



IN BRIEF



INCREASING WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT IN THE PACIFIC



Photo Credits left to right: Nadi Market 2013, Vilisi Veibataki/UN Women; Luganville Market 2013, Jane Rutledge; Honiara Central Market 2103, Marni Gilbert/UN Women.

What's the Issue?

Women's economic empowerment is the ability of women to bring about positive changes in their lives and societies as a result of their participation in economic activities.

Enhancing women's economic empowerment is strategic for long-term, equity, growth, and sustainability. UN Women research has shown that improving the economic status of women leads to increased economic activity in communities and positive ripple effects for the whole nation.

Marketplaces are key sites for women's economic empowerment as well as national poverty reduction. Marketplaces are often dominated by rural and urban women vendors whose cash incomes constitute a significant part of the income of poor households.

Market places also provide a significant revenue stream for local councils. However the economic contribution markets and market traders make to local and national economies is not often recognized by national and local governments.

For the most part, market vendors, especially women, face unhealthy and unsafe work environments. Violence against women is widely reported. Despite the dominance of women market vendors, women are often excluded from market governance and decision making.

Our Solutions

UN WOMEN supports women to reshape conditions at both ends of the economic spectrum — from boosting women's participation in economic policy-making to supporting efforts to provide women with practical skills needed for securing sustainable livelihoods.

UN Women's Pilot projects during 2008-2012 – Partners Improving Markets – focused on working with market vendors, local governments, and other stakeholders to access and prioritise market problems and plan solutions together.

UN Women's experience showed that marketplaces can be significantly improved, reducing personal risks for women and their children and increasing opportunities for economic empowerment.

In September 2013 UN Women, in partnership with potential donors, are rolling out the next phase of this project: Markets for Change (M4C). M4C is a six year multi-country initiative covering Fiji, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu. The goal of M4C is to ensure that marketplaces in rural and urban areas in Fiji, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu are safe, inclusive and non-discriminatory, promoting gender equality and women's empowerment.

The M4C project will focus on building capacity of both local government and women market vendors to engage with each other on improvements to market governance and infrastructure.



How We Make a Difference: Step by Step

Markets for Change will focus on four key areas:

REPRESENTATIVE MARKETPLACE GROUPS: M4C will work with relevant stakeholders to build and support organised groups that advocate for women market vendors’ rights and interests and enable market vendors to have a voice to articulate the hardships they face.

UN Women research has shown that while informal market networks often exist among vendors, along with some formal associations, these are often dominated by men. M4C will focus on empowering women market vendors to organise and participate in marketplace governance and decision-making as a unified community. This will involve supporting the establishment and strengthening of market vendor associations

The result will enable opportunities for women market vendors to contribute to the elimination of gender-based discrimination and violence, and to expand economic opportunities for women market vendors.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC SECURITY OF MARKET VENDORS: M4C will work with UNDP and service providers to assess and responded to the multifaceted rights, needs and interests of market vendors and deliver appropriate services, trainings and interventions. UN Women’s pilot projects have shown that supporting initiatives that meet the particular needs of women market vendors have had important impacts on product diversification, turnover and revenue.

M4C will involve increasing access to financial and social services, such as savings accounts and mobile banking, which are often inaccessible to those in the informal sector. M4C will also involve increasing access to social protection services and awareness of health and reproductive rights.

Trainings will focus on business and leadership skills and interventions to increase productivity and product development such as product diversification, environmentally sustainable practices, disaster resilient crops, and value adding.

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND MARKET MANAGEMENT: Because of their importance to local councils, marketplaces offer important opportunities to build partnerships with these councils. M4C will work

with local governments and market management to ensure that they are gender responsive, effective and accountable to women market vendors’ needs.

M4C will help facilitate the relationship between local government, market management and women market vendors to ensure that women market vendors’ priorities are heard, changes made in response and information is shared effectively and transparently.

M4C will work with local government and market management to build capacity and draft, adopt and implement bylaws, policies and budgets which ensure safe and secure market infrastructure, adequate amenities and services, and transparent revenue collection and expenditure. M4C will work to ensure local governments and market management are aware of and committed to national gender policies and international agreed norms and standards including CEDAW and the MDGs.

PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND OPERATING SYSTEMS: UN Women’s prior experience has shown that gender-responsive infrastructure design and building have offered important advances for women’s safety and convenience.

M4C aims to work with relevant stakeholders to improve physical infrastructure and operating systems at marketplaces to make markets safer, more sustainable, resilient to disaster risks and climate change, and more accessible.

Specific improvements may focus on safe, accessible toilets and washing facilities as well as hygiene practices, the accessibility of the market for people with disabilities, the availability of child care services at the market, the accessibility of shelter, and market designs to reduce the risks of crime and violence, and damage from extreme weather.

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