



***Supporting Women's Economic Empowerment
in the Philippines***

Annual Report

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ACRONYMS and ABBREVIATIONS

AWP	Annual Work Plan
BDS	Business Development Service
BFAR	Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources
CSF	Common Service Facility
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DA	Department of Agriculture
DAR	Department of Agrarian Reform
DOLE	Department of Labor and Employment
DOST	Department of Science and Technology
DSWD	Department of Social Welfare and Development
DTI	Department of Trade and Industry
ECHOsi	Empowering Communities with Hope and Opportunities
FDA	Food and Drugs Administration
FNRI	Food and Nutrition Research Institute
FY	Fiscal Year
GAC	Global Affairs Canada
GAD	Gender and Development
GEM	Global Entrepreneurship Monitor
GMP	Good Manufacturing Practice
GOP	Government of the Philippines
GREAT Women	Gender Responsive Economic Actions for the Transformation of Women
GGRVCA	Green and Gender Responsive Value Chain Analysis
HACCP	Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points
IAC	Inter- agency Committee
IRMD	Information, Resource and Management Division
MCW	Magna Carta of Women
MED	Monitoring and Evaluation Division
MSME	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NATCCO	National Confederation of Cooperatives
NCG	National Convergence Group
OSHC	Occupational Safety and Health Center
PDAD	Policy Development and Advocacy Division
PCW	Philippine Commission on Women
PIP	Project Implementation Plan
PMF	Performance Measurement Framework
PMO	Project Management Office
PSC	Project Steering Committee
PTRI	Philippine Textile Research Institute
RDC	Regional Development Council
RGMS- DTI	Resource Generation and Management Services- Department of Trade and Industry
ROG- DTI	Regional Operations Group- Department of Trade and Industry
SET- UP	Small Enterprise Technology Upgrade Program
TA	Technical Assistance
WEE	Women's Economic Empowerment
WME	Women's Micro- enterprises/ Women Micro Entrepreneur

1 Project Information

1.1 Project Name and Number

Supporting Women's Economic Empowerment Project in the Philippines
(2014-2020); Project Number D-000305

1.2 CEA/Lead Executing Agency

Philippine Commission on Women (PCW)

1.3 Recipient Country Partner

Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GOP)

1.4 Financial Information

Canadian Grant: CAD\$8.0 Million
PCW Counterpart: CAD\$1.26 Million in cash and kind

1.5 Actual Start Date: November 2014 (MOU signed)

Actual End Date: December 2020

1.6 Contact Information

(Ms.) Emmeline L. Verzosa
Executive Director
Philippine Commission on Women
1145 J.P. Laurel St., San Miguel, Manila 1005 Philippines
Telephone: (+632)7351654 ext. 126, (+632)7354955
Mobile: +639178664828

2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Supporting Women's Economic Empowerment Project in the Philippines, also called the WEE Project or GREAT Women-2, was conceptualized to assist women micro entrepreneurs in the food, woven textiles, and home-style sectors to successfully and sustainably grow their businesses. It builds from the lessons of the GREAT Women Project implemented in 2007-2013 by PCW in partnership with national agencies with economic/enterprise development mandate and a number of local government units. The tasks of building women's entrepreneurial skills and scaling up their enterprises remain huge and this is where the WEE Project will focus on for the next five years (2015-2020). It aims to improve competitiveness and sustainability of women's micro enterprises and at the same time improve the enabling environment for women's economic empowerment.

The FY1 work plan included the following major activities: a) establishment of project mechanisms at the national and regional level, b) developing partnerships not only with the four major government departments and ECHOSi Foundation but with private sector groups (i.e., SMEs and large corporations, industry associations and social enterprise organizations, c) identification of WME and SME targets for assistance from the regions, including profiling and database management development, d) initial capacity building for enablers from government and private sector, e) initial technical assistance for WMEs/SMEs (entrepreneur level), and f) identification of policies affecting women's businesses.

For this period, implementation was on-track in achieving the project mechanisms at the national and regional level (Component 1200) with initial capacity building for members of the NCG and RCGs conducted. The project generated initial commitments to partner with the private sector which included a large corporation, social enterprises in the Visayas, a federation of cooperatives and a micro finance institution, and two industry associations in the retail sector.

There was minimal activity conducted at the enterprise/entrepreneur level since the identification of WME/SME enrollees came in the last quarter (Component 1100). Hence, the targeted results for the WMEs did not happen during the year, except for the regions that conducted the value chain analysis workshops with WMEs. In particular, these initial sessions exposed the participating WMEs to the value chain framework, their enterprise potentials since they would be looking at market-based entrepreneurship and gender issues and concern for the environment. Similarly, the third component (Component 1300) suffered setbacks as delays in hiring project staff happened only in the third quarter and this affected implementation of the plan for the year.

The highlights of first year accomplishment were:

- a. Established project mechanisms: At present, there is a functioning national convergence (NCG) group represented by all partners, and 14 regional convergence groups that have met for action planning and targeting.
- b. Developed framework/ tools to guide implementation. The NCG adopted the women's enterprise competitiveness pathway, competency development framework, criteria for selection of women entrepreneurs, and six priority industry clusters to guide project intervention.

