



MARKETS FOR CHANGE SOLOMON ISLANDS



Participating in economic activities allows women to effect positive changes in their own lives and their communities, with positive ripple effects for the whole nation. Historically, however, gendered norms, behaviours and social relations have played a big part in disadvantaging women economically.

Biased institutions, systems and structures often restrict women's economic opportunities, while gendered roles and status can limit women's voices and choices when it comes to household and community decisions. Women often have less access to education and training, as well as other resources such as savings and credit schemes; persistently high rates of gender-based violence undermine their ability to take advantage of economic opportunities that are available.

As a collection of small and geographically scattered countries far from international markets, the Pacific region faces volatility in economic growth and prices as well as issues with achieving economies of scale, increasing labour productivity and gaining access to markets. The region is also particularly vulnerable to extreme weather events, as well as other climate change impacts, making food security a concern.

In Solomon Islands, rural areas and outer islands are semi-subsistence, which is part of the reason that markets play such a large part in providing for the income and nutritional needs of the country's population.

Women are responsible for the production of the majority of subsistence foods; just over 75% of the women who are economically active in Solomon Islands (around 62% of the female population) are participating in subsistence work¹. Men, on the other hand, tend to be more involved in the production, sale and marketing of more financially lucrative cash crops.

Women play a critical role in the Solomon Islands' economy, as both growers and sellers of produce at the market. They are responsible for the majority of fresh fruit and vegetable marketing, both as bulk buyers and retailers. Markets therefore play a significant role in Solomon Islands' socioeconomic development, including Honiara and Auki, the two sites involved in the Markets for Change project.

Improving economic and social outcomes at marketplaces is also expected to improve efficiency along farm to market supply chains and reduce food wastage, increasing revenues for vendors and councils alike.

MARKETS FOR CHANGE PROJECT AT A GLANCE

Timeframe: 2014-2019

Countries: Fiji, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu

Key Partners: Market vendors, government departments, local councils.

Funding sources: UN Women core funds, Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, UN Women National Committees of Australia and New Zealand.

75%
TO
90%

of all market vendors in the Pacific are women.²

“THIS WORKSHOP WAS A BREAKTHROUGH, I HAVE BEEN HUNGRY FOR THIS KIND OF CONVERSATION FOR A LONG TIME. SOMETIMES THINGS JUST DON'T SEEM TO GO ANYWHERE; THIS LOOKS LIKE IT'S GOING SOMEWHERE.”

Participant in a Markets for Change Getting Started workshop, Honiara, Solomon Islands.

THE PROJECT AT A GLANCE

UN Women's Markets for Change project is a key component of its Women's Economic Empowerment programme. The six-year initiative aims 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 project officially launched in 2014 and builds on experience gained through a series of pilot projects implemented by UN Women from 2009 to 2012. It will inject more than US\$17 million into the participating market sites, the bulk of which has come from the Australian Government.

The project capitalises and builds on UN Women's already strong working relationships with local governments across 20 market sites in all three countries.

During its six-year duration, Markets for Change will focus on four key areas:

Increased voice and participation for market vendors through accessible, inclusive, and representative governance structures within marketplaces. This will enable markets to grow, as well as strengthening the role and influence of women market vendors.

Improved socio-economic security through assessing and responding to the financial and business needs and interests of market vendors and rural producers.

Gender-responsive local government and market management to ensure decision-making processes are more transparent and accountable, as well as responsive to the needs of vendors.

Accessible and gender-responsive marketplace infrastructure and on-site services through working with local government and market vendors at the conception and construction stages.

PROFILE: ANNA KOKOSI, AUKI MARKET VENDORS' ASSOCIATION, SOLOMON ISLANDS

Anna Kokosi is a cooked food vendor at Auki Market selling motu fish and potato. After attending the Markets for Change Getting Started workshop in May 2014, she stood for election to the newly-formed Auki Market Vendors' Association Executive Committee and is one of 10 women on the 16-person committee.

Anna says the workshop helped build her understanding of the power of working as a group, as well as her individual potential as a woman and a leader.

She has since started talking to other market vendors about the importance of keeping the marketplace clean, of being proud of their work and selling good quality and healthy food. Her efforts, and those of her fellow market vendors, have already had a visible difference on the marketplace.



KEY REGIONAL RESULTS

649 market vendors (86% women) have actively participated in “Getting Started” workshops held in all three countries. The workshops focused on ways for market vendors to organise themselves in order to strengthen their participation in market governance, and by extension their ability to bring about positive changes for everyone.

