

# EMPOWERED WOMEN EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES

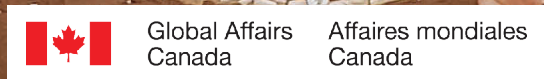
Integrating Women's  
Rights and Gender  
Equality into Women's  
Entrepreneurship

GOOD PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED FROM  
THE TUKOD HAIYAN RECONSTRUCTION PROJECT  
April 2019

**PICTURED IN BACKGROUND:**

A Tukod-supported farmer from Dolores, Eastern Samar with a handwoven basket made from Abaca. The Abaca seedlings were donated by the Tukod project for farmers to grow as a value-added crop that can be sold for handicraft production.

The Tukod Project was undertaken with the financial support of the Government of Canada provided through Global Affairs Canada (GAC)





**“Gender equality is more than a goal in itself. It is a precondition for meeting the challenge of reducing poverty, promoting sustainable development and building good governance.”**

**- KOFI ANNAN, FORMER SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS**

**PICTURED IN BACKGROUND:** Women farmers supported by the Tukod Project.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Gratitude is expressed first and foremost to the community women in Tolosa, Palo, Tacloban, Marabut, Taft, Can-avid, Dolores, and Oras, who wholeheartedly participated in the WE-MEAL program and the SMC/GST initiatives of the Tukod Project, and graciously contributed their reflections, experiences, and analysis for the production of this document. The gender equality champions emerging from our collaborative work - both women and men alike - have all earned our utmost respect and admiration.

Sincere appreciation is also extended to the LGUs who partnered with Tukod for these initiatives, and more importantly who are committed to partnerships with the now mobilized community organizations seeking to continue their participation in GAD and WEE developments going forward.

The immense contributions made by Tukod's own Gender and Inclusion Specialists over the life of the project - Ms. Marilou Parina (at the beginning of the project) and Ms. Estrella Espinosa (bringing the project to a successful close) were truly indispensable to the admirable gender equality outcomes of the project. Ms. Espinosa's expertise and unwavering commitment to advancing gender and development goals in the Philippines made a tremendous impact on the successes of the community gender equality champions and their advocacies. I myself learned a great deal from working alongside them.

Mr. Carlo Valle (Livelihood Advisor) and Ms. Danika Magoncia-Astilla (WE-MEAL Facilitator) were instrumental in the creative and empowering design and delivery of the WE-MEAL program, as were Ms. Marie Labajo (SMC Gender Specialist) and Ms. Monette Alfon (SMC Communications Specialist) for the SMC. Ms. Dalal Abdul-Razzaq (Communications Advisor) ever so artfully gathered and shared the powerful stories from the communities and played a leading role in coordinating this learning document.

Acknowledgment is of course extended to the Tukod National Team Leader Ms. Macelinda B. Cepe and to all other Tukod Officers and Staff who committed themselves to the aims of the project for over three and a half years. The contribution of the Social Mobilizers are particularly commendable, whose roles as the main points-of-contact with communities involved fruitful albeit endless relationship-building, coordinating, training, and monitoring.

The following individuals are also deserving of particular acknowledgement: the supportive husbands and families of Tukod's women beneficiaries; the resource persons who dedicated their time to the WE-MEAL Program and SMC efforts; participating UPVTC Business Management Students; all of the documenters, child-minders, and caterers who reliably joined us for so many weeks; Mr. Jeremy Bayaya for the video documentation; and Ms. Kahlille Seranilla and Ms. Pauline Dans Paguia for their support with the analysis and graphics for this learning document, respectively.

Lastly, a huge thank you to Mr. Marcel Monette (CECI Project Officer), Ms. Nathalie Roy (CECI Gender Specialist), and Global Affairs Canada (GAC) for making the Tukod Project possible.

Sincerely,

**Nikki J. Richard (former Tukod Gender Advisor & CECI Gender Consultant)**

# FOREWORD

On November 8, 2013, Super Typhoon Haiyan ravaged the Eastern Visayas in the Philippines, leaving devastating impacts on agricultural production and livelihoods. The provinces of Samar and Leyte bore the brunt of the disaster; incurring approximately \$1.23 billion-worth of damages and affecting 1.28 million farmers and fisherfolks. A total population of around 4.1 million was affected, 48.6% of which were women.

Prior to Typhoon Haiyan, the regional underemployment rate was already at 22.7%. Women comprised the majority of this underemployment category and the average labor participation rate of women was only 36.2%. As in many other regions in the Philippines, women in the Eastern Visayas typically lack access to, and control of household resources and are presented with unequal economic opportunities. Unfortunately, natural disasters like Typhoon Haiyan further deepen these inequalities.

The Tukod Project is a gender-sensitive disaster reconstruction project that aimed to revitalize some of the communities that were most impacted by Typhoon Haiyan. This was done by first and foremost, empowering women to participate fully in economic life. The project's Social Marketing Campaign for Gender Equality (SMC) and the Women's Empowerment through Micro-Enterprise Assisted Livelihood (WE-MEAL) Program are two exemplary models of inclusive and thoughtfully designed programs that were tailored to meet the needs of marginalized women from the Eastern Visayas who had limited access to economic opportunities and decision-making. Delivered together, the SMC and WE-MEAL program have led to remarkable personal transformations, some of which are documented here through the lessons learned and success stories. What we have observed over the course of the project's lifespan is that transformation does not start and end with women alone. Rather, empowered women empower communities as the title of this document suggests. As women gain the resources, awareness, and knowledge to assert their rights and mobilize for change, families and communities also benefit.

The Gender Sensitivity Training (GST) Facilitators trained under the SMC and the individual WE-MEAL entrepreneurs are all remarkable women who have shown inspiring resilience, passion, and dedication to rebuild their lives and renegotiate their gender roles in the aftermath of Haiyan. Without their active participation in the programs and honest feedback, we would not have had the insights we now have to further improve our practices in order to deliver meaningful programming for women in the region.

We hope that even after the Tukod Project has ended, the lessons learned and promising practices that have been gathered in this document will be adopted by and improved on by others in the field who are mobilizing for a more inclusive and equitable world for women from the Eastern Visayas and beyond.

**Macelinda B. Cepe**  
National Team Leader  
Tukod Project

**“You can tell the condition of a nation  
by looking at the status of its women.”**

*- Jawaharlal Nehru (First Prime Minister of India)*

When all women, regardless of their status and their condition, can have access to paid and decent employment opportunities or sit at the head of a company, their economic power will grow and their families and communities will positively benefit. It is on this basis that the Centre for International Studies and Cooperation (CECI) strongly believes in the importance of women's economic empowerment (WEE) and reflects this through the implementation of a holistic WEE approach in all of its projects.

As part of the project “Sustainable Economic Growth for the Women and Men Affected by Typhoon Haiyan in Leyte and Samar in the Philippines”, CECI in collaboration with Concern Inc., implemented a WEE approach for two specific intervention strategies: Women's Empowerment through Micro-Enterprise Assisted Livelihood (WE-MEAL) Program, and the Social Marketing Campaign for Gender Equality (SMC) initiative.

The content of this document is inspired by a consortium experience during the 3 ½ year project and puts forward effective strategies that have an impact on women's economic empowerment in a post-disaster context such as Typhoon Haiyan. This paper presents promising and innovative actions aimed at strengthening women's agency, improving the inclusive responsiveness of the market system, as well as creating a better environment for women, their families, and their communities.

We hope that the following pages will provide inspiration, innovation, and commitment for others to continue to contribute to global efforts for strengthening women's economic empowerment.

Good reading!

**Nathalie Roy**  
Sustainable Economic Growth and Gender Advisor  
Centre for International Studies and Cooperation (CECI)

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# INTRODUCTION

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Women roughly represent half of the Philippine's population, and yet their indispensable contribution to the economy is still not sufficiently recognized and supported. This can be attributed to various constraints that limit their capacity to engage in and sustain economic activities, further worsened by the impacts of disasters and natural calamities. It is in this context that the *Sustainable Economic Growth for the Women and Men Affected by Typhoon Haiyan in Leyte and Samar in the Philippines*, also known as the Tukod Project, implemented interventions to support women entrepreneurs to thrive.

**This document summarizes good practices and lessons learned from two key interventions implemented by the Tukod Project towards the objective of women's economic empowerment (WEE). These interventions are the *Women's Empowerment through Micro-Enterprise Assisted Livelihood (WE-MEAL) Program*, and the *Social Marketing Campaign for Gender Equality (SMC)* initiative. These lessons from the ground may be useful to other stakeholders who are working towards similar objectives, lending to more effective decision-making, preventing the recurrence of weaknesses, and contributing to the improvement of results and impact in other programming that also commits to supporting women's entrepreneurship as a critical vehicle to reduce poverty, grow local economies, promote sustainability, and advance equity. It is hoped that this document is useful, in particular, for local government units in the Philippines mandated to work in support of entrepreneurship initiatives and gender and development.**

To address the overall objective of the project to support a gender-sensitive and environmentally-friendly longer-term economic recovery for families and individuals, the *Women's Empowerment through Micro-Enterprise Assisted Livelihood (WE-MEAL) Program* was designed to create sustainable women-owned micro-enterprises in the provinces of Leyte, Samar, and Eastern Samar. Through various innovative approaches, the program targeted the removal of barriers to women's economic participation by designing an entrepreneurial training program and sustainability process that was empowering, participatory, responsive, and holistic. This involved creating spaces for skill development, knowledge-sharing, self-reflection, and confidence building, based on the specific needs and experiences of marginalized women and young women. It involved strengthening women's enterprises through expanded access to networks, markets, and capital. Mentoring and bridging relationships were fostered among a peer-group of women entrepreneurs, as well as with successful local business advisors, government units and agencies, and other actors in the market system. Principles of equitability, good governance, resiliency, ecological sensitivity, and sustainability, were integrated into women's business models as a reflection of the stated values of women and their communities, particularly in a context of rebuilding and redefining post-disaster.

Similarly, the *Social Marketing Campaign for Gender Equality (SMC)* intervention was able to improve the confidence of women entrepreneurs to participate more fully in the broader economic, social, and political realms

of their lives, with greater support and buy-in from their households and communities. Trainings were designed to raise women’s awareness of their rights and around concepts of gender stereotyping, division of labor between men and women, and gender and development. Promising women were also given leadership and facilitation skills to be able to conduct Gender Sensitivity Training (GST) sessions with other community women, men, and at times local officials. Further, as women are positioned within an integrated and inter- connected system of individuals, groups, and institutions, all of which have influence on her opportunities and constraints as an entrepreneur and as a woman, the project prioritized sensitizing a wide audience on women’s economic empowerment and gender equality. This involved working alongside women to engage members of her household, her community, her local government, and private institutions, including men and boys, with the objective of creating a supportive enabling environment within which she could thrive. Through approaches including developing and growing a network of community-based gender equality champions (known as ‘GST Facilitators’) to cascade awareness on women’s rights and gender equality; utilizing behavioral change and strategic communication methodologies towards gender equality; sensitizing men and mobilizing male allies as gender advocates; and linking women’s groups with local government units to participate in gender and development planning and budgeting processes, women leaders are more successfully influencing local development processes to which they have a rightful claim.

### Key Lessons Learned from WE-MEAL and SMC

The data used for this document was gathered through a review of project evaluation documents and outputs from After Action Review workshops, Most Significant Change interviews, and surveys conducted with select stakeholders from the community, project staff, consultants, resource persons, and local government representatives. This data was then analyzed by an external consultant and summarized into what are believed to be valuable learnings as well as recommendations for future initiatives.<sup>1</sup>

The following key lessons emerged from the selected women’s economic empowerment interventions:



The specific, complex, and unique needs of women entrepreneurs are best addressed through holistic interventions that reflect an inclusive and gender-sensitive approach to economic empowerment;



Sensitizing women on their rights is an essential component of women’s economic empowerment;



Women’s economic empowerment is most effective when complemented with the engagement of men and other members of the household;



Strengthening the social capital of enterprising women is essential, including through peer networks as well as strategic partnerships and collaboration with public and private stakeholders; and



Access to government mechanisms and resources assures the most sustainable and long-term institutional support for women’s enterprises and advocacy initiatives.

