

**Programme For The Advancement
Of Filipino Women Through Strategic Support
Mechanisms For Economic Empowerment**

A PROJECT MID-EVALUATION REPORT

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I. PROJECT BACKGROUND

The **Programme for the Advancement of Filipino Women through Strategic Support Mechanisms for Economic Empowerment** is a response by the TESDA Women's Center (TWC), in partnership with United Nations Development Program (UNDP), to the continuing problem of women being disadvantaged by "escalating unemployment, dwindling opportunities for gainful pursuits, diminishing social and public services, and rising prices of basic commodities" (Project Document). This is an effect of the lingering financial crisis that hit Asian economies in the late '90s and which has affected women workers more than men. Women not only are the first ones to lose their jobs but are also the first ones to suffer as entrepreneurs, household managers, or family breadwinners.

To mitigate this, the Philippine Government has fully committed to pursue gender equality and empowerment of women especially in the economic sphere. It has come up with legislative and policy reforms and set up programs aimed at assisting in the development of women entrepreneurs in the country. Government agencies initiated their own programs for women within their respective mandate. Many Non-government Organizations (NGOs) focused their programs and services on gender and women development including the provision of financial capital for livelihood or micro enterprises. Other private organizations and international agencies/donors increased their budgetary allotment for programmes on the development of women, especially as entrepreneurs.

The TESDA Mandate and the TESDA WOMEN'S CENTER (TWC)

The Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) was created in 1994 as the government arm that will directly address and respond to national policies and development goals and priorities for technical education and development in the country. It is empowered by law to provide relevant, accessible, high quality and efficient technical education and skills development and, in partnership or through participation of various sectors especially of private enterprises, expand such opportunities for more people to participate in.

In formulating a coordinated and fully integrated technical education and skills development for the country, TESDA's functions put premium in coordinating the policies, plans and programs of the different sectors and stakeholders involved in this service provision and ensures that there is equal participation by industry groups, trade associations, employers and workers in government's formulation of policies. In the process, TESDA serves as an integrating body in the formulation of national plans, enhancing linkages and partnerships between industry, labor and government.

The multi-partnership thrust of TESDA is best demonstrated by the composition of its Board, which is a multi-sector policy-making body where the government, employers, industry associations, labor and private technical-vocational

institutions are represented. Its mandate also necessitates an extensive and expansive structure for operation under a National Secretariat headed by a Director General. To carry out its plans and programs on a national scale, TESDA has regional and provincial centers offering technical education and skills development programs, aside from regional and provincial offices for operation. TESDA also has a nationwide network of public and private technical-vocational schools that implement TESDA-accredited curricula, and LGU and NGO partners many of whom are involved in the implementation of TESDA's Community-based Training and Education Development (CBTED) program.

CBTED, which is under a Committee on Community-based Training, is one of TESDA's most responsive programs to government's policy and thrust of making relevant, high quality and efficient technical education and skills development accessible to as many people as possible. It specifically implements programs that are tailored to suit the training needs at the grassroots level.

Women and Development and the TWC

One of TESDA's most significant actions is the enrichment of the scope of its mandate, going beyond the traditional sectors it assists. This is when it readily responded to the national policy on mainstreaming gender in all its activities, creating a Gender and Development Committee (GAD-C) responsible for its implementation. In 1996, the Committee's GAD mainstreaming activities in the whole agency received a boost when the National Vocational Training and Development Center for Women, otherwise known as the TESDA Women's Center (TWC), was established, extending its gender and development programme to its clientele.

The TWC is a joint effort of the Governments of Japan and the Philippines, aimed in general to improve the overall economic status of women in the country by providing them with access to training and career advancement opportunities in new, alternative and non-traditional technology-based occupations. The Center is also aimed at eventually becoming a model training center that will act as a catalyst for greater participation of women in development to support the country's long-term global and development strategies. In Asia and the Pacific, the Center aims to enhance the social and economic status of women in the region through information exchange and networking.

In more concrete terms, the TWC is continually being established as a self-reliant center of excellence providing assistance in the training, development and empowerment of women to become entrepreneurs making decisive inroads in the field of new and non-traditional technology and vocational livelihood or enterprises. Supporting this will be the Center's policy studies and researches, advocacy campaigns and programs, projects and services

that will strengthen and enhance women participation in development especially for the change in their economic and social status.

It is in this context that the project **"A Program for the Advancement of Filipino Women Through Strategic Support Mechanisms for Economic Empowerment"** was drawn up under the sponsorship of the Japan Women's Bureau through the United Nation's Development Program (UNDP) and in partnership with TESDA as executing institution.

Project Framework, Strategies and Beneficiaries

TESDA serves as an integrating body in the formulation of national policies for technical education and skills development in the country as well as coordinating the plans and programmes of various sectors and stakeholders involved in this service provision. To provide consonance to this, **the project's framework is based along the same core of evolving "coherent, gender-responsive system of strategic support service mechanisms that will provide coordination, harmonization and integration to the various programs and the strengthening of institutions to carry out the tasks" of economic empowerment for women.**

Working within this framework, the project set out **strategies** that are deemed to warrant the most in expected project outcomes. These include **a) working with existing internal and external partner institutions, as well as developing new partnerships that are multi-level and multi-disciplinary; b) adding value and gender dimensions to existing projects and training programs; c) collating and packaging user-friendly information on specific skills and trade areas, to be called "Enterprise Technology Manuals"; d) pilot testing of developed modules and coordination/partnership arrangements at selected sites and convergence areas, using an integrated approach.**

From the outset, the framework and strategies drawn up have been intended for the TWC and its partner institutions as main and direct project beneficiaries, whose capacity to deliver gender-sensitive and strategic support services for women entrepreneurs will be enhanced by the project. The project also targets as indirect beneficiaries women who are planning to enter into, or who are already engaged in, small businesses that include "ready-to-expand" home-based enterprises and who will be served by TWC partners through their support service mechanisms.

Project Objectives and Expected Outputs

Guided by a framework and strategies, the project identified its development objective in the long run as "the economic empowerment of women entrepreneurs in micro, cottage and small scale industries through gender-responsive policies and programs supported by an integrated system of entrepreneurship development

activities". To achieve this, the project came up with three immediate objectives with corresponding outputs upon which to build its long-term goal. These are:

- 1) To build the capacity of the TESDA Women's Center, with the support of the Women's Business Council and NCRFW, to contribute to the coordination of strategic support facilities for women entrepreneurs in micro, cottage and small enterprises, in support of the Center's objectives of providing useful assistance to SMEs, organizations and agencies for women to make decisive inroads in the fields of technology and entrepreneurship.

Outputs for this immediate objective are a) industry-specific and gender sensitive entrepreneurial training modules designed in partnership with selected industry associations and other partners; b) developed Technology Enterprise Manual; and c) strengthened support service facility through linkages with strategic partners

- 2) To build on existing programs of agencies serving the sector (WBC, DTI, OWWA, CMN) particularly on increasing access to credit and markets, through targeted advocacy activities.

The outputs for this second immediate objective are a) Issue Papers addressing operational obstacles on loan facilities for women and monitoring systems set-up for analysis of loan availment of women; b) advocacy tools addressing operational obstacles on loan facilities for women and monitoring systems set-up for analysis of loan availment of women; and c) a model for "Market Match" mechanism where buyers and products can link up and do business together.

- 3) To strengthen pilot support service facilities for women entrepreneurs in convergence areas at the provincial level.

Under this immediate objective, the output expected is an established and operating "One Stop Shop" (OSS) in a TESDA Provincial Office in three pilot sites providing effective support services for women entrepreneurs.

