



Solomon Islands Government

A National Strategy for the Economic Empowerment of Women and Girls



"A Simple Opportunity Can Make a Difference"

Abbreviation and Acronyms

ADRA	Adventist Development and Relief Agency
CBSI	Central Bank of Solomon Islands
CDF	Constituency Development Funds
CDO	Constituency Development Officer
DCCG	Democratic Coalition for Change Government
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australian Aid (Formerly AusAID)
EVAW	National Policy on Eliminating Violence against Women
GEWD	National Policy on Gender Equality and Women’s Development (GEWD)
GFP	Gender Focal Point
HCC	Honiara City Council
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MDPAC	Ministry of Development, Planning and Aid Coordination
MEHRD	Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development
MoFT	Ministry of Finance and Treasury
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPS	Ministry of Public Service
MWYCFA	Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs
MTDS	Solomon Islands’ Government Medium Term Development Strategy
NGOs	Non-Governmental-Organisations
NSEEWG	National Strategy for the Economic Empowerment of Women and Girls
PMO	Prime Minister’s Office
PO	Project Officer (in relation to CDF)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (Paris)
SICAFOW	Solomon Islands Christian Association Federation of Women
SICCI	Solomon Islands Chamber of Commerce and Industry
SICUL	Solomon Islands Credit Union League
SIG	Solomon Islands Government
SIWIBA	Solomon Islands Women in Business Association
SPBD	South Pacific Business Development
UN	United Nations
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
WES	Women’s Economic Strategy
WDD	Women’s Development Division (MWYCFA)

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Foreword

One of the most rewarding aspects of my role as Minister for Women is being able to present this Solomon Islands National Strategy for the Economic Empowerment of Women and Girls or the Women's Economic Empowerment Strategy (WEES). The framework is not only the first that the Solomon Islands Government has ever produced but that the vision that underpins this strategy is central to the achievement of gender equality and women's human rights here in Solomon Islands.

Improving the economic status of women is a policy priority of the Solomon Islands Government. The WEES builds on the Democratic Coalition for Change Government's (DCCG) policy statement objectives to "encourage gender balance" as well as to "generate jobs and increase employment opportunities for the growing population and achieve high economic growth, wealth and social wellbeing for all Solomon Islanders".

The National Strategy is also closely aligned with the Gender Equality and Women's Development Policy (GEWD) vision of a Solomon Islands where women and men are equal partners in development; where gender equality is at the heart of social and economic progress, so that women and men are able to achieve their full potential and women have **equal access to and control over economic resources**.

Gender disparities, in which women are disadvantaged in relation to men, continue to exist in virtually all areas of Solomon Islands life. The framework is therefore necessary because existing government strategies and initiatives related to economic growth and development are yet to fully include women's empowerment and a gender perspective. The WEES therefore takes a **twin track approach**: It calls for investment in women's agency and efforts while at the same time addressing attitudinal and institutional barriers.

Making this national strategic framework available for our use is both **strategic** and **timely**. It is strategic in that there is increased political will at the national level to invest much more seriously on women and girls. The DCC government's reform agenda is a demonstration of this commitment by our national leaders. The framework is also **timely** as there is now a fair improvement in the enabling environment giving women and girls the added advantage of operating in a setting that is conducive to realizing their economic interests. It is important that we seize this moment to capitalize on these gains and opportunities provided by the private sector, government, non-government organisations and our development partners who have taken the stance to be inclusive in their approach to economically empower women and girls.

Many individuals, groups and stakeholders have assisted my Ministry to produce this very important strategic framework. On that note, I would like to acknowledge and to sincerely thank the Government of Australia for the financial and technical support which has enabled the stocktake to be done and the development and completion of this framework. Similarly, I wish also to salute and congratulate the many stakeholders from Government, the Private Sector and NGOs whose voice has given this National Strategy for the Economic Empowerment of Women and Girls its value, meaning and purpose.

Let us work together as never before to accelerate and intensify our efforts to advance the economic status of our women and girls so as to be assured of a future that is secure and prosperous for all citizens of Solomon Islands.

God Bless Solomon Islands!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jimson F. Tanangada".

Hon. Jimson F. Tanangada MP
Minister for Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs

Presenting the Women's Economic Strategy

Summary of Women's Economic Empowerment

Strategic Areas

Key Strategic Area 1 – *Gender Mainstreaming in Resources Sector*

Key Strategic Area 2 – *Financial Inclusion*

Key Strategic Area 3 – *Enterprise Development and Business Training*

Key Strategic Area 4 – *Creating an enabling environment through legislation and policy changes*

Key Strategic Area 5 – *Applied Research and Knowledge sharing*

Key Strategic Area 6 – *Institutional Strengthening of MWYCFA*

Background and Purpose

The National Strategy on the Economic Empowerment of Women and Girls (NSEEWG) or Women's Economic Strategy (WES) is designed to enhance gender equality and improve the economic status of Solomon Islands women. It relates to Policy Outcome 2 of the Gender Equality and Women's Development (GEWD) Policy endorsed by Cabinet in 2010. In 2012, a desk-top review commissioned by the Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs (MWYCFA) revealed the low economic status of women in Solomon Islands and the challenges they faced in accessing economic opportunities. The purpose of this strategy is therefore to address these gaps and pave the way for women to unleash their economic potentials so women's economic status can be improved.

