Helpdesk Research Report: Women in Business in the Pacific Islands
04.08.08

Query: Please identify literature on the key issues relating to women in business in the Pacific Islands – namely Tonga, Samoa, Timor Leste, Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. Please include information on key trends and current issues; statistics; relevant government policies; laws and regulations; and high profile messages and statements.

Enquirer: AusAid

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1. Overview

It has been extremely difficult to find literature on the constraints and opportunities for women in business in the Pacific Islands. Most experts agree that there is a serious dearth of data and statistics on women’s economic activity in the region.

The need for gender-disaggregated data
Part of the problem is that women’s economic activity has predominantly been in the informal sector or within households, and has thus been either poorly remunerated or not at all. As a result, little information exists about their work, and their contribution remains undervalued. Most of the literature below stresses the need for gender-disaggregated data to allow policy-makers to factor the needs of women into the formulation of development policies and programmes. Some reports also emphasise that better gender analysis would shed light on the intra-household gender relations and processes that have an impact on household and family-run businesses, and this would offer alternative models for understanding economic growth processes.

The importance of the informal sector
There is widespread recognition amongst governments, international donors and organisations, and the academic community of the need to invest in women’s enterprises in the region. The rural areas are increasingly transitioning from subsistence-based to cash economies and income-generation activities are no longer undertaken solely on a need-by-need basis. However, the economies of many of the Pacific Islands are characterised by low growth rates, high rates of population growth, increasing levels of joblessness (particularly among youth), and a labour market with low levels of technical skill. This means that formal sector employment is unlikely to expand sufficiently in the near future to accommodate the increase in the labour force in most of these countries. Therefore, promoting the informal sector, which employs the vast majority of women, is being seen as an important means of generating employment and income. In Timor-
Leste, almost 93% of the rural and urban labour force is employed in the informal sector, 40% of which are estimated to be women. In the Solomon Islands in the early 1990s, almost half of all women working in the cash economy were self-employed, and a third of these self-employed women were the sole income earners for their households. In addition, many of the materials below highlight evidence of women’s small trading ventures that have grown into larger, more formal enterprises. They also highlight another noticeable trend - that women are usually involved in more than one activity as a risk-spreading strategy. There is also evidence that once a business becomes established, women will often hand it over to a family member, and start up something else.

Constraints to the economic participation of women
Each of the countries addressed below vary in terms of patterns of female employment, the trends of women in business, levels of official commitment to gender equality, and the broader issues surrounding gender. However, there are several important constraints to the effective economic participation of women which seem to be common to all. These include:

Lack of access to credit and finance: This is one of the most important barriers for women’s businesses in the region. Mainstream banks do not give out unsecured loans and as women often have limited land rights, they usually have to look to family members for funds. The World Bank's ‘Doing Business 2008’ ranks Samoa 135 out of 178 countries for access to credit. As a result, many donors are implementing micro-finance programmes for women in the region. As this issue has important implications for women, this research report includes some materials on micro-finance and credit, including good practice and lessons learned, even where they do not explicitly address gender issues.

Limited production capacity: Many Pacific Island businesses cannot access export markets because they are unable to produce the volume of goods required. As a result some NGOs, e.g. the Women in Business Development Foundation (WIBDI) in Samoa, are promoting products that are unique to the Islands to niche markets (e.g. virgin coconut oil).

Limited mobility: This can be due to cultural factors, household responsibilities, and poor infrastructure. Most rural women sell their products at local markets. Those that do travel to larger urban markets have to pay expensive transportation fees, undertake considerable hardship and risk theft of their goods. In Papua New Guinea, poverty has been found to be predominantly rural and is associated strongly with lack of access to services, markets and transportation.

Lack of skills and experience: Average literacy rates, especially among women, are low in the region. Production and accounting skills are also weak. Many commentators recommend that vocational training centres and schools should be established, and that these should provide practical and business-oriented training as well as theoretical lecture-based lessons.

Lack of access to training: The need for training in the areas of product diversification, planning and budgeting, marketing and packaging for product development have been consistently highlighted by women interviewed in some of the studies below. However, the training methods themselves must take gender concerns into account. Previous programmes have found that with mixed groups, educational differences can be disempowering for women. Women with lower educational levels may also be excluded from training because they feel they cannot manage certain courses, or because they are discouraged from attending.