At the end of the two-year project, it is expected that the strengthened capacity of the TWC and other key institutions providing services to existing and would-be women entrepreneurs in micro, cottage and small enterprises will result in the provision of enhancement training, technology and market development, referrals to and facilitation of credit access, integrated support services in convergence communities and innovative services/products for women entrepreneurs. It is also expected that a strengthened TWC and partner

institutions will advocate the formulation of policies and programs that are advantageous to women in micro, cottage and small enterprises as well as carry out a coordinated system in the delivery of support services. Another expected outcome is that a model for gender-responsive and integrated support services will have been developed, tested and replicated in the project's pilot communities.

The Project Implementation Set-Up

The project's implementation set-up is logically and purposively geared towards achieving the purpose of capacitating and empowering the TESDA Women's Center. Being the case, the larger TESDA institution is designated to operationalise and implement the project under the aegis of the Director General acting as Project Director. TESDA, as main project overseer, is directly responsible to UNDP for the total project operation, while as a partner serving as project integrator, facilitator, orchestrator and coordinator, it is expected to ensure the provision of strategic support services to the project as well as to harness TESDA resources and expertise of its related, regional and provincial offices to ensure the success of the program.

Under the Project Director is a Deputy Project Director drawn from among senior level officials. Providing direction and guidance to TESDA's project implementation is a Steering Committee composed of multi-sectoral representatives with JICA and UNDP as ex-officio members.

The project workhorse is the Project Coordinating Office, later named Project Management Office (PMO), which is responsible for the coordination and supervision of the details of project implementation. Under current arrangement, the PMO is headed by the Deputy Project Director who provides supervision to a National Project Coordinator (NPC) drawn from TESDA management. The NPC is supported by an Assistant National Coordinator and two technical/administrative staff. These support staff are hired externally, under a project co-terminus status.

Project Review Mechanisms

To assess and substantiate project progress and status, UNDP as sponsoring agency set up as requirement several project review mechanisms. Basic among these is Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation procedures integrated in all project components and which assess the relevance, performance and success of UNDP development interventions as shown by project results.

Also required on an institutional level are the Annual Programme Review (APR) following procedures outlined in the NEX and the Tripartite Review (TPR) to be convened within 12 to 15 months after the start of the project and towards the end

of the two-year project and participated in by UNDP, JICA, TESDA and other representatives of government, and key stakeholders from other sectors. The TPR aims to assess the progress of the project and make recommendations for the design and further implementation.

A barometer of project direction supportive of the TPR aim is the Mid-term Evaluation. As a project review mechanism, the mid-term evaluation can show the status of the project halfway in its target lifespan and serve as basis for corrective measures that can be adapted for the remaining project period. For this, UNDP has the option to arrange for a mid-term evaluation which covers the whole project or specific component themes only.

The project agreement on "A Program for the Advancement of Filipino Women Through Strategic Support Mechanisms for Economic Empowerment" was signed in May 2001 by UNDP and TESDA official representatives. The project was targeted to become operational in July of the same year. At the time of the evaluation period, the project has reached the stage where a review and assessment of project status was deemed necessary by the project parties concerned before it is to proceed in its implementation for the remaining period of project life.

II. THE PROJECT MID-TERM EVALUATION

In September 2002, the project was in its mid-term of implementation. The TESDA Women's Center and UNDP, as project sponsoring organizations, deemed it important to review and evaluate the status of the project, its strengths and weaknesses and to come up with measures that could ensure the attainment and sustainability of project outcomes.

The mid-term evaluation is to focus on the areas of: (1) Strategic Relevance of the project framework, strategies and processes; (2) Programme Outcome Trend based on the emerging results of output to date; (3) Project Management as evidenced by organizational capacity; (4) Financial Management for cost effectiveness and efficiency; and (5) Institutional Support for project sustainability beyond the UNDP assistance.

Evaluation Purpose and Objectives

Per the Term of Reference, the objectives of the mid-term evaluation are to:

1. Determine whether the development framework and strategies of the project continue to be valid and relevant given the assumptions laid out during their formulation and the current thrusts of TESDA
2. Review whether the objectives, outputs, activities and targets that have been set forth in the project document are realistic and attainable
3. Assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the Project Management Office (PMO) both in terms of its capacities and coordination arrangements
4. Assess the efficiency and effectiveness of utilization of project resources
5. Assess the effectiveness of current approaches, strategies and processes of achieving the activities/outputs of the project, and provide an analysis thereof of problems encountered in project implementation
6. Recommend new strategies, approaches and activities that could enhance effective implementation of remaining project activities, including institutionalization and sustainability of completed outputs, including alternative organizational and management arrangements

The Evaluation Processes and Methodologies

In order to meet the requirement of the mid-term evaluation, the Consultant submitted a proposed evaluation process and methodologies that were approved by TESDA Women's Center and UNDP. The evaluation processes and methodologies were a combination of activities that were meant to surface the various intended data from the various project stakeholders and other sources of information. These processes and methodologies include the following:

1. Review of project documents for project familiarization, especially the officially approved project proposal. The PMO lent the Consultant the necessary documents
2. Establishment of contact and evaluation arrangement and schedules with project implementers in both the

UNDP/TESDA level and the pilot areas. The Consultant was introduced by UNDP to TESDA's Deputy Project Director and PMO staff during a general project orientation. Initial contact by the Consultant and her team members with TESDA pilot sites implementers involved initial visits (Laguna), meetings with regional or provincial directors present in Central Office activities or through telephone conversations

3. Desk review of documents pertinent and relevant to project management and implementation in both Project Management Office (PMO) and Field Offices of the Pilot Sites, which include Work and Financial Plans, Accomplishment and Financial Reports, Steering Committee meetings, communications, memoranda, advisories, activity reports, monitoring and evaluation reports and other documents available and deemed important to validate or confirm certain data or oral information gathered in the course of the evaluation process.
4. Conduct of Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with PMO, TESDA Provincial Team and pilot site partners, and beneficiaries in two provincial pilot sites – Naga City and Laguna Province
5. Conduct of Key Informant Interviews with PMO officers and staff including former ones, TESDA Provincial Team, pilot site partners, and a leader and a beneficiary in Pangasinan Province
6. Direct observation of the One-Stop-Shop in every pilot site – Naga City, the provinces of Laguna and Pangasinan and the TESDA Women's Center (TWC). In the course of the field visit by the Consultant's team members, an ocular inspection of the One-Stop-Shop in each area was conducted to determine their status

Evaluation Constraints and Limitations

The mid-term evaluation was scheduled for six (6) weeks within the period December 3, 2002 to January 14, 2003. The urgency of the mid-term evaluation is underscored by the fact that the project is supposed to officially end in July 2003 if

actual start of project implementation period is to be followed. The evaluation team was, therefore, constrained by the following:

1. The onset of the Christmas Holiday activities when most people are already in holiday mood and busy with preparations for the coming festivities. Participation of stakeholders to scheduled activities such as FGDs, pilot site visits and interviews were highly affected. Some FGDs and meetings had to be postponed to the first week of January 2003 when concerned people were more or less available already
2. Participation to the FGDs by project participants was also constrained by their geographic location such as in the case of Laguna where beneficiaries are scattered all over the province.
3. The short period of evaluation time constrained the evaluating team in conducting more thorough follow up interviews or clarification sessions with project beneficiaries.
4. There was not enough time to pursue more in-depth interviews with pilot model partner organizations in the pilot areas to determine partnership model viability and relevance, as well as strengths and weaknesses of the pilot model
5. Project documents such as accomplishment reports, especially up-to- date ones, were lacking or not available at the time of the evaluation especially from the pilot sites which slowed down the evaluating team's assessment of outputs and accomplishments for the period being evaluated.