Outcomes

Ensuring women are economically empowered will enable them to contribute more to improving their children and families, work to strengthen their communities, participate in sustainable development, create more stable, just and equitable societies and importantly, in nation building. When women thrive, so do their families and societies.

Key strategic Areas

In order to achieve the above outcomes, the key strategic areas will involve:

- Gender Mainstreaming in the Resources Sector
- Financial Inclusion
- Enterprise development and Business Training
- Creating an enabling environment through legislation and policy changes
- Applied research and knowledge sharing
- Institutional Strengthening of MWYCFA

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation of the strategy will be undertaken by the Research, Policy, Planning and Information Division (RPPID) and the Women's Development Division (WDD) of MWYCFA. It will also provide coordination between and amongst key stakeholders to monitor and evaluate the Key Strategic Areas of the Women's Economic and Empowerment Strategy.

1. INTRODUCTION

The focus on improving the economic status of women is both strategic and timely. It is strategic in that the growth of the Solomon Islands economy increases attention to the resource and productive sectors, with a push for economic growth centres by government and substantial increases in the amounts of Rural Constituency Development Funds.¹ At the regional level, there has also been focus on economic empowerment of women. The Economic Ministers' Meeting at the Pacific Islands Forum in Kiribati in July 2012 considered a discussion paper on the economic empowerment of women.² Regional donors have also given policy focus in this area. The World Bank *'World Development Report 2012'* focused on gender equality and makes the case that gender equality is smart economics.³ AusAID launched the *'Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development'* initiative in August 2012 which aims to improve the opportunities for political, economic, and social advancement of women.⁴ The economic empowerment of women is a key strategy in this initiative. The UN Women Pacific Sub-Regional Office engaged (August 2013) a consultant to develop a Regional Programme Strategy on Women's Economic Empowerment for 2014-2018.⁵ This is yet to be a public document.

Improving the status of women is a policy priority of the Solomon Islands Government (SIG). The Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs (MWYCFA) is mandated by the Gender Equality and Women's Development (GEWD) Policy to coordinate SIG's commitment to addressing gender equality and advancing the status of women in the Solomon Islands.

GEWD Policy

The GEWD policy is the overarching framework for achieving gender equality in the Solomon Islands and premised on the vision that gender equality contributes substantially to improving the well-being of all Solomon Islanders - women, men, girls and boys- and that the promotion of gender equality must be at the heart of government's mission. The policy recognises that women and men are equal partners in the development of Solomon Islands, placing gender equality at the heart of economic and social progress, and giving equal value to the roles and responsibilities of Solomon Islands women and men.

The five priority policy outcomes of the GEWD policy to be pursued are:

1. Improved equitable health and education for women, men, girls and boys;
2. Improved economic status of women;
3. Equal participation of women and men in decision making and leadership;
4. Elimination of violence against women; and

¹Notable increases from SBD 1million to currently SBD 9million per MP

²Pacific Islands' Forum Secretariat. Economic Empowerment of Women Paper, Session I , Forum Economic Ministers Meetings, Kiribati, 2-4 July 2012

³Publications.worldbank.org

⁴www.ausaid.gov.au/countries/.../pacific-gender-equality-strategy

⁵Individual interview with consultant

5. Increased capacity for gender mainstreaming.

In the first two years (2010-2012) of the GEWD policy implementation, the focus has been on Outcomes 3 and 4, which have taken shape and gained momentum. In 2013, the MWYCFA began to pursue the focus on Outcome 2.

Methodology

In preparation for the development of this strategy, a desk review and stock-take analysis of research and activities relevant to women's economic status in Solomon Islands was commissioned in February 2012 which pointed to recommended areas of focus for the development of this strategy.⁶ The stock-take analysis was shared with stakeholders for validation. Between May and November 2013, a series of roundtable consultations and meetings with key stakeholders from government, non-government organisations, civil society organisations and the private sector provided further input to MWYCFA in the development of the WES.

This national strategy focuses on 6 key strategic areas:

- 1. Gender mainstreaming in the resource sector with particular focus on Agricultural and Fisheries activities especially for rural women;**
- 2. Financial Inclusion through financial literacy, savings schemes and access to affordable financial services – especially targeting the informal sector;**
- 3. Support for Women's Business Associations (SIWIBA, Women's Chamber of Commerce) to provide enterprise development and business training –for women in private and public sector;**
- 4. Enabling legislation for micro banking activities; equal employment opportunities in the formal labour market; security of land and property ownership rights for women; applied research and knowledge sharing;**
- 5. Institutional Strengthening of Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs**

Monitoring and evaluation will be carried out by the RPPID&WDD of MWYCFA under the oversight of the National Taskforce on Policy Outcome 2. In this regard, Institutional strengthening of WDD/MWYCFA is a priority concern to ensure suitably qualified and skilled human resources are in place to implement and take this strategy forward and provide the necessary policy support to the National Taskforce. Australian Aid/DFAT has committed to engaging a national officer to boost the MWYCFA capacity to implement this strategy.