- c. Generated the initial list of WME/SME Targets. A total of 1,897 women entrepreneurs and their enterprises were included in the initial list from 14 regions nationwide. Of this number, 1,224 (64%) were into processed food production and 673 (36%) were into non-food production.
- d. Conducted capacity building for partners. Five (5) batches of green and gender responsive value chain analysis (GGRVCA) were completed. This was followed by five (5) roll-out batches in regions with participation from 269 WMEs.
- e. Agency work and financial plan approved. Initial funds released to DTI Reg. IV-A to support implementation of their approved workplan. Meanwhile, revised work plans for ECHOSi, the DOST-Philippine Textile Research Institute (PTRI) and the DA-PhilMech were facilitated.
- f. Initial private sector engagement. Initial commitments to participate in project activities as implementers or business development service providers were: Legend Hotels International Corporation (LHIC) in Metro Manila, ANTHILL and Holistic Coalition of the Willing (HoliCow) in Cebu, Philippine Amalgamated Supermarket Association (PAGASA) and Philippine Retailers Association (PRA) in Metro Manila, the National Confederation of Cooperatives (NATCCO) and ASA Philippines, a microfinance institution with WME members.
- g. First market-match forum conducted. Following the demand-led strategy, the ECHOSi led the conduct of the forum which brought together some 100 women SMEs, corporations and industry associations to identify potential buyer-supplier arrangements and disseminate information on models of inclusive business in the value/supply chain.

Seven major challenges were experienced by the project. These included the following: (a) the need to level off different perspectives of project partners and engage program officers of partners in the region, apart from the GAD focal; (b) Evolving project mechanisms and layers of implementation. Coordination took time given the monitoring and reporting lines from PCW to national offices to regional offices. There were also confusions reported in some regions regarding the RCG leadership and membership from which lists of enrolled WMEs are lodged; (c) the wide coverage of project becomes a challenge as it hinders “quick wins” since the spread of WMEs is wide across all regions; (d) While the private sector organizations are quickly identifying product needs as potential buyers, the readiness of enrolled WMEs in terms of formal registrations and capacity to supply products has yet to be established at this stage of the project implementation. In addition, adjusting the partner agencies’ involvement to address certain demands of buyers come in conflict with internal agency processes that deter faster response to the emerging project needs; and (e) Difficulties in hiring personnel. The recruitment of project personnel was experienced the entire year both by PMO and PMT. This is due mainly on the limited number of applicants who would qualify in the position.

To resolve the concern on providing immediate responses to identified markets’ needs, Levels 2 and 3 enterprises from the regions with most number of WME enrollees will be prioritized. Level 1 enterprise will remain under each partner agency’s “incubation”.

In consideration of the challenges and to catch-up with implementation for the coming year, the project will: (a) develop the WME lead database; (b) engage more large companies and social enterprises to help in the RCGs; (c) conduct market encounter and test market matching approaches; (d) enhance existing technical assistance and learning modules with WEE core messages and tools; (e) continue to equip the government and BDS partners on relevant market and product design trends; and (f) start the conduct of discussions on relevant policies and regulations affecting women’s businesses.

3 PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND CONTEXT

3.1 Rationale

The Supporting Women's Economic Empowerment Project in the Philippines, also called the WEE Project or GREAT Women-2, was conceptualized to assist women micro entrepreneurs in the food, woven textiles, and home-style sectors to successfully and sustainably grow their businesses. It builds from the lessons of the GREAT Women Project implemented in 2007-2013 by PCW in partnership with 19 national agencies with economic/enterprise development mandate and about 40 local government units in eight provinces, which served as pilot areas. The first GREAT Women Project focused on enhancing the enabling environment for women's economic empowerment through capacity and partnership building.¹ This project allowed PCW and partner agencies to build their capacities to develop, improve and apply gender analysis tools to their respective policy and program focus (i.e., environment management, protected areas, public health insurance, occupational safety and health, technical and vocational skills development, science and technology, microfinance and SME development). By doing so, a core group of officers became the gender and WEE champions and emerged as an important resource of the agencies. They lead in the review and development of gender responsive policies, programs and services that facilitated efforts to address gender issues. Improvements in the quality and use of gender budgets were noted. PCW as an institution has advanced itself in the policy discussions of women's entrepreneurship and livelihoods because of the project and it established partnerships with social enterprise organizations and business groups.

GREAT Women-1 yielded some convergence and partnership models for government and private sector groups to deliver assistance to women. In particular, the product development clinics for WMEs in food processing and woven textiles brought together product designers and specialists in retail markets with national and local agencies to work on design improvements, raw materials and technology sourcing, branding, pricing and costing, and marketing for niche, specialty or artisan markets. The outcomes were sustained as some of the agencies replicated these models and other funding agencies became interested to support the GREAT Women brand and platform in ASEAN.

The tasks of building women's entrepreneurial skills and scaling up their enterprises are huge. A big number of microenterprises remained unstable, vulnerable to competition, changes in trends, disasters or any one of the slightest economic shocks. Many women owners were unaware of the need to continuously improve their products and enterprise operations and look into new markets. They need assistance to achieve new levels of growth. While there is a national directive for inclusive growth, more and better convergence approaches among government, private sector, and business development providers should be pursued to reach out to the country's microenterprises, especially those owned by women.

¹ GREAT Women Project stands for Gender Responsive Economic Actions for the Transformation of Women implemented by the Philippine Commission on Women and at least 19 national government agencies (NGAs) and about 50 local government units (LGUs) to make economic governance more gender-responsive. These agencies and LGUs reached over 10,000 women micro entrepreneurs to access various business development services.

3.2 Context

Women are key players in the MSME sector either as business owners or workers of small enterprises. The statistics do not even include thousands more in the informal economy where businesses or income generating activities remained unregistered, thus, unreached by government assistance. From the perspective of the value chain of a specific product, one finds many women-owned enterprises, formal or informal, at the lower end of the chain – as primary producers, suppliers of semi-processed products or parts of a finished product produced elsewhere. The difficulties to scale-up or move in the next stages of the chain include: (a) the lack of understanding of market trends and needs, (b) the lack of financial and other enterprise management skills, (c) inability to generate additional capital for business improvements, (d) inability to make production more efficient with technology, (e) inability to comply with required registration fees and standards for licensing, especially for food products, and (f) lack of access to business development programs/services.

