

# GREAT Women Project



## Reinventing The Philippine Commission on Women *Building Capacities on Women's Economic Empowerment*



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# Re-inventing The Philippine Commission on Women

## Building Capacities on Women's Economic Empowerment

### Summary

*The Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) is a continuously learning organization. With the GREAT Women Project, PCW embarked on a journey of self-assessment of its accomplishments for the past decades on promoting women's concerns towards re-inventing itself through capacity development to become more effective and responsive in advocating women's economic empowerment, and ultimately, furthering its role as the national machinery for the advancement of women.*

### Returning to the Basics: Addressing Practical and Strategic Needs of Women



By virtue of Presidential Decree No. 633, the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (NCRFW) was established to organize women primarily for livelihood projects called "Balikatan sa Kaunlaran." After a decade and changes in national leadership, NCRFW shifted its gears from looking at women as beneficiaries to active movers of development. It pursued gender mainstreaming as a strategy – understanding and addressing the implications of women and men's relations in the economic, social and political spheres through legislation, policies, and programs. Years hence, NCRFW committed itself in legislative advocacy on women's human rights and continued institutional development of the government on gender mainstreaming.

As poverty remains as a national issue, NCRFW found the necessity of returning to the basics of addressing the practical needs of women - livelihood and employment - however, it also recognized that its mandate, capacities and resources are limited to respond to such needs.

An opportunity was opened when the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) supported the development of the Gender-Responsive Economic Actions for the Transformation of Women (GREAT Women) Project, a governance and capacity development project that aims to promote and support a gender-responsive environment for women's economic empowerment, particularly those in microenterprises. The project aimed to strengthen the national and local environments for women in microenterprises to thrive and, most importantly, build the capacity of NCRFW to support such environments.

NCRFW (now, Philippine Commission on Women or PCW) primarily functions as an oversight body on women's concerns. It provides legislative and policy advice, technical assistance and information support to the government and conducts monitoring and evaluation of laws, policies, plans and programs on women. In the past, much of the efforts undertaken by the Commission are on the areas of women's human rights such as violence against women and reproductive health, and gender-responsive governance such as the implementation of gender and development (GAD) laws and policy mandates like the GAD Budget Policy. With the GREAT Women Project, the strength of the

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Commission on women's human rights and gender-responsive governance are amplified as it capacitates itself on how governance could support the pursuit of women's economic rights.

One of the first strategies of PCW to jumpstart capacity development is the installation of a Human Resources Development Officer (HRDO) for the project. The HRDO, lodged in the GREAT Women Project Management Office (PMO), ensured the implementation of capacity development interventions for staff, with a counterpart in the Commission to ensure sustainability and institutionalization of capacities after the project.

In 2007, PCW commissioned the Development Academy of the Philippines (DAP) to conduct a staff job analysis and training needs assessment (TNA). The results generated were comprehensive, which called for more pragmatic and immediate capacity development interventions for the Commission to provide technical assistance to national and local government partners of the project.

PCW then decided to prepare a full organizational capacity development plan. Several processes were undertaken however, the Commission recognized that capacity development interventions need to be aligned with the intended results of the project. Thus, in 2009, PCW's competency plan was developed based on the Performance Monitoring Framework (PMF) of the project. The plan was clustered into three major categories: technical support, technical operations, and management committee competencies.

As the capacity and competency development plans were being developed, PCW then adopted the 'learning-by-doing' approach which called for a sound judgment of the staff on project implementation issues and concerns and addressing such with practical solutions based on built-in capacities on gender, governance, among others.

To address initial limitations posed by the 'learning by doing approach,' PCW technical officers relied upon division chiefs and the Gender Advisor of CIDA as mentors, and on their exposure and learnings from other capacity development activities. Some technical officers initially found it difficult to persuade partner NGAs to engage in the GWP and mainstream GAD and WEE in their own flagship programs.

