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Global Women's Leadership Network

Global Women Grant Continues Ripple Effect

In 2015 - 2016, World Council's Global Women's Leadership Network implemented an [empowerment grant](#) program to provide women around the world with greater access to financial services.

Empowerment grant recipient, Elenita Sanroque, CEO of the [Asian Confederation of Credit Unions](#), leveraged the award to support [Paglaum Multipurpose Cooperative](#) open a business development center in the Philippines where 80 percent of members are female.

We recently sat down with Gadwin Handumon, CEO of Paglaum, to learn how Global Women continues to make a lasting impact today.

"I think the missing link is we need to help women get to market. It's not enough to give loans," Handumon said, so Paglaum (which has assets of \$19 million US dollars and 66,962 members) used the Empowerment Grant to formalize and grow its business development center. It teaches local women skills to help members start or grow their businesses, as well as providing financial education.



"We needed a sustainable development program because there's always donor fatigue," Handumon acknowledged. Rice trading was the organization's first economic activity, which helped members learn a trade and provided economic stability for the organization. The credit union also educated members about the importance of saving. In the first year, the Paglaum Business Center helped to empower 110 female members by training them on enterprise management and one-on-one support to enhance their trade such as soap-making, basket weaving, necklace designs and other crafts.

But it didn't stop there. Handumon worked with Elenita Sanroque to form dozens of ongoing Global Women chapters, called Sister Societies, in the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia and Nepal.

In the business development center's second year, it added numerous services and aided 1,000 women in the community. The center opened a coffee shop that also housed Pasalubong Center, a display area for beneficiary's crafts and services to help them better reach the market. Paglaum and many others in the local business community have helped to start the farming center, including a rice

mill to move beyond simply trading. It has a cooperative hostel, which is the only building in the area with an elevator, cooperative insurance offerings, telephone service and Nexen Innovation Technologies, which serves many businesses in the community.

Paglaum works hard to continue building partnerships and address other social issues in the community. Recently, they partnered with Unilever for clean drinking water, “especially for those in the countryside who have access to clean drinking water,” Handumon noted. Those same indigenous people in the hinterlands were able to receive micro solar power systems with a loan from the credit union, and he emphasized, they paid the loans back.

“Remember always, there is hope—with you, with the World Council and the rest of the world to make a difference in credit unions,” Handumon concluded.



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