Women owners/managers of businesses often face conflicts in family and business responsibilities as they are mostly in the child-rearing age groups. They, too, serve as caregivers to elder family members. For some, the choice to grow the business is sacrificed because of these roles. In other cases, the control of the business is given to the spouse when conflicts in business time and family responsibilities arise. Other issues emerge especially when the business reaches relative success and scaling-up becomes the choice of the woman. For example, decision-making on how the business earnings would be used becomes an issue with the spouse; problems on capital for expansion will arise if she has not established credit worthiness in formal lending facilities. In growing businesses, the entrepreneurs need to be exposed to new environments of suppliers, semi-processors or sub-contractors, standards of consistent production quality, packaging/labeling and branding, distributors and traders, and new outlets that she needs to help her grow her business.

In empowering the woman micro entrepreneur, she has to develop her own vision for the business and decide if she wants to grow her business so that it continues to support her personal and family goals. She needs assistance not only to improve her business skills but also to allow her to participate and contribute to good governance and sound environment management in any business environment (local or national). With value chain development and competitiveness framework as guides, the convergence approach to assisting WMEs would provide a range of assistance for business and self-empowerment, enabling the woman entrepreneur to make better and informed decisions.

The GREAT Women Project-2 is reaching out to more regions in the Philippines through a mechanism at the national and sub-national (regional and provincial) agencies from public and private sectors. The national and regional convergence mechanisms and processes aimed to pinpoint the concentration of WMEs in priority industry clusters.

3.3 Expected Outcomes

As shown in **Figure 1** below, the project intended to contribute to the goal of job generation and inclusive growth in the Philippines. Its ultimate outcome is “improved economic empowerment of women microentrepreneurs and their workers.” Two intermediate outcomes are identified to lead to the ultimate outcome, and these are: (a) improved competitiveness and sustainability of women’s microenterprises, and (b) improved enabling

environment for WEE. To achieve these intermediate outcomes, the project would be engaging government and private sector agencies or institutions directly providing assistance/services on enterprise development. Four immediate outcomes are identified to lead to the intermediate outcomes – two to correspond to the business side while another two to respond to improving the enabling environment side. The major activities of the project are: provision of technical assistance, trainings and other capacity building activities, coordination activities for convergence of services, and activities to support policy development.

**Figure 1. The Logic Model:
Supporting Women Micro Entrepreneurs to Improve Women’s Economic Empowerment in the Philippines**

GOAL Contribute to job generation and inclusive growth			
<u>Ultimate Outcome</u> Improved economic empowerment of women micro entrepreneurs and their workers			
<u>Intermediate Outcome 1</u> Improved competitiveness and sustainability of women’s micro enterprises		<u>Intermediate Outcome 2</u> Improved enabling environment for women’s economic empowerment	
<u>Immediate Outcome 1110</u> Increased capacity of WMEs to produce and market high quality, environmentally friendly products	<u>Immediate Outcome 1120</u> Improved entrepreneurial management capacity of WMEs	<u>Immediate Outcome 1210</u> Improved coordination and service delivery among stakeholders committed to WEE to implement and monitor gender and environment sensitive P/P/S	<u>Immediate Outcome 1220</u> Improved capacity of government institutions and women’s businesses to enhance the policy and regulatory environment for WEE
<u>Activities-Outputs</u> WMEs received technical assistance, Improved coordination and service delivery among stakeholders committed to WEE, Improved coordination of government institutions and women’s businesses to enhance policy and regulatory environment for WEE			

With this logic model, a major challenge for the project is to improve coordination and service delivery mechanisms among the agencies/institutions to address the needs of women and their enterprises. To do this, the project intends to bring the agencies to a convergence mode, evolving some working models in selected industry or geographic context. The project intends to support existing government and partnership mechanisms in the regions such as the regional development councils, the local government’s investments and enterprise promotions desks, the agency’s GAD focal and economic development committees, and others relevant to implementing activities in sub-national levels.

Capacity building for enablers in government and private sector to strengthen the gender analysis in value chain development with inputs on greening practices or making the value chain more environmentally sustainable. These activities will be supported by project funds and should lead to commitments in specific programs, services and resources of the agency. Hence, resources from implementing partner agencies, that are main actors in enterprise development, are expected to support the project. These resources included actual delivery of programs and services (i.e., trainings on various business development themes, customized design and links to manufacturers of processing equipment, transportation or

travel expenses for officers to participate in various project activities, or support to the establishment of improved production facility for a group enterprise.

Similarly, private sector partners are expected to contribute significantly to assistance on product development for specific markets: niche, artisan, specialty or high end and matching WMEs with new markets. As such, the project intends to engage more social enterprise organizations, product developers, designers, associations of businesses, even academic institutions and SME owners themselves who are willing to implement similar activities to bring more WMEs into their supply chain. As cited earlier, PCW's main role would be to orchestrate, develop partnerships and bring these agencies and private sector groups together for assistance to achieve the immediate outcomes of improved skills/capacities of WMEs, improved quality of women's products/enterprises, and improved coordination of services and participation in policy enhancements.

About 12,000 women microentrepreneurs in six industry clusters are targeted by the project. These industry clusters include: coffee, cacao, processed fruit and nuts, coconut coir, processed rubber and tourism support industries that include gifts, decors and housewares (GDH), fashion accessories, handicrafts, furniture and furnishings. In consideration of growth potentials, other WMEs in the food processing and services sectors maybe included especially when these are in support of tourism. A special focus on green businesses within the industry clusters' supply chain will likewise be targeted for assistance.²To a large extent, value chain development would allow the project to expand beyond women's microenterprises as direct beneficiaries and include SMEs or some large corporations who would be willing to implement 'inclusive business' approaches that can benefit their core business and, at the same time, the microenterprises in their supply chain. In this approach, the SMEs and large corporations can be considered as intermediaries as they will be included in selected activities of the project that can facilitate achievement of immediate or intermediate outcomes.