While this is so, the 'learning-by-doing' approach had its limitations. Specialized needs are forwarded to experts, which often require resources from the partners. Expo-

*Gearing  
To Learn*



*"The training on Engaging and Influencing Others (EIO) and negotiating skills taught us how to assert ourselves, especially with our partners who are older than we. Before, they seem to disparage our capacities because of our age. But now, they are listening because we can confidently articulate our concerns. That, to me, is very valuable," said a PCW Project Officer.*



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sure to experts' interventions to partners became simultaneous learning to the staff but separate and in-depth capacity development activities are requested by PCW staff to complement and follow-through the support given to the partners.

Structured learning sessions were still undertaken such as Gender Analysis, Environmental Analysis and Internal Analysis; Knowledge Management, Results-based Management (RBM); Engaging and Influencing Others and Negotiation Skills Development; Facilitation and Presentation Skills Development; Process Documentation; and, Whole Brain Management and Self-Mastery. Other sessions such as Social Protection; Outcome Mapping; Communication Planning and Social Marketing; Integrating Gender in the Comprehensive Development Plan; Value Chain Development; and the Rationalized Planning System, and ICT training on open source technology, particularly web content management systems, were also conducted.

## Theories and Concepts in Framing PCW's Capacity Development Plan for Women's Economic Empowerment

Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) subscribes to the view that capacity development is a key strategy towards achieving sustainable development. It adopted CIDA's definition of capacity development, as the "approaches, strategies and methodologies used by the developing country and/or external stakeholders to improve performance at the individual, organizational, network or broader system level."

At the individual level, capacity development means harnessing skills or abilities as social or organizational actors to contribute to the realization of development objectives (CIDA, 2000). It empowers people by believing about the meaning of their work, their capacity to work well, their sense of self-determination and autonomy in influencing work outcomes.

At the organizational level, capacity development focuses on strengthening structures, management systems and procedures, resources and culture.

In the context of the GREAT Women Project, the thematic focus of PCW's capacity development is women's economic development covering the following areas:

- Gender and human rights perspective in economic justice
- Inclusive social protection
- Recognition of the negative impact of women's unpaid work and the promotion of equal sharing of men in domestic work
- Civil society participation in promoting women entrepreneurship
- Expansion of public-private partnerships
- Gender-responsive leadership with women's economic empowerment as a priority agenda
- Inclusion of gender equality goals in the public and private sector
- Increase of resources for gender equality, such as official development assistance (ODA) and international trade

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These learning sessions were simultaneously carried out during project implementation. PCW was challenged to balance proactive vis-à-vis reactive capacity development interventions to suit the technical assistance demands in the project. PCW staff relied upon their division chiefs and the CIDA Gender Advisor as mentors and the sharing of lessons and practices from project activities to guide in project implementation.

PCW staff largely described their learning sessions as functional. For example, the learning session on local economic development (LED) was directly applied in influencing local government plans and economic projects. After the results-based management (RBM) training, PCW developed its own Performance Management Framework (PMF). The open-source technology training helped in enhancing the PhilGAD Portal. The training on presentation and facilitation helped in designing and implementing modules for technical assistance. With improved capacities, it is determined to build a Gender and Development (GAD) Institute in the future.

The establishment of a PCW Gender and Development Institute (GAD Institute) is proposed as a major sustainability mechanism to continue replicating and expanding the gains of GREAT Women, the programs of social rights (human rights) and gender responsive governance. Through a GAD Institute, the PCW seeks to ensure that agencies and LGUs are able to mainstream gender in their policies, plans and programs and implement the Magna Carta and other laws and commitments to international treaties such as the MDG and CEDAW.

Capacity development learnings brought results at all levels— individual staff, division and organization. Staff are able to engage with competency and confidence, and negotiate, when necessary, with partners because of the knowledge and skills acquired from learning. Divisions are able to work among each other to support technical assistance needs of partners. PCW, as an organization, is able to raise its credibility in influencing government agencies and local governments to address economic issues affecting women, especially those in microenterprise development.

A lot of room for improvement of PCW's capacities, nonetheless, is recognized. For one, strengthening the monitoring and assessment of capacity application is needed. At the staff level, staff development must be reinforced to feedback performance improvement and provide incentives to application of knowledge and skills in one's regular functions. Another is installing a knowledge management system in PCW to ensure transfer of individual capacities into sustained organizational capacities. Also, building stronger synergies among divisions are imperative to address compartmentalization of work among divisions.

## 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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