Case Study Overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Study Title</th>
<th>Markets for Change Project (M4C)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Implemented by</td>
<td>UN Women MCO Fiji</td>
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<td>Funded by</td>
<td>DFAT and UN Women</td>
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<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu</td>
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<td>Focus Areas</td>
<td>1. Improving pay and conditions</td>
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<td>2. Women workers in the informal economy</td>
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<td>3. Financial and/or digital inclusion</td>
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<td>4. Women’s entrepreneurship</td>
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<td>Budget</td>
<td>AUD$16,924,587</td>
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Abstract

The overarching goal of the Markets for Change (M4C) project is ‘by the end of the project 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 is based on a Theory of Change that through the creation and strengthening of representative marketplace groups that strengthen the role and influence of women market vendors, interventions focusing on financial literacy, access to financial services and increased participation in value chains, actions that strengthen market management and municipal and provincial governments’ accountability and capacity for employing gender-responsive policies procedures and decision making processes which are receptive to the needs of market vendors, and the design and building of gender-responsive infrastructure and on-site services, gender-equitable economic and socio–cultural empowerment of market vendors within the market environment can be attained.

Rural and urban markets in Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu are central to the livelihoods strategies for a majority of the population, especially for poorer households. Many small-scale market operations, especially market vending, are dominated by women, who comprise between 75% and 90% of all vendors. Hours are long, profits are often low, and conditions difficult. Despite the apparent small-scale nature of marketplace operations, market vending and other informal sector activities nevertheless contribute to gross domestic product across the three countries. In this regard, marketplaces are central to the livelihoods of many households, especially poorer ones, and contribute towards local and national revenues.
Targeting markets and improving economic and social outcomes at marketplaces is expected to improve efficiency along farm to market supply chains, reduce food wastage, and increase revenues for vendors and councils. Through the empowerment of mainly female vendors, some of whom are full time retailers and others of whom are part time and often market their own produce, the Project would help expand the range of local foods available at marketplaces, improve the quality of produce, improve packaging and preservation, expand transport networks, diversify product lines, and add value through processing (e.g., cooking). Exposure to new business models through training, south-south exchange and other learning opportunities are especially efficient when provided in marketplace environments, offering value for money. Marketplaces also offer important venues for expanded trade between wholesalers and retailers, and the emergence of new business deals and previously unknown opportunities.

Despite their central role in the lives and livelihoods of many households, markets in the three countries are fairly rudimentary operations. Food wastage is high, there is limited product differentiation, products sold are very seasonal and there is limited value-add through either packaging (e.g., the production and marketing of food baskets) processing (e.g. preserving at the farm gate or juicing fruits or cooking food on site), or conscious marketing of a range of related products (e.g., dairy products or a full range of fruits or vegetables). A strong base of sustainable, efficient production and distribution of local food for own use and for sale locally is a precursor for increased use of local food in restaurants, and for exporting indigenous produce. In the light of rising levels of obesity in Pacific Island Countries, increased consumption of local food can improve health and well-being.

All three countries import substantial quantities of food, and have the potential to increase the quantity of import substitution particularly in hotels and restaurants. All three countries have the potential to increase the number of locals, expat residents and tourists who visit, shop and eat at local markets. While local incomes are relatively low, all countries are currently experiencing economic growth (economic growth in 2012 was 2.5% in Fiji, 5.5% in the Solomon Islands and 2% in Vanuatu) as well as rapid urbanisation.

Problems Being Addressed

- **General problems being addressed**: Rural and urban markets in Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu are central to the livelihoods strategies for a majority of the population, especially for poorer households. Many small-scale market operations, especially in relation to vending, are dominated by women, who comprise between 75% and 90% of all vendors. Hours are long, profits are often low, and conditions difficult. Despite the apparent small-scale nature of marketplace operations, market vending and other informal sector activities nevertheless contribute to gross domestic product across the three countries. In this regard, marketplaces are central to the livelihoods of many households, especially poorer ones, and contribute towards local and national revenues.
• **Drivers of gender gaps and constraints:** The market bylaws that govern the operations and management of municipal markets are apparently gender blind and have not been reviewed or revised. In addition, the physical market infrastructure does not cater for the needs of women and children including people with disabilities.

### Approach and Implementation

• **Approach:** The project addresses the problem with consistent awareness raising and advocating to the key stakeholders (market vendors, Council Management and Staff, Management and Staff at Ministerial Level) on the importance of gender equality, governance, enabling trading environment, safe public spaces and most importantly on voice and empowerment of women through the Markets for Change Projects in all 3 countries. It was further addressed by bringing external partners from NGOs, CSOs and the private sector for capacity development and training opportunities for the Local Government management and staff and market vendors.