3.4 Canadian Engagement

For the period, one identified engagement for the project was that of the Canadian Executive Service Organization (CESO), which has been a long time partner of DTI. CESO and its volunteer advisors in business (especially the manufacturing fields) signed an agreement with DTI Region IV-A and will be part of the resource of the project under Component 1100. Initial referrals to partner with other projects supported by the Government of Canada, such as the Restoring, Empowering and Protecting Livelihood (REAP) Project in Ilo-ilo are being made through the Project Team Leader. In addition, the project has identified at least one activity that will target a mission to facilitate trade for a selected group of WMEs and their products with Canadian trade counterparts. The primary aim of this mission would be to explore and promote cross border trade between the Philippines and Canada with a focus on women's businesses.

²The Magna Carta for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (RA9501) defines MSMEs as any business activity or enterprise, whether single proprietorship, cooperative, partnership or corporation, engaged in industry, agribusiness, trade and services categorized based on total assets, as follows: microenterprises have assets of no more than Php3.0 Million, small enterprises have Php3,000,001 to Php15,000,000, medium enterprises have Php15,000,001 to Php100,000,000 and large enterprises have above Php100,000,000.

4 Operations

4.1 Implementation

The FY1 work plan included the following major activities: a) establishment of project mechanisms at the national and regional level, b) developing partnerships not only with the four major government departments and ECHOSi Foundation but with private sector groups (i.e., SMEs and large corporations, industry associations and social enterprise organizations, c) identification of WME and SME targets for assistance from the regions, including profiling and database management development, d) initial capacity building for enablers from government and private sector, e) initial technical assistance for WMEs/SMEs (entrepreneur level), and f) identification of policies affecting women's businesses.

For this period, implementation was on-track in achieving the project mechanisms at the national and regional level (Component 1200). In addition, initial capacity building for members of the NCG and RCGs were centered on the gender and green value chain analysis. The project made initial results in partnerships with the private sector, specifically establishing initial commitments from several large corporations, social enterprises in the Visayas, federation of cooperatives and a major player in micro finance, and two industry associations in the retail sector.

There was minimal activity conducted at the enterprise/entrepreneur level since the identification of WME/SME enrollees came in the last quarter (Component 1100). Hence, the targeted results for the WMEs did not happen during the year, except for the regions that conducted the value chain analysis workshops with WMEs. In particular, these initial sessions exposed the participating WMEs to the value chain framework, their enterprise potentials since they would be looking at market-based entrepreneurship and gender issues and concern for the environment. Similarly, the third component (Component 1300) suffered setbacks as delays in hiring project staff happened only in the third quarter and this affected implementation of the plan for the year.

The following are highlights of activities implemented during the year:

- a) Established project mechanisms: The articulation of support to the project were made by heads of major agency partners (DTI, DOST, DA, DOLE), including the designation of representatives to the PSC and the National Convergence Group (NCG), co-chaired by PCW and DTI. Likewise, expressions of support to the project were generated from the Regional Development Councils (14 regions); and the same number of regions created their respective regional convergence groups (RCGs) to conduct initial action planning and value chain development orientations (refer to **Annex Table 1-A** for details of RCG distribution).
- b) Developed framework/ tools to guide implementation: The NCG facilitated the adoption of the project's competitiveness pathway, WME competency development framework, criteria for selection of women entrepreneurs, and identification of six priority industry clusters. The PSC approved the tools for the project.
- c) Generated initial list of WME/SME Targets. About 1,897 women entrepreneurs and their enterprises were included in the initial list from 14 regions nationwide. Of this number, 1,224 (64%) were into processed food production and 673 (36%) were into

non-food production (see **Annex Table 1-B** for details of enrolled WME distribution by region).

- d) Conducted capacity building for partners. Five (5) batches of green and gender responsive value chain analysis (GGRVCA) trainings were conducted for regional facilitators. These led to specific regional action plans for roll-out of the GGRVCA in selected industry clusters. As of March 31, 2016, five (5) regions conducted the roll-out with participation from 269 WMEs. Other partners/agencies which participated in the GGRVCA and its roll-out batches in the region were: the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), the National Confederation of Cooperatives (NATCCO) and selected cooperative members.
- e) Developed partners' work and financial plans developed. PCW approved and released initial funds to DTI Reg. IV-A to support implementation of their approved workplan. Meanwhile, the work plans for ECHOSi, the DOST-Philippine Textile Research Institute (PTRI) and the DA-PhilMech were undergoing revisions.
- f) Engaged initial private sector organizations. Commitments from private sector groups to participate in project activities as implementers, business development service providers, or potential buyers were generated. These include the following: Legend Hotels International Corporation (LHIC) in Metro Manila, ANTHILL and Holistic Coalition of the Willing (HoliCow) in Cebu, Philippine Amalgamated Supermarket Association (PAGASA) and Philippine Retailers Association (PRA) in Metro Manila with members in major regional centers, the National Confederation of Cooperatives (NATCCO) and ASA Philippines, a microfinance institution with WME members.
- g) Conducted the first market-match forum. Following the demand-led strategy, the ECHOSi led the conduct of the forum which brought together 177 women SMEs, corporations, industry associations and partner agencies to identify potential buyer-supplier arrangements and disseminate information on product standards of retail stores, social media (facebook) advertising, government procurement as possible market, and models of inclusive business in the value and supply chain.
- h) Design of market encounter activities. From the initial discussions with Legend Villas, the design of market-encounter activities evolved. The encounter intends to bring together a number of WMEs/SMEs and an institutional buyer. This design will be tested in April 2016.