⁶Jan Cossar, MWYCFA internal paper, 2013

2. GENDER ANALYTIC FRAMEWORK

Gender issues have not been well articulated and integrated in national economic development policies and strategies. From the literature review, while there appears to be general consensus on actions to be taken with similar strategies, what is lacking is the articulation of the underlying gender analysis that informs such a strategy. This strategy identifies the gender issues, articulates the underlying gender analysis framework for the policy action and also specifies actions and activities to be undertaken in an action plan to guide and steer the implementation to achieve GEWD Policy outcome 2 to ‘Improve the Economic Status of Women’

There is increasing recognition that economically empowering women is essential both for the realization of women’s rights and to achieve broader national development goals such as economic growth, poverty reduction, health and education. The lack of understanding about this has resulted in economic development strategies leading to inequitable growth and rising feminization of poverty. Women’s economic empowerment promotes women’s ability to achieve their rights and wellbeing while also reducing household poverty, increasing economic growth and productivity, and increasing efficiency. Being financially independent also enables a woman to have life choices (and end violent relationships within which many women find themselves trapped).

Additionally, this strategy echoes DCCG’s development policies and objectives to “encourage gender balance” as well as to “generate jobs and increase employment opportunities for the growing population, leading to high economic growth, wealth and social well-being for all Solomon Islanders”. The GEWD policy vision of a Solomon Islands where women and men are equal partners in development is closely aligned to the above statements and objectives; a Solomon Islands in which gender equality is at the heart of social and economic progress, so both women and men are able to achieve their full potential and women have equal access to and control over economic resources. This is the vision that underpins this strategy and forms the gender analytic framework.

The Framework is necessary because existing government strategies and initiatives related to economic growth and development do not specifically include women’s empowerment and a gender perspective. When gender is included or mentioned, it is often in a tangential way and not fully integrated – and usually an after-thought, just for the sake of being mentioned. This framework advocates that gender concerns are addressed in a mainstream approach, acknowledging that women’s economic disadvantage have led to disparities and gender inequalities. In order to redress gender inequalities, a twin track approach is necessary to invest in women’s agencies and efforts while at the same time addressing wider societal attitudinal and institutional barriers.

Research⁷ points to strong reasons for emphasizing women's economic empowerment in development programs as follows:

- Economic empowerment is one of the most powerful routes for women to achieve their potential and advance their rights;
- Since women make up the majority of the world's poor, meeting poverty-reduction goals requires addressing women and their economic empowerment;
- Discrimination against women is economically inefficient. National economies lose out when a substantial (half the Solomon Islands population are females) part of the population cannot compete equitably or realize their full potential;
- Working with women makes good business sense.⁸ When women have the right skills and opportunities, they can help businesses and markets grow ; and
- Women who are economically empowered contribute more to their families, societies and national economies. It has been shown that women invest extra income in their children, providing a route to sustainable development.

3. DEFINING WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

The International Centre for Women's Research⁹ provides a relevant definition and the means for addressing women's economic empowerment, which was found relevant for application in this strategy.

Definition: A woman is economically empowered when she has both **the ability** to succeed and advance economically and **the power** to make and act on economic decisions.

- To **succeed and advance economically**, women need skills and resources to compete in markets, as well as fair and equal access to economic institutions.
- To **have the power and agency** to benefit from economic activities, women need to have the ability to make and act on decisions and control resources and profits.

Economic empowerment comprises of two inter-related components - 1) **economic advancement** and 2) **power and agency**. Both components are connected and both are necessary to achieve better lives for women and their families. Economic gain and success (economic advancement) promotes women's power and agency. At the same time, when a woman is able to control and share in resource use (power) and to define and make choices (agency), she is better able to advance economically.

Understanding Women's Economic Empowerment

⁷ICRW, 2011 pg. 3

⁸This is confirmed in the 2012 World Development report, by World Bank

⁹ICWR, 2011, pg. 4

To achieve women's economic empowerment, organisations must address the underlying factors that contribute to it, which are – individual and community resources, norms and institutions.

Resources are the building blocks women require to draw on to succeed economically or to exercise power and agency. Resources can be at the individual or community level. They are more than financial and monetary in nature and include:

- Human capital (e.g. education, skills, training)
- Financial capital (e.g. loans, savings)
- Social capital (e.g. networks, mentors)
- Physical capital (e.g. land, machinery)

Norms and institutions are the “rules of the game” or the organisational and social systems that govern activities and mediate relations between individuals and their social and economic environment. Norms and institutions influence how resources are distributed and used.