These lessons learned are complemented with four success stories that offer a snapshot of the impact of the interventions through the journeys of select women entrepreneurs and gender equality advocates. Their stories touch on significant changes experienced at the individual, household, and community levels. They also provide meaningful insight into the lives of these women and their families before, during, and after the devastating Typhoon Haiyan of 2013, and their hopes and aspirations for a better future where more women are aware of their rights and their potential as agents of change.

<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that this is not a thorough evaluation of the Tukod Project as a whole, which contained several other components related to sustainable economic growth not detailed here, nor is it a comprehensive manual on implementation of the two highlighted interventions.

# THE TUKOD HAIYAN RECONSTRUCTION PROJECT

*The Sustainable Economic Growth for the Women and Men Affected by Typhoon Haiyan in Leyte and Samar in the Philippines*, known as the Tukod Project, was a three-and-a-half-year project funded by Global Affairs Canada (GAC) in support of the national government's reconstruction and rehabilitation plans following Typhoon Haiyan. The project was co-implemented by the international NGO Center for International Studies and Cooperation (CECI) and the local NGO Center for Emergency Aid and Rehabilitation Inc. (CONCERN), both non-stock and non-profit organizations. The total project budget amounted to almost CAD \$6.6 million.

The project's overall objective was to support a gender-sensitive and environmentally-friendly longer-term economic recovery for 5,500 families, or 27,500 women, men, and youth, in the three provinces of Leyte, Samar (Western), and Eastern Samar. It intended to build capacities in different spheres of economic activity in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan, with a specific focus on vulnerable women and young women. These target beneficiaries consisted of 15% of the population across seven towns and four cities, namely Tacloban City, Palo, and Tolosa in Leyte; Marabut in Samar; and Taft, Can-Avid, Dolores, and Oras in Eastern Samar.

The project had **four thematic focus areas**, including:

- 1. Sustainable Reconstruction:** Increased opportunities in economically profitable activities for women and men active in the agriculture and fisheries sector;
- 2. Personal and Professional Skills:** Increased access to gender-sensitive skills development training for women, young women, men, and young men aligned with the labour market demand;
- 3. Creation of Sustainable Enterprises:** Increased number of MSMEs owned/operated by women and young women successfully accessed financial and business development strategies; and
- 4. Favorable Financial Environment:** Existing financial and business development services and products are enhanced and/or expanded to cater to the specific needs of women-led MSMEs.



# KEY INFORMATION



## OBJECTIVE

TO SUPPORT A GENDER SENSITIVE AND ENVIRONMENTALLY-FRIENDLY LONGER TERM ECONOMIC RECOVERY FOR FAMILIES AND INDIVIDUALS IN LEYTE, WESTERN SAMAR, AND EASTERN SAMAR.



## DURATION

AUGUST 20, 2015 TO MARCH 31, 2019  
(42 MONTHS / 3.5 YEARS)



## TARGET BENEFICIARIES

5,500 FAMILIES  
27,500 WOMEN, MEN, AND YOUTH

## FUNDER



GLOBAL AFFAIRS  
CANADA (GAC)

## BUDGET



\$ 5,991,407

\$ 602,149

**\$ 6,593,556**

GAC

CECI

**TOTAL**

## IMPLEMENTERS

CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDIES AND COOPERATION (CECI) +  
CENTER FOR EMERGENCY AID AND REHABILITATION INC. (CONCERN)



PICTURED: WE-MEAL entrepreneurs at a capacity building planning session to Tacloban City.



# WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

## AN OVERVIEW

*The successes of the Tukod Project in supporting women entrepreneurs were made possible first and foremost with a gender-responsive framework of intervention that put women and their needs at the center of the project. A contextualized women's economic empowerment approach and a comprehensive gender equality strategy guided all project activities, which were aligned with the provisions of the Philippines' Magna Carta of Women (Republic Act 9710). In this section, the salient points of these frameworks are presented as a guide for gender-mainstreaming considerations in approaching women's entrepreneurship in the context of post-disaster rehabilitation.*

### What is women's economic empowerment and why is it important?

According to the Philippine Commission on Women, women's economic empowerment (WEE) refers to women having access to and control over high-value productive resources, such as information, credit, loans or financial assistance, services training, markets and technology, and increased control over the business environment.

WEE is a concept which puts forward an inclusive vision of the markets and refers to the following four principles:

1. The ability of women to generate sufficient resources in a sustainable way;
2. The ability of women to make decisions concerning the benefits that result from their economic activities;
3. The possibility for women to have equitable access to resources and economic opportunities with a fair ability to exercise control over these; and
4. The possibility and the ability of women to build their confidence and self-esteem

It is a well-established fact globally that women's social and economic empowerment and inclusion leads to increased investments in the health, education and nutritional status of children, a general reduction of poverty in its broadest sense, an overall improved quality of life for the family, and greater aspirations of women and girls for themselves and for future generations. In recent years, there has been considerable progress made towards achieving gender equality and improving the status of Filipino women, including at the legislative level. However, data also demonstrates the persistence of gender inequalities and barriers for women, and the continued need to increase opportunities for women's economic empowerment in the country.

### What barriers must be addressed?

Numerous constraints limit women's full participation and enjoyment of equality. Manifestations of gender biases and discrimination against women prevail in all dimensions of their lives, and manifest through power dynamics in daily social interactions and relationships, cultural practices, and by

public and private institutions. They are learned and normalized through social, political, economic, and cultural institutions, and reflected in disparities in wealth, income, power, decision-making, and access to and control over economic and social resources. They are readily apparent in the division of labor, roles, opportunities, and constraints. All gender-related constraints bear some influence on the potential for women's economic empowerment and capacity to contribute to economic growth.

The Philippine Commission on Women reported that the average labor force participation rate of Filipino women is 49.7%.<sup>2</sup> It is comparatively lower in the Eastern Visayas; according to the Region VIII Regional Development Plan 2011-2016, women account for nearly half of the total active population, yet their participation rate in the workforce is only 36.2%, while that of men is 63.8%. This low rate of participation by women is attributable to factors such as the unbalanced distribution of household tasks, low levels of access to and control of resources, the prevalence of the male-dominated agriculture and fisheries sector, violence against women, and a market system which does not favor the inclusion of women and young women. The role and contribution of women to the labour force has largely been confined to the informal sector, at low levels of the job hierarchy. Despite improved access to livelihood assistance, including enterprise development, women's conditions generally remain disadvantaged. In the context of the Tukod Project's interventions towards women's economic empowerment, the following barriers were considered:

## SOCIO-CULTURAL CONSTRAINTS



Women allocate a significant and disproportionate amount of time and effort to care for children and the household. They also often do not have full control over revenues when involved in an economic activity. The prevalence of violence against women is both a women's rights and a development concern. Gender biases influence women's exclusion from decision-making spaces, including local politics that affect them.

## ENTREPRENEURSHIP-RELATED CONSTRAINTS



The majority of Filipina-owned micro-enterprises are not registered or regulated. They regularly suffer from a lack of capital which often means spiralling into a vicious cycle of dependency towards informal lenders, overwork, and limited access to materials and markets. Low awareness of the full operations of the market system and available services for business development; unresponsive approaches and tools used by service providers who fail to meet the needs of women; and weak approaches to promoting resiliency and sustainability in the business context, are also hindering factors. Women tend to have lower social capital (access to networks, mentors, interest groups), which can hinder success and growth.

Overall, the general conditions and constraints Filipino women face in society at large, as well as in the operation of their economic activities, are complex and multidimensional. In response, successful measures must address the specific support needs of women and young women's economic initiatives, as well as the broader environment they are operating within, including reducing the existing gaps between women and men.

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<sup>2</sup> As of January 2010.

## How do disasters affect women's economic capacities?

Natural disasters, like Super-Typhoon Haiyan in 2013, exacerbate inequalities and often impede the achievement of the fundamental rights of women as the economy plummets, the overall poverty rate increases, and additional unpaid work falls on the backs of women. In the Philippines, despite efforts made to ensure the full and equal participation of women in reconstruction processes, women still find themselves with inequitable access to opportunities and participation in decision-making processes. To address these, considerable investment should be made in skills development aimed at increasing the equitability, sustainability, and resiliency of livelihood options. Hence, reconstruction efforts and market restoration in the aftermath of disaster should be able to open spaces and opportunities for women to participate and be recognized in the formal economy. This can, for example, involve supporting women's financial, managerial, and communication capacities, as well as access to business continuity support including resiliency planning and micro-insurance.

## The Tukod Project's vision for gender equality

The Tukod Project sought to reduce the inequalities between women and men, by acting on the constraints limiting the participation of women and their ability to contribute fully to economic life.

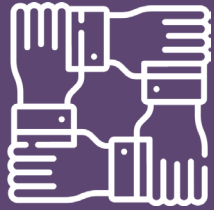
It operationalized a vision towards gender equality through the following objectives:

- Women and young women have strengthened capacities to be part of a sustainable reconstruction process, taking into account their needs and interests;
- The life skills of women, young women, men and young men are improved, promoting a family and professional environment free of violence against women and young women;
- The participation of women and young women in various spheres of decision-making is increased;
- Access to and control over resources (e.g. human, financial, material, etc.), knowledge, skills, business networks, and opportunities are equal; and
- The organizational and institutional capacity of training centers, financial institutions, business development providers, private companies, governmental, and non-governmental service providers are strengthened to take into account the specific needs and interests of women and young women.

The following sections will, respectively, acknowledge the role of local governments in women's economic empowerment; introduce the objectives, methodologies, and results of the two selected interventions under the Tukod Project; draw lessons learned and key recommendations; and finally, share stories of significant change.

PICTURED: WE-MEAL entrepreneurs creating vision boards during a leadership training activity in Tolosa, Leyte.





# LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNITS AND WEE: A WAY FORWARD

*The Tukod Project acknowledges the significant investment of the Philippine Government at the national, regional, provincial, and municipal levels in supporting micro, small, and medium sized enterprises, and in promoting women's inclusion in these initiatives. This section briefly gives recognition to some of these efforts, as well as offers key considerations for potential ways forward that local government units may consider, based on the learning experiences of the Tukod Project in the provinces of Leyte and Samar.*

## How is WEE being promoted in the Philippines?

The Philippine Government has institutional and legislative will to create an enabling environment for entrepreneurship. In addition to the Magna Carta of Women (R.A. 9710), other legislation has been enacted in support of women's economic empowerment (WEE), for example the Magna Carta for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) (R.A. 9501), and Providing Assistance to Women Engaging in Micro and Cottage Business Enterprises (R.A. 7882). Programs targeting women as economic actors are being offered by government agencies such as the Department of Trade and Industry, the Department of Labor and Employment, the Technical Education Skills Development Authority, the Department of Science and Technology, and the Commission on Higher Education. Financial institutions such as banks and micro-credit lenders are also required to set aside a certain percentage of their loan portfolio in line with the stipulations of government equity programs aimed at the development of small and medium-sized businesses. On the demand side, young women and young men are increasingly seeing entrepreneurship as a viable alternative to traditional employment.

A highly noteworthy policy of the Philippine Government that intersects all sectors is the gender and development (GAD) budget policy, which mandates that all departments, bureaus, offices, and agencies set aside five percent (5%) of their total budget for gender and development concerns, including local government units (LGUs). These actors must also have a GAD Plan that serves as their tool to address gender issues and concerns of their respective sectors and constituents, including specific targets and performance indicators. All agencies and LGUs are also mandated to have a GAD Focal Person to ensure the preparation, implementation, and monitoring of GAD Plans.

