



**Asia-Pacific
Economic Cooperation**

**Summary of the Workshop - Good Practices of
Women's Entrepreneurship in Local Communities in
the Process of Disaster Reconstruction**

Policy Partnership on Women and the Economy (PPWE)

June 2015

APEC Project: PPWE 03 2014S

Produced by:

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APEC#215-ES-01.2.

APEC Workshop Summary:

Good Practices of Women's Entrepreneurship in Local Communities in the Process of Disaster Reconstruction

1. Overview

On 18th March 2015, a workshop entitled “Good Practices of Women's Entrepreneurship in Local Communities in the Process of Disaster Reconstruction” was organized by Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Cabinet Office and Reconstruction Agency of Japan (in cooperation with Gender Action Platform; supported by Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry of Japan, OECD Tokyo Centre, and Oxfam Japan).

In 2014, the APEC Economic Leaders committed to “taking concrete policies and innovative measures to further enhance women's empowerment” – as stated in the APEC Economic Leaders' Declaration – and promoting women's participation in the post-disaster reconstruction process was encouraged at the APEC Women and Economy Forum. Following upon these undertakings, this workshop aimed to ① share good practices of women's entrepreneurship in the process of disaster reconstruction, ② discuss women's role in the inclusive reconstruction of resilient community and economy after natural disasters, and ③ identify key factors for success as well as impediments in women's empowerment and entrepreneurship, and effective supporting measures.

At the opening session, Dr. Alan Bollard, Executive Director, the APEC Secretariat, pointed out in his video message that the Asia-Pacific region experiences around 70% of the world's natural disasters, and hence the Philippines, APEC host for 2015, has set “Building Sustainable and Resilient Communities” as one of four priority areas for discussion under this year's theme of “Building Inclusive Economies, Building a Better World”. He hoped that APEC economies would be able to learn from the experiences of Japan and other economies' disaster reconstruction processes through the workshop.

Ms. Laura Winthrop Abbot, Executive Director, TOMODACHI Initiative, introduced the TOMODACHI Initiatives, which was established after the Great East Japan Earthquake as a public-private partnership to promote the Japan-US youth exchange programs, and explained that there has been approximately 3,500 youth participated in the program since its establishment. She hoped that such PPP initiative to be widely recognized as a role model for a cooperation among government, businesses and NPOs to work towards a common goal.

2. Keynote Presentation “ Report on the Case Studies: Economic Empowerment of Women in Post-Disaster Reconstruction in Tohoku and the Asia-Pacific” conducted by Gender Action Platform

Background of the Study

The Asia-Pacific is the natural disaster-prone region. Socio-economic impacts are different for men and women due to the gender norms and gender-based division of labor that are prevalent in the region. Nonetheless, as were seen in the Hyogo Framework (2005), the CSW Resolutions (2012, 2014), and APEC Women and Economy Forum statement (2014) attention to gender equality in the context of disaster response and recovery is growing. Japan’s Basic Act on Reconstruction and Basic Guidelines for Reconstruction of 2011 outline the role for women in disaster recovery and reconstruction, but their official supports are based on the male-headed household system, so actual support for women and girls in disaster recovery and reconstruction efforts is mainly provided by local women’s centers and NGOs.

Framework of the Study

Good practices in terms of women’s economic empowerment through entrepreneurship in Japan and the Asia-Pacific were selected in the study. The study tries to present how women can play active roles in the building-back-better process after natural disasters, by analyzing common success factors and identifying achievements and challenges. The selection was based on two criteria: 1) the project outcomes – skills and resources obtained, and positive impacts on the local community; and 2) methodology – partnerships and collaborations with other actors, and innovative ideas and approaches.

Characteristics of successful projects

(1) Factors common to all cases include: provision of skill and business development program; support by professional experts male and female within and outside of their community; provision of financial support by local and central governments, private companies as well as local and international NGOs.

(2) Successful partnerships are common feature of good practices, which led to the acquisition of skills and resources. Also, the case of successful entrepreneurship utilizing housework-skills, which are considered to be of little economic value under the gendered

norm, was a product of an innovative idea to turn women's unpaid domestic work into marketable work, and women themselves were made aware of their capacities.

(3) To have such a chain of effects, comprehensive approach based upon gender perspectives as well as strategic partnerships and local ownership in provision of support are required. The good practices we have studied created job opportunities and space for local residents. However, in order to make sustainable economic empowerment, the most serious challenge lies in the uncertainty of sustainable financial resources and the provision of follow-up to the initial support received will mark a turning point for long-term reconstruction.

(4) For realizing women's economic empowerment, it is necessary to provide resources, but also to remove the barriers for access to the resources by women.

3. Session 2 "Report the good practices of women's entrepreneurship in the process of disaster reconstruction"

At Session2, speakers from local NGOs from Tohoku region as well as APEC economies reported the good practices on "Good Practices of Women's Entrepreneurship in Local Communities in the Process of Disaster Reconstruction".