III. EVALUATION REPORT

A. Findings and Recommendations on Project Output Results

In covering the scope of evaluation in an integrated manner, the Consultant and her team members decided to work around the project output results and accomplishments. From these, findings in the other areas of evaluation focus can be surfaced and the relationships of findings can be established in a more logical basis. Since project activities are centered in the four (4) pilot sites – TESDA Women's Center (TWC), Naga City, Laguna, and Pangasinan – the project outputs and accomplishments from these project centers became one

of the main foci of evaluation. The findings were made vis-à-vis the Work and Financial Plans made for the year.

Following are the general findings on project outputs vis-à-vis the expected ones based on the 3 immediate objectives of the project and the corresponding recommendations by the Consultant:

For Objective #1

1. The TWC, as a program pilot site, was meant to build its capacity through enhanced entrepreneurship and skills development training programs by partnering with industry associations and other institutions. By the mid-evaluation period, serious partnership endeavors have just been started despite incorporation of such activities in the WFP for the four quarters of the first program year. While there were previously committed supports during consultations with possible partners before the start of the program, there are no records of formal agreements to this effect between TWC and targeted partner institutions, thereby slowing down the development of partnerships for entrepreneurship and skills development programs of the TWC.
2. The development of the Enterprise Training Modules (ETMs) and Technology Enterprise Manuals (TEMs) which were supposed to be finished by the middle of the first project year was late by almost a year. Both were contracted out for other groups to make. Both outputs are intended to be used for the training of TESDA trainers and partner institutions in both the Center and field offices who in turn will conduct the trainings for project beneficiaries. The same is true with the manual on Mainstreaming Gender and Development (GAD) in Technical Education and Training. By mid-evaluation period, the 3 manuals were still being finalized for presentation by the contracted parties for comments by TESDA and invited experts on the topics. Interviewed TWC PET members expressed regrets that they had no participation in the development of the modules and manuals since they could have contributed to these based on their experiences and knowledge as TWC trainers and researchers as well as learn from the process.
3. The TWC pilot site conducted and reported entrepreneurial trainings but these are mostly part of the Center's regular training services to its already regular clients than as a project activity for the project's target beneficiaries, meaning new enrollees. These

reported entrepreneurial trainings include Business Start Up Course for 347 participants; Business Improvement, Survival and Expansion Course for 172 women; Cooperative Development for 158 women; Training on Non-food Packaging (Gifts, Toys and House Wares) for 28 entrepreneurs; Product Assessment Workshop for 5 participants. For the Food Packaging and Labeling Course, some participants were drawn from among emerging women entrepreneurs who are members of project partners in the Laguna and Naga provincial pilot sites. This was the first major move of the Center to train project beneficiaries. The second was the inclusion of 4 project beneficiaries, again from Naga City, for a Trainor's Training.

4. A Project Coordinating Unit, otherwise known as Project Management Office (PMO), was set up to serve as the "hub" of the project. One of its main functions is to draw up an overall annual Work and Financial Plan (WFP) and provide overall project management and coordination. In the project document, however, the functions of the PCU or PMO was not well defined vis-à-vis the TWC Project Executing Team (PET) under the activities for the expected output of strengthened support service facilities through linkages with strategic partners (Output 1.3). This may well have given rise to the findings on project management mechanisms discussed more thoroughly in the succeeding section.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The TWC PET, with assistance from the PMO, must follow through initially established contacts with other institutions as project and TESDA/TWC partners, especially those that have previously committed support to, and participation in the project. This follow through should determine the areas of collaboration in the provision of services, assistance and programs for women entrepreneurs between TESDA/TWC and partners. Formal partnership agreements are one of the basic foundations for the TWC to fulfill its role of becoming not only a resource center but as integrator, facilitator, coordinator and harmonizer of multi-sectoral and multi-agency plans and programs for the development of women entrepreneurs in the country.
2. Aside from the above follow-throughs, TWC should pursue the development and formalization of more partnerships with other institutions providing services and programs for micro and cottage

entrepreneurs, such as NGOs and Cooperatives. This is to assist women, who are ready to expand and enhance their enterprises, make the "leap" towards small and medium scale entrepreneurship. The TWC/TESDA can make this as one of its major roles as there are a lot of women micro entrepreneurs who don't know how to upgrade their enterprises or where to seek assistance for such moves, as gleaned from even some of the project participants interviewed in the provincial pilot sites. This can even become the TWC/TESDA "niche" in the development of women entrepreneurship in the country.

3. In the evolvement/development of resource materials and researches for TWC by contracted institutions or partners there should, at the very least, some form of involvement by concerned TWC staff which should be included in sub-contracting agreements so that they can contribute to the enrichment of the materials based from their practical experiences. Their involvement can also effect skills transfer to them.
4. Realign some funds, then start and step up staff development of TWC personnel to enhance the manpower capabilities of the Center that is responsive to its aimed-for "niche" of becoming a Center with an integrated and strategic support services and facilities for the development of women entrepreneurship in the country. Include in the realignment of funds the development of resource generation (e.g. R & A data base system) to enable it to come up with proactive programs based on entrepreneurial trends and opportunities.
5. The roles and functions of the PMO, as project coordinating unit, should be further defined vis-à-vis those of the TWC PET. For Output 1.3, the question on whose role it should be to strengthen the TWC support service facility arises. Is it the PCU/PMO's role to coordinate/integrate arrangements with partner agencies and institutions, or is this part of the TWC PET's role as part of its development process? The same question arises for advocacy activities, enhancement of directory of support services, staff development, and institutionalization of an Entrepreneurial Training Unit within the Center. Defining the major roles and responsibilities of both can lead to a better execution of the project and its objectives.

On a macro perspective, the foregoing objective can be considered as pivotal to the development of the Center as an integrating institution

for multi-sectoral and multi-agency endeavors on women entrepreneurship in the country given the lack, if not the absence, of an identifiable organization that caters to the holistic need for the advancement of economic empowerment for women. The government and private sector has opened many avenues, including legal, for the development of women entrepreneurship in the country. Opportunities for access to various components of livelihood and enterprise development have been provided by relevant government and private institutions. Unfortunately, many remain to be scattered and assistance is usually limited to only either one or a couple of components, e.g. credit assistance alone; credit assistance and skills training only. This leaves would-be entrepreneurs to remain in the basic level of enterprise, as they are later left alone to develop their business. They are not aware of what to do next or where to go for assistance for the next level of development for their business.

This immediate project objective is, therefore, very relevant to TWC's goal as an integrating institution providing the necessary services or support, such as information at the very least, about entrepreneurship development. It even dovetails with TESDA's function of coordinating policies, plans and programs of various sectors/institutions for an integrated approach to women's economic empowerment in the country. This function means taking the lead and forging the coordinated and integrated advancement of women entrepreneurs.

Halfway through the project period, the mid evaluation shows that implementation of project activities has been slow and showing a tentativeness in the performance of people responsible for it. Tentative, because of a half-understood project concept and framework that contributed to the half-hearted participation by those involved in its implementation. Project performance also suffered in the period covered by the mid-evaluation due to professional baggage of TESDA/TWC PET and limited involvement, if not downright non-involvement, of target partners largely due to seeming oversight in developing the partnerships. Even the performance of the PMO/Project Coordinating Unit lodged at the TWC suffered because of internal kinks that took sometime to iron out. This is more thoroughly discussed under the section on Project Management. In effect, project performance in the first half of the project left out many of the target outputs for the period.

It is for this reason that project success for the period covered by the mid evaluation has been limited. The activities implemented under Immediate Objective Number 1 hardly made a dent in the task leading towards making TWC an integrative institution for the efforts of

various institutions and agencies towards empowering women in the economic front. Still, despite the tentativeness of actions during the period, some things have been started as mentioned above. The continuous clarification about project concept, framework and strategies sought by involved project implementers during the period can be considered a success in itself as evinced by the renewed enthusiasm of everyone concerned to forge forward towards the realization of project objectives during the evaluation result presentation and planning session for the second half of the project implementation.