Annex Table 2 (Accomplishment Report: 01 April 2015 to 31 March 2016) is a matrix of detailed activities and outputs by component to show how each activity contributes to the targeted/ planned results of the project.

4.2 Management issues

The following are summarized issues, challenges and the adjustments made in project implementation during the FY. 2015-2016.

4.2.1 Major challenges for the year

4.2.1.1 Leveling-off of different perspectives of project partners. FY1 was the project setting-up period and challenges emerged as part of the learning phase for most partner representatives who are new to the project. The concerns/issues for the period were:

- a) The design of the project includes a work package to implement actual assistance (or enterprise development) services to women entrepreneurs (micro and SME level). This is different from the previous GWP-1 involving mainly building for national and local enablers. Understanding the objectives, performance indicators and targeting for the project were discussed lengthily in various venues. The orientations had core messages that explain how the project would be different from existing programs of agencies, apart from being focused on women-owned and managed enterprises.
- b) For government partners, PCW-PMO needed to involve not only the agency's head office focal teams, who were mainly members of the GAD Focal System, but also the technical teams of relevant agency programs, especially, those in regional operations. The project mainstreams gender in economic areas, thus, more program officers (technical and GAD focal) need to be engaged at the start. In addition, as convergence strategies are fleshed out, questions on who gets the credit in a "convergence" had to be clarified. Thus, the project needs to strengthen its tracking and monitoring of interventions per agency and identify the results emerging from each intervention.
- c) For business and private sector organizations, the engagement in the project needs to be clear as to how these groups will benefit in terms of their business and their stakeholders. For example, the Legends Villas expressed their interest to source out fresh food and native delicacies for their hotel requirements direct from project enrolled WMEs to possibly cut down food costs (usually charged by middle traders) and support the growth of women microenterprises as well. The company's preferences are for WMEs who are formally registered, can issue receipts, and can regularly supply.

Three types of possible private sector partners are emerging – one as business development service (BDS) providers, another as SME buyers who could be enrolled in the project and thus avail of assistance, too, and third, a combination of both. In the 'buyers' or market category are the large companies (homegrown or multi-nationals) that can serve as institutional buyers for our WMEs/SMEs.

- d) The positive response from the initial set of private sector organizations, required faster and quality response from the project. Quick action and sustained communications with the private sector partner should prevail. Oftentimes, response or quick action becomes difficult since the project had to deal with government procedures.

4.2.1.2 Evolving project mechanisms and layers of implementation. The role of PCW as a policy advisory agency largely limited its capacity to directly provide services, thus, its reliance with government partner agencies to pursue the project. The mechanism that evolved were national and regional convergence groups identified in the Project Implementation Plan (PIP). Activating the regional convergence groups alone, took long as department orders would come from heads of offices. Similarly, the support from the regional development councils (RDCs) had to be solicited as recommended in the regional orientations conducted by PCW. With these levels of implementing teams, the following other concerns emerged:

- Longer coordination lines from PCW to national offices to regional offices;
- Confusion in RCG leadership members in some regions;
- Delays in identifying WME targets for the reported list of WMEs enrolled in the project; and
- As expressed by the DTI Project Coordinator, the emerging need would be to create Provincial Convergence Groups which are not in the approved PIP

4.2.1.3 Prioritization of project targets. The initial effort to establish regional convergence in all 16 regions posed expectations that the project direction is for a nationwide coverage. While this may help in achieving the 12,000 WME target, it may also hamper interventions to 'quick wins' since the spread is wide across all regions. Wide coverage may also entail additional structures at the ground that could lead to lengthy and circuitous processes as already emerging in (b) above. The need is for a more strategic prioritization of geographical coverage to fast track interventions without necessarily creating more layers or steps in the process.

4.2.1.4 Expectations from facilitators of value chain development (VCD). After the series of trainings of national and regional partners on GGRVCA, the roll-out at the regions were led by DTI. Some concerns were on the following:

- Limited involvement of trained facilitators due to their lack of confidence and experience on the value chain analysis;
- Differences in delivery of core messages of gender and greening modules during the roll-out;
- Level of participation of WMEs during the roll-out;
- With multiple products of WMEs, actual facilitation of their respective value chains may need expertise from other partners.

For the immediate term, the roll-out batches may specialize on specific commodities or product groups so that intensive analysis of opportunities can be generated.

4.2.1.5 Challenges in implementing demand-focused strategies. The mid-term report was said to be very "supply driven" which prompted the question on whether "the demand for priority products are being considered by the partners" in implementing project activities. Given these, PCW-PMO began conducting discussions with large companies and industry associations to determine their product needs and a few committed to try products from WMEs. The emerging challenges are:

- The need to adjust the pace of agencies' involvement to address certain demands of a buyer (i.e., identify WME/SME suppliers of products). Often, conflicts in agency priorities prevent the project focal persons to move at a faster pace. Related to this, access to the WME clients become important in responding to buyer-supplier matching.

- 4.2.1.6 Difficulties in hiring project personnel. This was experienced the entire year, which affected the pace of recruitment for both PMO and DTI-PMT. The basic difficulty is the lack of qualified applicants with project management experience.
- 4.2.1.7 Inactive agency partner/focal persons. DOLE-BWSC focal persons were inactive in project activities since July 2016. As a result, the agency's participation in RCGs was also disrupted for many regions. Some regions like Reg. 3, 4A and 5 had DOLE regional offices represented in recent activities like GGRVCA roll-out. For initial project activities, the presence of DOLE attached agencies were noted and these included TESDA and OSHC. There are initial discussions with OSHC on integrating module/s on occupational safety and health in the technical assistance for WMEs under Component 1000. In addition, several other agencies became active in the initial roll-out of the GGRVCA and these are the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) and Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR).

