



GOOD PRACTICES IN

BUILDING THE CAPACITY OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT THROUGH MICRO ENTERPRISE-ASSISTED LIVELIHOOD PROGRAM (WE-MEAL)



CONTEXT

Natural disasters like Super-Typhoon Haiyan exacerbate inequalities as the economy plummets and the overall poverty rate increases. In the Philippines, despite efforts made to ensure the participation of women in reconstruction processes, women still find themselves with inequitable access to opportunities and decision-making processes. Reconstruction efforts and market restoration in the aftermath of disaster should create opportunities for women's participation and recognition in the formal economy. To achieve this, the Tukod Project's WE-MEAL Program invested in developing the capacities of 60 promising women entrepreneurs impacted by Haiyan to support the success and sustainability of their livelihoods.

GEOGRAPHICAL COVERAGE



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

STAKEHOLDERS AND PARTNERS

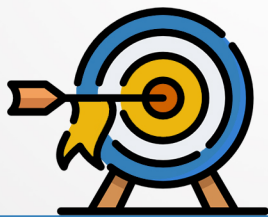


Government units and agencies to support recruitment, access to markets, and sustainability; local resource persons to facilitate learning sessions; business management students and peer-networks for mentoring; financial institutions and cooperatives for accessible products and services.

TARGET POPULATION



60 marginalized individual women and young women micro-entrepreneurs.



OBJECTIVE

The WE-MEAL Program had the overall objective of developing micro-enterprises owned and operated by individual women and young women in Leyte, Samar, and Eastern Samar, through a holistic and gender-responsive entrepreneurship program based on their needs and experiences.

“The most important aspect of the [WE-MEAL] training for me was how to run a business. Before, the money would just come in and out. I wasn't recording and checking if I was making a profit. Now I can see where it goes, and I have opened up a savings account.”

– JACKIE, WE-MEAL ENTREPRENEUR



METHODOLOGY

The 12-week program had the following key components:

- **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.
- **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.
- **Marketing and product development:** Ongoing customized support and guidance on the preparation of marketing plans, product development, packaging, and labeling.
- **Access to seed capital:** Seed grant to kick-start or rejuvenate micro-enterprises, in accordance with new business plans.

RESULT

58 New micro-enterprises owned and managed by women were created and received seed grants. The 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 providers. 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 their market access.



SUCCESS

The seed grant allowed the women to kick-start or rejuvenate their enterprise, and filled a gap in their limited access to capital. Trainings strengthened their capacities to manage their businesses, as well as to assert control over their time, resources, and the division of labour at home. Learning styles helped them to express themselves freely and build their confidence and communication skills, which fostered better relationships with customers and family members. The child-minding services reduced a layer of burden that women often experience in engaging in extra-household activities.

IMPACT

WE-MEAL participants expressed being more confident and better equipped to manage their enterprises, and empowered by independently contributing to the family income. Connecting to a network of women entrepreneurs instilled a sense of purpose for them to pay-it-forward by positively influencing other women and advocating for collective objectives.



Empowered Women Empowering Communities: *Jackie's Story*

After Super Typhoon Haiyan swept through the Eastern Visayas in 2013, Jackie's family, like thousands of others, no longer had a livelihood. Before Haiyan struck, Jackie was a housewife. She was primarily reliant on her husband's income to support the family and had a casual enterprise. After joining the WE-MEAL program, Jackie learned how to diversify and expand her business. The 12-week trainings taught her how to manage her finances and streamline her business practices. Her micro-enterprise has since flourished and she is now the main breadwinner for her family. Being able to contribute to the family in this way has boosted Jackie's confidence. Since learning about women's rights during the program, she has renegotiated the household division of labor with her husband. Inspired by her own transformation, Jackie started to share her learnings with other women in her community and has since helped establish a women-led biscuit-making enterprise in her community.

CONSTRAINTS

A few women had difficulties meeting certain requirements such as the proper recording of their cash flow and transactions. This was addressed with more intensive and customized mentoring by project staff.



UNINTENDED OUTCOMES

Women identified their membership in the women's network as a substantial gain, as it has given them a peer-platform to share information and strategies on enhancing their business practices and common objectives.

SUSTAINABILITY

Additional capacity-building, sustainability assessments, and exit planning assisted 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 to ensure a reliable support system. Linkages with key government and private agencies and financial service providers facilitated women's access to ongoing business development support and financial inclusion.

REPLICABILITY AND UPSCALING

Other initiatives for women's entrepreneurship can adopt a similar holistic approach by firstly investing in a gender analysis to take into account women's needs and capacities, and using the results to design a framework that incorporates these critical capacities for success. Strong partnerships and collaboration among stakeholders (i.e. government private sector, peers) can strengthen and scale-up of these efforts.