Finally, the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) is leading the execution of Phase II of the GREAT Women Project (Gender-Responsive Economic Actions for the Transformation of Women), a project that aims to promote and support a gender-responsive enabling environment for women's economic empowerment, particularly micro-enterprising women. The first phase of the GREAT Women Project was supported by the Canadian Government through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) (now Global Affairs Canada). According to the PCW, key lessons that

informed the design of the second phase included a focus on scaling-up women-led micro-businesses; engaging the private sector for inclusive business and the promotion of women's economic empowerment; utilizing local resources (i.e. GAD budgets) to develop women leaders and small enterprise development initiatives; and the crucial role of LGUs and regional agencies in facilitating convergence services and partnering with women micro-entrepreneurs for product development, up-valuing, and market testing and development.

## Recommendations

Truly inclusive and equitable economies require addressing the ways in which systems create and sustain women's disparate economic, social, and political positions in relation to men. Should initiatives wish to be truly transformative, poverty reduction and economic empowerment programming requires targeting women and young women as beneficiaries, but also including them in planning and decision-making processes, being responsive to their needs and experiences, and actively contributing to gender justice. Approaches may involve, among other things, capacity-building for local government units; including women and peoples' organizations in gender planning, programming, and budgeting; the presence of empowered local groups pushing for reforms on a sustained basis; gender equality champions within the barangay and city level governments; and the installation of systems, tools, and mechanisms to ensure the enforcement and implementation of the GAD budget.<sup>3</sup>

In practice, there is a gap between the GAD budget policy and its effective gender-responsiveness and implementation. Further, despite the current frameworks promoting WEE denoted above, women entrepreneurs in the Philippines continue to face challenges and barriers in accessing support for business development and financial inclusion. There is thus ample opportunity to merge these gaps by inviting women's groups to participate in local development planning to ensure that GAD budgets reach and benefit the most marginalized enterprising women who have claims for its rightful use.

Drawing from lessons learned by the Tukod Project, key recommendations for strengthening the integration of women's rights and gender equality into entrepreneurship initiatives are:

1. *To invest in a thorough gender analysis of women's needs and capacities, considering their socio-cultural, political, and economic environments, and use the results as a basis for developing a framework of intervention and critical capacities for women's economic empowerment;*
2. *To integrate GST into all entrepreneurship initiatives, prioritizing topics such as the Magna Carta of Women, manifestations of gender bias, GAD, and WEE (see the annex for reference to Tukod's GST Manual);*
3. *To identify appropriate ways to integrate men in WEE activities; and develop male gender equality champions who will engage other men more meaningfully in advocacies;*
4. *To establish and/or strengthen partnerships and foster collaboration among government agencies, civil society organizations, the private sector, and other institutions to enhance women entrepreneurs' capacities for success;*
5. *To support the development, strengthening, and recognition of women's networks as critical platforms for advancing women's practical and strategic needs; and*
6. *To develop the capacities of women entrepreneurs and advocates to participate in local development processes, including the LGU's GAD planning and budgeting, in order to advance and sustain their development agendas.*

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<sup>3</sup> Recommendations adapted from: Vercelles, N.A., Philippine Journal of Social Development, Making the GAD Budget Gender-Responsive.

GOOD PRACTICES:  
**Building the Capacity of  
Women Entrepreneurs and  
Leaders for Gender Equality**



**PICTURED IN BACKGROUND:** Members of Tukod Project's Women's Network, Advocates for Gender Equality: A Network for Transformation (AGENT).



*The interventions are considered as good practices in building the capacity and leadership of women micro-entrepreneurs and in fostering an enabling environment for women's economic empowerment because of their demonstrable effectiveness, proven gender-responsiveness<sup>4</sup>, acceptability by the community, sustainability, and potential for replicability and scalability. Both initiatives have created a remarkable ripple effect, wherein changes experienced by individual women have extended to their families, social networks, and communities-at-large. The term 'good practice' as opposed to 'best practice' is intentionally used, to acknowledge that it is difficult to know what is 'best' given the different contexts, objectives, populations, opportunities, and challenges of a given project or program. The interventions presented here are, however, practices found to be good for the particular objectives and cultural, political, and resource environment of the Tukod Project.*



<sup>4</sup> The Tukod Project was given a rating of "gender-responsive" using the NEDA-PCW-ODA GAD Network Harmonized GAD Guidelines, according to an independent assessment.



PICTURED: A WE-MEAL entrepreneur from Tolosa using a sewing machine purchased from WE MEAL seed capital that was given to her to help revitalize her tailoring enterprise which came to a halt after Typhoon Haiyan destroyed her equipment in 2013.



## PRACTICE 1: WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT THROUGH MICRO-ENTERPRISE ASSISTED LIVELIHOOD (WE-MEAL) PROGRAM

The *Women's Empowerment through Micro-Enterprise Assisted Livelihood (WE-MEAL) Program* took inspiration from *The GREAT Women Project* of the Philippine Commission on Women, which used a similar approach towards women's economic empowerment. A core objective of the Tukod Project was to develop or strengthen micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) owned and operated by women. This initial approach taken to achieve this objective was through support for the creation and development of 98 women-led MSMEs (a group approach not detailed in this document). In subsequently recognizing the gaps and challenges faced by individual women with visions towards entrepreneurship, the project expanded on the group strategy and developed programming to target marginalized individual women entrepreneurs. This approach challenges the conventional view that supporting individual women entrepreneurs is inherently high-risk. Through this initiative, the Tukod Project has seen that with holistic approaches designed to meet their needs, including sufficient support systems and linkages, individual women entrepreneurs are indeed capable of successfully creating and managing their own micro-enterprises.

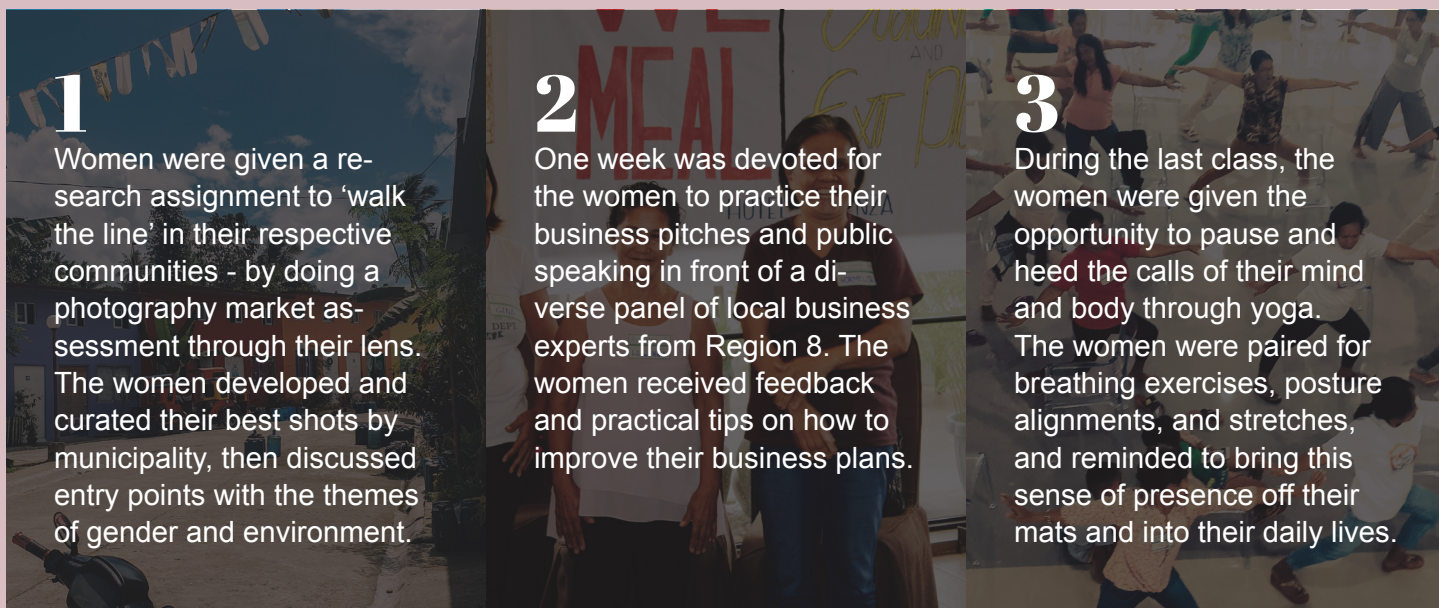
### The Intervention

WE-MEAL was a 12-week customized and responsive entrepreneurship development program tailored to the needs and capacities of 60 promising women in the provinces of Leyte and Samar in the context of the Haiyan reconstruction initiative. The strategy focused on building the capacities of

women who own and operate micro-enterprises in an environment designed to be holistic, empowering, collaborative, focused on sustainability, and capable of addressing and responding to women's barriers and needs. The structured capacity-building component of the program centered on skills in business and leadership, as well as on increasing women's awareness of their rights and the principles of gender equality, in order to build assurance they would enjoy the full benefits of entrepreneurship. At the end of the training phase, all beneficiaries were given seed capital, and ongoing, flexible, tailored support and mentoring was provided by Tukod staff, consultants, and local resources.

The training program built women's capacities around critical entrepreneurial competencies such as conducting market assessments, business planning, financial literacy, marketing and product development, and business continuity. Also given focus were sessions on leadership, communication strategies, women's rights, digital literacy, and negotiating gender roles and the division of labor within the household. As noted above, transcending the barriers that hinder economic and social equality between men and women has its challenges. Certain challenges can be exacerbated in the case of a woman pursuing an enterprise alone and without the support of a collective organizational framework to pool strengths and share risks. A holistic and gender-responsive approach therefore necessitates assessing individual women entrepreneurs' specific and unique needs, integrating these considerations into program designs, and responding to changing circumstances through ongoing feedback. For the WE-MEAL Program, this approach resulted in a comprehensive scope of capacity-building.

## Sample WE-MEAL learning activities:



Further, a dynamic, collaborative, and reduced-hierarchical learning space was carefully crafted to allow the participants to foster relationships with one another, as well as with the resource persons invited to the space, to a more intimate and meaningful degree. Local experts worked closely with Tukod staff ahead of their session to ensure the content was relevant, accessible, and engaging, and resource persons were encouraged to see the sessions as a dialogue rather than a lecture. The goal

was to open up opportunities for two-way learning and to ensure the content and delivery focused on the women's needs, interests, and meeting them where they were. It also provided opportunities for strengthening skills in public speaking and critical thinking, in turn building confidence. Women often suffer from a lack of social capital in comparison to men, which is a hindering factor in their ability to access information, resources, capital, or opportunities. The women of WE-MEAL, who in some cases expressed feelings of isolation and uncertainty in knowing where to turn to for support, had the opportunity to form relationships with their peers and gain connections to relevant market actors and resources in the government, academe, and financial institutions. The importance of networks and linkages for the sustainability and health of an enterprise is paramount; as it is for individual women's sense of belonging as they otherwise lack membership in a collective.

A final thread weaved into the design of the training program was the commitment to identifying and mitigating real or perceived barriers to women's participation and success in the program. Core tenets of this mainstreaming effort were, for example, holding the weekly six-hour class mid-week (a time and day voted on by participants), providing complementary child-minding services during training sessions, a transportation allowance, and meals during trainings. Participants were also matched with a 'buddy' from their municipality to promote accountability in attendance and peer-support both inside and outside of the learning space. Perfect attendance was encouraged and rewarded with public acknowledgment, however in some cases unforeseen circumstances inevitably arose. Guidance around expectations and accommodations were created through consensus with the group, which strengthened ownership and accountability in attendance, participation, and implementation.