Existing family obligations and domestic responsibilities: Women’s increased participation in the market economy, paid employment and other such activities occurs in addition to their existing traditional and social roles, which includes household duties and childcare. In many cases, running small businesses can impose further pressures on women, leaving little time to attend meetings, training, etc.
Socio-cultural beliefs: Some of the literature highlights the contrast between the cultural values of Pacific Island communities, (i.e. the importance of kinship, service to the family and community, reciprocity in terms of gifts, respect for age, and the importance of ceremonies) and the dominant ‘Western’ models of enterprise and business. This has led to difficulties in implementing various income-generation programmes. However, there is also evidence that some women are choosing business options which build on the strengths of family systems and preserve customary values, such as the Aggie Grey enterprise in Samoa.

Land ownership: Women do not have the same access as men to the ownership of freehold property. For example, they have less understanding of the legal procedures that are required to become a joint owner of land with their spouse and there are many cases where men purchasing freehold land do not register their spouses as joint owners. In addition, a large proportion of land in the Pacific region is held under customary tenure. Customary land cannot be used as security for loans for development purposes. Some governments have made moves to increase freehold ownership of land but many of the procedures required to do this marginalise women.

Policy environment: Government commitments to gender equality vary across the region. The constitution of Tonga contains no affirmative action provision that could be invoked in favour of women, and the government is yet to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). In Timor-Leste, commentators argue that despite gaps in the legal and regulatory framework, the most pressing challenge for the Government is developing the administrative and enforcement capacity of institutions.

Note: The documents below are organised by country, preceded by a section of literature that address the Pacific Islands as a region. Given the lack of relevant materials found during the course of the research for this report, some of the references cited below date back to the 1990s. In some cases, documents which do not directly address gender issues, but do look at the pertinent areas of the informal sector and micro-finance, have also been included. The literature selected has been scanned for information on key issues; statistics; policies and institutions; and laws and regulations, and the relevant information has been highlighted in the summaries. Only where a document clearly only contains information on one of these issues has it been placed under a separate sub-heading.

1. Key Documents - Regional


This chapter illustrates the various trajectories that women’s businesses can take in the Pacific Islands. The section entitled ‘Case two-the economic strategies of Pacific women’, (pp. 67-70) highlights two examples of Pacific women using their family systems to encourage and enhance economic development options. Aggie Grey’s enterprise in Samoa is an example of a business which has used family systems to grow ‘vertically’ in size, to increase the numbers employed and capital outlay. The second example highlights the WOSED (Women’s Social and Economic Development Program) micro-credit programme in Fiji. This is based on the Grameen model of peer group support and the premise that credit and/or savings are the catalyst that will enable women to develop resources to bring about change. The author highlights a 1997 review of WOSED which found that a significant number of WOSED members were engaged in more than one income-earning venture, and, often when one enterprise was operating effectively, women gave this to the care of another family member and then started another small enterprise. Thus, some women entrepreneurs in Fiji prefer to run a number of small businesses at one time,
following a ‘lateral’ pattern of business development, rather than increasing the size of a single business.

Equally, the author questions whether cultural norms are also denying women equal opportunities, most critically in the area of education. “Are there social attitudes and circumstances at play which work to prevent women from fully using these chances—are girls kept home from school to help in the home? Is it seen as a waste of time for girls to enrol in tertiary study, and, is science ‘too hard’ for girls? Or, is the belief still widely held that women do not need as much education as males because their brothers or their families will look after them?” (p. 71).

http://www.unescap.org/EDC/English/Specialbodies/PIDC9/E1373e.pdf

This note reports on the ninth session of the Special Body on Pacific Island Developing Countries, which deliberated on issues relating to the creation of employment and income-earning opportunities for vulnerable groups in Pacific island developing countries. The Special Body adopted a set of specific recommendations for action on these issues at the national, subregional and regional levels. Some of the key points are:

- The generation of private-sector growth requires appropriate public policy settings. Inappropriate approaches to economic regulation have constrained the development of small and medium-sized enterprises as well as the growth of the labour market. Continuous legislative reform to enable the development of such enterprises is essential.
- Access to financial resources by vulnerable groups is crucial. The role of microfinance should be further promoted, taking into account lessons learned. Asian countries could offer training to Pacific island countries on microfinance based on their successful experiences, to strengthen existing microfinance schemes.
- Comprehensive labour-market programmes for vulnerable groups should be developed through formal-sector measures and the promotion of self-employment, particularly through micro-enterprise development. Those programmes should include employment services, training, public works, wage and employment subsidies and self-employment assistance as well as micro-enterprise support.