The Sendai Family Support Network in Miyagi promoted the empowerment of mothers with young children by producing a handbook for re-entering the labour market, self-realization, and organizing workshops. The Ishinomaki Revival Support Network succeeded in helping 24 women start businesses through the Yappesu Entrepreneurship Fund, and organized capacity-building seminars with child care programs to encourage the participation of mothers, resulting in half of the female participants being able to find jobs.

The People in Fukushima established a business model with locally grown cotton to produce cotton dolls by local hands as a marketable product. The Fukushima Organic Cotton Project found a way to utilize abandoned farmland, producing economic benefits as well as restoring bonds among local residents.

The Participation Planning Iwate increased the number of women entrepreneurs by providing an entrepreneurial support program, catering to the needs of each woman in the community, taking into consideration gender-based constraints on women's roles and responsibilities, as well as their limited access to resources.

In the Philippines, holistic assistance was extended to women entrepreneurs and workers in the Ticog Grass Mat industry in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan, to restore their businesses and livelihoods. This assistance included the provision of access to raw materials, soft loans, and wider market access through the mobilization of government, businesses, and donors in the Philippines and abroad.

In Chile, after the Earthquake in February 2010, women who were not provided with necessary assistance because of their socio-economic status, organized themselves to negotiate with the government for household recovery and community-business infrastructure reconstruction. Drawing on these experiences, they are now actively engaging in policy advocacy towards local and national policies and measures in response to natural disasters.

4. Session 3 “Panel Discussion on “the importance of women’s role” as well as “factors for success”

At session3, panel discussion on ①the importance of women’s role in the inclusive reconstruction of resilient community and economy after natural disasters, ②factors for success as well as impediments in women’s empowerment and entrepreneurship, and effective supporting measures was conducted.

The Reconstruction Agency of Japan pointed out that in addition to funding, supports such as leadership training and provision of a physical space for business and awareness-raising to promote gender equality in local communities are necessary to provide an enabling environment for women entrepreneurs.

Oxfam Japan reported that based on their experiences in providing support for women entrepreneurship and single mothers’ employment – with a focus on building organizational capacities of the local groups, “Implementing Agencies have Gender Analysis Capacities”, “Comprehensive support” and “Connecting to the Community Resources” were highlighted as success factors to women’s economic empowerment .

R3ADY Asia Pacific highlighted that mobilizing and organizing local women, providing

entrepreneurial support, and access to resources, housing, and child care as success factors for effective support for women to recover their household and livelihoods after Hurricane Katrina and Haiyan Typhoon.

Sustainable Development Foundation (Thai) supported the creation of a system for local women in the fishery community to buy fish, and sell them in the market to make profit together with supporting local women to organize themselves to voice their needs and opinions and to participate in the decision-making processes, including laws, policies, and budget allocations. Based on those initiatives, the importance of providing the program which bring positive impacts on other women, as well as considering socio-economic and political conventions were highlighted as success factors.

Stronger Christchurch Infrastructure Rebuild Team (New Zealand) introduced the promotion of women's employment in the construction industry, which dramatically increased the labour demand in the post-earthquake (February 2011) recovery process. It was highlighted that collaborative initiatives among the Ministry of Women's Affairs, industry, training institutions and etc., was successful in increasing women workers and transforming the images of construction being men's work, by providing free training and construction uniforms for women, producing a handbook for employers, and rewarding employers who hired women.

5. Outcomes

In the course of presentations and discussions, together with sharing the good practices, the important points on ① women's role in the inclusive reconstruction of resilient community and economy after natural disasters, ② factors for success as well as impediments in women's empowerment and entrepreneurship and effective supporting measures, were raised as follows.

a) Regarding factors for success, the following four main points were highlighted:

1. Comprehensive and gender-sensitive approach: Projects take into account local gender norms (including gender-based division of labour, and women's limited access to decision-making in the household and community), and thus they are designed to respond effectively to women's specific needs.

2. Strategic partnerships: Projects build on strategic partnerships between local and external entities and communities (including grass-roots groups, government, NGOs, and the private sector, etc.), and strategically utilize local and external resources.
 3. Local ownership: Projects value and build on local ownership, and some are run by local organizations with working experiences in the community, while others are run by a group of local women who share the same concerns and are mobilized after disaster with external assistance.
 4. Innovation: Projects take comprehensive approach including provision of skills and knowledge development as well as follow up to the initial support. They also take an innovative approach aimed for transforming traditional gender-based division of labour and going outside of what is traditionally identified as “women’s realms”.
- b) The following two points were noted as challenges:
1. Sustainability: How to continue the businesses and programs after the external assistance is finished. Funding, marketable product development, marketing, human resource development, and external relations and networking are some of the concrete areas in which they need further assistance.
 2. Participation in policymaking: It is crucial for women not only to provide services to the local community, but also to fully and formally engage in decision making at local and national levels in post-disaster reconstruction and disaster risk reduction to contribute to the development of a resilient community and nation.