**PICTURED:** Participants of the Sustainability and Exit Planning activity.



# METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The overall WE-MEAL framework can be summarized by the following diagram:

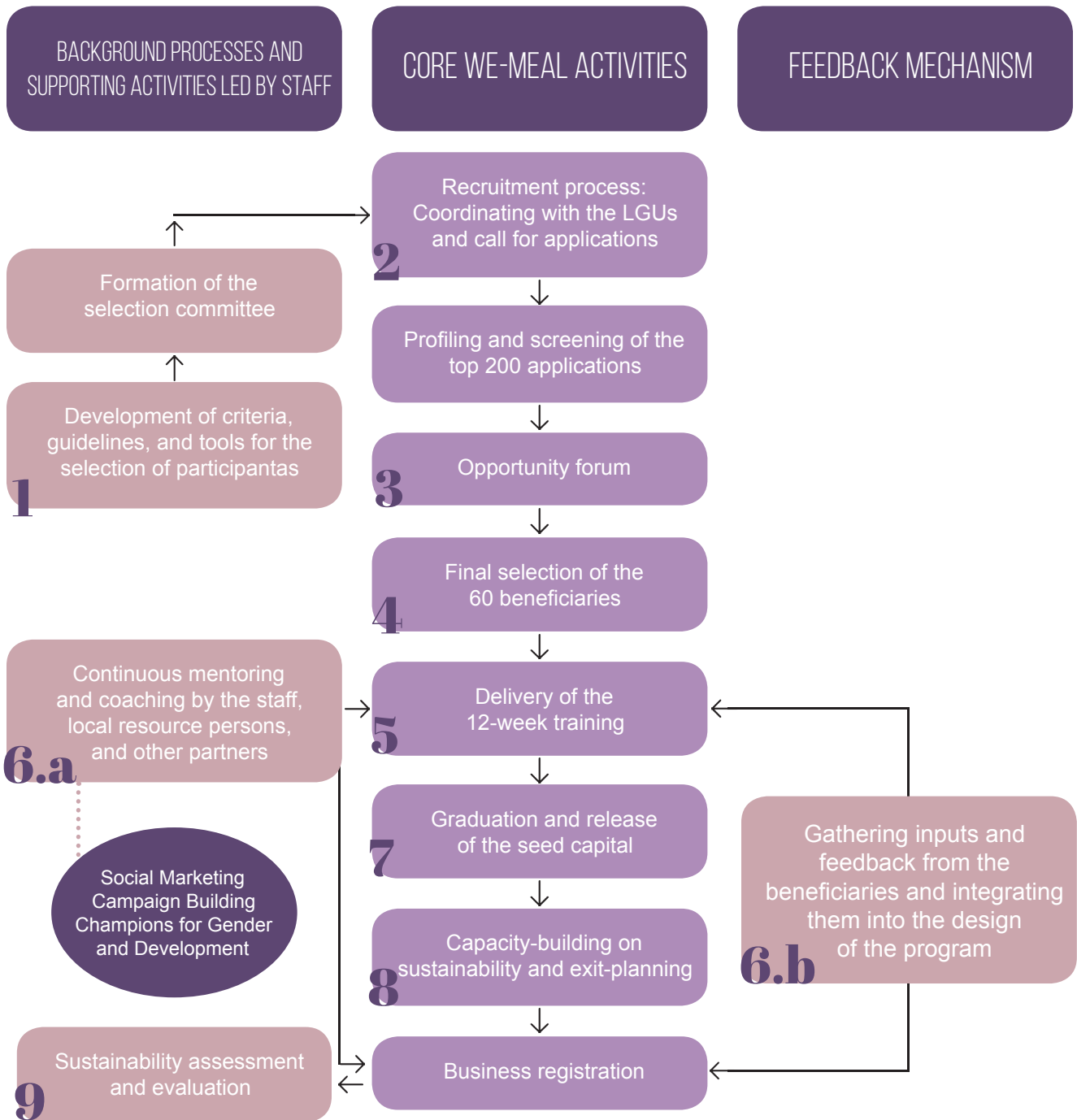


FIGURE 1. THE WE-MEAL METHODOLOGY

Engagement and coordination with the local government units during the **recruitment process** ensured that target participants were reached, and equal opportunity was afforded to all interested individuals based on set criteria. **Two Opportunity Fora** allowed the program team to level off expectations with the applicants, and identify and address potential barriers to women’s participation in the program.

As for the training proper, the content of the six-hour classes once per week allowed for a degree of flexibility based on feedback and evolving capacities of the participants. Trainings were delivered by the main facilitator - a young, skilled, female entrepreneur, mother, and Haiyan-survivor herself - as well as other local and qualified resource persons. Following each session, the local resource persons often committed to provide ongoing mentoring and support to the participants; one of several benefits of working with local experts. After twelve weeks of training, the beneficiaries celebrated at a graduation ceremony and were given seed capital to implement their business plans.

The following diagram outlines the main topics of the comprehensive 12-week training program:



FIGURE 2. WE-MEAL'S 12-WEEK TRAINING PROGRAM

**Continuous mentoring and support** was provided to the beneficiaries during the 12-weeks as well as post-training, supported by project staff, local resource persons, and other strategic partners. The project also engaged the University of the Philippines Visayas Tacloban College (UPVTC) and their Business Management School students undergoing on-the-job-training (OJT). The students were paired with the recently graduated women entrepreneurs in Leyte, Samar, and Eastern Samar, to assist them with packaging and marketing. Local resource persons were also tapped to coach and mentor the women after the completion of the training portion, including women leaders from Tukod-assisted group MSMEs who received financial support for mentoring WE-MEAL graduates on bookkeeping and creating market linkages.

To ensure sustainability and a proper transition, additional capacity-building, sustainability assessments, and exit planning were undertaken to assist the entrepreneurs in identifying strategies to sustain their businesses. Self-help groups were formed to create better access to resources, savings, and credit schemes, and a reliable and sustainable support system. Linkages with key government and private agencies, for example for business registration, and with select financial institutions and cooperatives, were also facilitated to strengthen women's access to ongoing business development support services and financial inclusion.

## Results and Impact

At the culmination of the WE-MEAL program, 58 new micro-enterprises owned and managed by women were created and received seed grants. Women have reported practicing their newly acquired skills from the training program, and have joined group savings mechanisms. Their awareness on the available financial and business development services has increased, and some are actively seeking support from agencies that provide them. Successful links were made between the entrepreneurs and key government agencies and the private sector for the marketing of their products and services, and most women have enhanced market access for their products.

Many women expressed that they discovered potential within themselves that they did not realize they had, for example, recognizing their ability to positively influence others, and to create and sustain their own business. Participants also expressed feelings of empowerment in being able to contribute to their family income. The notion of empowerment was echoed by representatives from the government who noted that WE-MEAL participants have become more visible and active in their municipalities. The seed capital provided by the project has supported women to be more engaged in various entrepreneurial activities.

## Success Factors, Challenges, and Unintended Consequences

Adopting a holistic framework that aimed to address the constraints and barriers women face was a key success factor for the project in achieving the outcomes mentioned above. The provision of a seed grant allowed the women to kick-start their businesses, and was a significant support given the reality of their otherwise limited access to capital. The entrepreneurship trainings successfully built the women's capacities in not only running a business, but also in asserting control over their time, household resources, roles, and potential. Discussions on women's rights and the use of participant-centered learning methodologies also helped participants to express themselves freely, and in the process, build their confidence and communication skills. This allowed them to foster better relationships with their customers, household members, and other people in the community. The child-minding services offered by Tukod during the training program also facilitated women's meaningful engagement, since it reduced a layer of burden that they normally experience when seeking to participate in personal or business development activities. Of the 60 women who were trained under the program, 58 graduated with seed capital (i.e. passed the requirements). This is a strikingly high success rate for a three-month program with weekly obligations for individual participants, for which drop-out rates would typically be high, and is in part credited to the removal of barriers to participation and the internal commitment that was fostered. All in all, the overall program succeeded in achieving significant results and impact because of the intentional design of the approach, and might not yield the same results if implemented in silos.

There were, however, some challenges. There were varying levels of capacity among the group, and some women failed to meet certain requirements such as the proper recording of their cash flow, and struggled with proper financial management. These cases were addressed with more intensive and customized mentoring and coaching by project staff. Building partnerships and collaborations with various stakeholders (e.g. women's associations, government agencies, private sector, etc.) at an early stage is important, as well as the participation of government agencies in various stages of the program, which was lower than had been anticipated. These are factors that could have been strengthened in the WE-MEAL Program as supporting women's access to institutional programs and services and strong links to a range of stakeholders is crucial for sustainability and success.

The most evident unintended outcome from the WE-MEAL intervention was the success of the newly created network of women and allies who share the same aspirations and advocacy for women's economic empowerment. This was identified by the women entrepreneurs as one of the most significant gains they saw from participating in the project. They see this network as not only a venue for them to connect with other women entrepreneurs and advocates, but also a platform where they can learn new knowledge and experience, a place to draw strength and inspiration from, and a peer-group to share strategies on enhancing their business practices and marketing. Some described it like an extended family of support that will be sustained beyond the Tukod Project. The success of this social capital resource is largely attributable to the fact that it was built according to the needs of the women themselves, and took shape organically under the leadership of the women with the encouragement of the project team.

A second unexpected outcome grew from the partnership created with the UPVTC Business Management School. The intention of this partnership was to pair WE-MEAL entrepreneurs with students undertaking their on-the-job-training (OJT) mandates for reciprocal learning; the students could apply their newly-acquired skills from the classroom to undertake purposeful work in communities of need; and the women received hands-on mentoring on business planning, financial management, packaging, and marketing. This partnership proved to be highly successful and well-received by both students and entrepreneurs, and as a result of this success, the Business Management School has formally adopted the targeting of marginalized women micro-entrepreneurs into its OJT program.



# WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT THROUGH MICRO-ENTERPRISE ASSISTANCE FOR LIVELIHOOD

## What is the WE MEAL Program?

The Women's Empowerment through Micro-Enterprise Assistance for Livelihood (WE-MEAL) is a 12 week customized entrepreneurship designed to support the business development needs of 60 promising women from the provinces of Leyte, Samar, and Eastern Samar, The Philippines.

The ultimate goal of the program was to increase the the number of micro-enterprises owned and operated by women and young women. The program centered around the importance of not only building the capacity of women as entrepreneurs, but also of promoting women's economic leadership and empowerment so that they may enjoy the benefits from entrepreneurship.



**A HOLISTIC, TAILORED, AND GENDER-RESPONSIVE APPROACH TO WEE**

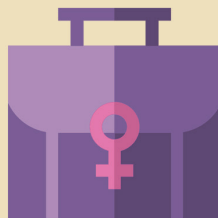
Capacity-building designed for holistic learning by developing critical capacities on technical, business, and soft skills, with a lens of gender-sensitivity, environmental sustainability, and resiliency.



**A PARTICIPATORY AND BARRIER-FREE LEARNING SPACE**

Workshops designed to be collaborative and empowering through meaningful engagement and dialogues with local experts. Barriers reduced with transportation allowance, child-minding services, and accessible learning methodologies.

## THE KEY COMPONENTS



**ACCESS TO MENTORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES AND MARKET LINKAGES**

Membership gained to an expanded network of peer women entrepreneurs, and links to government actors, business experts, and financial institutions for access to resources, services, markets, and capital.



**ACCESS TO SEED CAPITAL**

Seed grant to kick-start or rejuvenate micro-enterprises, in accordance with new business plans



**MARKETING AND PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT**

Ongoing customized support and guidance on the preparation of marketing plans, product development, packaging, and labeling.

## What did the WE MEAL Program Achieve?

**60** individual women entrepreneurs trained in the 12-week program, including 10 young women (i.e. 30 years of age or younger)

### At least 1M seed capital

grant given to start-up, diversify, expand the businesses (an average grant amount of **20,000 PHP** per business)

### Increased overall awareness of their rights as women

and access to a community women's movement organizing for gender equality.

**8** municipalities covered in Eastern Visayas (Tolosa, Palo, Tacloban, Marabut, Taft, Can-avid, Dolores, Oras)



### A peer-mentorship model and municipal networks created

for ongoing and sustainable support.

### Linkages with business development service providers and social security providers

improved and developed (Product 8, Pasalubong Centers, business to business, trade fairs, UPVTC, EVSU, PhilHealth, SSSI).

### Increased overall confidence of women entrepreneurs

to manage their businesses.



PICTURED: A community theatre performance workshop from the Social Marketing Campaign for Gender Equality.