4.2.2 Managing for results

In summary, the challenges cited are telling the project management staff to facilitate the following major operational priorities:

- a. Managing the layers of implementing mechanism is addressed through close coordination between PCW and DTI through the project management team. Any requests, reports and activities involving RCGs should go through the DTI-IVA project management team.
- b. The working arrangement is that DTI-IVA and its PMT will oversee all RCG operations while PCW-PMO will evolve and implement the private-sector led partnerships, apart from its major responsibility of overseeing the project in its entirety.
- c. Development of standard core messages in local and national orientations; including the compilation of FAQs as part of the project information materials; standardization of training modules on the GGRVCA and identifying a pool of trainers along these areas would be an immediate priority of PMO.
- d. In addition, PMO's priority will be assistance to partner agencies and private organizations to finalize their respective work plans with a demand-led approach (i.e., PTRI, PhilMECH, DOST central offices, FNRI, ITDI, ECHOSi and NATCCO). The target is to download support to these agencies to implement assistance to RCGs and their enrolled Levels 1 and 2 WMEs.
- e. Tracking interventions and monitoring of results at the regional/local and WME level would be part of the data management system led by DTI-IVA and DTI-MIS. This is closely coordinated with PCW-PMO and IRMD.
- f. PMO's other priority would be to ensure that gender responsiveness are being integrated in different activities of partners. This would definitely require mobilizing additional members of the PCW-TSD gender resource pool.

4.2.3 Risk management

In general, the project's risk profile did not change and the following year is expected to remain the same except for some effects of the May 2016 national elections. There would be expected changes in the agencies' top leadership, the appointments of whom would depend on the incoming president by June-July 2016. To ensure continuation of activities despite changes in agency leadership, the department orders and circulars issued by the current Department Secretaries in support of the project would remain in effect. To complement these circulars, additional project briefings would be conducted for the new agency leaders as soon as opportunities arise. The updated risk response matrix as of March 2016 is presented in **Annex Table 3**.

4.2.4 Monitoring and management of crosscutting themes

As of this period, monitoring of crosscutting themes is lodged in the monitoring of activities and outputs of various work packages. Since many of the work packages have started implementation in the last two quarters of FY1, the environment, gender and governance themes were integrated in the design and delivery of regional orientations, GGRVCA modules, and targeting of enterprises. In particular, the criteria for selection of target entrepreneurs was clear on female ownership and percentage of required female workers if the enterprise is male-owned.

The partners were also oriented on the project's performance measures in the form of a review workshop conducted solely on understanding the PMF (May 2015) and another review with the PCW Divisions. The inputs from partners were discussed with the GAC GE Monitor and Project Team Leader and subsequent clarifications were made with the NCG members. As a result, the NCG members were leveled-off on the indicators and agreements were made to develop a complementary profile of indicators in terms of measures i.e., definitions and minimum targets (**Annex Table 4** presents a summary of clarifications made on the PMF).

4.2.5 Project governance

Two tracks of implementation are emerging in FY1, one led by the DTI-IVA project management team overseeing the implementation of 14 RCGs and another for the private-sector led partnerships, which the PCW-PMO oversees. Agencies that decide to take in separate WME/SME enrolment, apart from those in the RCG list, would follow the same profiling, validating and data management system to record interventions and results.

Among partners, several convergent activities were developing during the period. For example, ECHOSi, ANTHILL and SMEs who are into woven textiles are being engaged in the PTRI planned activities to integrate business skilling and market development. In addition, ECHOSi currently partners with DOST for a number of WMEs to be assisted in GREAT Women Platform. This platform brings together selected women's businesses either for development of products under the GREAT Women Brand or for product development for specific niche, specialty or artisan markets.

PMO takes charge of the overall project monitoring and evaluation for all components. In addition, the PMO implements work packages under Component 1200 in coordination/collaboration with the NCG and different PCW Divisions (such as IRMD, MED, PDAD and TSD).

4.3 Fund Status and Explanation of Variances in Financial Report

The PCW received its first cash advance (CA) from Global Affairs Canada on May 5, 2015 in the amount of CAD500,000 or Php17,414,965.76 at an exchange rate of Php 34.83 to CAD1. The second CA was received on February 1, 2016 in the amount of CAD1,000,000.00 or Php35,613,981.30 at an exchange rate of Php 35.61 to CAD1. Thus, a total of CAD1.5 Million (Php53,028,947.06) was available as grant fund to implement FY1 work plan.

As of March 31, 2016, some 35.25% of the total grant for the year amounting to CAD528,695.02 (equivalent to Php18,431,830.96) were used to implement the setting-up activities. Most expenses in the first three quarters of the first year were on establishing mechanisms, initial capacity development activities and developing partnership work plans. It was only the lead partner DTI, which had an approved work plan and the corresponding release of support fund.

Table 1 showed that the five work packages with implemented activities and significant fund utilization were as follows:

- Project administration (WP1310) with CAD138,319.89 (or 26% of total) for the year; the amount was spent on PMO staff salaries and benefits, and initial trainings and participation in external activities;
- Strengthening capacities of partners for WEE (WP1221) with CAD123,717.89 (or 23% of total) for regional orientation and the conduct of training on GGRVCA;
- Assessment, validation and profiling of target WMEs (WP1111) with CAD83,881.71 (or 16% of total); the amount was downloaded to DTI as part of their work plan for FY1;
- Improvement of coordination of partners in service delivery at national and sub-national (WP1211) with CAD\$65,382.57 to cover costs of regional orientations, field visits, and initial action planning workshops for partners organized and attended by PMO;
- Capacity development on entrepreneurial management skills (1121) with CAD36,582.54 (or 7% of total); the amount was downloaded to DTI-IVA to support initial activities of RCGs.