This report highlights major challenges facing the Pacific, Papua New Guinea and East Timor in the next 12 years. It emphasises the importance of economic growth and provides practical policy options in nine key sectors to maximise growth: four crosscutting ‘growth factors’ – investment, labour, land and political governance – and five important ‘productive sectors’ – agriculture, fisheries, forestry, mining and petroleum, and tourism. In the section entitled ‘Combating Discrimination in the Labour Market’, the report highlights that women are heavily involved in the informal sector: “While government gender policies will not influence the informal sector directly, there is clearly a role for policy in removing formal barriers and changing attitudes that limit the opportunities for women and any other group discriminated against in the workplace. This would encourage the breakdown of both formal and informal barriers to gender equality in labour market participation. The removal of such barriers would be extremely productive, as the traditional gender-based roles in the Pacific have prepared women for employment better than they have prepared men. Many of the roles reserved for women (gardening, livestock, child rearing) involve the sort of thinking that develops economic skills, such as effort–reward calculations, forecasting and planning. By contrast, traditional male roles tend to involve social and political activity focused on status and power rather than productivity.” (p. 91).
Pages 81-88 also offer an overview of the issue of land reform in the region. Customary ownership of land is deeply embedded in Pacific cultures and a large proportion of land is held under customary tenure. The authors argue "(m)aintaining customary land systems in their current form will not meet emerging needs, especially given the fast-changing demographics and aspirations of Pacific citizens." This section includes details from a 2003 World Bank report which found that secure land tenure increases the incentives for land-related investment and allows for the transfer of property to those who can make productive use of the land. As a major asset for most people, land provides the foundation for economic activity by increasing access to credit markets. The report also offers three recommendations on how security of land tenure could be improved:

- Individual title is not the only option. Recognising customary tenure and finding means to facilitate land exchange through long-term leases can be just as effective in encouraging security.
- Improving security of tenure also requires the existence or creation of institutions to enforce legal rights.
- Property rights need not be static, and can respond to the changing demands for tenure security as countries develop.


This study was jointly commissioned by Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and the UNDP Pacific Sub Regional Centre. It examines the status of microcredit across the Pacific region. The paper explains that there is a gap between the traditional subsistence economy and the modern monetized economy which is often filled by small- and micro-enterprise economic activities that are called the "informal sector". Since the island peoples find it hard to cross the gap, some feel that policy interventions should encourage informal economic activity to fill the gap. However, the paper argues that the reasons for the missing middle are complex; that microcredit is not a magic bullet capable of creating an informal sector where it is absent; and that microfinance, and not just microcredit, is necessary to achieve the financial inclusion of island peoples. The report recommends:

- Both microfinance institutions, as well as formal financial institutions should provide a broad range of microfinance services;
- Governments must think systemically and consider how they can make their financial systems more inclusive;
- Information technology must be used to increase the feasibility of all modes of microfinance;
- Governments must remember that an enabling environment for financial inclusion is characterized by the absence of interest rate caps and subsidies, and of government grants that undercut sustainable microfinance.
- The paper concludes that microfinance in the Pacific is growing and the possibilities for microfinance to play a significant role in the economic development of the region are increasing.