For Objective # 2

1. In pursuit of building on existing programs of agencies serving the sector through advocacy activities particularly on increasing access to credit and markets, the TWC PET was able to provide credit support service to 95 women entrepreneurs who were referred to micro-financing institutions while the Center itself provided capital to 5 TWC trainees and 18 other women entrepreneurs. However, there were no documents to show monitoring efforts on how these referrals for credit support fared out from said institutions.
2. In the provincial pilot sites, the project lays claim to the provision of capital/credit to 520 women beneficiaries of the WEED Center, a project of Metro PESO of Naga City and project partner of TESDA Camarines Sur, which is identified as the OSS of the pilot site. The fund is from the Naga LGU's budget for the WEED Center which can be considered as the LGU's counterpart to the project.
3. For the Market Matching aspect of the project, the first half of project implementation saw the conduct of 3 forums on e-Market for Women. Two were conducted by the TWC pilot site, the first one for 41 women entrepreneurs and the other for 132 participants from women's organizations, National Government Agencies, NGOs, industries and other organizations. The other was conducted in Naga City for 50 women entrepreneurs who are members of the WEED Center.

While these activities were conducted, no real effort during the first half of the project was made by TWC to pursue the project's

aim of coming up with a model for a Market Match mechanism. Basic and groundwork activities, such as a review of existing and planned mechanisms and other activities as spelled out in the project document and which will lead towards a design for a Women's Market Match, are not evident in output documents provided.

4. For Market Links activities, the TWC pilot group was able to provide assistance in market accessing for 11 women entrepreneurs. Among the provincial pilot sites, 14 women entrepreneurs from among WEED members of Naga City were assisted to participate in the Orgullo Kan Bicol. TWC also established partnership with the Philippine Marketing Corporation for assistance in the marketing of products of women micro-entrepreneurs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. In keeping track of the Center's reach and depth as a lead institution in the country providing support services to women entrepreneurs, the installation of a Monitoring Mechanism for the services it provides must be put in place. A determination of the services it is capable of providing and indicators of achievements for each service will have to be made purposively as basic requirement in coming up with the mechanism. This would require a review and planning as initial activities which TWC must go back to in the second half of the project before it can put in place a monitoring mechanism that can be sustained even after the project life.
2. In conjunction to Recommendation Number 4 under Objective Number 1, the importance of project support for Research and Development is being underscored due to the importance of establishing a Data Bank from where can be drawn the issues on women entrepreneurship such as policies and procedures that affect women's access to enterprise development – credit, technology, market, etc. The first half of the project shows a lack of attention to the development of issue papers and advocacy tools that can help address these issues besetting a large segment of women entrepreneurs, especially those who want to make the "leap" from micro to small enterprise.

3. It is also imperative that the TWC get back to basic activities for the Market Match model in the remaining period of the project. The TWC should be able to work out, learn from what are in existence and create, if not innovate, a model mechanism that effectively link women producers and buyers in a businesslike environment. Following its possible niche of being an integrative institution for the development of women entrepreneurship in the country, the TWC can serve as the center for programming and coordinating such activities and not just "ride" on whatever ongoing marketing effort. Again, the importance of the TWC's R&D role and capability is being underscored if it is to have a good grasp of existing marketing endeavors that it can use for its planning and design for a Market Match model.

Immediate Objective #2 emphasizes the need for **partnerships** with other agencies and institutions serving the sector and build upon, or enhance, what is existing at present. This objective recognizes the importance of coordination and collaboration among various stakeholders and service providers. If TVC is to pursue its goal of becoming an integrative institution in the field of women entrepreneurship development, this objective provides the relevant step towards that direction.

However, the activities undertaken towards this direction during the first half of the project were, unfortunately, unfocused and lacked method. Groundwork and other basic activities in the establishment or strengthening of such partnerships were largely unattended to. In order to assess the extent of TWC's reach and depth in service provision to women entrepreneurs through or together with its partner institutions, it is paramount to have a good grasp and understanding of the various stages where women entrepreneurs get stuck and the reasons they are unable to rise above their current level of entrepreneurship endeavors. There could be varying issues, concerns and needs in these various stages of enterprise development among women. For example, why can't women entrepreneurs in the informal sector (which statistics show comprise the bulk of Philippine economy) not improve on their micro enterprise? A better understanding of the underlying issues could then lead towards more directed advocacy papers and tools. The width and depth of experiences of various partner and would-be partner agencies and institutions can provide the TWC with a wealth of data that can provide a holistic view of the status of women entrepreneurs in the country from which can be mapped out a responsive approach

towards developing mechanisms and models, from monitoring access to and provision of services up to marketing opportunities.

Given the above, the performance and success of the project up to the mid evaluation has been very limited. Its conduct of e-Forums for women and the limited market links provided showcase activities that leaves much to be desired in the pursuit of Objective #2.

For Objective # 3

1. For its goal of strengthening support service facilities for women entrepreneurs in the provincial areas, One-Stop-Shops (OSS) in selected provincial pilot sites were targeted to be established. The OSS is an expected major output and around which project activities are to revolve. The OSS as a service concept was launched in September and October 2001 in Laguna, Pangasinan and Camarines Sur. However, the actual setting up of the facilities took sometime, more than a year at the most or well beyond the first half period of the project. Laguna's was set up in November 2002; Pangasinan's center-based OSS was never set up although a KKKOSS-On-Wheels was conducted for advocacy purposes in some areas of the province; and Naga City's was not firmed up with the WEED Center of Metro PESO, resulting in a barely set-up place. The existing TWC OSS at the time of the project implementation was identified as the facility for further development under the project but activities for its enhancement was very slow up to the time of the mid-term evaluation.
2. With OSS facilities not set-up or barely set-up in the provincial pilot sites, target activities of providing support services to women entrepreneurs, such as access to necessary information and services/referrals needed for starting up an enterprise, were largely not implemented except in Naga City wherein the city's WEED project, which acts as the project's OSS, was able to service existing women's groups of entrepreneurs that are members of the WEED. In the FGD with provincial pilot site beneficiaries, it was commonly expressed that many of them are not aware of the existence or even the plan for an OSS in their area that can be of assistance to their needs in enterprise development and as entrepreneurs.

3. Major OSS activities and outputs in the first year of the 2-year project which are essential for the implementation of other activities and achievement of other outputs were implemented in the mid or latter part of the first year with results only available in the start of 2003. These are the Sectoral Analysis of Women Micro-Entrepreneurs which is aimed at determining existing women entrepreneurs in the pilot areas and their needs, and the Participatory Capacity Assessment Forum on Entrepreneurial Environment for Women aimed at determining the prevailing conditions in the sites with regard to policy, programs and services for women entrepreneurs and their development. Results of these 2 activities are to be used as basis for the development of other project components such as responsive or appropriate training designs, services and programs for the needs of women entrepreneurs in the pilot sites.
4. In the absence of a set-up OSS facility and of data on women entrepreneurs, the pilot sites' activities focused on the conduct of training (all 4 sites) and on advocacy work (Pangasinan). Laguna, however, conducted basic skills training on livelihood (such as candle making and meat processing) for indirect beneficiaries who are members of partner organizations instead of the targeted training of partners for enterprise development of existing women entrepreneurs. Pangasinan and Naga City, on the other hand, conducted training for partner institutions on Gender and Development and Trainors' Training on Gender Sensitivity (Pangasinan). Laguna, per late report, was able to train 753 women on basic livelihood skills from November 2001 to November 2002. Pangasinan was able to conduct only one training each for Gender and Development and TOT on Gender Sensitivity, servicing a total of 34 women, while Naga City was able to conduct also one training only for 30 women on Gender and Development during the first year of the project and a Forum on Micro-Enterprise Development for Women with 25 participants
5. In Advocacy, TESDA Pangasinan's NGO partner was able to embark on an advocacy campaign and accomplished quite a number of activities in the middle part of the project period under evaluation which include radio promotions of the project in 2 local radio stations, a video and photo exhibit of the project during TESDA's 8th Anniversary celebration, press releases in local newspapers, and the posting of project activities in Pangasinan in the TESDA and TWC websites. In Laguna, while it was not a conscious effort for advocacy work by the Provincial TESDA, the

project gained advocacy support from the Governor of Laguna in whose radio program the project was introduced to the public.

