Leyte and Southern Leyte buy (directly or through relief organizations and LGUs) one single unit mat equivalent per year, the gatherers will have potential net sales value at P8.55 million and weavers another P8.55 million per year, or a monthly average of P712,000 per month for each sub-group. Similarly, the marketing federation will have a potential gross marketing margin (at 20% rate) value of about P3.42 million per year or P285,000.00 per month.

Pandan woven products are sold at PhP 50 to 100 at the OTOP Center in Baybay. Nearby local retailers in the province sell the items at PhP 150, within the Visayas region at PhP 200 and, in Luzon and Mindanao at PhP 250. Products are priced at PhP 400 to 500 for foreign and local buyers in Manila and other tourist spots while price is at PhP 500 to 700 per item for North American and European buyers. A sales value of PhP 10,000 per month comes from three (3) recognized groups of weavers; other small and independent weavers are not included in this estimate.

UPWARD is unable to generate a commercial volume sales contract that would stabilize production and facilitate improvements in product design and production tech-

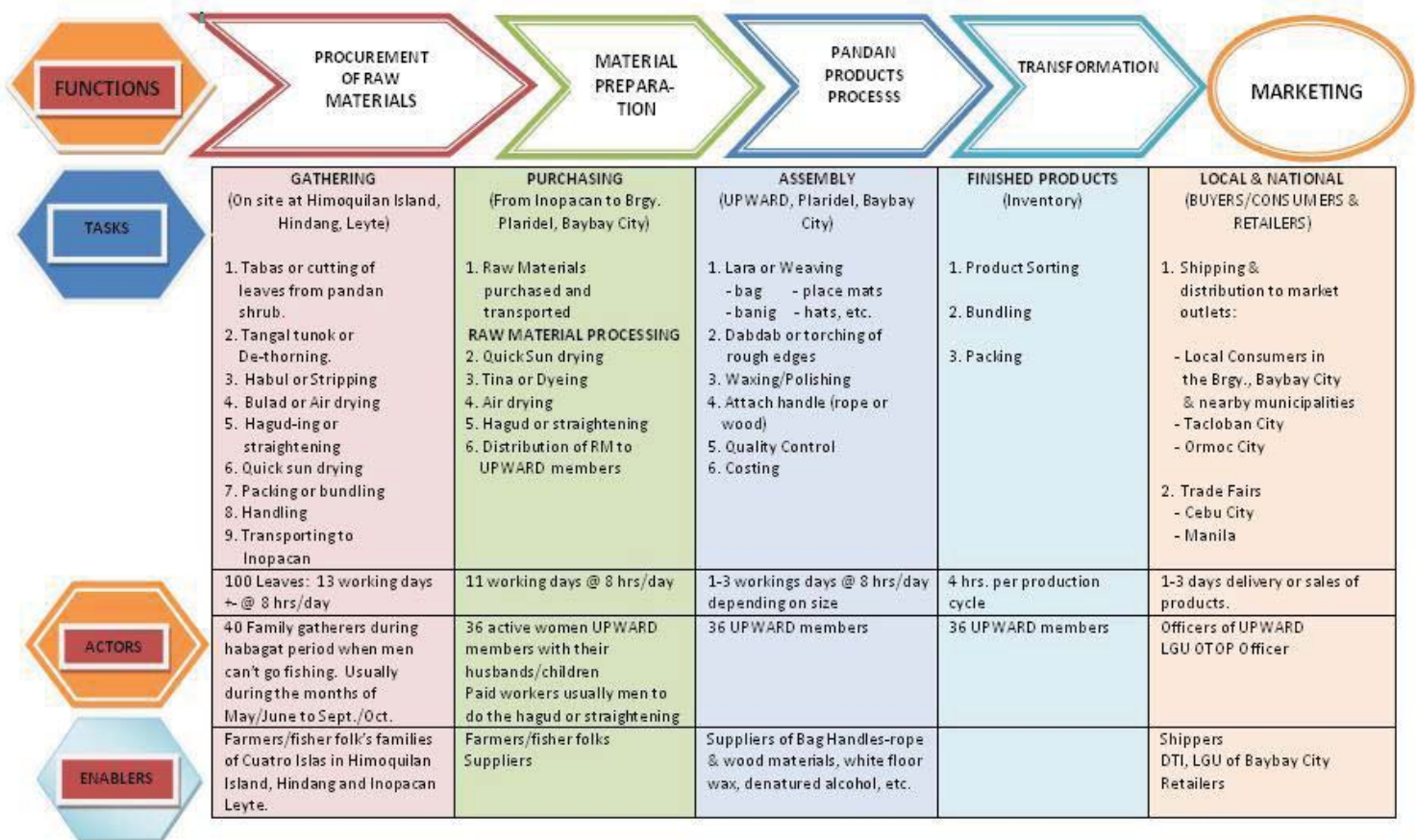
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nology for pandan weaving in Baybay. Acquiring a volume sales contract on a sustained basis is necessary for UPWARD to upscale as an enterprise and to economically benefit its members.