This paper assesses the success factors for microfinance in the Pacific Island. It includes an overview of the Pacific regional situation, finance and banking systems, donor interventions in the microfinance sector, case studies on microcredit schemes with an emphasis on gender dimensions, demand for microfinance, pacific urban populations and estimated urban poor, finance, banking and informal credit institutions, and risks and special considerations. The report finds that most donors target exclusively disadvantaged groups, particularly women, and in some
cases youth and Outer Island (rural) groups. It also highlights that women’s access to microcredit had increased substantially over the five years prior to the writing of the report and that 60% schemes were targeted exclusively at women. However, reviews of the schemes found significant and consistent difficulties. These included:

- Administering groups have not established adequate systems for loan delivery and management;
- Loan management systems or income generating activities conflict with traditional systems of resource allocation;
- The absence of consistent, knowledgeable back-up support (access to credit) has led to loan defaulting and business failure;
- Many products originally intended for sale were later kept (tapa, mats, food), leading to repayment difficulties.
- Numerous examples of men obstructing either schemes or production. This is sometimes based on traditional role conflict but more often due to perceived lack of fairness particularly when access to finance for men is more limited;
- It is too often assumed that attendance at a short training course will provide sufficient business skill. This is often incorrect and many women say they have not understood but were afraid to ask (in both mixed and single sex groupings).

The report also highlights the large number of informal credit and savings schemes that currently operate in the region. For example, in Western Samoa there are over 330 villages, each with at least one such scheme.


This article argues that while many aspects of women’s participation in Pacific Island fishing have changed, their traditional and social roles have largely remained the same. Women’s increased participation in the market economy, paid employment and other such activities happens in addition to their existing traditional and social roles. In some cases, the involvement of women in the fisheries sector is undermined and under-reported because their activities are viewed as an extension of their traditional role of food foraging for home consumption. The author argues that traditional institutions, protocols and beliefs are slowly changing, with modifications to the structures, leadership and dynamics that influence decision-making at the community level. However, “(w)omen in Pacific Island countries continue to live within traditionally defined settings while at the same time being expected to deal with the modern market economy through their marketing activities. The credit facilities available, development ventures and training provided are foreign and have little meaning for their livelihoods. The missing link in this case is how to get information and opportunities out to the women. Traditional and social barriers that have been one of the biggest hindrances to women’s full participation in fisheries development are starting to break down, but linking women to available development resources and information is still a challenge." (p. 26)

*Messages and statements*


http://www.islandsbusiness.com/islands_business/index_dynamic/containerNameToReplace=MiddleMiddle/focusModuleID=17595/overrideSkinName=issueArticle-full.tpl

**Commonwealth Secretariat, ‘Pacific women receive business development training’, October 10, 2007**


**‘New World Bank project offers cash for Pacific women’s business projects’, Secretariat of the Pacific Community, 2007**

http://www.spc.int/Women/women_CSW51_info2.html#art01
2. Tonga

Key trends and issues

http://www.adb.org/Documents/CAPs/TON/0103.asp

This ‘Country Performance Assessment’ section of this web-based version of the Plan offers a very brief overview of women in Tonga. The key issues highlighted are:

- **Access to credit**: “In spite of the difficulties in obtaining access to credit, women are key players in agricultural work, including commercial agriculture. Access to credit is more difficult for women because of their negligible land rights. Despite better repayment rates and overall creditworthiness than men, few women are able to access loans for commercial crops, even though their role in these sectors has become increasingly important”.

- **Gender biases**: “Gender biases in the definition of work for example, mean that official statistics show as much as 58 percent of women over 15 years old as not economically active. According to national statistics, only 119 women were employed in agriculture and fisheries in 1996. Even in areas of employment where women are better represented formally and where non-discriminatory human resource management policies apply, gender biases persist. For instance, about 46 percent of civil service employees are women. Yet almost 85 percent of these women are in lower level positions. There is only one woman employed at the most senior level in the civil service.”

- **Government policies**: “Unlike those of other Pacific countries, the Tongan Constitution carries no general affirmative action provision that could be invoked in favor of women. Tonga has yet to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Ratification is by no means assured in the near future either, as it would require the Tongan Government to guarantee, through legal and other measures, the equality of women in national law and policy. In this regard, discrimination in the area of land law is one of the most politically sensitive issues.”

- **Lack of accurate and gender-disaggregated data**: “Due in part to data shortage, women’s economic activity remains largely undervalued in national accounts and sectoral reporting. As a result, the mainstreaming of gender into national planning and macroeconomic policy is seriously inhibited.”


