

Empowered Participation: Women in the Income Generating Projects of the University Business Affairs Program in Central Luzon State University – A Case Study

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Abstract

This study explores women's participation in the Income Generating Projects (IGPs) of the University Business Affairs Program (UBAP) of Central Luzon State University (CLSU). It investigates how women contribute to the sustainability, innovation, and operational success of university-led enterprise programs while navigating socio-cultural and institutional challenges. Using qualitative methods—interviews, focus group discussions, and institutional records—the study highlights women's leadership, entrepreneurial contributions, and capacity for grassroots transformation. Findings emphasize the need for gender-inclusive policies to institutionalize their role and amplify their impact within State Universities and Colleges or SUC's enterprise systems.

Keywords: Women empowerment, university enterprises, income generating projects, gender mainstreaming, SUCs, Central Luzon State University

1. Introduction

Women's economic participation has been a cornerstone of national development agenda globally, and higher education institutions (HEIs) are increasingly seen as platforms for promoting gender equity in leadership, employment, and entrepreneurship.

The University Business Affairs Program (UBAP) of Central Luzon State University (CLSU) exemplifies this trend, where women play a significant role in managing and sustaining income-generating projects. These initiatives range from

agricultural production, garments and merchandising to services like transportation, canteens, and ambulant vending—areas where women's leadership and labor have proven indispensable.

This case study documents the involvement of women in the planning, management, and execution of UBAP's IGPs, examining their roles, challenges, and contributions, while identifying key enablers and barriers to their full participation.

2. Background and Context

In recent decades, the role of State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) has expanded beyond instruction and research to include social enterprise and income generation. In this shift, the University Business Affairs Program (UBAP) of Central Luzon State University has demonstrated how academic institutions can create livelihood opportunities while empowering women. This study examines how women actively shape the implementation and outcomes of these university-led enterprises and evaluates the gender dimensions embedded within UBAP's enterprise design.

CLSU's UBAP has long embraced a developmental approach to enterprise, with a dual purpose: (1) generate revenues to augment university funding, and (2) provide employment, training, and development opportunities for students, faculty, and surrounding communities. Women comprise a substantial proportion of UBAP's workforce—occupying positions from frontline staff to project managers, division heads, and Vice President. Their involvement spans both productive and reproductive work, often balancing roles as caregivers and breadwinners.

This study builds upon gender and development frameworks, contextualized within the university setting, and reflects on how IGPs may serve as instruments of empowerment rather than perpetrators

of traditional gender roles.

3. Literature Review

Gender roles in development have undergone substantial shifts, yet structural barriers remain. Studies by the Philippine Commission on Women (2020) and CHED have highlighted the underutilized potential of women in enterprise and leadership in higher education. The concept of gender mainstreaming in IGP's remains underexplored, making this study a valuable contribution to the discourse on inclusive innovation and social entrepreneurship within SUCs.

4. Methodology

The study used a qualitative case study approach. Data collection included ten (10) key informant interviews with women in project management, operations, and support staff and two (2) focus group discussions (FGDs) with women employees from three UBAP divisions, and document analysis from UBAP's annual and financial reports, HR records, and internal memoranda.

A thematic analysis identified recurring patterns in women's participation, innovation, leadership, and challenges with particular focus on gender roles, leadership dynamics, innovation practices, and institutional policies affecting women's participation.

5. Findings and Analysis

5.1 Leadership and Managerial Participation

Women occupy 60% of mid- and senior-level management positions in UBAP IGP's, particularly in the garments, food service, merchandising projects. Their management style is often characterized by participative decision-making, conflict resolution skills, and community engagement.

5.2 Operational Roles and Skill Transfer

Women in UBAP's IGP's perform diverse roles—from production to inventory, marketing, customer and support service. In projects like garments and food service, women are both skilled workers and trainers. Many have developed technical and soft skills on the job, often serving as mentors to student interns and newly hired staff.

5.3 Socio-Economic Empowerment

Women employees, many of whom are breadwinners, emphasized how IGP's provided them with stable income, training opportunities, and a platform to support their families and communities.

5.4 Barriers to Full Participation

Despite their presence, women reported limited access to formal decision-making structures in certain projects. Despite their contributions, women face challenges such as limited access to formal training,

gender stereotyping in leadership roles (especially in male-dominated units like transport and agricultural production), and work-life balance constraints. Other concerns included absence of professional development pathways and under-recognition of their leadership.

6. Implications for Policy and Practice

The study indicates that women's full and meaningful participation in IGP's has significant implications for the sustainability and social impact of university enterprises. To institutionalize gender equity and maximize contributions, the following actions are recommended:

Gender Mainstreaming in UBAP Policies: Integrate gender-sensitive policies in recruitment, promotion, and training programs.

Leadership Development Programs: Tailored training for women to further enhance their leadership and entrepreneurial skills.

Supportive Work Environments: UBAP shall institutionalize a Gender-Responsive Parenting Support Program (GRPSP), including the establishment of child-care facilities, to foster work-life integration and support the needs of working mothers and fathers engaged in income-generating projects.

Recognition and Incentives: Establish recognition mechanisms for women-led innovations and high-performance teams.

Monitoring and Evaluation: Develop gender-disaggregated indicators to monitor women's participation and progress across all IGP's.

7. Conclusion

The case of UBAP reveals that women's participation is not just symbolic—it is strategic. Their involvement improves institutional outcomes and community relevance. However, to move from participation to empowerment, UBAP and other SUCs must redesign policies to accommodate women's distinct needs and leadership trajectories. This includes recognizing invisible labor, valuing care work, and dismantling informal biases that limit women's full participation in enterprise development.

Women are at the heart of UBAP's enterprise ecosystem, serving as producers, innovators, and mentors. Their consistent contributions demand institutional recognition and policy support. CLSU's experience demonstrates the transformative potential of inclusive enterprise models, offering a blueprint for other SUCs nationwide.

While this study provides rich insights into the gendered dynamics of income-generating projects, the findings are drawn from a qualitative, context-specific

case study focused on one state university, and may not fully capture the varied experiences of women across other SUCs or regions. As such, the conclusions should be viewed as indicative rather than universally generalizable. Future studies with broader geographic coverage and mixed-method approaches are recommended to validate and expand upon these findings.

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