- Norms include gender defined roles, taboos, prohibitions and expectations such as whether or not it is appropriate for women to be in public spaces, hold certain types of jobs, or manage money.
- Institutions include legal and policy structures, economic systems, market structures, marriage, inheritance and education systems.

Why women's economic empowerment matters

The OECD¹⁰ refers to economic empowerment as the capacity of women and men to participate in, contribute to and benefit from growth processes in ways which recognize the value of their contributions, respect their dignity and make it possible to negotiate a fairer distribution of the benefits of growth. Economic empowerment increases women's access to economic resources and opportunities including jobs, financial services, property and other productive assets, skills development and market information.

Women's economic participation and empowerment are fundamental to strengthening women's rights, enabling them to have control over their lives and exerting influence in society. It is about creating just and equitable societies. Women often face discrimination and persistent gender inequalities with some women facing multiple discrimination and exclusion. Gender based violence including violence against women and girls persist when they are disempowered. There is an inextricable link between economic empowerment of women and violence against women.

The economic empowerment of women is a prerequisite for sustainable development, pro-poor growth and the achievement of all the MDGs. Gender equality and empowered women

¹⁰ OECD, 2011, pg.6

are catalysts for multiplying development efforts. Investments in gender equality yield the highest returns of all development ventures.¹¹ Women usually invest a higher proportion of their earnings in their families and communities than men. Increasing the role of women in the economy is therefore critical for economic resilience and growth.



Flowers are beautiful and are also a source of income.
Flower vendors selling at the Honiara Central market: *Courtesy of UNWOMEN*

¹¹OECD, 2010

4. ECONOMIC STATUS OF WOMEN IN SOLOMON ISLANDS



Planting taro as a cash crop: *Courtesy of Ministry of Agriculture*

Improving the status of women through their access to and share of productive resources such as land, income, financial services, training opportunities, enterprise development services and technology contributes significantly to poverty reduction.¹² The literature review¹³ (refer to annex 1) revealed that the 2012 Women's Economic Index included the Solomon Islands for the first time in its global comparison of women's economic opportunities but the overall score for the Solomon Islands rated a disturbing 124th position out of 128 countries.

A range of inter-related factors limit women's economic empowerment in the Solomon Islands. The lack of women in parliament and in positions of leadership also reflects women are not involved in decisions that directly affect their economic lives. Even though several provincial areas are based on a matrilineal society where land rights are inherited through the female lineage, land ownership is generally in name only for women with men making decisions related to land use and ownership resulting in women having limited access to royalties, financial services and institutions for collateral. The most significant barrier faced by women is having the required collateral or something to borrow against as banks are unwilling to provide small amounts, as is often needed by women entrepreneurs.

¹²Solomon Islands National Policy on gender equality and women's development, pg. 2

¹³ Review of Women's economic empowerment status in the Solomon Islands, Jan Cossar, AusAID internal report 2012.

Research found women spend more time than men every day on agricultural work and the work they did amounted to three times that of men. Furthermore, 85% of women relied on informal selling. Reportedly, women lack the technical skills that limit their ability to start and expand businesses and most women have not received training in economic areas such as saving, financial management and investment. A financial competence survey¹⁴ showed that gender differences are pervasive across financial competencies measured. The survey found that 59% of women considered they could not communicate in English; are less likely to have a bank account, less likely to use electronic payment and remittance channels, are less likely to be involved in the management of household finances and are also 20% less likely to use a mobile phone.



Shells are also a resource: Selling shell money necklaces in the Auki market: *Courtesy of UNWOMEN*

¹⁴ Conducted by the Central Bank of Solomon Islands and shared at the National workshop on financial inclusion and financial competence held 4-5 June, 2013 in Honiara.

5. GEWD OUTCOME 2: IMPROVED ECONOMIC STATUS OF WOMEN

GEWD Policy Outcome number 2 relates to the “Improved economic status of women.” The actions to be carried out and performance outputs to be achieved are as follows:

ACTION 2:

- 2.1 Develop policies and programs that involve women and men in natural resource development and management and that respond to women’s and men’s different needs;
- 2.2 Improve access to and ownership of resources, land and development opportunities by women in the productive sectors of fisheries, agriculture, forestry and minerals;
- 2.3 Improve access to, and legal protection and ownership of, financial resources and enterprise development opportunities for women;
- 2.4 Improve employment and business opportunities for women in public, private and community sectors.

Performance Outputs

- *Equitable access, legal protection and ownership by women and men of land, property rights and royalty shares in the productive sectors*
- *Full and meaningful participation of women in training and development opportunities in the productive sectors especially in agriculture and fisheries*
- *Access to, and legal protection and ownership of, financial resources and small medium enterprises for women is approximately equal with men’s access*
- *Improved productivity, growth and development of employment opportunities for women in all sectors and Infrastructure developed that reduces burdens for women*

To this end, the vision underpinning the GEWD policy resonates well with the policy statements and objectives of the Democratic Coalition for Change Government’s (DCCG) agenda. DCCG has made a bold commitment to provide support to community programmes and projects for women and girls through the provision of development grants targeting and prioritizing women and girls including those with special needs. The outcome envisaged is more women and girls who are economically empowered who will be able to provide more income to support and strengthen their families and communities. The WEES will therefore provide the framework through which DCCG can practically implement its policy statements and objectives.