Recommendations

1. A further review of the project concept, framework, strategies, objectives and expected outputs should be held to check if the PMO and provincial pilot site OSS are finally leveled off on these. Include the pilot sites' main project implementing partners (LEMDC, Naga Metro PESO) so that implementing roles and responsibilities are clarified. This should be done before any preparation of WFP for the remaining period of the project.
2. The PMO, together with all pilot sites, must review the OSS concept and come up with general operating guidelines for this service facility. Hasten the completion of the pilot sites' TNA so that together with the Sectoral Analysis and Participatory Capacity Assessment results they can serve as bases for the kind of resource materials and services to be offered by the OSS.
3. Another aspect that needs to be reviewed and decided on by project implementers is whether basic skills training on livelihood should continue to be provided by the provincial pilot sites without compromising services for the direct target beneficiaries of the project which are institutions providing support service facilities for the already existing women entrepreneurs in the area. In the FGDs, especially in Laguna and Pangasinan, there seems to be a clamor for this kind of basic skills. The Consultant, however, recommends that TESDA steps up its public information campaign on its CBTED component and refer OSS inquiries regarding basic skills training to this program/unit of the institution.
4. Finalize with partner implementing agency the location of OSS facilities and their set-up, including responsible manpower to run the facility on a sustained basis. As part of the modeling experiment on partnership, the provincial pilot sites should be given enough leeway to come up with the most appropriate and responsive scheme possible in each pilot site. Formal agreements, such as MOAs, are imperative for the sustainability of the OSS over a period of time.
5. To reach the real project target beneficiaries (women entrepreneurs), the provincial PETs need to draw up an advocacy

plan which can be based on the data gathered from the Sectoral Analysis and Participatory Capacity Assessment. Another basic activity, as often mentioned, is the expansion of contacts and establishment of partnership by the PETs with institutions in their area providing services to women entrepreneurs.

The project's Objective #3 aims to reach out to women entrepreneurs in the provincial areas starting with 3 selected pilot sites. Although not explicitly spelled out in the project document, the project hopes to provide the same services in the provincial pilot sites that the TWC in the TESDA central office is still developing or enhancing. The relevance of this objective is, therefore, tied up to the capability of the TWC to provide capacitation to the provincial PETs both in the form of skills and other support resources such as materials and finances. A case in point is the setting up of the OSS in the pilot sites. From the interviews with TESDA provincial PETs, they have very little idea of what to put in the OSS and how to go about the service set-up. There is expectation that the TWC will provide the lead for this and assist in the setting up as well as the development of skills of provincial OSS staff in developing a corollary programme of activities for the provision of services to women entrepreneurs in their areas, including the enhancement and further development of institutional partnerships.

The performance and success towards the realization of this objective are, therefore, more limited than objectives 1 and 2.

In the examination of output documents and accomplishment reports, many of the above outputs were crammed in the second half of the first project year and two months into the second year. Overlooked is the basic formulation and signing of partnership agreements between the implementing agency, TESDA, and its main partner organizations for project implementation in the modeling pilot sites – TESDA Laguna with the Laguna Employment and Manpower Development Council (LEMDC), TESDA Camarines Sur with the Naga City Metro PESO, while TESDA Pangasinan signed only a six-month Memorandum of Agreement with BUDHI Foundation. Even this, however, lacks the "partnership" spirit that the project calls for as the agreement left the implementation of project activities mostly in the hands of BUDHI. With regard to other partnership development, the PETs of TWC and Laguna stated during the interviews that they considered agreements signed with existing partners for other TESDA projects as part of their outputs under the UNDP project which may account for the lack of more partnership development activities.

B. Findings and Recommendations on the Project Management Mechanisms

The management of the project is lodged in two levels – the Project Management Office (PMO) for overall project management; and the TESDA Provincial Executing Team (PET) for implementation management in pilot sites, also called the provincial convergence areas. The pilot sites are to implement the project under three different models of implementation partnership – Provincial TESDA with a multi-sector group (Laguna), with an NGO (Pangasinan), and with an LGU (Naga City). The TWC, as a pilot site, was also required to have a PET to distinguish its project activities from the regular services of the Center. **The Evaluation Team looked into these implementing mechanisms and came up with the following findings:**

1. The Provincial TESDA PETs had varying interpretations of their roles and responsibilities under the project as well of their partnership with their main implementing partner in the area. The Pangasinan TESDA PET viewed their role as mainly a conduit between the PMO and their NGO partner for the release and liquidation of project fund with very little involvement in the implementation of project activities. The Laguna TESDA PET had no idea what to do with their project implementing partnership with the LEMDC and assumed full implementation of activities except in training whose implementation is coordinated by 5 women organization partners. It is only the Camarines Sur TESDA PET and the Naga City Metro PESO that established the ground of their project partnership although the Metro PESO head decries the lack of transparency of TESDA PET with regard to project finances and the sharing of project documents, including the WFP drawn up together by both.
2. The Provincial TESDA PETs, especially in Laguna and Pangasinan, had very little control over up-to-date reporting of activities, accomplishments and fund liquidation by their women group partners and NGO partner respectively. This contributed largely to the delays in project implementation and the submission of quarterly accomplishment and financial reports.
3. The TWC PET was not operational during the period covered by the evaluation. The PMO assumed the implementation of project activities in the TWC pilot site, it seems from the very start of the project.

4. The establishment of the PMO started only in July 2001 when project activities were supposed to be ongoing already per approved WFP. The absence of a project operating guideline at the same time slowed down the establishment of the PMO
5. Aside from establishing the PMO and an operating guideline, the period July to September 2001 and even beyond was spent by the PMO and the TESDA PETs in seeking clarification on various aspects of the project and of project implementation
6. Based on records and interviews, a PMO "team" was unable to be formed at the onset of the project and until the turn over to a new set of PMO in the 3rd Quarter of the first project year. There was very little substantive communication among those composing the first set of PMO, and disagreements on the PMO's roles and functions especially relative to the pilot sites arose, prompting the resignation of the Assistant Project Coordinator only six months after the project's start. The APC also perceived resentment from some TESDA organic project staff in the hiring of external project staff whose salaries are higher than theirs. This is due to the fact that organic staff assigned to the project does not receive a premium for their involvement. Up to the mid-evaluation period, the APC has not been replaced as well as another vacant position for project administration support.
7. There is a lack of monitoring and evaluation mechanism in the PMO since the start of the project up to the evaluation period, including regular monitoring visits to the pilot sites to provide immediate assistance in the facilitation and resolution of project issues and concerns
8. There was a lack of project documentation and record keeping by the first PMO team. A project filing system was only set up by the next set of PMO which was already well into the 3rd Quarter of the first project year. Despite this, project documentation and record filing still requires more attention and systematization if project implementers hope to capture insights and learning that can be used to improve or expand the project after the project life

In general, the findings show the inability of the PMO at the start to provide an appropriate understanding of the project's strategic framework to the pilot site implementers. However, documents show that the PMO itself needed to seek clarification on project goals and objectives as well as on the project deliverables from the project planners and sponsors. From interviews of PMO Officers,

TESDA/TWC management were consulted and involved only once in the early stage of project conceptualization and planning. There was neither TESDA/TWC involvement in the final project planning and document preparation nor indication to them that the project will push through.