## PRACTICE 2: SOCIAL MARKETING CAMPAIGN FOR GENDER EQUALITY (SMC)

*Without significant change in the roles that women play in their households and in family decision-making processes, increasing women’s capacities as income-earners will not necessarily liberate them from their otherwise oppressive conditions. Studies show that women’s participation in economic activities may even result in multiplying their already burdensome functions and responsibilities in the family. Infusing change in these areas of women’s lives is therefore essential to increase the likelihood that economic empowerment interventions will have the intended positive and sustainable impact on women’s well-being and contribution to local economic growth.*

*The Social Marketing Campaign for Gender Equality (SMC) was an innovative intervention developed by the Tukod Project that applied principles of commercial marketing techniques to change people’s behaviour towards a social good; in this case, to “market” (promote) behaviour change in support of gender equality. The SMC had the overall objective to sensitize women, the members of their household, as well as the community, on the concepts of women’s economic empowerment, gender equality, the redistribution of care work, and violence against women. The objective over the longer-term was to influence positive behaviour change in the household and in the community related to these themes. Key vehicles to achieve this aim were Gender Sensitivity Trainings (GST) and strategic communication and advocacy.*

### The Interventions

The *Social Marketing Campaign for Gender Equality (SMC)* had a two-pronged approach: 1) raise women’s awareness of their rights and situations through gender-sensitivity trainings; and 2) support women in influencing their socio-cultural, economic, and political environments to be more enabling through communication and constructive engagement strategies (as these environments have the power to enable - or hinder - women acting on their empowerment).

Under the first approach, over 350 women entrepreneurs received GST workshops. In addition, 80 women (and some men) were also trained as “GST Facilitators”; these were promising and interested leaders trained to roll-out GSTs themselves. Over the course of the project the GST Facilitators were given additional training and mentoring to help them effectively carry out their roles and ensure they felt equipped to advance their gender equality agendas through diverse and strategic means.

The second approach under the SMC was designed to support the women in sensitizing their families and communities on the concepts of women’s economic empowerment, gender equality, and gender-based violence. It also aimed to encourage the redistribution of domestic tasks and unpaid care activities, the brunt of which falls on women’s shoulders. This was achieved through interactive capacity-building on communication skills and channels - such as radio script-writing and community theatre - as well as through guidance on strategic campaign planning and monitoring and evaluation. Gender equality advocates were also supported to develop capacities that would help them constructively engage with their local governments in pursuit of participating in and influencing gender and development (GAD) planning and budgeting processes.

Hand-in-hand, these SMC approaches intended to reduce gender inequalities by promoting shifts in mindsets - and eventually behaviours - at the household, community, and government levels that would positively benefit the well-being of women, men, children, communities, and economies.

## METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The process undertaken under these interventions is shown in the diagram below:

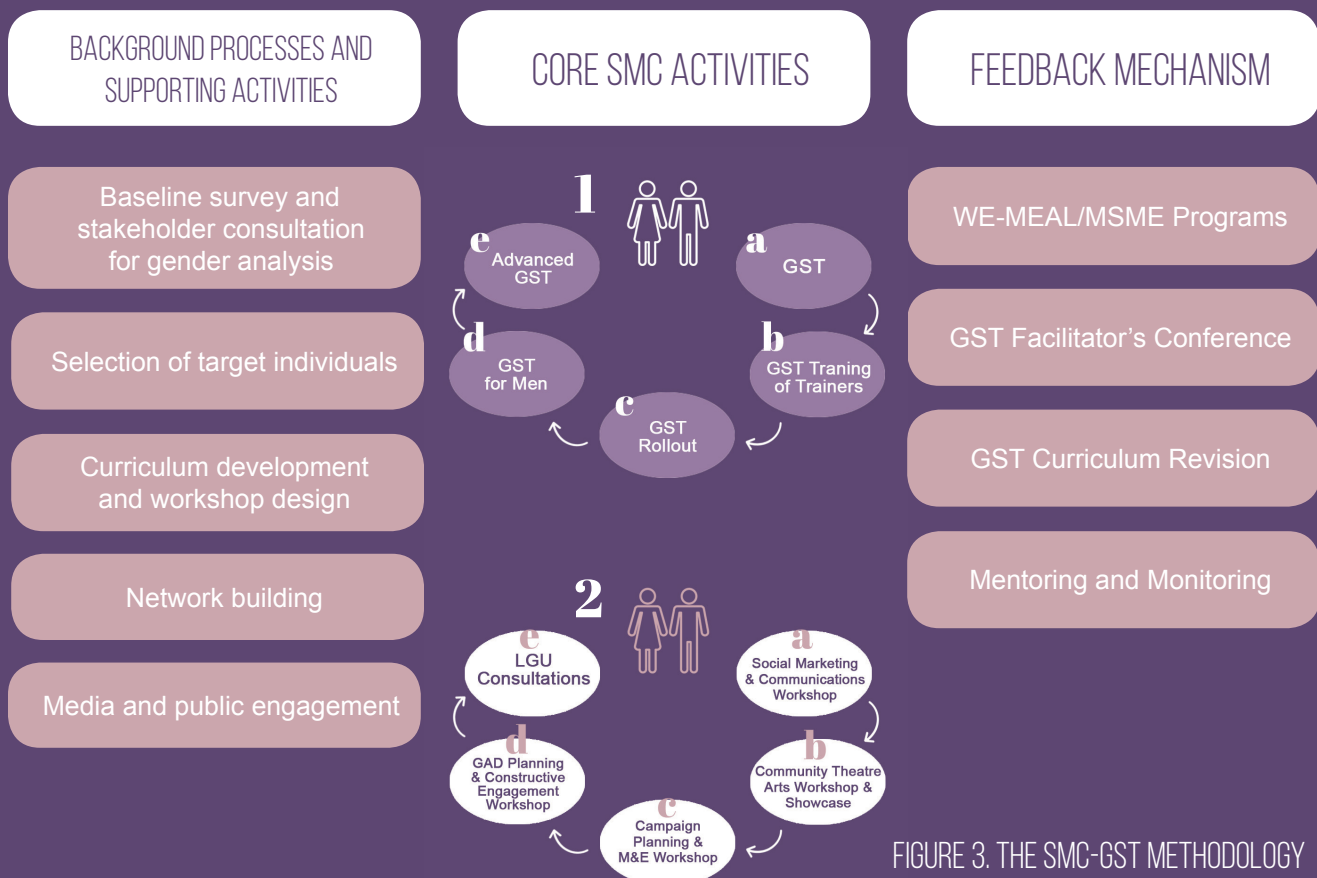


FIGURE 3. THE SMC-GST METHODOLOGY

**The SMC's key stages of intervention for the GST approach are as follows:**

- **Gender Sensitivity Training (GST):** Workshops were given to all Tukod-assisted women entrepreneurs to raise their awareness of their rights and the situation of women, through an engaging and accessible curriculum codified in a GST Manual developed by the project.
- **Training of the GST Facilitators:** Supplemental Training of Trainers (ToT) was conducted for those who expressed an interest in taking on a leadership role as gender equality advocates within their MSME and/or within their wider community. The workshop for GST Facilitators prioritized skills on 'facilitating that empowers' and included a practicum component. Subsequent GSTs for the project's newly-supported MSMEs were rolled-out by GST Facilitators, with mentoring guidance from Tukod staff.
- **GST for Men:** These workshops were undertaken to enlighten men and generate more support from husbands and other male significant others of the women entrepreneurs in their undertaking of entrepreneurship and community-oriented leadership. These workshops were conducted by a male facilitator for all-male participants, and addressed themes of toxic masculinity, fatherhood, gender division of labor, and violence against women. Several of the active men in the workshops also joined as GST Facilitators, committing themselves to sensitizing other men.
- **Advanced Gender and Soft Skills Training:** Based on the monitoring and feedback of active GST Facilitators' emerging needs, additional trainings were delivered to deepen and sharpen their understanding on GAD, WEE, and gender analysis, as well as enhance their skills in leadership, communication, negotiating, and power-sharing. Throughout the GST roll-outs, continuous mentoring in training delivery and revision of modules was ensured.

PICTURED: GST Facilitators at a Gender Sensitivity Training session in Tacloban.



**The SMC involved the following key activities related to communications and constructive engagement:**

- **Baseline survey:** A survey was conducted to establish the current situation of the target communities in terms of: (a) gender issues at the household and community levels; (b) gender beliefs in relation to roles on productive, reproductive, and community work; (c) opportunities, rights, access to and control of resources; and (d) violence against women.

- **Social Marketing and Communication Workshop:** The workshop focused on building the participants' basic communication skills (i.e. messaging, public speaking, interpersonal skills), as well as their capacity to use various communication mediums such as poster making, radio script-writing, social media, and PowerPoint. The themes being communicated were women's financial independence, shared decision-making and domestic work, violence against women, and forming associations, which were tailored according to the survey results.



**PICTURED:** GST Facilitators perform a dance to raise awareness on gender equality and women's rights during an International Women's Month celebration.

- **Community Theatre Arts Workshop:** Women, men, and youth were invited to deepen their ability to inform, educate, engage, and entertain an audience, using the powerful communication method of community theatre, movement, and music. The workshop culminated in a final showcase attended by family and community members and representatives from the LGUs, including a mayor and vice-mayors.
- **Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Workshop:** Representatives from each municipality presented their social marketing and communication plans (including their general objectives, activities, timelines, and required resources), and were then trained on how to design their own monitoring and evaluation system for these plans. This included the development of specific objectives, outputs, indicators, sources of information, and data collection methods.
- **GAD Planning and Constructive Engagement Training:** Gender equality champions were oriented on the GAD policy, the process of accessing the GAD budget, and advocacy and lobbying skills and strategies. Each municipality completed the training with an advocacy and lobbying plan, and following the workshop, GAD Consultations were facilitated by Tukod between the advocates and their respective LGUs, that aimed to have the groups endorsed.

## Results and Impact

The SMC approach, as a whole, succeeded in advancing awareness of women's rights and gender equality in the target population, including among women, men, and youth. Throughout the life of the project, 358 Tukod-assisted entrepreneurs were trained on gender sensitivity and their rights. Of those 358, a total of 80 women (and some men) were also trained as GST Facilitators.

On a personal level, the GST Facilitators have expressed increased self-confidence that has permitted them to engage more meaningfully and effectively with others, including their husbands and families, other community women and men, their customers and suppliers, and public officials. A widespread sentiment is that the women are more empowered because they better understand their rights and the context of women's oppression, and accept the expansiveness of their potential. Women and men are now also more mindful in using gender-sensitive language and comportment that encourages inclusivity and respect for others.

A particularly significant accomplishment is the formation of a network of gender equality champions, called "Advocates for Gender Equality: A Network for Transformation" (AGENT). The network was formed as an avenue for knowledge-sharing and a forum for members to seek advice and discuss women's issues including business and leadership challenges. The network also intends to serve as a unifier for women's advocacy and lobbying efforts on the Magna Carta of Women and other pursuits for women's rights, including GAD and WEE. The development of these agents of change is a formidable result for the sustained promotion of their gender equality objectives beyond the end of the project.

The work under the SMC has enabled women – and some men – an opportunity to come together, share common struggles, influence others, and collaborate on strategies to address gender issues in their own communities. By engaging with their LGUs and the GAD Focal Persons, the gender equality advocates have also raised their profiles as legitimate peoples' groups. For example, the Palo LGU GAD Focal Person tapped the Palo GST Facilitators to handle a one-day Violence Against Women and Children (VAWC) survivors training. During Women's Month celebrations, two other LGUs approached GST Facilitators to deliver a session at the municipal hall for barangay leaders, and to showcase their theatre performance on gender equality at the municipality's event. The municipal clusters have all made progress, to varying degrees, towards their goal of meaningfully participating in GAD planning and budgeting processes. Following consultations facilitated by Tukod, by the end of the project at least four LGUs had formally endorsed the municipally-organized advocates and are engaging them in local development planning and implementation around WEE and GAD activities.

Finally, the success of the women leaders has also led to opportunities to increase their visibility and the dissemination of their messages towards women's empowerment among the general public. For example, CNN Philippines showcased several active GST Facilitators with its "Postcards from Disasters" initiative, where a photography exhibit profiling the women leaders was created for public engagement and the women were interviewed for television.