Saving for the future of our families: Counting money and deposits for a Savings Club:
Courtesy of World Vision



“I have an account in the bank now!” Opening bank accounts in Honiara:
Courtesy of UNWOMEN

6. STRATEGIC AREAS OF FOCUS

6.1 Gender mainstreaming in the resources sector with particular focus on Agricultural and Fisheries activities especially targeting rural women

“I am a farmer too.” Selling water-melons at the Honiara Central Market: *Courtesy of Ministry of Agriculture*



Taking a ‘whole-of-government’ approach, the focus will be on gender mainstreaming activities in key government agencies and key policy instruments such as the Medium Term Development Strategy (MTDS) and gender based budgeting with the Ministry of Finance and Treasury, Councils and Provincial governments. Since agriculture and fisheries are the main resource sectors for rural women, proposed activities will focus on gender mainstreaming and targeted women’s assistance in the government resource sector agencies primarily the Ministry of Agriculture – where there are 30 agricultural women’s officers already working with women farmers and the Ministry of Fisheries – where there are grants for women’s fisheries projects. The other relevant agencies are the Ministry of Commerce and Industry – for small business advice and support; Ministry of Rural Development – for disbursement of RCD funds to women’s projects; and Ministry of Tourism for marketing of women’s handcrafts.



All in a day’s work: Women preparing taro for replanting and selling at the market: *Courtesy of Ministry of Agriculture*

6.2 Financial Inclusion through financial literacy, savings schemes, access to credit and affordable financial services



'Eureka! I've got it!' Temotu women using calculators during Financial Inclusion training: Courtesy of Caroline Kanoko, Central Bank of Solomon Islands (CBSI)

Women need financial literacy and skills training to save, start and expand businesses, have access to financial services and be competent in financial management and investment. It is understood that micro finance schemes and banking services for women are limited in the Solomon Islands, especially for rural women, hence the focus on financial inclusion and financial competence by the CBSI and the National Financial Inclusion Taskforce to improve women's literacy and access to affordable financial services. This strategy builds on that focus and proposes a national drive on savings and establishing savings clubs and changing attitudes and behaviour are key objectives. Various NGOs have been involved in existing savings clubs but there needs to be a stock take of the existing schemes. Concern has been expressed by some NGOs about sustainability of the savings clubs when their project funding projects run out which is where MWYCFA can be involved and provide further support. Emphasis is also on working with banks to remove the barrier faced by women for the required collateral or something to borrow against and to develop a range of financial products particularly suited for rural women.

6.3 Provide enterprise development and business training through Support for Women's Business Associations

'This is what I can do when given the opportunity':
 Entrepreneur selling in her stall at the Honiara Mere's market: *Courtesy of Solomon Islands Women In Business Association (SIWIBA)*



Research confirms the importance of networking and mentoring for women to be successful in business. The important role played by Women's business associations is emphasised. In the Solomon Islands, SIWIBA plays a key role but requires capacity building and core support. A focus is to support a partnership with SIWIBA and to provide it with institutional strengthening support and an effective functioning savings and credit scheme for their members and for other small women farmers and market vendors. UN Women is also involved with market vendors and is a key partner to collaborate with. Apart from food selling, other key product sales for women are handcrafts, flowers and floral arrangements, especially in Honiara. The Honiara City Council, the Ministry of Lands and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism as key stakeholders, amongst others, have been identified for the establishment of a handicraft centre in Honiara which can also provide space for floral vendors.



'Hmm! I can make money growing and selling flowers.'

Inspecting potted plants at Kakabona:
Courtesy of SIWIBA

6.4 Creating an Enabling Environment

Participants in a Mock Parliament session: *Courtesy of Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs (MWYCFA)*



Enabling legislation is required to formalise for micro banking initiatives, equal employment opportunities in the formal labour market and security of land and property ownership rights for women. The CBSI is mandated to facilitate financial Inclusion, however, there is still a gap in the provision of legislation to foster and harness the establishment of savings clubs and microfinance institutions. This is necessary for the protection of these micro banking initiatives which serve the majority of local and rural communities in the non-formal sector. There is also a need to focus on the formal sector and legislation is required for equal employment opportunities in the formal labour market. Since the government is the largest employer, the focus is to work with the Ministry of Public Service on their current review of the Public Service Act, to have a provision on equal employment legislation. In addition, legislation and policies are required to ensure the security of land and property ownership rights for women. A close collaboration with the Ministry of Lands and the Land Reform Unit in the Prime Minister's Office is therefore necessary.