From all accounts, TESDA was surprised with a ready made project after a period of time of not hearing from project sponsors. It was caught flat-footed and unprepared in the process. However, still cognizant of the advantages that could be derived by the TWC in carrying out the project TESDA rose to the challenge and signed the project agreement with UNDP.

Recommendations

1. If TESDA means to mainstream the activities of the project into the agency/TWC, the performance and outputs of the PET members should be made part of the annual performance target and merit point system.
2. TESDA PETs and modeling partners must firm up and formalize their project management partnership and draw up a governance mechanism that will guide it.
3. Re-instate the TWC PET to carry out its role in the implementation of project activities
4. The project should be treated and implemented with the least of protocol encumbrances since project duration is usually short in order to achieve project objectives and goals
5. Provide the PMO with a full manpower complement per approved staffing pattern for better management of project implementation efficiency
6. The PMO should be allowed to assume a proactive and facilitative role with regard to the pilot sites and in the delivery of support system to them
7. The PMO should set up a monitoring and evaluation mechanism that will include regular site visits for a stronger PMO guidance and facilitation of implementation support to the pilot sites
8. Determine the actual capability of the pilot site PETs for project implementation

C. Assessment/ Analysis of Output and Management Results

Project grasp and internalization

The one year and a half implementation of this project is largely characterized by a "groping" around of project implementers in both the TWC and provincial pilot sites. Both the PMO and the provincial pilot sites were plunged into the project with many unclear matters and unresolved questions at the start of the project and over a period of time after this. As a result, project implementers drew up and conducted project activities following the overall project Work and Financial Plan, not knowing whether there is sequential logic in them and whether these are priorities that would lead towards key project results and expected outcomes. Their lack of project grasp led into a slow implementation of activities, with the Camarines Sur TESDA PET and its LGU partner even refusing to conduct activities for one quarter.

Several meetings and workshops between the PMO and the provincial TESDA PETs were held for this purpose but these were of little help for almost 6 months. The April 2002 Tagaytay workshop somehow mitigated the situation when Dr. Sylvia Ordonez, one of the original project conceptualizer and planner provided a project briefing and clarifications on the strategic framework, components and project deliverables upon the request of UNDP.

This situation arises from the apparent lack of a pre-implementation phase where a thorough leveling-off of project concept, framework, strategies and objectives is held for project implementers in both the TWC and provincial pilot site levels. This activity could also include the defining and leveling-off of roles, functions, responsibilities and accountabilities of main project implementing partners especially in the provincial pilot sites. The partnership problem that arose with BUDHI Foundation's expectation of organizational financial support in implementing the project in Pangasinan could have been surfaced at the start and promptly resolved by TESDA and UNDP.

From interview accounts, UNDP seems to have handed an already packaged-and-ready-to-be-implemented project to TESDA without a final consultation and project implementation planning with the executing agency. The final Project Document perused by the Consultant is rather general and does not show where the capacitation of the TWC begins and ends in relation to that of the provincial pilot sites. As it is, the document seems to present a plan for the simultaneous capacitation of both but at the same time expects the TWC to take the lead in the capacitation of the provincial pilot sites in the development of OSS resources, programs and services for the project duration.

Project Management

In the provincial pilot sites, the TESDA PETs and their main project partners do not have a feeling of project "co-managership" as manifested by their varying perception of their partnership. The lack of a project governance mechanism has spawned perceptions of non-transparency as well as an absence of assumption of project roles and responsibilities. On the part of the TESDA PET members, this stems from their non-feeling also of "project ownership" even though they are the outreach arm of the project executing agency. PET members, whether in the TWC or in the provincial pilot sites, view the project as **on top of their other regular tasks and therefore an additional load or burden. Their participation in the implementation of the project in their area of jurisdiction therefore becomes mere compliance to the directives of TESDA management.** The feeling of "burden" is due to the knowledge that the project will not be included in their performance target, and therefore, will not contribute to their performance merit when the annual performance appraisal period comes. Between giving priority in implementation of their regular tasks and those of the project, the PET members prioritize the former during regular working hours and reserved time for project activities during the weekends.

On the other hand, the TESDA PET's piloting partners adopted a posture of passivity, taking project leadership and implementation cue from the former. Project partnership seems to also have been subsumed under previous or other partnership arrangements. This seems to be the case in Laguna, where there is an absence of formal project management partnership agreement and set-up with the LEMDC at the start of the project. The absence of leveling-off placed the burden of project responsibility on the TESDA PET which usually has a manpower complement of 3 non-fulltime provincial staff who had to spread itself out too thinly, slowing down the implementation of project activities and the realization of project outputs. On the other hand, main project partners LEMDC and Naga City Metro PESO were at a loss or unsure of their position and responsibilities in project management and implementation. In contrast, TESDA Pangasinan assumed an offhand attitude in project implementation relying heavily on BUDHI to conduct the project activities.

The project design and set-up naturally place the TESDA PETs and PMO into a position of strategic management partnership through complementation of roles that can provide a more efficient and effective project implementation. However, this has not been viewed as such. This seems to have been constrained by the standard TESDA protocol known as the COROPOTI (Central Office/Regional Office/Provincial Office/Training Institute) which observes the organizational order of process flow, authority, responsibility and accountability. Despite the PMO's position as overall management body of the project, its role in relation to the pilot sites have been limited to coordination and monitoring of the implementation of project activities. The more strategic facilitative and guiding roles of the PMO have been ignored so as not to "ruffle feathers", as some project implementers say. This has in turn constrained the

PMO to practice a more proactive approach in the resolution of project concerns and problems instead of the current reactive practice for damage control.

The PMO's assumption of the responsibility of the TWC PET further undermines its strategic role and functions. The TWC pilot site activities which will lead towards its capacitation as a resource center for women entrepreneurs, require closer attention and the development of more external partnerships, further eating up on the time and attention of the PMO for its other responsibilities. This also constrains the PMO to develop and install better and more responsive management mechanisms and systems that can assist in the improvement of project implementation in the pilot sites, aside from developing a better management complementation with TESDA PETs. The current 2-man PMO manpower complement is not enough to address its strategic management as well as administrative support functions.

D. Fund Usage and Management

The project has a total project fund of P15.9 million for two years of project implementation. After one and a half years (assuming that project period count starts with July 2001), only P4,173, 356.00 have been used by the project up to the time covered by the evaluation period, which is November 2002. Fund absorption by the project is, therefore, very slow. The 2001 budget release of P3.1 million covering project budget for only one quarter (July to September 2001) was expended instead over a period of 3 quarters or up to March 2002. Still, actual expenditures recorded for the period was only 29% of the fund already at hand. The 63% of the expendable fund was classified as amount for outstanding obligations while the remaining 8% was classified as Planned Expenditure.

In 2002, UNDP released in the middle of the year only P.9 million out of a projected total budget of P6.4 million. Per record as of September 2002, the amount was earmarked by project implementers for Planned Expenditures for the subsequent months. Up to the evaluation period (December 2002 to January 2003), UNDP has only released a total of P4 million or 25% of project funds, leaving P11.9 million for use in the remaining period of project implementation, which is either up to July or September of 2003 whichever will be considered by project implementers as start up month when the project commenced implementation.