## Success Factors, Challenges, and Unintended Consequences

Similar with the WE-MEAL approach, the women also found that topics on the rights and laws protecting women had brought out significant changes in how they see themselves in relation to other people. They expressed being able to take more firm positions when it came to their roles and responsibilities as women, and voicing their opinions on matters that affect them. Behaviour changes that some women reported included more actively gathering women in their community for collective aims, traveling farther than they ever had before, and being more assertive with their husbands in renegotiating the division of labor. Some men were also participating more in unpaid care work

and taking part in influencing other men to see the positive effects of supporting women to become empowered. Overall, the SMC intervention enabled women to be more active in the community, and also helped men to become more gender-sensitive.

Innovative approaches in communication, such as using the language of theatre and the arts, helped participants build confidence to articulate their advocacy on gender equality using effective and accessible mediums. Fostering their capacity to express themselves simultaneously facilitated their internal processing of these issues and of their experiences. The community theatre was widely regarded as one of the most impactful methodologies. It not only permitted women and men to creatively use their voices and bodies to communicate gender equality messages related to their own experiences, but it also provided a venue for healing and processing from their experiences during Typhoon Haiyan. With this, these women and men expressed being more confident and articulate in expressing their issues, concerns, ideas, and experiences. In addition, the theatre showcases in Tacloban and Taft were attended by high-level representatives of the LGUs, who openly expressed being impacted by the power of the performance and inspired by the creative method used to communicate messages of gender equality.

The success of the approach is also attributable to a fundamental belief that was integrated into the design of the SMC that women have the capacity to realize their situation and the power to change it. The project avoided passively downloading information to participants, but instead created opportunities for women to take ownership and leadership of the experience. Although objectives were established at the outset, the community women greatly influenced the design and process of implementation throughout. The SMC is thus also a good example of how a functional feedback mechanism between project implementer and beneficiaries can lead to an improved design and greater impact.

Of the challenges experienced, most were related to programming, and specifically the challenge of measuring impact. It was difficult to develop indicators for the communication and advocacy work that would be met within the project's timeframe for implementation, as transformational behaviour change is observable over the longer-term. In the end, significant outcomes and visible shifts at the individual and household levels were still achieved within the time period, as highlighted above.

There was also an awareness that as women become empowered, men can feel a shift in the status quo, and this caused friction in some cases. The ways the project addressed this was firstly by conducting GST for Men workshops, intended to create a safe space for men to better understand the situation of women, to share experiences of being raised as a man, and how gender equality objectives are beneficial to everyone. Secondly, men were also engaged by inviting them to participate in gender equality activities, for example, the community theatre arts workshop and women's month celebration events. Despite these efforts, there were still challenges around men's meaningful engagement, since

they were often reluctant to participate. The lower than desired participation of men in SMC activities is attributable to a common misperception that these topics are not relevant to them, and because they could not attend in-lieu of income-earning activities. Ideas discussed to address these barriers included engaging men at the beginning of the project – simultaneously with women – to explain the objectives of the project and implications for the family directly. Notwithstanding these challenges, several community men proved to be highly engaged and committed as women’s allies and advocates.

There were unintended outcomes that emerged due to the links made between different interventions of the project around gender equality efforts. For example, after the completion of the WE-MEAL program, select individual women entrepreneurs also joined the growing cadre of GST Facilitators. Further, through the women’s network, individual women entrepreneurs of WE-MEAL were encouraged to become members of the women-led group MSMEs that also received entrepreneurship support from the Tukod Project, and similarly, the MSMEs were encouraged to join the larger regional network of women.

**PICTURED ON RIGHT:** The husband and son of a WE-MEAL entrepreneur show their support for gender equality at an International Women’s Month celebration.





# SOCIAL MARKETING CAMPAIGN FOR GENDER EQUALITY: MOBILIZING GENDER EQUALITY ADVOCATES IN LEYTE AND SAMAR, THE PHILIPPINES



The *Social Marketing Campaign for Gender Equality (SMC)* was an innovative intervention developed by the CECI-CONCERN Tukod Project that used strategic communication methods as a way to influence people's behaviours in support of gender equality. The overall aim of the campaign was to sensitize women, the members of their household, as well as the community, on the concepts of women's economic empowerment, gender equality, the redistribution of unpaid care work, and violence against women, with the longer-term objective of influencing positive behaviour change in the household and in the community.

## PROGRAM FEATURES



### GENDER SENSITIZATION TRAININGS

#### GENDER SENSITIVITY TRAINING (GST)

To raise women entrepreneurs' awareness of their rights and the situation of women.

#### GST TRAINING OF TRAINERS

To take on leadership roles as gender equality advocates sensitizing others through GST.

#### GST SESSIONS FOR MEN

To generate more support from husbands (and other important men in women's lives) and to also identify and capacitate male gender equality champions.

#### ADVANCED GENDER AND SOFT SKILLS TRAININGS

To deepen and sharpen GST Facilitators' understanding of emerging topics and to be responsive to their requests for further skills development, for example, on leadership and gender analysis.

## GEOGRAPHICAL COVERAGE

Philippines, REGION VIII: Provinces of Leyte (Tacloban City, Palo, Tolosa), Samar (Marabut), and Eastern Samar (Taft, Can-Avid, Dolores, Oras)



## STAKEHOLDERS & PARTNERS

GST Facilitators (women & men), LGUs, GAD Focal Points, Gender and Communications Specialists, Theatre Specialist (Philippine Educational Theater Association)

## TARGET POPULATION

Women entrepreneurs, GST Facilitators, men (husbands, male members of women-led MSMEs), other household members, community members/general public

## ADVOCACY & COMMUNICATIONS & LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT



#### SOCIAL MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION WORKSHOP

Women leaders were trained in campaign planning and basic communication skills (i.e. public speaking, interpersonal skills) and communication mediums (i.e. poster-making, radio script-writing, social media)

#### PARTICIPATORY MONITORING AND EVALUATION WORKSHOP

Community reps trained on how to design their own M&E system to track the desired behaviour changes towards gender equality that their campaign plans intended to influence.

#### GAD PLANNING AND CONSTRUCTIVE ENGAGEMENT

Gender equality advocates trained on gender and development (GAD) planning, budgeting, and advocacy and lobbying skills and strategies, to support them in their plans to access the policy-mandated 5% GAD budget.

#### COMMUNITY THEATRE ARTS WORKSHOP

Women, men, and youth were trained in community theatre as a creative medium to inform, educate and engage audiences on gender equality.

## RESULTS


**358** TUKOD-ASSISTED ENTREPRENEURS trained on gender sensitivity and women's rights

**141** Number of MEN who participated in GST workshops using a masculinities approach.

**80** WOMEN (AND MEN) trained as GST Facilitators to sensitize other community women & men.

**1** Formed regional network for gender equality champions.

**4+** LGUs formally endorsed the women's groups.

A woman in a white top is performing a community theatre piece. She is in the foreground, looking down with her arms extended. In the background, several other people are visible, some with their arms raised, suggesting a group performance. The setting appears to be an outdoor or semi-outdoor space with a light-colored wall and some foliage visible in the distance.

PICTURED IN BACKGROUND: A survivor of Typhoon Haiyan performing at a community theatre performance as part of the Social Marketing Campaign for Gender Equality.

# LESSONS LEARNED & KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

THE FOLLOWING LESSONS LEARNED EMERGED FROM AN ANALYSIS OF THE EXPERIENCES AND REFLECTIONS OF THE WE-MEAL AND SMC INTERVENTIONS OF THE TUKOD PROJECT. SEVERAL RECOMMENDATIONS ARE ALSO MADE IN RELATION TO THESE LEARNINGS.



## LESSON 1:

**The specific, complex, and unique needs of women entrepreneurs are best addressed through holistic interventions that reflect an inclusive and gender-sensitive approach to economic empowerment.**

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The feedback and experiences of Tukod-assisted women entrepreneurs revealed that aside from having access to seed capital, their strengthened capacities in business management, personal empowerment, and improved social capital had also contributed to their success in creating and managing their own businesses. The project interventions not only addressed women's needs for entrepreneurial and business development skill-building, but also their need for enhanced soft skills; in leadership, communication, and negotiation. Moreover, the interventions went beyond the individual level by addressing concepts around gender stereotypes and biases that often pose barriers to women's economic empowerment.

### RECOMMENDATION:

Invest in a thorough gender analysis of women's needs and capacities, considering their socio-cultural, political, and economic environments, and use the results as a basis for developing a framework of intervention and critical capacities for women's economic empowerment.



## LESSON 2:

# Sensitizing women on their rights is an essential component of women's economic empowerment.

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The most significant changes that women expressed at the personal level were attributed to an increase in their awareness of their rights and the principles of gender equality through Gender Sensitivity Trainings (GST). The implications of this improved confidence and conscientization reported by women themselves were wide-ranging, and bore immeasurable influence on their contributions as members of society. For many women, knowing their rights and receiving validation that they are capable of making important contributions to their families, their communities, and their economies beyond their reproductive roles, and that the oppressive conditions they face are not just nor inherent, was a major turning point in their lives. Many women so inspired and empowered by this experience have committed themselves to collaboratively advancing gender equality agendas.

## RECOMMENDATION:

Integrate GST into all entrepreneurship initiatives, prioritizing topics such as the Magna Carta of Women, manifestations of gender bias, GAD, and WEE (see Tukod's GST Manual cited in the annex).



## LESSON 3:

# Women's economic empowerment is most effective when complemented with the engagement of men and other members of the household.

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Women are able to take on more productive roles with greater success and ease if they have a supportive enabling environment and are relieved of the burden of domestic work. Tukod-assisted women entrepreneurs report that the participation of their husbands and children in unpaid care work has helped them focus on developing their business. Likewise, the household's support in managing the micro-enterprise resulted in a more stable flow of income, which positively impacts the family's capacity to meet their daily, long-term, and emergency needs. As household members better understand women's experiences and concerns, improvements in social relations within the family have also been observed. The experiences of women supported by the Tukod Project validated the known reciprocal relationship between women's economic empowerment and the well-being of the household.

### RECOMMENDATION:

Identify appropriate ways to integrate men in WEE initiatives; and develop male gender equality champions who will engage other men more meaningfully in advocacies.

## LESSON 4:

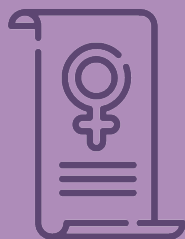
### **Strengthening the social capital of enterprising women is essential, including through peer networks as well as strategic partnerships and collaboration with public and private stakeholders.**



The WE-MEAL program expanded women’s social capital first and foremost through connections with their peers, who went on to successfully organize themselves into municipal networks to capitalize on each other’s strengths in enhancing their business practices. Equivalently, the women’s network “AGENT” that grew out of the SMC initiative, has been instrumental in harnessing women’s collective power to sensitize others on gender equality and advocate mandate-holders to respond to their needs. Prioritizing local resource persons in the WE-MEAL program who had the potential to become longer-term mentors/partners with the assisted entrepreneurs was also a lesson which proved to be effective. The project also facilitated connections between entrepreneurs and both public and private sector service providers that offer loans or grants, business development support, skill-building, and social protection and insurance. Many women had not been aware of or did not know how to access these resources. Facilitating women’s participation in networking events and trade fairs were important venues for women to not only market their products, but also to make connections with actors in the value chain.

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1) Establish and/or strengthen partnerships and foster collaboration among government agencies, civil society organizations, the private sector, and other institutions to enhance women entrepreneurs’ capacities for success; and
- 2) Support the development, strengthening, and recognition of women’s networks as critical platforms for advancing women’s practical and strategic needs.