CEDAW Delegation representatives in a CEDAW mock session: *Courtesy of MWYCFA*

6.5 Applied research and knowledge sharing

The CEDAW report being presented by women representatives of Solomon Islands:
Courtesy of MWYCFA



The stocktake analysis revealed that there is very little applied research currently available that captures the views, realities and stories of Solomon Island women in relation to economic empowerment. The literature reviewed often uses the same sources yet there is an absence of women's and girls' voices and their identified priorities. Applied research should be undertaken to ask the women and girls of the Solomon Islands, especially in rural areas, what their priorities are in relation to women's economic empowerment. There is also value in undertaking consultations with men and boys as part of this process. This information will be critical to the development and refinement of MWYCFA's next Strategic Action Plan in relation to women's economic empowerment. The development of an M&E framework will assist in further identifying areas for baseline information and further research. The creation of a knowledge bank and provision of space for stakeholders to develop Solomon specific responses is necessary.



Meeting of partners and stakeholders to validate Gender Country Assessment report by Asian Development Bank.
Courtesy of MWYCFA

6.6 Institutional Strengthening of MWYCFA

Gender Statistics training for Government Ministries Gender Focal Points:
Courtesy of MWYCFA

To effectively implement this strategy, the MWYCFA requires capacity building and institutional strengthening. The WDD needs structural realignment to incorporate a sectoral approach. To boost capacity, DFAT/Australian Aid is funding an additional position to assist with this strategy.



Our strength is in our partnerships: Participants in a Women in Shared Decision Making (WISDM) and Temporary Special Measures (TSM) conference organized by UN WOMEN: *Courtesy of MWYCFA*

1. PLAN OF ACTION

STRATEGY	ACTION	ACTIVITIES	ACTORS/PARTNERS
1. Gender Mainstreaming – targeting resource sector agencies	1.1. Work with MDPAC for a cross cutting gender strategy in the MTD Plan 2014-2018	1.1.1. Submission and proposal to MDPAC	MDPAC WDD MoFT
		1.1.2. MWYCFA submissions for MTD	
		1.1.3 Strengthen Gender Focal Point (GFP) in MDPAC	
	1.2 Work with the MoFT, Councils and Provincial Governments (PG) to introduce gender based budgeting	1.2.1 Establish GFP in MoFT and develop an approach to gender based budgeting 1.2.2 Train Council and PG Treasury in gender responsive budgeting with refresher trainings/follow up	
	1.3 Provide support for gender in the resources Sector	1.3.1 Follow up with training on gender mainstreaming in the following sectors, Fisheries, Agriculture, Lands, Rural development, Commerce & Industry, Tourism	Ministry of Agriculture Ministry of Fisheries Ministry of Rural Development Ministry of Tourism
	1.4 Work with Ministry of Agriculture and other responsible organisations to provide training in financial literacy, access to savings and credit and empowerment to women farmers	1.4.1. Partnership with Women Agricultural Officers to identify women farmers' and their training needs and deliver training 1.4.1. Partnership with UN Women, HCC and others to provide training to small scale women farmers e.g. market vendors	Ministry of Agriculture
	1.5. Work with Ministry of Rural Development to access CDF for women's projects	1.5.1. Work with Ministry of Rural Development on guidelines to target women's projects 1.5.2. Work with Provincial women's officers and women's groups and CDOs and POs to access CDF funding for women's projects	Ministry of Rural Development

<p>2. Financial Inclusion (Financial competence)- increasing women and girls' financial literacy and access to affordable financial services</p>	<p>2.1 Promote a national drive on savings and establish savings clubs for women and youth</p> <p>Address attitudinal and behavior change in training (National Financial Inclusion Taskforce (NFIT) – have identified learning areas to address 13 competencies identified)</p> <p>Work with HCC or Ministry of Home Affairs to explore opportunities for establishing a microfinance scheme which allows market vendors to join and access credit</p>	<p>2.1.1. Take stock of existing savings schemes and scale up and expand networks – CBSI & NFIT</p> <p>2.1.2. Develop training materials and conduct training in financial literacy, financial competency and financial services to include confidence building and empowerment</p> <p>2.1.3. Establish savings club with church women and youth through SICAFOW</p>	<p>CBSI Live and Learn World Vision Rokotanikeni ADRA SICAFOW and member church women's groups SIWIBA SICUL SPBD</p> <p>UN Women</p>
	<p>2.2 Organise workshops in provinces to share ideas and experiences in management and operations of their communities</p>	<p>2.2.1. Partner with World Vision, Rokotanikeni, Live and Learn to conduct workshops in provinces where savings schemes are already in existence</p>	
	<p>2.3. Create and strengthen partnerships with banks</p>	<p>2.3.1. Explore a partnership with SICUL, SIWIBA and SPBD to establish a Micro Bank for women (DBSI)</p> <p>2.3.2. Work with banks and MFIs to develop new financial products including savings, insurance and credit products</p>	
<p>3. Enterprise development and business training for women and girls</p>	<p>3.1 Provide institutional strengthening support to SIWIBA</p>	<p>3.1.1. Strengthen SIWIBA credit and savings scheme</p> <p>3.1.2. Work with the Chamber of Commerce to fund business awards for the informal sector</p> <p>3.1.3 Provide support for working with informal market vendors to link them</p>	<p>SIWIBA HCC Ministry of Lands Ministry of Tourism</p> <p>UN Women UNDP</p> <p>HCC</p>

