

# GREAT Women Project



**Making Social Enterprise  
Work To Create A Women's Brand**  
*Results of Partnership between PCW-GREAT Women  
Project and ECHOSI Foundation*



Philippine  
Commission  
on Women

# Making Social Enterprise Work To Create A Women's Brand

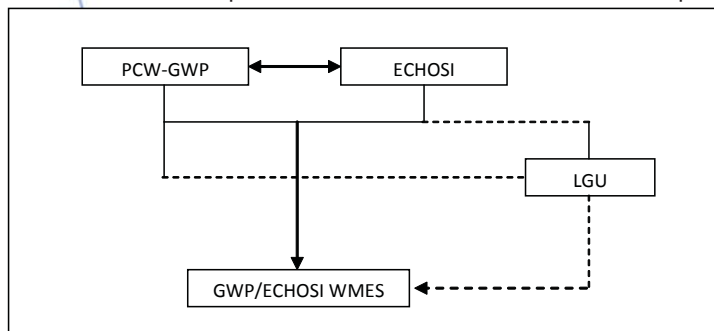
## Results of Partnership between the PCW-GREAT Women Project and the ECHOSI Foundation

### Abstract

The Philippine Commission on Women-GREAT Women Project initiated with a public-private sector partnership with Enabling Communities with Hope and Opportunities for Sustainable Initiatives (ECHOSI) Foundation, a non-government social enterprise organization, to provide direct services for women on product development. ECHOSI Foundation has a strong track record of developing community products to provide market access, visible support to women's groups and advocacy of women empowerment and fair trade.<sup>1</sup> The partnership operated on this framework of cooperation.



Framework of Cooperation of PCW-GWP and ECHOSI Partnership



GREAT Women Project recognized strengths and expertise of private sector groups, especially social enterprises, in helping entrepreneurs upscale their products and explore new markets. With the project partnership, ECHOSI Foundation assisted women micro-entrepreneurs and local government units through a series of intensive design clinics with the view of seeking community products, upscale in value and linking them to bigger markets (local and exports) through appropriate channels. This private sector partnership tried to evolve models and good practices to show that business inputs are not only available from government agencies, and that social enterprise groups could create and strengthen the products and value-chains of women-led microenterprises to bring more economic value to their products.

The partnership, formalized by a memorandum of agreement in 2012, was titled "Value-Adding Selected Products of Women Micro Enterprises in Selected GREAT Women Project Sites and Development of Women's Product Brand to Markets" within January 2012-March 2013. The partnership had two phases (1) conduct of an Intensive Design Clinic Series to upscale women's products and (2) the creation and launch of the Great Women Brand (a product line of women microentrepreneurs).

### Footnote:

<sup>1</sup> ECHOSI Foundation is a partner of ECHOStore Sustainable Lifestyle, a pioneering social enterprise/retail store abide by fair trade principles and promotes environment-friendly products from various communities.

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Within the partnership, GREAT Women Project wanted to develop a model for private sector and government to jointly upgrade women's products and eventually grow their microenterprises. Private sector inputs are seen to increase women's capacities to look at better product quality and designs, while raising their knowledge and confidence to know about new markets for their products.

With the partnership with ECHOSI Foundation, the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) gained necessary experience needed to encourage national and local government partners on conduct targets and activities to facilitate women's economic empowerment in communities. This partnership brought to for fast-yielding results to lead to growth of women's enterprises, and new ways of creating a convergence for business services.

From January 2012-January 2013, GREAT Women Project and a team of known designers engaged by the ECHOSI Foundation traveled to key GREAT project sites to conduct a series of product enhancement workshops for women microentrepreneurs through Intensive Design Clinic sessions. GREAT Women Project and ECHOSI Foundation conducted one "design clinic" session in Iloilo to test an approach to up-value a number of food and non-food products in terms of quality, design, packaging and so forth. Prior to this, GREAT Women Project and ECHOSI conducted two Product Inventory and Scanning activities in Iloilo and MNDC.

The PCW partnership with ECHOSI was intended for the Intensive Design Clinic Series to provide opportunities for women's groups to meet successful women entrepreneurs, experts on processed food products (from FNRI-DOST) and design of non-food products to get feedback and recommendations to improve their own products. The Intensive Design Clinic Series were conducted in Quezon, Leyte, Davao Sur (which included PALMA+PB women's products), Iloilo, and Bohol during the period.

