

GREAT Women Project



*Partnering With Women
To Enhance Local Governance
Partnership between Balilihan and A Local Women's Group*



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Partnering with Women to Enhance Local Governance

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Abstract This case study features the intensified partnership of the Municipality of Balilihan with the Balilihan Association of Women for Development (BAWOD), the umbrella organization of women in the municipality. Because of this partnership, the local government was able to pursue gender-responsive policies, plans and programs, which enabled BAWOD to access services to improve their members' enterprises and participate in local governance.

Background Balilihan is a 4th class municipality in the province of Bohol, and an interior town located 22 kilometers northeast of Tagbilaran City. As of 2005, it is composed of 31 barangays with a total land area of 15,022 hectares. It has a population of 17,638 individuals (51% males and 49% females) or 3,458 households.

Farming is one of the major sources of income of Balilihan. Presently, there are 2,535 farmers, 526 of which are women. Basket-making, furniture-making, food processing and manufacture of cleaning products, are alternative sources of income for women.

Influencing Balilihan To Become A Gender-Responsive LGU As Balilihan was chosen as one of the pilot municipalities for the GREAT Women Project in 2008, capacity development interventions from the project were given to members of the Balilihan Technical Working Group.

The municipal government formulated its Comprehensive Development Plan (CDP), Executive-Legislative Agenda (ELA), Annual Investment Plan (AIP), GAD Code, GAD Plan and Budget, with participation from various sectors, especially women. The Balilihan Association of Women for Development (BAWOD), the umbrella organization of women's groups in Balilihan, participated in the consultations and in the formulation of these local policies and plans. More importantly, the municipal government was able integrate gender and women's economic concerns in the sectoral areas of the CDP and ELA.

Furthermore, the municipal government consolidated all its GAD-related projects and activities into its annual GAD Plan. It also saw the necessity of a participative workshop and the use of PCW's GAD tools in reviewing its 2011 GAD Plan and formulating its 2012 GAD Plan. The GAD Budget for the 2012 GAD Plan then increased from Php 635,000 in 2011 to Php 845,474.

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These enhanced local plans and programs made the municipal government more attuned to the needs of women. Support programs for women microentrepreneurs, for example, were identified in the AIP, such as the conduct of business and strategic planning, organizational strengthening, simple bookkeeping, construction of a multi-purpose building converted into a Common Service Facility, and the allocation of PHP 310,000 additional capital for women microentrepreneurs in 31 barangays. Other initiatives identified to support women were the setting-up and strengthening of Balilihan Micro-enterprise Development (BaMED) Unit, with a budget of Php 100,000; enterprise-related training for women-led cooperatives, assistance for women to enroll in technical-vocational training; conduct of GST++ at the barangay level, creation of Barangay Women's Council, and information campaign on human trafficking and anti-violence against women and children.

The Municipal Technical Working Group (MTWG) for the project, on the other hand, directly supported women microentrepreneurs. In 2010, the MTWG consulted with Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and the Provincial Agriculture Office (PAO) on commitments to support women microentrepreneurs. It also learned from the gender-responsive practices of Real, Infanta and General Nakar in Quezon Province, which were then shared with the Municipal Executive Committee. Through learning visits, Balilihan LGU became more enabled to improve services with the institutionalization of their enterprise development desks.

With this, Sanggunian Bayan members and all heads of offices became aware of replicating good practices on gender-responsive local governance and women's economic empowerment. The MTWG also monitors the progress of BAWOD.

The MTWG and BAWOD steered partnerships along the areas of capital build-up thru a DOLE grant and shares from interested women members. They organized the BAWOD homecare line producers and appointed business managers and workers. They worked toward a convergence among DOLE, DOST, DTI, PGO, PAO and BAWOD.

Thru the convergence, BAWOD is also determined to construct a fully equipped processing center for their food production enterprise allocating a permanent venue for meetings. The Balilihan LGU provided an area for a multi-purpose building where BAWOD WMEs can establish separate production areas for food preparation (catering) and food processing (banana chips) enterprises.

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In April 2011, the municipal government reviewed its GAD Code and formulated its implementing rules, which had more emphasis on women's welfare and promoting women's rights in society.

Training workshop on project development using the Results-Based Management and Monitoring and Evaluation Tools (M&E) Customization in 2011, firmed up the LGU's understanding on monitoring and evaluation of programs, projects and activities for women's economic empowerment. Consequently, LGU Balilihan completed the M&E framework on the four programs of the LGU (namely, the Kawasan Tourism Complex, Waterworks System with Salintubig Project, Solid Waste Management, and BAMED).

For two consecutive years (2010 and 2011), Balilihan received its Seal of Good Housekeeping Award from the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG). Balilihan LGU's improved gender-responsive governance contributed to its receiving the Seal of Good Housekeeping.

In 2007, the Municipal Government of Balilihan organized BAWOD. BAWOD served as an organizational partner of the LGU in implementing its Solid Waste Management Program. Its women members had the task of segregating and collecting household waste in every barangay. It obtained its legal accreditation from DOLE in September 2007 and was registered at the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) in May 2008.

Many BAWOD members are microentrepreneurs. They operate along four main enterprises such as manufacturing of home care products (liquid, powder laundry soap, handwash and healing oil), handicraft-making (specifically, basket-weaving), banana chips, corn and coffee processing, and catering services.

Soon, the LGU saw possibilities in helping BAWOD as a women's enterprise group with potentials to impact the local business sector. Through the GREAT Women Project, the Municipal Government of Balilihan realized the importance of women's participation in local governance and their development as micro-entrepreneurs. While having formally registered as an organization, BAWOD lacked organizational policies and systems necessary for its sustainability.

In September 2010, Balilihan's Municipal Technical Working Group (MTWG) and the GREAT Women Project convened BAWOD officials to reflect on BAWOD as an organi-

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zation and to determine its focus. BAWOD already had its organization's thrusts aligned on women's rights, ecological solid waste management and tourism, health and nutrition, and livelihood projects. BAWOD put sharper focus on the definition of four women-led enterprises that will be supported by the organization.

Because of BAWOD's refocusing of thrusts, the municipal government provided funds to BAWOD for cattle dispersal and homecare products. Selection on the kind of women-led enterprises of BAWOD was not based on market demand, rather on the predominant livelihoods and resources in the area.

Later on, trainings on enterprise development and other services were provided to BAWOD members to increase their capacities to manage their enterprises and become more involved in local governance. In December 2009, the municipal government and BAWOD developed a strategic plan for women small and micro entrepreneurs. Through the strategic plan, the BAWOD women indicated their vision of a stock room, machines for production, and established links with direct buyers, local and abroad.

"Self-reliance and improved capability can be observed in BAWOD. Before the Project, these women would not come here to ask for help. But because of GREAT Women Project inputs, they already initiate seeking for LGU help on what should be done to implement their projects," Mayor Chatto said.

BAWOD became more scientific in their approach to growing women's enterprises. Its officers called for an inventory of micro-entrepreneurs to help the LGU in determining focused interventions and improve economic opportunities for women. It worked with the Barangay Health Workers (BHWs) to collect data on the actual number of micro-entrepreneurs, their business type and background, capital amount and source, among others.

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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