		to SIWIBA credit and savings scheme and smaller savings group	
	3.2 Work with SIWIBA, HCC, Ministry of Lands and Ministry of Culture and Tourism to establish a handicraft centre in Honiara city which also provides space for floral vendors	3.2.1. Work with all parties to identify land and financing to establish the handicraft centre	
4. Enabling legislation for: (a) micro banking in the non-formal sector; (b) equal employment opportunity to increase women's participation in the formal labour market (c) Policy development on security of land and property ownership rights	4.1 Work with the CBSI for enabling legislation for micro banking and MFIs.	4.1.1. Work with CBSI & NFIT	MPS MEHR MoFT SICCI
	4.2 Work with MPS to increase women's representation and promotion in the public services, Boards and tribunals	Introduce equal employment policy and legislation	
		4.2.2 Introduce affirmative action policies	
		4.2.3 Gender awards for SIG agencies	
	4.3 Work with the MoFT and SICOC to increase women's representation on SOE Boards	4.3.1. Board/Corporate governance training, mentoring and coaching for women directors	
	4.4 Increased scholarships for women to undertake tertiary and postgraduate studies	4.4.1. A quota of scholarships to be allocated for women	
	5.1 Work with the Ministry of lands and Prime Minister's Office (Land Reform Unit) to increase access to land and property for women	5.1.1 Develop policy and legislation on property ownership rights for women	Ministry of Lands Land Reform Unit/PMO
5. Institutional Strengthening of the MWYCFA	6.1. Re-organisation and realignment of WDD structure to GEWD Policy requirements	6.1.1 Restructuring of WDD in liaison with the MPS	WDD HRM, MWYCFA MPS DFAT
	6.2. Strengthen the National Taskforce to oversight and monitor the national strategy	6.1.2 Appointment of staff to focus on GEWD Policy Outcome #2	
	6.3. Conduct applied research, reflection and learning through sharing and exchanges	6.1.3 Secure funding support from DFAT for Desk Officer position for 2 years Resource mobilisation and funding support	

2. MONITORING & EVALUATION

Design Summary	Performance Targets and Indicators	Data sources and reporting mechanisms	Assumptions and Risks
<p>1. Financial literacy training for women and girls and savings clubs established and operational</p>	<p>Twenty (20) financial literacy training activities (2 each province including HCC) for women entrepreneurs and young women completed by 2015</p> <p>Fifty (50) savings clubs operational by 2015 with another 50 by 2016.</p> <p>SIWIBA credit and savings scheme operational and functioning to benefit at least 500 women</p>	<p>-Workshop reports - Ministry Annual report</p> <p>-Progress reports</p> <p>-An MOU with SIWIBA - progress reports</p>	<p>It is assumed there is technical capacity to roll this out and external partners will cooperate.</p> <p>The risks are that the activities will not be implemented in an effective and timely manner</p>
<p>2. Marketing support Focal points for women vendors established and operational</p>	<p>Ten focal points for marketing established in every province & HCC by 2016</p> <p>Ten marketing training (one in each province plus HCC) for women farmers and women agricultural officers by 2016</p>	<p>-Provincial reports</p> <p>-Workshop reports</p> <p>-A joint venture with SIWIBA, HCC and Ministry of Tourism</p> <p>-Media coverage</p> <p>-Testimonies of participants</p>	<p>It is assumed that the provincial governments & HCC will cooperate.</p> <p>The risk is that the partners do not cooperate. Travel to provinces is dependent on available and timely transportation which can be disruptive</p> <p>It is assumed that business people will be willing and available and young entrepreneurs will come forward</p>
<p>3. Enterprise development and business training for women delivered and recognition through business awards</p>	<p>A handicraft centre for women in Honiara by 2017</p> <p>A series of four (4) small business training targeting at least 1,000 SIWIBA members and other women in the informal sector by 2015</p> <p>An annual event to recognize enterprising women through</p>	<p>-Report from MRD</p> <p>-Workshop report</p>	<p>It is assumed that MPs will be supportive of women's projects</p>