## LESSON 5:

# **Access to government mechanisms and resources assures the most sustainable and long-term institutional support for women's enterprises and advocacy initiatives.**

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In order to sustain the progress made after the exit of the Tukod Project, efforts were made to encourage the LGUs' recognition of and/or support for the women entrepreneurs and gender equality advocates in the project areas. The most promising sustainability mechanism identified in the local governance system is the GAD policy. Therefore the project delivered specific capacity-building for women's groups on constructive engagement and advocacy, in order to build their confidence and competence to be able to participate in GAD planning and budgeting in partnership with LGUs. GAD budgets could be tapped for social marketing activities for gender equality, the organizational strengthening of women's associations and networks, or skills and enterprise development that may not be available or accessible by other agencies. Women may also undertake advocacy to influence local policies and ordinances that protect and promote women's rights.

### RECOMMENDATION:

Develop the capacities of women entrepreneurs and advocates to participate in local development processes, including the LGUs' GAD planning and budgeting, in order to advance and sustain their own development agendas.



EMPOWERED WOMEN EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES

# Stories of Change from Leyte & Eastern Samar



PICTURED IN BACKGROUND: Community women and men pose for a group photo after a social marketing campaign for gender equality theatre performance in Tacloban



S:

# ern Samar

# 'The Woman at the Center of the Circle'

Lani Navales is a soft-spoken woman from Tolosa, Leyte who is quietly but determinately paving the way for women's empowerment in her community. She is one of 60 individual women entrepreneurs selected by Tukod Project to participate in the *Women's Empowerment through Micro-Enterprise Assisted Livelihood (WE-MEAL) Program*. Lani joined so she could receive support to manage a family handicraft business with her father. Although she is a busy mother of six, with the free time she has remaining, Lani also volunteers as a *Gender Sensitivity Training (GST) Facilitator* to raise awareness on women's rights and gender equality to barangays around Tolosa and Leyte.

Some important shifts have occurred in Lani's life since she joined the Tukod Project. From being a self-described timid housewife, Lani is now a key breadwinner for her family. After growing up feeling isolated, she is now connected to a thriving social network of other women GST Facilitators and women entrepreneurs in her community and beyond. She has also become actively engaged in local politics and is lobbying her local government unit (LGU) representatives to facilitate her community's access to gender and development (GAD) funds.

If you had told Lani three years ago that she would be giving presentations to crowded community halls and hotel conference rooms attended by government officials, she may have looked at you in disbelief. Growing up, Lani often felt isolated from her peers. Her parents were so poor that she often had to miss out on activities at school because of the extra fees. Recalling her past self, Lani draws a picture of a painfully shy girl:

“When I was in my third year of high school I heard my mother say that we had no money for my school fees. We relied solely on our father's income from weaving and selling baskets in our community. We had no electricity back then... all we had was a bahay-kubo, a nipa house. I had very little experience interacting with people. I felt such deep anxiety and low self-esteem, and I was afraid to talk with higher, professional people because I saw myself as very, very low.”

After Lani left the family home and married, she continued to struggle financially. She relied primarily on her husband's income and they were barely able to make ends meet. Even though this situation frustrated Lani, she did not entertain the possibility of doing productive work: “My mentality was that my husband should be the one earning a salary to sustain our family's needs. But it wasn't enough.

**PICTURED IN BACKGROUND:** Lani Navales with handwoven baskets she sells in a small family enterprise supported by the WE-MEAL program.

*When this became a struggle, I would lock myself in the bedroom because I didn't know what to do. I didn't think I could do anything to help my family. I was depressed, and would cry and cry. I was always asking myself, "why I am like this?"*

Things turned for the worse after Super Typhoon Haiyan wreaked havoc on the region in 2013. Tolosa was among the worst-hit areas in the Eastern Visayas. And as was the case for thousands of others, the storm destroyed Lani's home and wiped out the family's livelihood. Lani's husband lost his job as a construction worker, and her father's meagre earnings from handicrafts also took a hit.

The trauma of surviving Haiyan marked a turning point in Lani's life. Her eyes glaze over as she describes tying her newborn daughter to her arm to keep her secure as the family waded through rising surge waters, barely making it to safety: *"We climbed to the roof of another building and were there for almost two hours", she recalls. "The water level rose as high as the coconut trees."*

Lani's determination to ensure her family's survival was perhaps the beginning of her stirrings of inner transformation. *"I saw women in our municipality coming home with food and emergency supplies... I got curious and I approached one of the women. She told me that she was part of a group being supported by the government. I thought to myself, "Why are they the only ones getting support when in fact we're all poor?"*

Undeterred, Lani kept searching for opportunities to support her family. When she heard that the WE-MEAL program was accepting applications for an entrepreneurship program, she saw this as her chance to revitalize her father's dwindling handicraft enterprise. Despite her mother's disapproval, Lani submitted her application. A few weeks later, she was one of 60 women invited to participate in the 12-week training program for women entrepreneurs.

Over the following weeks, Lani was exposed to other marginalized women who, like her, could not access LGU funds because they were not part of an association. The WE-MEAL program filled this gap in services for women like Lani. It gave Lani and the other women access to tailored business and financial management trainings that helped her grow her family business: *"I'm more engaged in the business now. Although my father is still the one who makes the handicrafts, I market the products. This is our main source of income now, because of the assistance from Tukod ."*

After graduating from the WE-MEAL program, Lani began to realize that she had more options for her future. She describes the empowering feeling of being a skilled entrepreneur:

**“ Before, most of my decisions were born out of fear. I was too afraid I might fail so I didn't think about my future. I oftentimes heard my mom's voice at the back of my head saying, "You can't do this, you can't do that" . . . but the program changed my mindset. I went from being helpless to being an entrepreneur who is open-minded and resourceful. ”**



PICTURED ABOVE: Lani, centre, holds a yoga pose during an energizer at a WE-MEAL leadership training in early 2019.

WE-MEAL was also the beginning of Lani's exposure to community advocacy. As the program progressed, she began to form meaningful connections with the other women in her group. Some women started mentoring each other and organizing around their shared concerns:

“ There were ten women from Tolosa in the program. We became closer and closer and organized ourselves into a self-help group to manage our businesses - we even help each other with bookkeeping! We've also linked with the women's network in the municipality and we're planning to approach the municipality together and ask for assistance for women entrepreneurs in Tolosa. I'm certain that even after the Tukod Project is finished, the women from WE-MEAL and the Women's Federation in Tolosa will continue. ”

Being trained as a GST Facilitator also gave Lani a sense of purpose she had not known before. As she received more invitations to give GST trainings, her self-confidence flourished. Lani surprised herself by discovering that she had a natural flair for storytelling and a strong public speaking presence. *“It opened my mind,”* she says of learning about concepts like 'gender equity' for the first time, *“And I saw the potential in myself to do something. I now believe I have a calling outside of my individual self, and it's to work for the community.”* Friends and people in the community were taken by Lani's transformation: *“They were amazed at how I was now talking in front of them. They observed the difference before and after I joined the Tukod Project. I now have more confidence.”*

Reflecting on her life before and her life now, Lani conjures a poignant picture of self-transformation and belonging: *“Before, if you drew a circle, all of the women would be inside the circle and I was outside the circle. That was me before. But now, I see myself at the center of the circle. We all belong in one circle. All of the women surround me, and the link is complete.”* After a pause she smiles and adds, *“Now I want other women to also be more involved in the community, in the world around them. I want them to know the reality of their surroundings. Based on my experience, I can tell them that there's a better world out there rather than just household chores.”*

“ We all belong in one circle. All of the women surround me, and the link is complete. ”

# ‘NEGOTIATING THE HOUSEHOLD DIVISION OF LABOR WITH HUSBANDS’

Eastern Samar is one of the poorest regions in the Philippines. Typically, families here have relied on the farming or fishing sector to make a subsistence living – a sector that took a terrible hit after Haiyan devastated the region on November 6th, 2013. Although the struggling local economy is slowly regaining its footing, unemployment rates remain high in the area. Women in particular are largely underrepresented in the formal employment sector. One reason behind this is the gendered division of labor that is characteristic to most agrarian communities in the Philippines.

Job Mangaring is one of few men who is slowly breaking the paradigm of what it means to be a husband and father in his small community of Taft, Eastern Samar. Although Job is not a farmer or fisher, he works in a highly masculinized profession as a military aide. He and his wife Coring live in a small house on the side of the main highway. Upon entry, their dwelling resembles any other house in the neighborhood. A pot of rice steams on the charcoal stove, while Sunny, the family dog, sleeps on the dirt kitchen floor. Outside, there is a small vegetable garden of okra, chilis, eggplant and papaya trees being tended to by Coring’s mother.

What is not so typical about this scenario is that it is Job, and not Coring, who is in the kitchen chopping the vegetables, attending to the pots on the stove, and washing the dishes. Since Coring attended her first GST session through the Tukod Project over a year ago, the couple’s relationship has markedly transformed. During the session, it dawned on Coring that she was carrying far more than her share and burden of the household work. She decided to share what she was learning with her husband and suggested it was time for a change.

As is often the case with any behavioral and cultural transformation, things between the couple did not just change overnight. At first, the transition was an awkward one, but slowly, the couple began to share more of the household chores. Coring taught Job a few of the basics such as how to fold the laundry and how to make a pot of rice, and Job began to see the benefits of helping his wife with the chores. The couple has been arguing less, and a significant amount of Coring’s time is now being freed up, allowing her to follow other pursuits that she cares about, such as volunteering in the community as a GST Facilitator, and managing a small sari-sari store attached to the side of their home.

But it appears that much more work can still be done to address the social conventions around gender and the division of labor in the community. When asked about the reaction of his male peers to the shift in the couples’ division of labor, Job says that some of the male members in Coring’s association have questioned her, asking why men should do the household chores when they’re the ones who earn money.

“ Maybe they’re used to women washing clothes and cooking food. It’s defined as part of being a woman for them. But I don’t understand anymore why other men cannot help— I do it now because I know that I can. ”

PICTURED IN BACKGROUND: Job washing the dishes.

Elena from Dolores, Eastern Samar and her husband Rene, were also struggling with their relationship over household tasks. While her husband held a full-time job, Elena worked casually as a Barangay Health Worker (BHW) and spent most of her time on household work and caring for the couple's two children, one of whom has special needs. As Elena explained, the opportunity to take on BHW assignments were few and far between, but she loved the work and wanted to have more time for it. Whenever she did get called for an assignment, it often meant travelling to remote areas and returning home late at night to unattended domestic tasks. This often created a discord between her and Rene, who at the time, felt that Elena should be at home. But after Elena attended a GST session for the first time, she realized that she could start asking her husband to help:

**“Before the GST, I was the one doing the chores while my husband was earning money— but when I did work in the community, my time was limited because my husband would get angry if I would get home late. I became more enlightened after the GST. I realized that men are also capable of doing the household chores, so I told my husband, “My tasks are not just for women, they can be yours too. Why are you waiting for me to get them done?”. ”**

As with Job and Coring, Rene was open to his wife's suggestion, but the shift in arrangement between the couple took a bit of adjusting, since Rene had to learn how to do household chores from zero. Gradually, he started to see the connection between his role in helping around the house and the impact on Elena's time to contribute to the community. He then became more supportive, and would even drive Elena to the training venues. Elena too, started to connect the dots between the impact of the gender sensitivity trainings on her own life and on her community: *“It helps a lot because there is more engagement in the community. I can help people by sharing with them what I've learned. The first time I did this I was very nervous and shy to face many people. But when the training started, the nervousness faded away.”*

Despite these gains, Elena is still conscious of the fact that much more needs to be done to raise awareness of gender inequality in her community. This sentiment was echoed by Rene as he recounted a few negative comments he has received from the community towards the couple's redistributed household chores. But Rene does not seem too concerned about these comments. When asked how he responds to judgment from his peers, he simply smiles and shrugs it off, stating,

**“It's men's duty to participate in the household work. Whatever you're capable of doing, do it. It's important that my wife is empowered because she is my companion in life. ”**

PICTURED: GST Facilitator Elena and her supportive husband, Rene.