Five new market vendors associations have been set up as a result of the “Getting Started” workshops (two in Solomon Islands, two in Vanuatu and one in Fiji); a further four associations are in the process of being formalised. UN Women has provided technical and resource support for drafting and adopting a constitution, completing the legal registration process, holding elections and member recruitment drives. Women have been elected to between 50% and 80% of leadership positions in the new associations.

278 market vendor association executive committee members (88% women) in Solomon Islands and Fiji have taken part in a number of follow-up workshops aimed at strengthening their communications and leadership skills, as well as developing strategy and planning for their associations.

2,087 market vendors were interviewed by participants of the “Getting Started” workshops across all three countries as part of a mapping exercise that has helped inform action plans for new and existing market vendors’ associations. The interviews helped identify priority issues and concerns to be addressed within the market that would help improve the safety, security and earning capacity of market vendors, particularly women.

1,465 market vendors (89% women) in Fiji have been trained in financial literacy through the first round of Continuing Market Business Education, implemented by UN Development Programme (UNDP) in partnership with Westpac. The trainings were delivered in English, Hindi and indigenous Fijian language, and focused on basic budgeting, goal-setting and record-keeping. Discussions are ongoing for similar training in Vanuatu and Solomon Islands.

“ONE FUTURE WISH OF MINE IS THAT I’D LIKE TO SEE EVERYTHING INSIDE OUR ACTION PLAN IS IMPLEMENTED. I LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING A CLEAN, HEALTHY MARKETPLACE.”

Maureen Sariki, Executive Committee member, Honiara Central Market Vendors’ Association, Solomon Islands.

80%

The percentage of leadership roles in the Honiara Central Market Vendors’ Association that are currently held by women. The association is legally registered and has more than 250 members.



MAKING HISTORY: MARKET VENDORS' ASSOCIATIONS

Strong marketplace groups can enable market vendors to participate in the decision-making processes that govern their workplaces, as well as advocate for vendors' rights and interests.

At the "Getting Started" workshops held in Auki and Honiara in 2014, unanimous decisions were made to set up market vendors' associations, something that had never happened before at either market. The Honiara Central Market Vendors' Association was the first to be legally registered under the Solomon Islands Charitable Trusts Act in August 2014, attracting more than 250 members through its first recruitment drive. Auki followed in March 2015.

Rural and urban women dominate markets in Solomon Islands and the elections for the executive committees of both associations reflected this – women were elected to 10 of the 16 committee positions in Auki, and 16 of the 19 roles in Honiara.

The associations are working with market management to deal with issues of importance to market vendors, with a particular focus on cleanliness within the market, fair and transparent market operations, and measures to make the market safer and more accessible for everyone.

A great success for both associations has been the invitations to participate in council and provincial government-led committees to improve the health and sanitation of the marketplaces.



FOOTNOTES

¹ <http://www.spc.int/prism/solomons/index.php/sinso-documents?view=download&fileId=61>

² http://www.forumsec.org/resources/uploads/attachments/documents/2013_Pac_Regional_MDGs_Tracking_Report_FINAL.pdf

CAPTIONS

Page 1: Market vendors at Auki Market interview other market vendors as part of a mapping exercise, 2014. Credit: UN Women/Marni Gilbert.

Page 2: Anna Kokosi, Auki, Solomon Islands, 2014. Credit: UN Women/Marni Gilbert.

Page 3: Market vendors from Honiara Market at the official launch of the Markets for Change project, 2014. Credit: UN Women/Marni Gilbert.

Page 4: Above: Market vendors joining the Honiara Central Market Vendors' Association at its membership drive, 2014. Credit: UN Women/Marni Gilbert.

Right: Joy Janet Ramo speaking at the official launch of the Auki Market Vendors' Association, 2014. Credit: UN Women/Marni Gilbert.

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JOY JANET RAMO, AUKI MARKET VENDORS' ASSOCIATION, SOLOMON ISLANDS

Joy Janet Ramo usually works six days a week selling clothing and sometimes cosmetics at Auki Market in Malaita and the "Getting Started" workshop in May 2014 was her introduction to the concept of a market vendors' association. It also left her inspired to make changes at the marketplace, with ideas of making Auki a model market for the Pacific.

"This workshop is new. Everything is new. We learned how to organise, how to form associations, how to address issues."



She accepted a position as one of the new market vendors' association executive committee members at elections held during the "Getting Started" workshops and in 2015 took on the role of association chairperson.

Joy Janet said a second round of workshops focused on the concepts of gender and transformational leadership gave her a new understanding of, and confidence around, the word gender – a word she had previously been frightened of.

"I came to these workshops and learned about gender equality. When I went back to my house I storied with my sisters, and I storied with my husband. I believe I can help the church women I work with understand this word gender that we often think is a threat."



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