Chapter 3 of this paper addresses the issue of women and the economic environment. Pages 61-62 look at the issue of self-employment and business. It finds that Tongan women are very active in small-scale informal business activities but their presence is also becoming increasingly visible in medium-to-larger-scale formal sector business, traditionally a male stronghold. The author argues that the most pervasive and persistent problem facing women entrepreneurs, whatever the scale of their business, is the difficulty of accessing bank loans or credit, particularly with
regard to conventional security or collateral requirements. Poorer or socially disadvantaged women inevitably encounter the most obstacles in trying to start a small business. There is also a serious need to develop women's professional accounting skills and to improve their access to formal training opportunities in business and financial management.

The report also highlights the participation of women in cooperatives. It cites a 1996 report by the Department of Cooperatives, which claims that the participation of women is 'valued as one of the most potential strengths of the Cooperative Movement in Tonga'. The most successful cooperatives are village consumer stores (fale koloa), 80 percent of which are managed by women. In 1996, in response to this success, the Department recruited two women cooperative extension officers, followed by a further two appointments in 1997 (the total complement of extension officers in 1998 is 23). The women's officers are assigned to promote women's involvement in cooperatives as well as to assist women members. In addition, the Department has a formal commitment to encouraging women's participation at decision-making level.

This article is available for purchase from Wiley InterScience: http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/120855523/abstract?CRETRY=1&SRETRY=0

This article describes recent aid-funded credit schemes for women textile producers in Tonga which were designated ‘failures’ by the donors because the recipients were seen to be making and seemingly ‘retaining’ textile koloa (indigenous wealth) rather than donors’ lack of understanding of indigenous global economic systems and hybrid notions of development inherent in the women textile producers’ actions. The author argues: “The disjuncture highlights a situation where the operational process of ‘development’ in the Pacific, and the narrowly focused Western economic indices and the Western capitalist assumptions that underpin these, obscure the extent and true nature of indigenous Pacific economic systems and their local, cultural formulations of wealth. This same narrow focus prevents an exploration of the dimensions and dynamics of indigenous contemporary responses to capitalism, and the articulation of these economic activities and formulations of wealth with the global economy.” (pp. 218-219)

Messages and statements


3. Samoa

Key trends and issues

This book is available for purchase from IPS Publications:
A preview is available at:
http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=Tckqy2TMjqoC&oi=ind&pg=PA79&dq=Women+and+privatisation+of+Samoan+coconut+oil+mill%22+E%2%5B0%2%5D+Pacific+Economic+Bulletin&ots=0eK7uEqlUP&sig=8sqDinpyaU3CoUPl+kuUNCbPgA#PPA78,M1
This chapter reports on the findings of a research study which aimed to explore the nature of women's informal sector activities, and to assess the reasons for the recent increase in informal trading, how micro-level participation can be factored into macro-level planning, and what support systems, i.e. education, services, resources and policies, women need for these activities. The author argues that there is little recognition of the contribution that women in Samoa make through informal work. The study found that out of a random sample of 90 women from three villages, 71 were involved in informal sector trading – this represents 4 out of every 5 women. The women traded mostly in agriculture or agriculture-related products, followed by livestock and fishing. These women did not rely on any one activity – most engaged in multiple economic activities, as a risk-spreading strategy. The author cites the support needs of women in the informal sector as identified by the general development literature – training loans, adequate transport and services, and a regulatory or policy environment that does not marginalise them. Among the main constraints identified by the respondents in this study was training, lack of funding or credit, and lack of ideas and technology to enable diversification. The study also showed that NGOs were the main agencies supporting the training needs of these groups. In conclusion, the author argues: "...women's informal sector activities will increase... and become a permanent feature in the Samoan economic landscape. The informal sector is the window for the sustainable livelihood of youth as well... (W)ith little support (training, services, credit, policies) these ventures could be used as stepping-stones, or bridges to larger, more formal ventures. Many successful Pacific businesswomen have had their beginnings in informal sales. Their experience highlights the economic logic of establishing an appropriate infrastructure and policy environment that will foster the transition from small-scale, informal training activities to fully fledged development ventures for those who wish to do so." (p.77)

This article is available for purchase from Asia Pacific Press:
http://www.asiapacificpress.com/books/advanced_search_result.php?keywords=la%20%26%20x%3D%201%26%20y%3D%201
A preview is available at:
(Please note: I have not seen this article. The summary below is adapted from the publisher’s website.)