The disbursement and management of project fund is largely the responsibility of the PMO upon receipt from UNDP. In practice, the PMO releases funds in tranches to the pilot sites through the TESDA PETs. TESDA PETs, in turn, disburse the money to project partners conducting project activities for the period. The partners are expected to liquidate the amounts to the TESDA PETs who in turn submit the liquidation to the PMO. In Pangasinan, the TESDA PET oftentimes

release bulk fund to its NGO partner instead of on a per activity basis. Based on experience, liquidation activity mounted one on top of the other due to non-liquidation of expenses of finished activities which caused further delays in the project liquidation to UNDP and its subsequent release of funds. While the same is true in Laguna, it is more due to the difficulty of following up community women groups who received the funds for the preparations in the implementation of training in scattered, and sometimes far-flung, areas of the province.

As a rule, further disbursement of project funds to the pilot sites is dependent on the liquidation of previously released fund. Documents show that submission of fund liquidation by pilot sites to the PMO is usually long overdue during the period under evaluation. This is, however, connected to the slow implementation of project activities and for the reasons cited above. Aside from this, however, both the PMO and the TESDA PETs have no control mechanism that will ensure immediate liquidation of project funds by project partners. As a consequence, the release of fund tranches from UNDP is affected.

E. Assessment of the Project Framework, Strategies and Processes

The current global economic condition continues to put women in a precarious or marginalized situation. The project framework has become relevant more than ever. The strategies and objectives remain valid. However, project activities and expected outputs are proving to be unrealistic for the short period of the project duration. A lot of activities are crammed for implementation during the period based on the assumption that the TESDA organization set-up and mechanism will be more than prepared to go into full-blast implementation. The process of engaging project partners in the implementation of the project including primary stakeholders in the pilot site level is true to the principle of a participatory process. However, establishing and developing such stakeholder project governance process will require a longer and sustained effort. Developing partnerships involve relationships and relationships mean people and people mean processes.

In general, there is a need for project sponsors and executing agency to consider adjusting project implementation into phases that will allow the development and strengthening process for partnerships. Initial talks and consultations with other key institutions and other stakeholders as to their project involvement, such as those initially conducted during the project conceptualization and development, need to be firmed up and formalized in subsequent meetings. Pre-implementation planning saves a lot of problems, troubles and time during the main project implementation phase and allows for adoption of more flexible implementing measures.

F. Emerging Results of the Project

Based on project outputs after one and a half year of project implementation, **the emerging result is a better understanding and appreciation of the project by various levels of project implementers and stakeholders.** The period under evaluation only enabled the project implementers to clarify a lot of things and eventually come up with adjustment and appropriate project set-up that can now buckle down to work to attain project goals and objectives for the remaining project period.

Important to take note of, however, is the high enthusiasm and appreciation of project benefits by indirect project beneficiaries – whether those who underwent basic livelihood skills training in Laguna, or micro entrepreneurs under the WEED project in Naga City, or institutional partner participants to the Gender and Development training and Training of Trainors on Gender Sensitivity in Pangasinan and Naga City.

In the FGDs with community women beneficiaries in the pilot sites, especially in Laguna, the enthusiasm of most women for the project hinges on the hope that it can help them uplift their economic status by even just learning basic livelihood skills that they can use to establish micro enterprises. There are, however, some women beneficiaries in Laguna who are more advanced than the others and with emerging entrepreneurial outlook and are encouraged by possible enhancement trainings under the project. In Naga City, many WEED members, who are the project beneficiaries and who already have either a micro or cottage enterprise, look forward to more enterprise development trainings such as product and market development. This enthusiasm is bolstered by the participation of 5 WEED members and project beneficiaries in the Food Labeling and Packaging seminar conducted in TWC under the auspices of the project.

As gathered by pilot site evaluation team members, interviews conducted with institutional participants to some project activities such as the gender training showed that they are very willing to continue partnerships with TESDA under the project for the economic empowerment of women in their areas. Even documents of the initial multi-sectoral meetings in TWC for the project showed the readiness of other partner institutions to upscale their involvement to achieve the project goal. It seems that it is only a matter of defining their participations for the development of more project partnerships with the TWC.

During the presentation of mid-term evaluation results where project clarifications contributed to better realization and appreciation of the project, representatives of pilot site main partners – LEMDC of Laguna and Metro PESO of Naga City – expressed renewed interest and enthusiasm in being project partners and assuming more “co-managership” responsibilities with TESDA PETs.

G. Piloting Partnership Models

Partnership models have been piloted in many areas of the country and for many kinds of project. As an implementing mechanism, it has been known to work out in many cases. It cannot be said that, under the project, one model is better than the other. The period under evaluation does not show sufficient indicators that would cast negative light on any of the 3 pilot site models. A look at the 3 models' experiences so far can help in the development of such partnerships.

1. **TESDA/NGO Partnership.** Based on experience, NGO and funding or executing agency partnership has been a general practice in development work in the country. Such partnership, however, undergo a process of selection based on established criteria of project sponsoring partners. It is an important process in the establishment of a clear understanding and agreement by both parties of joint project responsibility and accountability. It also shows from the start the institutional capability of a partner NGO to enter into such a project partnership.

The case of BUDHI as NGO partner of TESDA Pangasinan in the project implementation is a case of misconception and misunderstanding at the outset of the organizational capacity and readiness for partnership by BUDHI. From the visitation made in Pangasinan by a member of the Evaluation Team, it was apparent that the NGO lacks the necessary organizational complement for the task at hand, the organization being run by only one person. The organization does not also have its own organizational fund for operations and apparently, again, relied on the project fund even for manpower compensation and other operating expenses. There was an expectation that these will be provided by TESDA/UNDP.

This is because in most cases of NGO/sponsoring agency partnership, provision of such support, usually called management and administrative support, is part of partnership agreements. Usually, the NGO personnel directly involved in the implementation of project activities get full compensation assistance while administrative support is partially given. It seems that BUDHI has entered into this kind of arrangement before, hence the above expectation from TESDA/UNDP. However, based on experience, it is also important to point out that the partial support presupposes that the NGO has the capability for forms of counterparts to the project such as support staff, office equipment, office facilities and others that can be of assistance to the efficient implementation of the project by the partner.

The weakness of the partnership between TESDA and BUDHI lies in the fait accompli of the latter's choice due to what is termed by some as "political power play". From all accounts, no survey of other NGOs in the province was made from where a selection process, following a set up criteria, could have been made. The extent of partnership, especially project financial assistance, seemed not to have been clearly spelled out between the sponsoring/project executing agencies and the NGO. Roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of the implementing partners were not made clear from the start and implementing mechanisms were not set up. It seems that there were a lot of assumptions on both sides that were never verbalized and discussed thoroughly. These could have been mitigated if TESDA did not allow itself to be "railroaded" (in the words of TESDA Pangasinan's Director) by "political accommodation" into the partnership.

There are a lot of strengths in an NGO/sponsoring agency partnership as experienced by many, including the Consultant's NGO in Cebu. These include the harnessing of expertise accumulated by an NGO through years of community-based experiences and relationships built; the linkages and networking it has entered into; strategies and methodologies it has developed based on experiences of actual situations; and the commitment and dedication for development efforts that sponsoring agencies like TESDA/UNDP can tap for efficiency in project implementation. Unfortunately, these were not explored to the fullest under this project due to unclear communication and understanding between TESDA and BUDHI resulting in unmet expectations by both sides.

2. **TESDA/MULTI-SECTORAL Partnership.** As a pilot for another kind of partnership model in convergent areas, the LEMDC as a multi-sectoral organization shows good potentials as TESDA project partner. Composed of organizations and agencies with highly educated, aware and development-oriented representatives to the Council, it has a good grasp of project goals and objectives. However, as a body composed of high-powered and busy individuals, its weakness lies in the availability of these people to put time and effort in overseeing the project in tandem with TESDA. Such partnership, therefore, would require a partnership mechanism that would ensure the implementation of project activities. This is a learning of TESDA Laguna and the LEMDC who have started to come up with such a mechanism. During a visit by evaluators to the Pitak Kababaihan/OSS facility, a LEMDC-appointed person has started to take on partnership activities with TESDA. Whether this mechanism will

prosper and be sustained depends on agreements between the project partners on the details of the set-up.

