

GREAT Women Project



Improving LGU Vision with Gender Lens
Women Empowerment Views in Infanta's Social and Policy Analysis

August 2011

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Introducing Infanta



Communities were already thriving in the northern areas of Quezon Province even before the entry of Spanish colonizers. One town, Binangonan del Ampon, used to be affiliated to the Province of Nueva Ecija in 1803. This town was later renamed “Infanta” by its head, Juan Salvador in honor of “Jesus Infante” or Child Jesus. The town became reclassified as part of Laguna to its west, in 1850.

At the turn of the Century, the town was occupied with American colonizers. The larger barrios of Infanta—General Nakar and Real—spun off as independent municipalities after World War II. Today, Infanta is a first-class municipality. As the second largest town in Quezon, the province covers an area of 34,276 hectares. Its population is 50,922, occupying a density of 463.8 persons per sq. km. Infanta is home to institutions of higher learning, banks, transportation hubs, and trading posts.

This rich historical background helps establish Infanta as a socio-cultural and economic hub of the province. The area is vulnerable to seasonal typhoons which periodically weaken agricultural productivity. Infanta’s resilience enabled it to weather three successive typhoons from November to December 2004. It has gradually recovered from typhoon damages.

Beginnings of Partnership

Infanta and the rest of northern Quezon were invited to discuss the prospects for partnership under the Great Women Project (GWP), by the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (now Philippine Commission on Women) in 2008. Infanta, Real and General Nakar all have active and organized women microentrepreneurs who can ultimately benefit from the LGU-focused capacity development for women’s economic empowerment.

NCRFW proposed a GREAT Women Project partnership at the provincial level and at the municipal level involving the towns of Infanta, General Nakar and Real in a consultative meeting. NCRFW discussed possible partnership with the Provincial Gender and Development Office (PGAD), other provincial government representatives, and the Local Chief Executives (LCEs) and representatives of the towns of Real, Infanta, General Nakar.

Formalizing Project partnerships entailed a series of activities. NCRFW and LGU held an orientation meeting, joint scheduling and harmonizing of municipal workplans. It reorganized the Municipal GAD Council, and formed the Municipal Technical Working Group (MTWG). Other activities that followed were refinement of the Memorandum of

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Agreement (MOA) between NCRFW and partners, and the deliberations and planning for the conduct of baseline studies on local women.

In pursuit of partnership, Quezon Province needed to immediately build capacities of local leaders in advancing advocacies and support structures for Gender and Development (GAD). Gender Sensitivity Training with women's economic empowerment (GST++) trained the LGU to integrate WEE in the LGU's local economic development-related plans, policies and programs.

Infanta views introduction of gender to the LGU as a two-level process. At the first level, the LGU gains the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes for meeting outcomes. At the second level is the application of a "gender lens" or use of gender-responsive and women's economic empowerment perspectives in Infanta's policies and programs.

Infanta applied the gender lens primarily in the review and enhancement of the Infanta Gender and Development (GAD) Code. The municipality created a GAD Committee with members from the Municipal Gender and Development Council (MGADC) and the Technical Working Group membership in April 2009 to review the GAD Code. Infanta patterned its municipal GAD Code, using the enhanced Provincial GAD Code. After critiquing in July and presentation over a public meeting in August, Infanta's GAD Code was ratified through a municipal order issued on August 10, 2009

The Provincial GAD Office puts a premium on having newly-elected officials need to undergo GST++ to level off understanding on gender concerns, and effect gender-responsiveness of LGUs.

With GST++, Infanta officials and planners now use a "gender-sensitive approach to planning" as they evaluate proposed plans using their gender lens. Infanta Mayor Filipina Grace America shares that having gender and women's economic empowerment as a new dimension in their planning process, may "open new opportunities" for the LGU to gain assistance from other funding agencies. Many funding institutions require gender-responsiveness as a prerequisite for assistance.

A clear indication of the LGU's gender-responsiveness is in the LGU allocation of the GAD Budget. From Php 1.20 million in 2005, the GAD budget has been adjusted to Php 4.51 million for 2009. GAD Budget increased annual, at an average of Php 827,505 (averaging a 61-percent increase a year).