• **Challenges during implementation:**
  - Market vendors were initially resistant to work as a collective group.
  - Initially lack of political will to support the key objectives of the project.
  - High turnover of management and staff at the local government level.
  - High turnover of national government ministers and councilors in particular Vanuatu.
  - Natural disaster experienced in the Pacific contributed to considerable project implementation challenges. Considering the double impact of TC Pam in Vanuatu 2015 and the El Nino-induced drought and TC Winston in Fiji 2016, UN Women and UNDP will reassess activities that were aimed at increasing the productivity of vendor-farmers and strengthening the livelihoods of farmers in general to determine whether they need to be refocused on recovery instead.

• **Overcoming the aforementioned challenges:**
  - Strengthening inclusivity within the projects. Ensuring inclusiveness of market vendors through the M4C programme. Specific targeted approaches were introduced to reach a diverse range of market vendors. For example the increase in rural vendors in established market vendor associations representing all produce sectors (such as fish, agriculture and handicrafts). Capacity development of MVAs and Executive Committees. In 2015, MVA Executive Committee members across the board fully embraced their new responsibilities. They demonstrated greater eagerness than expected to advocate for their members and took the initiative to improve the lives of their members.
  - The training days and duration of trainings were revised, as it was noted that vendors were often not present when trainings were organized, and they had limited time to spare for training. UN Women and UNDP worked on a variety of options to reach a wider group of vendors especially rural market vendors – from holding shorter training sessions at accommodation centres in the evenings or days when casual vendors were in town, or by holding the trainings in their communities, or organizing intensive trainings on a range of topics in just one day.
  - Having consistent dialogue with the national government and local government’s key management and staff on the objectives of the projects. Making entry points at various national and local government meetings, forums to advocate and create awareness of
the M4C Projects and to ensure key stakeholders are knowledgeable and supportive of the projects. This also ensured to some extent that the information on Markets for Change projects were with the National and local government despite the high staff turnover.

- UN Women and UNDP had to reassess and revise work plans and strategies to address the impact of natural disasters affecting project implementation. Activities that were aimed at increasing the productivity of vendor-farmers and strengthening the livelihoods of farmers in general, were revised as the need was focused on disaster recovery instead.

- **Key partnerships:** Strong, effective and strategic partnerships with a wide range of partners has been key to the M4C projects initial success.

  - The most critical partnership is with market vendors, and UN Women is currently partnering with 17 MVAs. In all three countries, government partnerships are crucial for project outcomes, and UN Women must liaise with and retain partnerships at both local government and national ministerial levels. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is also a key partner as the responsible party for most of the activities under Outcome 2. Beyond these immediate stakeholders, partnerships with the private sector and CSOs have been established in order to ensure delivery of specific project components. Partnerships have also been established with service providers in order to bring a variety of services to market vendors and to advise on project implementation. Finally, partnerships have been developed with other donors and programmes to extend the impact of the M4C programme beyond its immediate outcomes and towards sustainable economic and social change.

  - **Fiji:** Key partners include the Ministry of Local Government (MoLG) and members of the 10 municipal councils where the programme is implemented, as well as the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation. Westpac Banking Corporation is a key private sector partner that provides financial literacy training to women MVA members. The CSO FemLink Pacific provides training for MVAs’ executive committee members on leadership and communications. Partnerships were established with the Commonwealth Local Government Forum to evaluate local government needs and build their capacity around market management. New partnerships were also formed with the Ministry of Health, which has piloted free health checks and delivered some health services to market vendors, and with the Ministry of Agriculture, which will be providing trainings to vendor-farmers.¹ Both the Pacific Disability Forum and the Fiji Disabled Persons Federation have provided specific advice to UN Women to improve market accessibility for disabled persons. In the context of the response to TC Winston, UN Women brokered a partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to channel seeds and farm tools distribution through the MVAs. Further to this UN Women managed to mobilise resources amounting to AUD 4.7million from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Australia (DFAT) for physical market infrastructure re-construction in light of the markets that were destroyed by TC Winston in 2016.

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¹ Vendor-farmers are market vendors who sell produce from their own farms or gardens.
Solomon Islands: UN Women works closely with two MVAs and a range of government partners. This includes Honiara City Council (HCC) under the Ministry of Home Affairs, Malaita provincial government (MPG) under the Ministry of Provincial Government and Institutional Strengthening, the Environmental Health and Health Promotion Divisions of the Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS), which runs the “Healthy Market Settings” committee, and the Ministry of Women, Children, Youth and Family Affairs. UNDP and Bank of South Pacific (BSP) formalized a valuable private sector partnership to provide financial literacy and business skills training to market vendors. UN Women has also engaged CSOs such as the Commonwealth Local Government Forum, Vois Blong Mere, Women’s Rights Action Movement (WRAM) and Development Services Exchange (DSE) to support programme implementation.