The strength of this partnership model lies in the width and depth of the combined linkages, network and projects of the members of this multi-sectoral organization which can be tapped by the project to achieve its objectives and outputs. Being composed of both private and public organizations that are involved in various economic development endeavors, the LEMDC and similar organizations can provide a directed outlook and perspective in the pursuit of economic development, including those for women entrepreneurs. Their various fields of development activities and expertise – manpower development, technology, marketing, etc. – can be drawn upon to institute a coherent approach to project implementation. They can also provide a more professional approach to achieve implementation efficiency.

3. **TESDA/LGU Partnership.** Like the other two project partnerships, this shows possibilities and in fact has been tried out in other areas of the country. However, the political backdrop of such partnership should be a conscious consideration by both parties. In the case of TESDA Camarines Sur and Naga City's Metro PESO, the strength of the project partnership lies in the fact that it is found in a nurturing environment. This is because of the LGU's long years of partnerships with multi-sector groups in the city where insights and learning on how to make partnership work between local government and the private sector have been used to advantage. Pivotal to this kind of partnership is a highly aware, development-oriented, open and non-political/non-partisan LGU leadership. Naga City's previous leadership has left this kind of legacy in the city leadership which has fortunately been sustained through the years even with the change in political leadership. In this environment can also be found mechanisms for participatory local governance that encourage partnerships such as that of the project's as well as possible sustainability of the endeavor beyond the project (UNDP sponsored) life. Another strength of this partnership model is the ability and position of LGUs to help mainstream and institutionalize the project's goals locally.

In the replication of this model of partnership, a similar political and governance environment is a necessary consideration to approximate the effectiveness and success being enjoyed by the project in Naga City. Fortunately, there are other areas in the country that have aware, development-oriented and strong LGUs such as those that can be found in Bohol, Negros Oriental and Occidental, Iloilo, Bulacan, to mention a few areas known for their progressive outlook and development activities.

The weakness of this kind of partnership can emanate only from self-serving purposes of partners such as the lack of transparency on certain aspects such as project finances especially by those handling project funds. The lack of financial transparency can become a source of irritant between partners and cause non-acknowledgement of responsibility and accountability by either one of them. Credit for project success as a tool for either political or agency recognition mileage may also spoil partnerships. Still, these weaknesses can be mitigated by constant and open communication between partners to iron out kinks that may arise in the course of joint project management and implementation.

In all 3 partnership model, it is encouraging for the project that the above institutions have expressed their willingness to partner with TESDA for the project. Unfortunately, the terms of reference spelling out project management partnership agreements as well as local implementing mechanism was overlooked at the start. In piloting these partnerships, it would be of help and advantage to TESDA to look into experiences of similar undertakings. After all, various types of partnerships in development endeavors are now a frequent governance mechanism in many parts of the country.

H. Major Project Problems Encountered

Given the above findings on the project after a year and two months of implementation, the evaluation Consultant finds it important to point out certain major problems that the project encountered that have contributed to, if not set the scene for, the implementation problems that cropped during the first half of the project duration.

From the interviews with the PMO and even the TESDA PETs, one major problem cited by them that had affected the project implementation is the change in corporate leadership, sometimes unheralded, sometimes unwarranted. As the PMO head states, the project was initiated and developed under the auspices and support of the TESDA Director General in 2000 who was relieved of his position after the change of administration in 2001. TESDA was fortunate to have a successor whose background and experience provided impetus to the formulation of the project, but who, after a short stint in the agency was reassigned to another government agency and position. Necessarily, a new Director General was assigned.

From the experience of the PMO, these changes in corporate leadership led to corresponding changes in focal persons for the project which disrupted and distracted the focused attention in the further development of, and preparation for,

the project. As a result, continuity of thoughts and other inputs to the project concept suffered and interest in project development waned.

The TESDA PETs on the other hand expressed their observation that the regular bi-annual reassignment of directors affected the continuity of arrangements and preparations previously put in place by the outgoing directors in the pilot sites. This posed a major problem with would be project partners as they had to deal with a new set of TESDA PETs, coming into agreements all over again. This is because previous PET members may have been reassigned to other positions and functions by the new directors. In effect, TESDA's overall corporate shakeups affected the continuity aspect of the project, which spawned problems in the eventual implementation of the project.

Another major problem encountered by the project and project implementer alike stems from what the PMO head describes as "Political accommodation". This refers to the pilot site partnership case of TESDA Pangasinan and BUDHI Foundation whose selection was regarded by the Pangasinan PET as arbitrary and a result of "powerplay". BUDHI's Chairperson who also happened to be the TWC Chairperson at the time considered it a project advantage to forge a project partnership in Pangasinan. At the interview of the TESDA Provincial Director at the time, he expressed initial misgivings at the "fait accompli" selection. The absence of terms of agreement for the partnership led to BUDHI expectations that the project could not fulfill, financial support to BUDHI as an organization not being a part of the official project features. This has resulted in powerful pressures and demand that continue to distract the PMO up to the mid-term evaluation period. At the same time, activities in the Pangasinan pilot site suffered a setback when BUDHI terminated its project implementation role and the PMO and TESDA PET in the site strive to settle the issue and resolve the situation.

I. Project Strengths and Weaknesses

Despite operational problems, the project has a lot going for it. Its basic strength lies in its being relevant to the needs of the time and responding to these based on a framework that leads towards sustainability. Another strength of the project is its being lodged in an institution like TESDA whose mandate and organizational set-up ensures the institutionalization and mainstreaming of project outputs and outcomes, even on a national basis in the long run. The presence of the TESDA Women's Center enables TESDA to focus and highlight its activities and assistance to the development of women entrepreneurs, thereby putting "teeth" to the Center's objectives. Adding to the project's strength is the presence of a dynamic multi-sector stakeholders and institutions with which partnerships could be forged for the realization of project objectives and goal. It is a matter of harnessing these

strengths to the fullest for the project to concretize its purpose of economically empowering women in the country.

The project's general weakness is its many expectations in so short a period of implementation time. In trying to achieve these by the end of a 2-year period, the project somehow lacked focus, with components and activities that detract from the pursuit of major activities and attainment of major objectives and results. This is best demonstrated by the lackluster pursuit of activities for the capacity building of TWC both as a resource center and as integrator, facilitator, coordinator and harmonizer of multi-sector and multi-agency plans and programs for the development and economic empowerment of women in the country.

IV. GENERAL RECOMMENDATION TO UNDP AND TO TESDA PMO

If official project duration is to follow the date of the formal signing of project agreements which was March 2001, or the Work and Financial Plan which showed July as the start of the activities, or the start of activities in September, there are either one, five or 7 months left to accomplish the project deliverables. A review of these project deliverables will show that not even half of project outputs have been achieved, or those that have been started are still to be finalized. This is true in both provincial and TWC pilot sites.

The TWC is envisioned to take the lead in the development of resources – both material and human – for support to women entrepreneurs that can be brought down and shared with TESDA Provincial Offices, initially with the pilot sites. However, it seems that the project's strategy of simultaneously building the capacity of the Center and of the pilot sites is proving to be less focused and strategic as project implementation becomes diffused. The pilot sites also require a closer look and preparation than the period of time it has been allotted.

In this regard, the Consultancy Team recommends the scaling down of activities and funding support to the pilot sites, and the enhancement of capacity building for the TWC. This is seen to be more strategic, if the TWC is to take the lead in advocating both policy reform and service/program support for the development of women entrepreneurship in the country.