Major reasons for underutilization of funds for FY1 were as follows: (a) fund support to the partner agencies such as DOST, DA, PTRI, ECHOSi and PhilMech could not be released due to revisions on their work and financial plans; (b) the second release for DTI's fund support requires submission of liquidation of the first release; (c) implementation of activities in Component 1000 work packages are dependent on the needs of WME targets and the list came only in the last quarter of FY1; and (d) delays in recruitment of project staff and the learning process took about 2-3 months for the new team to gel and pursue major activities for the project.

Budget forecast for the first semester of 2016-2017 totals CAD1.188 Million and this will be used largely for support to partners such as DOST Central Office, FNRI, ITDI and PTRI, DA selected regions and PHILMECs, and ECHOSi. These agencies' budgets are charged mainly in Component 1000 specifically to provide technical assistance and services to the enrolled WMEs.

The processing of fund support are expected to commence immediately after the revised work plans were approved and corresponding agreements were signed within April-May 2016. In addition, the first semester budget will cover PCW-PMO's implementation of demand-led activities with the private sector (i.e., market encounters and inclusive business forums), activities to strengthen capacities of partners for WEE, and support to policy review via consultations and roundtable discussions on issues of food safety certifications, registration and related business development requirements.

To continue the activities of the partners in various components and those planned for implementation under Component 1200, the second semester budget forecast would reach CAD1.283 Million as shown in the same table.

Table 1. Fund Status and Budget Forecast: 2015-2016

Line Item	Item No.	Original Full DFATD Budgeted Contribution (A)	Total Actual Cost to Date as of March 31, 2016 (B)	Budget Remaining as of Last Semester (A-B)	FORECAST & ACTUAL FOR CURRENT FY April 1 to Sept 30	FORECAST & ACTUAL FOR CURRENT FY 2nd Semester, Oct 1 to Mar 31	Total Forecast and Actual for Current Fiscal Year	First Semester of FY 2016-2017
1000 Improvement in competitiveness and sustainability of Women's micro enterprises								
1100 Increased capacity of WMEs to produce and market high quality, environmentally friendly products								
Assessment, Validation and profiling of target WME Groups	1111	136,363.64	83,881.71	52,481.93	83,881.71	-	83,881.71	76,797.83
Facilitation of WME registration and certification requirements	1112	1,469,830.48	-	1,469,830.48	-	-	-	150,018.04
TA in Product Development, Upgrading/Enhancement of production technologies	1113	679,515.14	10,102.81	669,412.33	10,102.81	-	10,102.81	111,261.88
Technical Assistance in market development and expansion	1114	886,363.63	8,340.35	878,023.28	-	8,340.35	8,340.35	196,745.96
Sub-Total 1110		3,172,072.89	102,324.87	3,069,748.02	93,984.52	8,340.35	102,324.87	534,823.72
1120 Improved entrepreneurial management capacity of WMEs								
Capacity dev't on entrepreneurial management	1121	1,104,242.42	36,582.54	1,067,659.88	42,970.49	(6,387.95)	36,582.54	81,411.13
Sub - Total 1120		1,104,242.42	36,582.54	1,067,659.88	42,970.49	(6,387.95)	36,582.54	81,411.13
Total 1100		4,276,315.31	138,907.41	4,137,407.90	136,955.01	1,952.40	138,907.41	616,234.85
1200 Improvement of enabling for women's economic empowerment								

1210 Improved capacity of government institutions and women's business to enhance the policy and regulatory environment for WMEs								
Improvement of Coordination of Partners in Service Delivery at National and Sub-National	1211	268,341.87	65,382.57	202,959.30	58,142.36	7,240.21	65,382.57	62,262.55
Sub - Total 1210		268,341.87	65,382.57	202,959.30	58,142.36	7,240.21	65,382.57	62,262.55
1220 Improved capacity of government institutions and women's businesses to enhance the policy and regulatory environment for WEE								
Strengthening Capacities of Partners for WEE	1221	636,454.55	123,717.89	512,736.66	27,015.51	96,702.38	123,717.89	56,884.79
Support to policy review and enhancements effecting WEE	1222	601,977.12	21,654.97	580,322.15	21,224.31	430.66	21,654.97	72,195.10
Sub-Total 1220		1,238,431.67	145,372.86	1,093,058.81	48,239.82	97,133.04	145,372.86	129,079.89
1230 Knowledge management and communications								
Support to strengthen KM, communication and database platform of WEE in PCW and partners	1231	306,281.70	-	306,281.70	-	-	-	40,253.27
Sub - Total 1230		306,281.70	-	306,281.70	-	-	-	40,253.27
Total 1200		1,813,055.24	210,755.43	1,602,299.81	106,382.18	104,373.25	210,755.43	231,595.71
1300 Project Management and Audit								
Project Administration	1310	1,286,538.56	138,319.89	1,148,218.67	52,272.36	86,047.53	138,319.89	212,168.61
Procurement	1320	111,666.67	31,424.05	80,242.62	16,767.15	14,656.90	31,424.05	102,035.28
Monitoring, Evaluation and Technical Coordination	1330	132,121.19	9,288.24	122,832.95	8,564.78	723.46	9,288.24	26,108.04
External Audit	1340	30,303.03		30,303.03	-	-	-	-
Total 1300		1,560,629.45	179,032.18	1,381,597.27	77,604.29	101,427.89	179,032.18	340,311.93
Total (DFATD)		7,650,000.00	528,695.02	7,121,304.98	320,941.48	207,753.54	528,695.02	1,188,142.49

5 Outcomes

5.1 Highlights of outputs/outcomes achieved

Despite the challenges encountered in setting-up the project for FY1, several outcomes emerged from the set of activities implemented. These were the following:

5.1.1 Immediate Outcomes

1. Established functional convergence mechanisms (WP1210) – These included the national convergence mechanism (NCG), which had been meeting regularly to harmonize efforts to provide assistance to the initial set of WME/SME enrolment. At the regional level, the Regional Convergence Groups were organized in 14 regions and to identify their WME targets and conduct the roll-out of the GGRVCA with WMEs. The DTI-IVA oversees activities of the RCGs.
 - 1.1. NCG agreements: (a) harmonized framework for WME competency development and enterprise development pathways, (b) criteria for WME selection, (c) design and conduct of the GGRVCA for five-days, and (d) flow of monitoring and reporting for the project.
 - 1.2. The RCGs generated the initial list of 1,897 WMEs targeted for assistance following the selection criteria.
2. WMEs initial exposure to market-based entrepreneurship via the regional conduct of value chain analysis and market match forum (WP1111-1113). These were the roll-out batches conducted by RCGs in at least six regions where WMEs were participants. The workshops became venues to expose the WMEs to new connections among other women entrepreneurs and the partner agencies.

5.1.2 Major Outputs

1. Technical Assistance provided to NGAs and private sector partners (WP 1211) which generated the following:
 - 1.1. The 5-day GGRVCA trained 189 participants from 16 regions who could serve as potential resource persons on value chain analysis in their agencies
 - 1.2. Six batches of the 3-day GGRVCA with participation from 269 WMEs in six (6) regions generated individual action plans from WMEs.
 - 1.3. Initial commitments from 5 private sector partners as market for WME products included: the Legend Villas, HoliCOW, Anthill, PRA and PAGASA; and five (5) as BDS providers namely HoliCOW, Anthill, NATCCO, PRA and PAGASA
 - 1.4. Revised work plans for: PTRI, ECHOSi, PHILMEC; on-going work plan development for DOST-CO, NATCCO and BFAR.
2. Market-Match Forum led by ECHOSi (WP 1114) with 44 SME/WME participants and 56 big businesses; side event on trade exchange participated by 15 women SMEs with non-food products.

3. Initial project information materials developed (WP 1231) for the PCW website and partners; drafts for project FAQs and GGRVCA modules completed for final editing and approval of NCG.
4. Inputs on WEE advocacy and GREAT Women model to local and international conferences participated by partners and PMO (WP 1222) in the ASEAN, APEC and international federation of cooperatives in Asia and the Philippines.
5. Established the PCW-Project Management Office and DTI satellite Project Management Team (WP 1310); conducted partner orientation sessions and monitoring and planning workshops.

6 Lessons learned and next steps

The first year experience yielded the following lessons that should influence project implementation strategies in the following year.

- 1) Decision-making and documentation requirements in government take time because of layers of decision-makers and control system. While consultations are made at different levels of government, this is not an assurance that agreements would be carried out vertically or horizontally in the agency structure. With the WEE Project being time bound, PCW and its partners need to find ways to implement faster and produce women's empowerment results at the soonest time. Several steps can be made to achieve this, as follows:
 - a. Prioritization of targets by level of enterprise and by region with the most number of enrollees should be pursued. This shall put focus on achieving 'quick wins' for enterprises that need a little push to move up and expand markets. For FY2, this could mean six (6) regions to cover especially those with industry clusters that can be matched with demand or specific markets.
 - b. FY3 could involve the next six (6) regions, and so on in the following year. This way, the limited resources could be used more intensively in areas and clusters that would produce results.
 - c. The need to access this list of WMEs becomes important when market matching activities are being implemented.
- 2) Once committed to the project, private sector organizations, specifically businesses and social enterprises, would require quick actions. This pace would often be held back by government procedures. To move activities faster would mean allowing PCW to make direct payments for services required of activities implemented with private sector partners as leads. Even these would mean any service requirement would need to pass through government procurement processes that take weeks/months to follow.
- 3) Partnership with large businesses, industry organizations, and social enterprises that can serve as BDS providers is one tactical approach for project to sustain. While the project recognizes the institutional expertise of our government partners, private sector should

also be tapped to implement technical assistance relevant to their core businesses or specific competencies as they are seen to be more market-oriented. They can assist WMEs to tap into new markets.

- 4) As implementation in different work packages begin to take momentum, the need is to fast track the data base system development under DTI-IVA PMT and eventually train partners to access the system for monitoring and reportorial use.
- 5) To complement the WME profiling and database system, PMO should prioritize the conduct of baseline research that would cover indicators included in the PMF and look at other possible women's entrepreneurship research themes.
- 6) PCW should start the integration of women empowerment indicators and business leadership in technical assistance and learning modules for partners as part of their capacity building on WEE.
- 7) Test and conduct an initial market encounter with a large company. Look at variations of such activity to cover more potential institutional buyers to match WMEs. This strategy is seen as a 'quick fix' approach to directly link the WMEs to a bigger market while at the same time helping them improve their capacity to negotiate directly with other businesses.
- 8) Learning sessions on product trends, business laws and policies and food safety regulations are some of the specific themes of learning sessions for enablers. These should include a number of women SME/WME leaders, private sector partners and other Business Development Service providers to who can be engaged in meaningful discussions during the sessions.
- 9) Develop the project's communications plan as discussed in the NCG where private sector audience can be targeted to generate support for inclusive business approaches. The project's communication strategies should similarly disseminate information and WEE messages and shall include FAQs, brochures, fact sheets and other knowledge materials apart from the project, gender issues in microenterprise development and other relevant themes.
- 10) The roll out of GGRVCA should be conducted with WMEs to capacitate them on the VC process and how their business can find potential growth in the chain. This roll-out should enable WMEs to develop action plans for their product/ enterprises so that partners can identify the specific interventions needed for targeted WMEs.

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