*Integrating
Gender and
Women's Economic
Empowerment in
Local Governance*



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Engendering Plans and Programs



Sustainable agriculture and fisheries has been the backbone of Infanta's economy, and supports a fifth (20%) of Infanta's Development Fund. The Infanta Sustainable Agriculture and Fisheries Program (ISAFP) is a major entry point for women's economic empowerment. As an entry point, the LGU sought to define the role of women in ISAFP and then enhance their role in promoting development. Infanta held workshops within September to November 2009 to review ISAFP for gender-responsiveness. As a result, the LGU added a development dimension to ISAFP's work and financial plans. Women participants found out how the program helps them and how they can contribute back to the program.

Infanta also applied the gender lens to make Infanta's Revenue Code, Comprehensive Development Plan, Comprehensive Land Use Plan, and Zoning Ordinance gender-responsive.

The LGU's endorsement of GST++ and its subsequent application of the gender lens, helped women's cooperatives, too. In the case of Infanta Credit Development Cooperative, the response of the cooperative changed favorably for women members. Women members of the cooperative, making up 80% of women microentrepreneurs in the public market, were not able to pay their loans on time. The cooperative's regulation was to refer cases of non-payment of loans to women microentrepreneurs, and let the legal process take over. With GST++, the cooperative's management introduced a stage in the process where they find out the reasons for non-payment of dues, prior to applying penalties.

The LGU, using its gender lens, has extended livelihood and financial aid to the Infanta Commercial Center Extension Vendors Association. This group of sidewalk vendors and fish vendors became the recipient of LGU services after formally organizing and registering with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

GREAT Women Project and the LGU decided to share GST++ with key sectors of the LGU, including the academe and barangays. Infanta create its own "Trainers Pool" for the purpose of widely sharing GST++. Training design was based on the Tagaytay GST++, but adapted to be more appropriate for the locality and target participants.

Infanta also conducted GST++ for the Department of Education teachers and supervisors, so GAD concepts are more meaningfully explained and applied. The Infanta Municipal Gender and Development Council and the Municipal Technical Working

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Group believed that educators should have a clear and deep understanding of GAD as they educate children and reach out to parents. GST++ for the academe trained 26 DepEd representatives at the Supervisory and Management levels, and eight teaching staff.

Infanta also trained barangay chairpersons, treasurers and community workers in GST++ in January 2009. Through provision of GST++, the LGU strategized to gain a wide base of support for women's economic empowerment, and as much as possible to "get everybody involved in GWP."

Infanta LGU deems it important to establish a formal monitoring system to measure results and outcomes of gender-responsive policies, plans and programs. Having a monitoring and evaluation system is likely to sustain gains and multiply of gender-responsive local governance.

GREAT Women Project implementation has also seen the rise of women's champions in the LGU leadership. These are Infanta Mayor Filipina Grace America and Zenaida Sol, the current Chair of the Committee on Women and Family, and the Committee on Food and Agriculture of Infanta's Sangguniang Bayan (Legislative Council).

**GAD and WEE
Champions**

Mayor America has served as GAD Champion for Quezon Province, and has displayed staunch commitment to GREAT Women Project implementation. In March 2010, she received an Award of Excellence during the Provincial Women's Day Celebration for her efforts in promoting women's welfare. Meantime, Zenaida Sol is credited for being the main author of the local GAD Code, and taking lead in its consultative process. The GAD Focal Point Person of Infanta, Armida Marquez is an emerging champion of women's advocacy among Infanta youth.

The Municipal GAD Council (MGADC) and the Municipal Technical Working Group (MTWG) members are creating the synergy for project implementation. These are primary conduits for the establishment of a support system for GAD concerns are the MGADC and the GWP MTWG. The MGADC is mandated by law as a policy-making body to push forward GAD advocacies, including a wider scope of women's concerns including violence against women and health.

On the other hand, the MTWG as a multi-sectoral support group provides technical and operational assistance for the GWP in the locality. Unlike the MGADC, the MTWG's

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aim is more focused and specialized for Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE). The MTWG includes active members from the private sector, cooperatives, and the Infanta Integrated Community Development Assistance, a development-oriented NGO.

To date, the town of Infanta has made great strides in enhancing gender-responsive local governance, as well as in promoting women's economic empowerment. These were mainly due to GREAT Women Project-strengthened capacities of the LGU to review, analyze, and enhance policies and programs that apply a gender-sensitive perspective and process. Infanta leaders are now adept in applying a gender and women's economic empowerment perspective, which they call 'gender lens' in social and policy analysis.

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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