



# MARKETS FOR CHANGE PROJECT



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, gendered norms, behaviours and social relations have played a big part in disadvantaging women economically. 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 also have reduced access to education and skills, as well as other resources such as credit and land.

As small and geographically dispersed countries far from international markets, Pacific Island countries and territories (PICTs) face volatility in economic growth and prices as well as issues in achieving economies of scale, increasing labour productivity and gaining access to markets.

The Pacific region's average gross domestic product (GDP) per capita is the third highest of all the regions in Asia and the Pacific<sup>1</sup>, but there are a number of other factors to consider. While the World Bank considers Nauru and Palau to be upper middle income countries,

the United Nations (UN) classifies Kiribati, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Tuvalu as "least developed countries" based on their low incomes, economic vulnerability and weak human resources.

Pacific populations are mainly rural and rely largely on subsistence activities; women especially are heavily involved in informal economic activities. Much of this falls outside the formal economy and is therefore not represented by GDP.

The region is also particularly vulnerable to the increasing frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, as well as other aspects of climate change, making food security a growing concern. As a result, some economies in the Pacific are likely to shrink rather than grow.

At an aggregate level, PICTs are estimated to have the second highest rates of vulnerable workers (in the subsistence economy, working for family, own account workers or in the informal economy) of all developing country groupings. Pacific women are more likely than men to be in vulnerable work (84% versus 71%)<sup>2</sup> while also balancing the lion's share of unpaid domestic work and caregiving with lower average earnings.

## MARKETS FOR CHANGE PROJECT AT A GLANCE

**Timeframe:** 2014-2019

**Countries:** Fiji, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu

**Funding sources:** Australian Government, UN Women National Committees of Australia and New Zealand.

**Focus areas:**

- Increased voice and participation for market vendors

- Improved socio-economic security for market vendors

- Gender-responsive local government and market management

- Accessible and gender-responsive marketplace infrastructure and on-site services

75%  
TO  
90%

of all market vendors in the Pacific are women.<sup>2</sup>

“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.

“MY SALES HAVE INCREASED DRAMATICALLY AFTER THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE SHELTER, AS MORE PEOPLE ARE VISITING MY STALL TO BUY FLOWERS, EVEN DURING BAD WEATHER.”

*Milame Tikomainiusiladi,  
market vendor, Fiji.*

# 90%

The percentage of women in the newly formed Silae Vanua Market Vendors’ Association, Vanuatu’s first organisation of its kind. The association represents more than 1,000 market vendors from Efate and other off-shore islands.



## IN MY OWN WORDS: RAVEENA SHARMA

“I got married after completing Form 6 at Penang Sangam High School in Rakiraki and moved to Tavua because my husband was from here. After my husband passed away, and with no source of income, I decided to come to the Tavua market and ask the Market Master to give me a table/space at the market to sell and earn money. He gave me the grog table!

“Sometimes we just pay the stall fees, sit all day, no customers and go back home. At times my children say, Mum there is no use going to the market because you don’t earn any income. But I always tell them to have patience because business is like always like that – up and down.

“At the beginning I was not very comfortable [selling grog] but I gave it a shot. I just kept telling myself that if I wanted a source of income from selling in the market than I need to sell grog. Now I enjoy selling grog. I have also asked for a table to sell vegetables but haven’t been successful in getting one!

“On days when my bench is full but my customers keep coming, I give my customers to the other grog sellers. They need money too so I help them by giving them my customers.

“I continue to raise issues with the Council on the market facilities. We pay our stall fees and we would like that the market facilities be improved.

*A widowed mother of two, Raveena is the only female kava seller at Tavua Market. She attended the Getting Started workshop in Tavua on February 3-4.*



### FOOTNOTES

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

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.forumsec.org/resources/uploads/attachments/documents/2013\\_Pac\\_Regional\\_MDGs\\_Tracking\\_Report\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.forumsec.org/resources/uploads/attachments/documents/2013_Pac_Regional_MDGs_Tracking_Report_FINAL.pdf)

### CAPTIONS

Page 1: Market vendor at Suva Market, Fiji, 2014. Credit: UN Women/Olivia Owen

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: Raveena Sharma at her kava stall at Tavua Market, Fiji, 2015. Credit: UN Women/Sereana Narayan. Right: Market vendors at the signing of the Silae Vanua constitution, Vanuatu, 2015. Credit: UN Women/Murray Lloyd.

Updated 31 December 2015

## GETTING A SAY IN MARKET DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

Market vendors in Vanuatu’s capital Port Vila are looking forward to improvements in their work place as registration of the country’s first fresh-produce market association takes effect this week.

As a registered organisation, the Silae Vanua Market Vendors Association (Silae Vanua) will now engage in decision-making, and agree on improvements and operating conditions with market managers and the municipal council in charge of the Port Vila Central Market.



Women make up over 90 per cent of Silae Vanua which includes vendors from off-shore islands around the main island of Efate. In total more than 1,000 market vendors are represented by the association.

Silae Vanua was set up as a result of “Getting Started” workshops held in Vanuatu in late 2014 as part of UN Women’s Markets for Change project.

Many members of Silae Vanua lost their homes and gardens when Category 5 Cyclone Pam devastated the islands in the south-east of Vanuatu on 13 March 2015. Despite this, the association’s members were determined to maintain their momentum and continue working on the founding constitution and incorporation of Silae Vanua.



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