

CLEAN CITIES, BLUE OCEAN



WOMEN IN WASTE'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

BBEST inaugural rollout. Informal waste collectors from Quezon City, the Philippines.

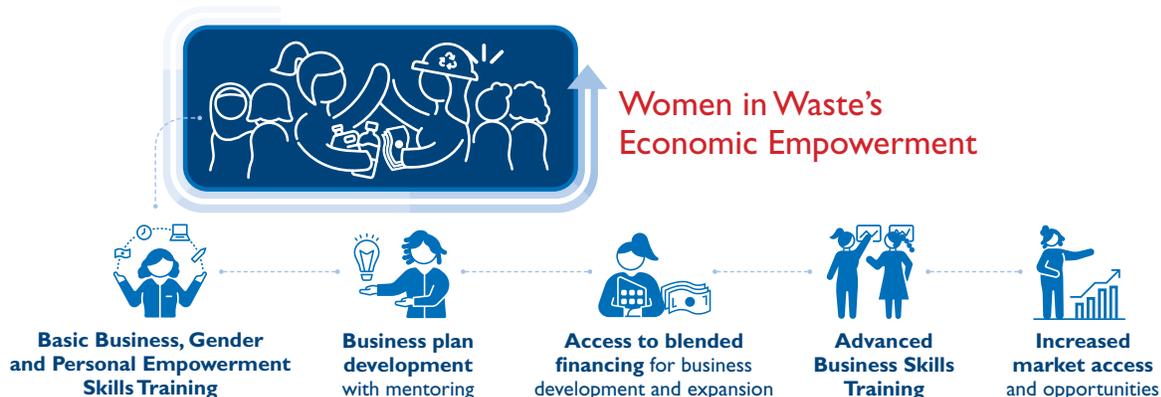
PHOTO: JOEL DELOS SANTOS FOR CLEAN CITIES, BLUE OCEAN

The Women in Waste's Economic Empowerment (WWEE) activity is led by Clean Cities, Blue Ocean (CCBO)—USAID's global flagship program to address ocean plastic pollution under the Save Our Seas Initiative. CCBO is helping coastal cities in low- and middle-income countries to create green jobs while they reduce plastic pollution, transforming the solid waste management (SWM) sector, and ensuring a just transition for the individuals on the front lines of waste management, many of whom are women. WWEE empowers women through an innovative blend of business and personal empowerment trainings, coupled with a small business incubator program that offers mentorship and funding opportunities for establishing or expanding women-owned recycling or waste businesses.

Across the globe women play critical roles in local SWM systems. It's estimated that roughly 58 percent of plastics sent to recycling centers—and diverted from entering the ocean—are collected by informal waste collectors, the majority of whom are women. Beyond waste collectors, women also work in or own small recycling centers, junkshops, and upcycling enterprises. Despite their crucial contributions, women's work is often unrecognized and under resourced. They face gendered structural barriers that limit their earning power and opportunities for upward mobility. Women often have limited access to credit, training, and time, which leads to working in the informal SWM sector where they receive lower wages, few health and safety protections, and are at heightened risk of gender-based violence (GBV).

WWEE'S INTEGRATED APPROACH

WWEE developed a first-of-its-kind, five-step approach to empower women as leaders in local emerging circular economies:



This integrated and reinforcing approach begins at the foundational level with a Basic Business and Empowerment Skills Training, or BBEST. Graduates of the five-day BBEST training are then offered mentorship for business plan development, access to blended financing, advanced business skills training, and finally opportunities to connect to new market opportunities. In addition

to creating green jobs as women expand and staff their businesses, these new businesses are expanding waste services to parts of cities where waste collection services currently do not exist—and where dumping causes a serious threat to the environment and human health. In Metro Manila, Philippines and Semarang, Indonesia, WWEE activities are enabling women to transform their waste business ideas into start-ups, expanded enterprises, or franchised operations, and be part of a supportive network with access to larger markets and public sector contracts.

WWEE'S PARTNERS

WWEE's approach fosters cross-sector partnerships for impact and sustainability. As the program lead, CCBO works with multiple partners, including:

- **Local grantee organizations and implementing partners** – Local non-governmental organizations, EcoWaste Coalition and the Associated Resources for Management and Development in the Philippines (Philippines); and Yayasan Kesejahteraan Keluarga Soegijapranata Semarang (Indonesia) collectively support WWEE's curriculum development and training components, as well as recruit, support, and monitor the success of WWEE participants.
- **Curriculum development and training partner** – The Johns Hopkins University's Self-Empowerment and Equity for Change Initiative works with CCBO and its grantees to incorporate its proprietary empowerment training into WWEE's curriculum, train trainers, provide ongoing coaching support, and track changes in women's agency and confidence as a result of the program.
- **Private sector partners** – The Coca-Cola Foundation (Global and Philippines) provides funding support to WWEE's mentorship and blended finance components through a grant to the World Wide Fund for Nature-Philippines; and sits on CCBO's panel to evaluate and fund participants' business pitches.
- **Local governments** – Local governments in the Philippines and Indonesia provide support through in-kind donations of training space and provide complementary funding, where possible, to selected women.
- **National training and education agencies** – National training and education agencies such as the Philippines' Technical Education and Skills Development Authority have endorsed WWEE's BBEST curriculum to advance gender equality across the SWM sector.

WWEE ACHIEVEMENTS

The WWEE program is positively impacting the lives and livelihoods of women in the Philippines and Indonesia. To date:

- In the Philippines, more than **250 women have graduated** from the program's BBEST training as of October 2022, and the program is expected to far surpass its goal of 300 graduates. CCBO launched its BBEST trainings in Indonesia in November 2022.
- Women reported that participating in the activity has led to efficiencies at work, which resulted in participants having **more time with their families, caring for themselves, and being active in their communities**—they reported having newfound confidence to share their ideas with others, form relationships with their peers, and trust themselves.
- Positive BBEST experiences resulted in some graduates **recruiting nearly 20 women each** to enroll in future learning cohorts.
- **WWEE training addresses GBV** and provides (at no cost) professional psychological support for participating women experiencing GBV or who are GBV survivors. Due to the supportive atmosphere that WWEE training creates, many participants have discussed their experiences for the first time.



WWEE entrepreneur Riza Santoyo in Quezon City, Philippines, graduated from BBEST and was selected to receive funding to establish door-to-door waste collection services. Her business is now thriving and she has doubled her income while working fewer hours.

According to Riza, "With this door-to-door collection business, I won't need to spend hours on the streets collecting waste. I will have more time for my children."

CONTACTS

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