# ‘ENTREPRENEUR, MENTOR, AND LEADER’

Jackie is an entrepreneur from Barangay New Kawayan – a small community on the outskirts of Tacloban City that was built to shelter families who had lost their homes after Typhoon Haiyan. Despite a grim beginning, over the years a vibrant and tight-knit community has formed. On a Sunday morning, a group of eight women are gathered in Jackie’s tiny kitchen. They are wearing hair nets and making cookies to sell to neighboring schools for supplementary income. The entire operation - including making the dough, moulding the cookies by hand, assembling, and packaging - takes place on her kitchen table. Jackie kickstarted this women’s enterprise shortly after she graduated from the Tukod Project’s WE-MEAL program, with the goal to reach out and help other women in her community who had been unsuccessful in their applications to the program. She believed that like her, the women in her community only needed a little push to sustain a secure livelihood.

Being an enterprising woman and community leader is a new chapter in Jackie’s life. Before Typhoon Haiyan hit, Jackie mostly stayed at home caring for the household and children while her husband worked as a full-time security guard. Although Jackie only worked sporadically at the time as an on-call examination surveyor, they were making ends meet. After Haiyan however, the family’s finances took a dramatic turn for the worse. The severity of Haiyan left the local economy in complete disarray, and like many others who were impacted, the family’s earnings quickly dried up. Jackie’s husband lost his job and her calls to survey exams stopped. As a mother of two young children, one of whom has a chronic illness, Jackie found herself in a state of constant anxiety about finances, and panicked about how to feed the family and pay for her son’s medication.

To complicate matters, because of the severity and scale of damage, thousands of others just like Jackie were waiting for social assistance. Applying for social housing immediately after the typhoon proved to be a bureaucratic nightmare of endless paperwork and waiting lists. As Jackie explained, *“It was not easy... there were so many processes and in order to get support you needed to be really helpless, or your house had to be totally damaged. There were so many applicants.”* After being put on a waiting list for two years, Jackie’s family was finally assigned a house in the New Kawayan subdivision. While this gave Jackie some relief, it was by no means an end to their financial troubles: *“It was hard when we first arrived because we had no income, I had no job, and everything felt restrictive. The transportation was difficult; there were three of us in the family spending 60 pesos just for transportation, plus our daily needs and sustenance. We also had to buy water. It was difficult.”*

**“...there were three of us in the family spending 60 pesos just for transportation, plus our daily needs and sustenance. We also had to buy water. It was difficult.”**

Eventually, Jackie was able to piece together a string of casual contractual jobs. She also began selling dishwashing soap and laundry detergent in her community as a small side income. The short-term gigs usually only lasted a week or two at a time, but as Jackie explained, at least the family’s basic daily needs were being met.

PICTURED IN BACKGROUND: WE-MEAL entrepreneur, Jackie.

When Jackie first heard about the WE-MEAL program, she was attending a community church service in New Kawayan. Her neighbor gave her an application form and encouraged her to apply to join the program for individual women entrepreneurs. She admits that her initial reaction was skepticism:

**“ It was a first for me. It was like going back to being a student. It was also difficult because every one of us had to speak during the training and I didn’t know anyone at that time. At first I was worried... what if I showed the real me; they might not like me or I might not like them. Although our transportation expenses were being reimbursed by the program, I was concerned what sideline jobs I might miss by going. ”**

But as Jackie attended more WE-MEAL trainings, her apprehensions eased and she started opening up to the other participants. She credits some of this to the interactive and participatory framework that the program used: “The facilitators were a big help because every time they conducted trainings, we were encouraged to get to know others. There were activities where we were instructed to join other tables, instead of just staying where we were seated. We got to know each other better and became friends because of this. The facilitators helped us to create better relationships with each other.”

Eventually, Jackie’s economic circumstances started to shift. Through the bookkeeping and accounting sessions, Jackie gained skills to track the family’s savings and manage her profits: “I used to lump all of my money in one purse so I didn’t know my income, or set aside money for medicine or daily expenses. After we had the training, now I know that everything should be separated.” As she learned to assess the market demands in her community and diversify her enterprise, her sales also started to flourish:

**“ My business has grown. I have more customers in Samar who call me for deliveries. Before I would just deliver retail items by the kilo, but now I deliver bigger quantities. I’m also no longer just selling small retail items; I also raise hogs, poultry, and make my own ice candy. I don’t focus on a single enterprise, so I have other options when one income is not good or steady. Tukod taught us how to become entrepreneurs. I’m in awe at how, in just one year, the project had such a huge impact on us. It was such a big help. ”**






PICTURED ABOVE: WE-MEAL entrepreneur, Jackie and the women from her community who she has shared her learnings from WE-MEAL with to assist them with establishing their own group enterprise.

Jackie also built up the confidence to change her circumstances at home. She started to speak out as she learned to express her views and needs more openly to her husband:

“Tukod gave me strength to talk. Before, when my husband and I would argue, my voice was mellow, but now I show him that I’m brave. I’m empowered. I’m empowered because my income has increased; because I was able to create a livelihood. I now have the guts to speak up because I know what’s right. That’s why I can say I’m empowered.”

Jackie started to think about how she could enable other women in her community to generate an income. This is where the idea for the cookie-making business came in: *“The WE-MEAL program was a big help to me personally, and I wanted to share the benefits with others. My mind has opened because of everything I’ve learned. I kept saying, ‘let’s do this, let’s do that!’ What I’ve learned - the knowledge, the help - I’ve shared.”* On helping her community, she says, *“For me, my community is my investment. I was able to help them, and as a result, they were able to help themselves. I’m not a leader who acts just for myself. Tukod Project is a mission accomplished because it was a big help. Since I was able to help other women, it is also a big help for them too.”*

Even though she shies away from calling herself a leader, Jackie is displaying the qualities of leadership by empowering the women in her community and sharing her knowledge with others.



## 'AGENTS OF CHANGE: Women from Palo Mobilize for Equality'

The Gender Sensitivity Training (GST) Facilitators from Palo, Leyte share a special dynamic that has propelled their advocacy beyond expectations. Since 2018, the seven women from Palo trained through Tukod's *Social Marketing Campaign for Gender Equality (SMC)* have demonstrated remarkable capacity and passion to mobilize around their shared vision for gender equality. What is their secret? A combination of having confidence in themselves, a supportive family, loving what they do, and collaboration.

This particular cohort of GST Facilitators emanates a tangible confidence. They regularly seek out opportunities to convey their messages to audiences in Palo and beyond through dance and theatre. One of their favorite outreach methods is choreographing and performing interpretive dance to raise awareness on gender equality. They clearly have no qualms about speaking to the public or being in the limelight. *"The community theatre really brought us together,"* explains one facilitator, referring to the community theatre arts workshop for gender equality organized by the project. Another adds, *"Filipinos like to have fun, so it's a powerful message when you deliver it through dancing and the arts."*

The Palo facilitators also stand out as going above and beyond because of their ambition. For example, the women have initiated and delivered a number of GST workshops outside of their target area of Palo – even travelling on their own budgets to a penal colony in Abuyog, Leyte to deliver a GST to female and male inmates. On a weekly basis, the women meet to strategize, plan and discuss their ideas for furthering their gender advocacy. One of the facilitators' recounts how the tight-knit group's collective efforts evolved organically, *"We started forming friendships through the Tukod trainings. We began planning activities together, reaching out to communities together. Over time our friendships have become very tight, and even as the project ends, we'll keep working together."*

Since this work started, notable changes have been observed in the women themselves. Although several of the women were active in the community prior to the Tukod Project, for example in facilitating self-enhancement workshops and working with women survivors of violence, they felt they lacked the in-depth understanding of gender issues that they have today.

PICTURED IN BACKGROUND: GST Facilitator from Palo and her supportive husband

One facilitator explained, *“I now have much wider views and I’m more determined than before to work on women’s rights.”* The husband of one facilitator commented on what he observed as a subtle shift in his wife over time. He explained, *“It changed something in her. What I notice about her now is that - while she’s still a wife, still a mother - now she has that thing, what’s that called? - “The Force” [everyone laughs]. The Force is within her.”* One facilitator, who is a practicing Muslim, also saw her awareness of her own position in society shift after she became involved as an advocate:

“ I never thought I would become an advocate for gender equality, because I really didn’t know what it was about. I had heard that household duties were not just the tasks of women, but at the time, I didn’t care. After Tukod, it was really an eye-opener for me. I gained more understanding that each one of us has rights, and each and every one of us deserves respect. In our tradition, our religion, it’s difficult as a woman to explore or to expand our potential. If you are a girl or a woman you have to stay in the home, take care of the kids. But from these workshops, I started to think outside the box. A woman can do something. It has been very useful for me because I cannot only help people in our community, but others also. ”

The Palo women also credit the success of their advocacy on having a supportive environment. They say the support from their husbands has been a key factor enabling them to meet on a regular basis and sustain their advocacy work. The women expressed how important it is that their husbands not only support what they do, but also understand why they engage in gender advocacy work. *“It’s really hard if your husband is not supportive because he might try to say no, you can’t go to these GSTs. That could cause a quarrel. Husbands should attend GSTs too, because then they’ll understand and listen.”*

PICTURED BELOW: Palo GST Facilitators pose with their photo which is displayed in a photo exhibition featuring survivors of Typhoon Haiyan in Cebu



The family demonstrating that they accept the implications of the women's work is just as important. One husband reflected, *"It's important for me to help around the house because it will make the family stronger."* Another facilitator noted, with great pleasure, *"Sometimes my husband is the one cleaning the house now because I'm busy or tired. I wake up and the house is clean!"* The facilitators share these shifts in their households with other women and men to show what is possible, but also to show that they are putting their own teachings into practice. *"When we go out to connect with others, we can lead by example through how we live our own lives. We can show others that our husbands are like this, so they know it's possible."*

Finally, the Palo women all demonstrate an unwavering passion for empowering others. One facilitator describes it as a sense of purpose that comes from a 'love' for what she does: *"I do it out of the love of being in service. In spite of the difficulties, we're still willing to do it. If you have that love, no matter what challenges you face, you can continue doing something for the betterment of others. It makes you see the importance of your existence."* Or as another put it: *"Being an empowered woman to me means being able to follow your heart. If you are able to do what you love, you can pursue it, whatever it is."* This 'love' or sense of purpose is perhaps another key factor that makes the women from Palo want to sustain the momentum of their gender advocacy work, even after the Tukod Project has ended. Moving forward, the women are now strategizing about how to collaborate with others to expand their advocacy beyond Palo and Leyte. They have been actively involved in the Tukod Project's recently launched women's network *"Advocates for Gender Equality: A Network for Transformation" (AGENT)*. The objective is that AGENT will sustain the momentum started under the project by connecting women representatives from the eight target areas in Leyte, Samar, and Eastern Samar through a common platform for gender equality advocacy.

**“ We want this network to be a channel for women – and men – so that they can do more for themselves. We can help them to discover who they are, and how to find empowerment,” explained one of the facilitators. As the women nod in agreement, another adds: “There are still many challenges in our municipality, but we are stronger because we are many. I envision us to be a solid group, who can assist women in difficult circumstances and serve as a voice for women who cannot express themselves. Through this, more women like us will be empowered.”**



PICTURED: GST Facilitators from Palo interviewed by the media about their gender advocacy at a photo exhibition featuring survivors of Typhoon Haiyan in Cebu.

# ANNEX - ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

**CECI CONCERN Tukod Project.** Gender Sensitivity Training Manual. 2nd Edition (March 2019).

Available in English ([https://www.dropbox.com/sh/r89mr1gh7xnnzed/AADFQw-o7xS4E\\_EpLvi-joScta?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/sh/r89mr1gh7xnnzed/AADFQw-o7xS4E_EpLvi-joScta?dl=0)) and Tagalog ([https://www.dropbox.com/sh/r89mr1gh7xnnzed/AADFQw-o7xS4E\\_EpLvi-joScta?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/sh/r89mr1gh7xnnzed/AADFQw-o7xS4E_EpLvi-joScta?dl=0)).

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Picture 1): WE-MEAL entrepreneurs hold a power pose during a leadership training energizer activity in Tolosa Leyte. Picture 2): Palo GST Facilitators performing a dance they have choreographed to raise awareness on gender equality during an International Women's Month performance.

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