The Intensive Design Clinic Series enabled women microentrepreneurs to develop, pre-test and commercially produce market-suitable variants of food and non-food products. Community products were developed into specialty products with regard to taste, texture, nutritional components, design and packaging, label, production processes involved and overall marketability. Non-food products improved in functionality, relevance to fashion trends, form and overall quality.

### *Intensive Design Clinic Series*



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Through the Intensive Design Clinic Series, women microentrepreneurs received technical advice and mentoring on value-adding for products, developing new product collection, managing the microenterprise, strengthening production capacities, proper packaging and labeling, and assistance with food and nutrition requirements and technologies.

The Intensive Design Clinic Series brought in leading women entrepreneurs, product experts and renowned Filipino designers to provide product development and design consulting for women microentrepreneurs. The Intensive Design Clinic Series included Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), Department of Science and Technology (DOST), and local government officers to be part of the process to assist women microentrepreneurs in improving their products as recommended by the design experts.

ECHOSI provided resource persons and design experts to critique food and non-food products of women entrepreneurs. The Intensive Design Clinique Series were attended by women micro entrepreneurs, local and national government representatives handling programs for women in enterprises, ECHOSI design partners and PCW staff. The Intensive Design Clinic Series were venues to provide inputs for women micro-entrepreneurs to “rise” in the Up-Leveling Process Framework of the Great Women brand.

Two rounds of design clinics were implemented for each of the sites, with an interval of 3-5 months. The first round was focused at collecting all possible products from the identified participants, giving recommendations and assignments and discussion of key topics aligned with the concerns of their business. This represented level 1 in the process. In the second round or level 2, assignments were checked and further recommendations were given.

The Intensive Design Clinic Series allowed women entrepreneurs to show their products to ECHOSI partner designers. Each round of two-day cliniquing featured major topics such as design inspirations, sustainability, costing, production capacities and the peculiarities or characteristics of different types of market. For the second round of clinics, WMEs are expected to improve products or variants by providing additional recommendations on design, form, maintaining quality, color and costing.

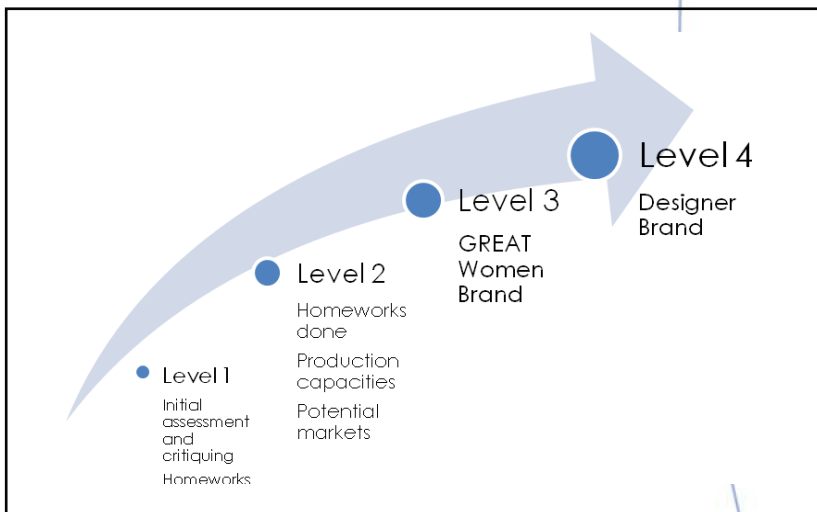
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### The Up-Leveling Process Framework

One of the key results of the design clinics was the development of the Up-Leveling Process framework. The four-tiered framework (as shown in Diagram 1 below) served as a guide in the selection of products for the Great Women Brand. It is a step-by-step process in developing women's products so they suit demands of consumers in the urban, niche and upscale markets.

**Diagram 1. The Up-Leveling Process Framework**



In level 1, products were presented in their actual form and packaging as they are made available in the local (municipal or barangay) markets. Food products were assessed according to: taste, texture, ingredients, design and packaging, label, production processes, and overall marketability. Non-food products were assessed mainly by their functionality, relevance (fashion and color trends), form and overall quality.

Only the women's groups or individual women microentrepreneurs who submitted their improved product fitting specifications will be qualified for Level 2. The identifying information about the women microentrepreneurs were included in a database (or catalog) with these information: province, group or individual with contact details, product code, price, and production capacity. Level 1 also engaged WMEs in a basic costing exercise using a work template.