	<p>business awards</p> <p>A mentoring programme targeting at least 200 young female entrepreneurs by successful business women by 2016</p>		
<p>4. Increased allocation of CDF funds for women’s income generating projects</p>	<p>Proposal writing and project development workshops in all 50 constituencies by 2016</p> <p>Annual workshops with CDOs, POs, provincial women’s officers and Provincial Councils of women to target at least 30% of CDF allocation for women’s economic projects</p>		
<p>5. Increased women’s representation on Statutory bodies and SOE Boards</p>	<p>Conduct at least 3 workshops on Corporate Governance and Board directorship targeting women in Boards and statutory bodies and potential women candidates for SOE Boards</p> <p>Equal Employment legislation to be drafted in partnership with the MPS and PSC to be passed and in place by 2016</p>	<p>Baseline data from MoFT and PSC of women’s representation on Boards and statutory bodies - database of gender profiles from SIG agencies</p> <p>EEO legislation in place and monitored by sponsoring agencies</p>	<p>It is assumed that the MoFT and SICOC will be supportive.</p> <p>It is assumed that there will be technical assistance to draft legislation and adequate resources to hold consultation</p>

ANNEX 1

1. Key Findings of a Stock take Analysis

The stock take analysis¹⁵ was commissioned by the MWYCFA to carry out the literature survey and to make recommendations to inform the formulation of this national strategy. Below is a short summary of key findings and recommendations.

a) Gender Equality and Women's Development (GEWD) is a 'Whole of Government' Responsibility

Given the enormous task of implementing the SIG's GEWD policy and the limited resources MWYCFA has, it is realistic and desirable that the Ministry adopts a clearly articulated 'Whole of Government' (WoG) approach to issues of gender equality, including women's economic empowerment. Such an approach would ensure all SIG ministries include gender equality and women's development in their plans and programs and would demonstrate the collective commitment of SIG to tackle this fundamental development issue. This in turn should maximise results and ensure a more sustained public sector response.

Within a 'Whole of Government' response, it should be recognised that the elimination of violence against women is considered a key underpinning factor that must be addressed to advance women's economic empowerment.

b) The Solomon Islands Compares Poorly in Recent International Research on Women's Economic Empowerment

The 2012 Women's Economic Opportunity Index included the Solomon Islands for the first time in its global comparison of women's economic opportunities. The overall score for the SI rated it 124th out of 128 countries. This data is disturbing and provides substantial evidence that SIG and its Ministries need to prioritise and target improvements in performance in relation to gender equality and women's economic empowerment.

c) Multiple Issues Impact on Women's Economic Empowerment

A range of inter-rated factors limit women's economic empowerment. This is clearly outlined in the literature and demonstrated in the SI's first CEDAW report prepared by MWYCFA in 2012. Lack of women in parliament and in positions of leadership mean women are not involved in decisions that directly affect their economic lives. Land ownership is generally in name only for

¹⁵Jan Cossar, 2013

women with men making decisions related to land use and women have limited access to financial institutions (MWYCFA, 2012). It is essential that SIG ministries be required to address GEWD issues and be rewarded when evidence based results are achieved.

The literature emphasised again and again that the elimination of violence against women is a key factor in women's economic empowerment as women's and girls' safety and security underpins development in all spheres of their life. The literature stresses that this positive work currently being undertaken to eliminate violence against women is critical to women's economic development and provides an enabling environment for women to explore learning and work opportunities. Hence, elimination of violence against women should be identified as an enabling strategy for women's economic empowerment.

d) Women need increased opportunities to access credit, especially rural women

Micro finance schemes and banking services for women are limited in the SI, especially for rural women. The SI rated 0/100 for developing a credit history and access to financial programs in the Women's Economic Opportunity Index assessment, 2012. The most significant barrier is having the required collateral or something to borrow against. Banks are also unwilling to provide small amounts, as is often needed by women entrepreneurs and compounding this issue is the lack of financial services available for women. Outside Honiara, banking services are very limited and banking agents can't open new accounts.

e) Specific targeted agricultural support for rural women is a priority

71% of women and 51% of men are engaged in subsistence agriculture in the Solomon Islands. Research found women spend more time than men every day on agricultural work and the work they did amounted to three times that of men. Furthermore, 85% of women relied on informal selling. Women's economic development requires providing targeted assistance to these women, recognising women's family and domestic responsibilities and introducing services appropriately.

f) Redress the skills and education gap for girls and women

Reportedly, women lack the technical skills that limit their ability to start and expand businesses and most women have not received training in economic areas such as saving, financial management and investment. 23% of attendees at vocational and technical training institutions in the SI are women. In key sectors of fisheries, industrial development, agriculture and natural resource management, 2.5% are women. 31% of students in junior secondary

schools are girls and 17% in senior secondary school. At a tertiary level, gaps are still prevalent with only 30% of scholarships being awarded to female students.

g) Markets are a key area of economic activity for women

Local markets play a vital role in the lives of most Solomon Islands women with 84% of people in Solomon Islands' rural areas relying on the informal marketing of food and betel nut and in urban areas like Honiara at 51%. A 2009 report found that overcrowding, inadequate infrastructure (including transport to market) and harassment constrain women's business growth. Insufficient markets also require rural women to travel to access markets. Expanding and improving market operations would substantially increase economic opportunities leading to the economic empowerment of Solomon Islands women.

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