



MARKETS FOR CHANGE VANUATU



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.

Before the global financial crisis, Vanuatu was emerging as one of the fastest growing economies in the Pacific region, with growth driven mainly by foreign investment, tourism and land development. However, Vanuatu is ranked 134 out of 187 countries on the UN's Human Development Index¹ and around 12.7%² of the country's population of 264,700³ is said to live below the poverty line.

Women account for around 36% of those in the formal employment sector, 29% of the non-agricultural workforce and 28% of unpaid subsistence workers⁴. A national survey showed that 80% of women earned money and of those also living with a man, over half earned about the same or more than their husband/partner⁵. Despite this, less than one in five have savings in the bank and few women own any major assets on their own⁶.

The UN World Risk Index lists Vanuatu as the world's most vulnerable country to disasters⁷ and in March 2015 Vanuatu received a direct hit from Tropic Cyclone Pam, one of the most powerful cyclones to ever hit the country. Around 96% of crops in the affected areas were destroyed and almost half the population was affected⁸. As agriculture is both an important source of food and income for women and their families in Vanuatu, they were particularly hard hit.

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.⁹

“THE BEST THING ABOUT THE DAY WAS THAT IT WAS SO BIG AND FORWARD-THINKING ... IT RAISED MY MORALE, MY CONFIDENCE AND MY SKILLS TO STAND AS A LEADER AND TALK IN FRONT OF A BIG CROWD.”

Marie Toara, Vice President, Silae Vanua Market Vendor Association, Vanuatu.

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.

VANUATU POST CYCLONE SEED DISTRIBUTION TARGETED MARKET VENDORS

An initiative in Vanuatu’s capital, Port Vila helped revive the livelihoods of hundreds of families after Cyclone Pam devastated the parts of the country in March.

Assessments by UN Women’s Markets for Change project showed that while seeds had been widely distributed by government and relief agencies since the cyclone, women market vendors had not received sufficient seeds to re-establish gardens large enough to supply markets and rebuild their social and economic livelihoods.



A Markets for Change partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) facilitated access to seeds for market vendors. In June FAO and the Vanuatu Ministry of Agriculture distributed a variety of seeds to almost 200 women, while a second distribution with Silae Vanua Market Vendors Association reached a further 400 women.

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.



Credit: UN Women/Murray Lloyd

“AS MARKET VENDORS WE ARE PROUD TO HAVE OUR VOICES BEING REPRESENTED IN DECISION MAKING.”

*Salomé Perkone,
Communications Officer,
Silae Vanua Market Vendor
Association, Vanuatu.*

100%

The percentage of leadership roles in the Silae Vanua Market Vendor Association in Port Vila Central Market that are occupied by women.



VANUATU'S FIRST REGISTERED MARKET VENDORS' ASSOCIATION

The Silae Vanua Market Vendor Association in Vanuatu's capital Port Vila formed out of "Getting Started" workshops held in late 2014 as part of the Markets for Change project.

Many of the association's members lost their homes and gardens when Category 5 Cyclone Pam devastated the country's southern islands in March 2015. It is testament to the determination of the Silae Vanua executive that work on the association's constitution and incorporation maintained momentum in the months following the Cyclone. Silae Vanua formally registered as an association in July 2015 and since then has grown to nearly 3,000 members.

The executive is now actively engaged in decision-making and improvements in operating conditions with market managers and the municipal council in charge of the Port Vila Central Market.

"Over time we hope to develop the skills and resources to represent our members in any market in Vanuatu where Silae Vanua membership is represented," says Silae Vanua spokeswoman, Salomè Perkone.

In early 2016 market vendor associations in Luganville on the northern island of Santo, and at Marobe Market on the outskirts of Port Vila gained legal registration and like Silae Vanua, are actively working for their collective interests in the market.



FOOTNOTES

¹ <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/table-1-human-development-index-and-its-components>

² <http://www.adb.org/countries/vanuatu/main>

³ <http://www.spc.int/images/publications/en/Corporate/Beijing20.pdf>

⁴ 2009 National Population and Housing Census, Gender Monograph

^{5,6} <http://aid.dfat.gov.au/countries/pacific/vanuatu/Documents/womens-centre-survey-womens-lives.pdf>

⁷ <http://i.unu.edu/media/ehs.unu.edu/news/11138/Fact-sheet-WWR-2015-English.pdf>

⁸ https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/tropical_cyclone_pam_fs03_04-13-2015.pdf

⁹ http://www.forumsec.org/resources/uploads/attachments/documents/2013_Pac_Regional_MDGs_Tracking_Report_FINAL.pdf

CAPTIONS

Page 1: Market vendors at International Day of Rural Women celebrations, Emua, Vanuatu, 2015. Credit: UN Women/Nicky Kauatonga.

Page 2: Seed distribution at Marobe Market, Vanuatu, 2015. Credit: UN Women/Murray Lloyd.

Page 3: International Day of Rural Women celebrations, Vanuatu, 2015. Credit: UN Women/Nicky Kauatonga.

Page 4: Above: The signing of the Silae Vanua Market Vendor Association Constitution, Vanuatu, 2015. Credit: UN Women/Murray Lloyd. Right: Winnie Douglas, Emua, Vanuatu, 2015 Credit: UN Women/Murray Lloyd.

PROFILE: WINNIE DOUGLAS

Winnie Douglas is treasurer of the Emua Village Market Committee and her daily responsibilities are typical of many women in rural Vanuatu. They include everything from feeding the family and tending the garden to making mats, and teaching Sunday school, as well as preparing food for single men and families in need.

But it is her responsibilities at the market that Winnie says are most critical for the wellbeing of the village: "The market is very important. This is our business. It must grow and we have to look after it for our community. We must respect it and work together with one spirit."



Under Winnie's guidance the Emua market operates as a co-operative of 40-50 growers, with a revolving roster of sellers freeing up growers to tend to other responsibilities. In exchange, a contribution of 10% of all sales goes into a savings account at the local bank, creating a cash reserve that helps cushion the blow of disasters such as Cyclone Pam, which completely destroyed the market house. Having money in the bank meant the market house was quickly rebuilt and Emua Market re-opened just eight weeks after the cyclone. Winnie says the income has helped village residents rebuild their lives.

Winnie attributes the savings scheme to a workshop she attended several years ago and is grateful for the guidance UN Women and other organisations provide. "The advice you give, I pass on and it helps us improve all the time. We move to the next level with the help we get."

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