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In level 2, only those women’s groups or individual women microentrepreneurs who submitted their improved products joined this level. Level 2 focused on production capacities, catalog production, strengthening of the business side for sustainability, value additions, new product categories for research and development (R&D), proper packing processes and technical discussions on FDA requirements. ECHOSi also identified potential markets at this level.

In level 3, the focus is on identifying the specific products included within the GREAT Women Brand upon recommendation of at least two ECHOSi resource persons. For food products, the GREAT Women Brand had uniform packaging and labels. During this stage, ECHOSi continued to focus on strengthening pricing and production procedures to maintain steady and standard quality supply of products for bigger markets. WME products accepted for Level 4 shall be for development under labels of partner designers who have worked with the women throughout levels 1, 2 and 3 of the Intensive Design Clinics.

This table summarizes overall themes and recommendations of GREAT Women and ECHOSI Foundation resources persons during the Intensive Design Clinic Series:

Product Category	Aspect	Overall Recommendations
Food	Packaging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use food-grade re-sealable stand-up pouches and glass bottles. Opt for clear and plain packaging</li> <li>Package in small / sampler packs for easy consumption.</li> <li>Maximize use of paper.</li> <li>Outsource equipment for vacuum-sealed and frozen products.</li> <li>Write story of the product.</li> </ul>
	Ingredients/variants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimize use of oil.</li> <li>Do not use condensed milk and white sugar.</li> <li>Use natural ingredients such as rock salt and raw sugar.</li> <li>Research and develop new product variants such as cinnamon, salt &amp; pepper, and white cheese.</li> </ul>
	Taste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Products should not be too sweet nor too salty.</li> </ul>
	Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bake or dehydrate food.</li> <li>Review the basics of Good Manufacturing Procedures (GMP).</li> <li>Conduct taste test among a diverse market.</li> <li>Conduct own shelf life test.</li> <li>Standardize procedures and measurements.</li> <li>Conduct time and motion to measure production speed.</li> </ul>
	Certification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Submit for shelf life, toxin and chemical tests.</li> <li>Apply for FDA certification.</li> </ul>

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Non-food	Design and Form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use neutral and natural colors.</li> <li>• Replace synthetic materials with local and natural ones.</li> <li>• Research and develop new designs using various components.</li> </ul>
	Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reinforce edges.</li> <li>• Clean and natural finish is preferred.</li> </ul>
	Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct time and motion to measure production speed</li> <li>• Standardize procedures.</li> <li>• Have quality control mechanisms.</li> </ul>

Together with PCW, product experts and leading entrepreneurs from ECHOSI Foundation cliniqued over 2,000 women's community products in 47 GREAT Women Project LGUs with the Intensive Design Clinic Series. Many women's products, including those WME products that pre-qualified for the Great Women Brand, are now reaping better sales through exposure to wider markets and institutional buyers.

The intensive design clinic sessions implemented throughout Quezon, Metro Naga, Leyte, Iloilo, Bohol, Davao and PALMA+PB in 2012 involved some 90 women micro-entrepreneurs, some of whom were members of cooperatives and associations from 37 municipalities. Out of more than 1,000 pieces of products individually critiqued by partner designers, only 90 made it through Level 2. Some 24 products qualified for the Great Women brand while only 10 were named under partner designer brands.

In March 2013, PCW-GREAT Women Project and ECHOSI Foundation launched these products to the public which could also be found at the ECHOStore, Tesoro's and Milky Way restaurant until May 2013 under a market test made.

"The Great Women Brand is a distinct line of specialty food products, lifestyle goods and homeopathic care products manufactured by women microentrepreneurs throughout the country. The Great Women brand is a concept brand that taps local designers and leading women entrepreneurs to gather community products, upscale and link these quality products with local and exports markets through social entrepreneurship channels." -- Jeannie Javelosa, President of ECHOSI.

The Great Women brand was designed to generate a higher demand for selected women microentrepreneurs' products from GREAT Women Project sites in Ifugao, Metro Naga, Quezon, Bohol, Iloilo, Leyte, PALMA+PB Alliance in North Cotabato and Davao

### Creation and Launch of the Great Women brand



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del Sur. GREAT Women products will initially be sold at all ECHOStore retail stores and Tesoro's Handicrafts' outlets and the designer labels of Lulu Tan-Gan, "Filip and Inna" and Renee Patron. The last three designers produce made-to-order items available on-line and cater to both local and export buyers.

Great Women brand products were seen to create employment and income opportunities for women and their communities, who form the brand's supply chains. Women and the community will additionally benefit by being able to sell products at fair trade prices.



## 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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