

# GREAT Women Project



## 'Kneading' Success for Barugo Roscas-Making

GREAT Women Project Convergence  
for Enterprise Development



Philippine  
Commission  
on Women

January 2013

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**Abstract** The case study trails the growth of the women-led roscas-making enterprise of Barugo, Leyte. It shows how convergence efforts of national agencies, the local government as well as civil society supported a family enterprise such as roscas-making into a community livelihood towards a commercial enterprise.

### *Beginnings of Roscas-Making in Barugo, Leyte*



Roscas is a kind of cookie largely available in Barugo, Leyte. It had its beginnings in the late 1960s when a Barugo woman brought roscas-making technology from her travel abroad. What began as a family business grew into a community enterprise, with families producing roscas for festive occasions. Within a decade, roscas became known to other towns and was replicated in Calbayog and Carigara.

Barugo is a 4th class municipality in the province of Leyte, with a population of 27,000 people or 5,108 households (2010 National Census). It has 37 barangays - two urban and 35 rural. Its residents carve a living from small-scale fishing, aquaculture and agriculture to produce rice, corn and copra. Roscas and tuba (local wine from coco sap) are the usual cottage industries that drive local economy.

### *Organizing Barugo Roscas-Makers*

In 2006, there were moves among independent roscas makers and the community to organize as a group. The roscas makers wanted to develop their products' quality, grow into a commercial enterprise and uplift the socio-economic conditions of roscas producers, which are mostly women.

In August of the same year, the Barugo Roscas Producers Association (BRPA) was organized and, later on, registered with the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) as a rural workers association in 2008. BRPA was organized ahead of the GREAT Women Project partnership with the Barugo LGU.

Women producers were faced with the rising cost of ingredients and raw materials, all procured from Tacloban City. They also use lard, a high-cholesterol ingredient, to keep roscas prices at bay, even when such ingredient may pose some health risks.

As earlier mentioned, kneading machines and ovens were designed for male use. Women regard such equipment as risky thereby resulting to hiring male workers to operate such.

As roscas are usually made only twice or thrice a week, some women producers were unable to participate in production because of household responsibilities.

### *Challenges Faced in Roscas-Making*

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BRPA, on the other hand, has not maximized its production capacity because of limited market absorption. Roscas producers relied on existing retailers and drop-in buyers. It also tried to maintain the same price on products to cope with competition such as commercial cookies and pastries which are taking the majority share of the market, and the Carigara and Catbalogan roscas, which use different processes and technologies for roscas-making.



### *Where Women and Men Are In The Roscas Value Chain*

The GREAT Women Project, in coordination with the DTI and the municipal local government, enabled roscas producers to undergo a gender-responsive value-chain analysis (GR-VCA) to better understand their roles and possible value-adding interventions in the roscas-making chain. Below is the summary of the GR-VCA for roscas-making:

1. Preparing and mixing ingredients for roscas are mainly done by women.
2. Kneading the dough is manually prepared by women or machine kneaded by men. Machine kneaders are often bulky and designed for male use.
3. After kneading, the dough is allowed to rise and formed by women into their traditional shape.
4. Baking of formed dough is done by men. Machines that bake bulk roscas may be risky for women to operate. The dough is allowed to initially bake for 30-45 minutes.
5. After the initial backing, roscas are sliced into halves and finally baked for another 30-45 minutes, again, by men.
6. Sorting cooled products according to pairs, sizes and quality is done by women.
7. Roscas are then packaged, labeled and prepared for delivery by women. Usual packs contain about one-fourth ( $\frac{1}{4}$ ) kilo while special packaging is made depending on the request of retail stores.

Roscas are regularly priced at PhP 150.00 per  $\frac{1}{4}$  kilo pack, both for wholesale and retail. Special pricing is made for special packages depending on the request of retail shops.

BRPA produces about 12 kilos of roscas on Mondays and Thursdays, while special orders are made during Saturdays. At the end of each month, income is shared among its members. A woman member's share commonly ranges from PhP 1,000 to PhP 1,500 during regular months and PhP 3,000 during the peak months of May, June and December.



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BRPA also rented a facility for roscas-making, however, the facility does not have proper electrical wiring to accommodate all machines for production, even those which have been provided by support partners.



In 2009, the BRPA was recognized as a promising organization to benefit from the interventions of the GREAT Women Project. As a result, the Department of Science and Technology-Food and Drug Administration (DOST-FDA) and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) led the training on Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) and packaging as well as bar code certification of products for the Barugo Women's Roscas Association. DOST also assisted the roscas makers with product-testing, preparation of nutritional facts and improvement of product shelf life. DOST also provided equipment gave the association a packaging and a labeling machine amounting to PhP 150,000 while DTI gave various trainings and marketing support, and donated uniform to women roscas microentrepreneurs. The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) provided the association with various production equipment amounting to PhP 200,000 and raw materials amounting to PhP 150,000.

*Improving  
The Lives of  
Women Roscas  
Makers and the  
BRPA*

The local government of Barugo, on the other hand, provided baking pans, trays, and display racks for finished products. It likewise made roscas as the official OTOP (One Town One Product) of the municipality. It also facilitated the sending of representatives and BRPA roscas products to trade fairs. The Runggiyan Social Development Foundation (RSDF) provided the association with PhP 20,000 seed capital.



*"Now, with roscas-making, I am able to send my child to college." said Carmen Benusa, a roscas maker and entrepreneur from Barugo, Leyte.*



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After the interventions of the GREAT Women Project, women roscas makers gained income that augmented their household financial needs.

"Right now, with roscas-making, I was able to send my child to college. Before the GREAT Women Project, income from roscas sales came mostly during birthdays and fiestas. But now, at the end of each month, we look forward to sharing profit from roscas sales. I am (also) able to impart the training lessons to (other members of) our association," said Carmen Benusa, a woman roscas producer.

Aside from income, members were afforded the opportunity of going to other places as they engage in marketing and trade fairs.

BRPA grew from 15 women members in 2006 to 20 women members in 2012. It employed two male workers, a kneader and a baker, given its production needs. It is presently renting a production center at Brgy. District V, several blocks away from the center of Barugo town.

Roscas-making also brought business opportunities to raw materials suppliers, retailers, and the transportation sector. With consciousness for environmental conservation, women roscas makers are exploring possible products with enterprise waste materials such as cans, boxes, plastics and egg whites.



## 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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