UPWARD caters to the same markets from its inception. Its woven products are largely sold to the traditional consumers in Leyte. It also sold to local institutional markets for bags and hats, and accessories are also seasonally sold during teacher or students camps, election periods, athletic competitions, fiestas, and similar social occasions. It heavily relied on local market vendors for sales and there is no recognized bulk trader, exporter agent or exporter in the area. (See GR-VCA map below.)

Pandan Product Value Chain Map



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Weavers' associations like UPWARD, though undertaking some form of collective marketing efforts, are doing so as a producer group rather than as a trading group. The OTOP Center, on the other hand, can only provide technical assistance and offer a display center. It does not have the mandate and capability to serve as an active marketing event organizer, buyer agent or buyer. Hence, UPWARD needs capacities in marketing to target consumers and buyers, especially higher-end markets.

UPWARD is an active member of the Bahandi Producers' Association of Eastern Visayas (BPAEV). Its institutional linkages with OTOP and BPAEV enabled the organization of production and marketing of pandan products. It also has a lot of ground to cover, however, in translating business operations into sustainable benefits for its members and other women handicrafts producers in Baybay. As of the moment, UPWARD only has 36 active member-weavers.

Other enterprise constraints include the lack of capital, matching between design, low production volume, need for product development and production technology to fulfill current product demand, lack of price structure studies on different market segments, no identified "pang-masa" product, and no product inventory and financing, as well as operational and managerial constraints. Depletion of pandan plants as the main raw material is likewise considered as a challenge.

Gender issues in pandan crafts-making are also evident based on the gender-responsive value chain analysis conducted in 2011. Time utilization assessment showed that women involved in pandan-based handicrafts work almost twice as longer than men. Women, in the processing side of straightening pandan strips or 'hagud,' exert greater physical strength that in the long run could affect their health or slow down the business process; they have to pay a sizeable margin of their income if they commission this role to men.

Through the Intensive Design Clinic Series supported by the GREAT Women Project, UPWARD realized it can explore higher-end markets for bags, hats and pandan-strip accessories among local and foreign tourists arriving in Baybay and those visiting the Philippines. These markets can be served by tourist-oriented display centers and shops, and targeted by marketing efforts.

Though the more immediate market potential are sleeping mats and reusable shopping bags through small local market and "tabô" traders, such market channels can only

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be more effectively exploited if women weavers and their groups are able to organize a federation-type marketing enterprise, co-owned by the Baybay OTOP Center. The Baybay OTOP Center can develop institutional linkages with successful handicraft display centers, exporters and specialty traders in Cebu City and Metro Manila. Trade fairs in Cebu and Manila are also possible venues to establish local and international traders for the pandan-based products.

Through the project, UPWARD received training from DOST on technical dyeing using indigenous materials. As a result, there was improved color and design of handicraft and textile products which enabled UPWARD to actively participate in trade fairs in Cebu and Manila. UPWARD was recently one of 85 exhibitor groups at the 2012 Bahandi Regional Trade Fair in Metro Manila.

UPWARD WMEs also received training on values formation and marketing and, gained access to local loans. UPWARD weavers also became trainers to Capoocan Weavers Association.

The Baybay City Government supported a pandan planting program to sustain raw materials. The City Agriculture Office, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, together with the UPWARD members, participated in the program. With a plantation of 75,000 pandan seedlings along coastal areas, raw materials will be ready for harvest in the next few months.

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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