Vanuatu: UN Women’s main partners are the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Department of Local Authorities, the Shefa Provincial Council, the Port Vila Municipal Council, the Luganville Municipal Council and the Department of Women under the Ministry of Justice. In the context of the response to TC Pam, UN Women brokered a partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to channel seed distribution through the MVAs. Other key partnerships achieved during 2015 were with the Efate Council of Chiefs, which passed a resolution supporting M4C and with the Pacific Prevention of Domestic Violence Programme. Discussions were initiated with the New Zealand High Commission to link markets with the tourism trail supported by the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Partnership was also developed with the National Bank of Vanuatu to provide financial literacy and business skills training to market vendors.

Results

2015 was the first full year of implementation of the project. Results thus far:

- In Fiji, a partnership with Westpac proved key in building financial literacy training. Municipal councils were able to submit proposals to UN Women for infrastructure development. Important progress was also made in Solomon Islands and Vanuatu in undertaking developmental activities and supporting newly established MVAs, as well as engaging local government with MVAs.
- There is early evidence across all three countries of significant progress towards the creation and growth of marketplace groups that are contributing to gender, social and economic advancement, the elimination of gender-based discrimination and violence, and expanded economic opportunities.
- To date, 17 MVAs have been either established (10) or strengthened (7) under the M4C programme. Ten of these have already been legally registered. Thirteen have more than 50 per cent women in leadership positions, and nine are headed by women. MVAs with membership lists reported 5,339 paying members across the region, 70 per cent of whom are women. In all three countries, MVA Executive Committees have started to demonstrate effective functioning by organizing their own activities for the benefit of their members, and successfully interacting and advocating with local government.
Significant progress was achieved on financial literacy trainings being provided to market vendors in all 3 countries. Most of the other work relevant to socio economic security that was accomplished was developmental, focusing on negotiating partnership agreements with new service providers, assessing the needs of vendor-farmers and developing training programmes adapted to these needs, and exploring opportunities for women market vendors across the farm/market produce value chain.

UN Women worked towards facilitating activities that increased communication and consultations between market vendors and local government. UN Women through their partners Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF) has completed a training Needs assessment in 14 Municipal and Provincial Councils across the 3 countries and have rolled out more than three quarters of the trainings across the 3 countries that were identified. Currently groundwork for larger activities, such as consultative process/meetings between market vendors and Councils are underway for the revision of by-laws and other market-related policy documents, which are planned for 2016.

Considering the double impact of TC Pam and the El Nino-induced drought, UN Women and UNDP will reassess activities that were aimed at increasing the productivity of vendor-farmers and strengthening the livelihoods of farmers in general, to determine whether they need to be refocused on recovery instead.

Changes will be considered in terms of the location of ring-road markets, which are involved in the programme from an infrastructure point of view, taking into account a number of issues from community readiness to location and land title.

**Beneficiaries:**

- National Governments: Through improved physical market infrastructures in cities and towns promoting better economic opportunities, improved levels of public infrastructure in place; improved South-South Exchanges between management at National Government level.
- Local Governments: Through better and improved market facilities; Capacity of staff enhanced by being involved with project management and having opportunities of attending various trainings, meetings and events; Improved South-South Exchange in country between Councils and regionally between the 3 countries.
- Councils were able to engage in bigger and better capital projects for their respective Municipal Markets.
- Market Vendors: Market improvements brought about an enabling environment to work from. In addition there was better socio-economic security for market vendors after attending financial literacy and business management skills and trainings, as well as better knowledge of their rights and responsibilities as a market vendor.

**Frequency of tracking impacts:** Monitoring of the project is ongoing hence any changes etc. is noted and acted upon in a timely manner.

**Potential for scale up or replication:** There is huge potential for scaling up and/or replicating this initiative as the 4 outcomes areas covered under the Market for Change projects takes a holistic approach to improve municipal markets, empower market vendors, and build capacity of market and Council management in line with providing better and bigger physical market infrastructure for the general public. This is also apparent from the donors’ perspective as in the case of Fiji the donor has increased their support to the Markets for Change Projects by
increasing their financial support for 2 more Municipal Councils and reconstruction of 4 Municipal markets after TC Winston. There is also interest shown from other Pacific Island countries to be included in the Markets for Change Projects as they all see the benefits of such a holistic approach. The Markets for Change projects can be considered for scaling up and/or replication in any other region as municipal markets are in existence in most countries with similar concepts.

Links for Further Information


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