This case study of Samoa’s coconut mill highlights the potential for women’s empowerment that this privatised venture enabled in strategic areas of the copra industry (from production, through to management and marketing). The case also illustrates several other development issues. First, it shows the significance of smallholder production to the national economy and the importance of including this micro-level contribution into national economic planning. Smallholders proved extremely responsive to market forces. When backed by sound training, research services and credit availability, they can grow from small-scale producers (two bags of copra a week) through to micro-enterprises and on to formal business. Secondly, the case shows some of the benefits of privatising a state-owned enterprise. The capital and international marketing experience this foreign company brought to the venture and the agricultural extension system it established, rejuvenated Samoa’s copra industry to become a key national income earner again. The data reinforces the viability of foreign capital investment in an industry based upon smallholder production and use systems. The study shows the important role of company management in creating opportunities for women's empowerment.

This article is available for purchase from IngentaConnect:
http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/ip/ije/2008/00000009/00000002/art00008;jsessionid=1a962s7qchkok1.alexandra
**Note:** I have not seen this article and an abstract is not available.

**UNDP Special Unit for South-South Cooperation, 2001, ‘Sharing Innovative Experiences: Examples of Successful Initiatives in Agriculture and Rural Development in the South’, UNDP/FAO**


Chapter 5 of this volume ‘Beekeeping as Business: Samoa’, outlines the work of the Women in Business Foundation (WIBF), an NGO which aims to encourage and support the involvement of women in small business initiatives, in this case beekeeping. It provides an overview of how WIBF identified bee-keeping as an appropriate income-generating activity and provided training in the villages of Saleimoa on Upolu and Faletagaloa-Safune on Savaii, covering basic beekeeping, potential products related to beekeeping, empowerment, microcredit and small businesses. Some 20 people, mostly village women, were encouraged to learn through lectures and extensive hands-on experience.

Prior to the programme, villagers had little access to income-generating activities other than production of handicrafts, which was only carried out when funds were required for family commitments such as church or school fees and uniforms. Villagers relied for their cash needs mainly on relatives living overseas or living and working in urban areas.

The report argues, however, that as women become more involved in the cash economy, they encounter additional problems – they realise that they need money to make money and are often frustrated by their lack of access to credit. In addition, women are traditionally responsible for food preparation, resource management, household duties and childcare. In many cases, small/microbusiness can impose further pressures on their already busy lives. Therefore, village-based income-generating ventures need to be implemented that will provide additional funds to family budgets, without adding to the already heavy workload of women. The report highlights that many women have begun involving themselves in income-generating activities and argues that agricultural projects, such as beekeeping, implemented at or near the home, help to alleviate the pressure of balancing home and income-generating activities.

**Policies and institutions**


http://www.fao.org/DOCREP/003/X6092E/X6092e00.htm#TopOfPage

This report examines existing policies in the areas of agriculture, natural resource management, fisheries, forestry and rural enterprises in three Pacific Island countries - Fiji, Vanuatu and Western Samoa. The author argues that sex-disaggregated data is a crucial prerequisite to the formulation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes which are aimed at enhancing the role of women in agriculture, natural resource management and rural development. However statistical data of this nature is not easily available in Pacific Island countries. Section 2.3 addresses the main sectors in Samoa. The report outlines that current economic policy is centred on promoting the private sector as the engine of economic growth. This includes creation of a less regulated economic environment, continuing reform of the fiscal system; the sale of shares in state-owned enterprises (primarily to citizens), and efforts to make land more easily available for productive use. The productivity of land, labour and capital is to be increased whilst diversifying agriculture and rural economic activity. The public sector is to withdraw from many of its current services. Efforts to promote manufacturing are to concentrate on export-oriented activities. The report also outlines the provisions for women in each of the sectors:

- **Agriculture:** “Women’s involvement in agriculture has been viewed largely from the home economics perspective rather than the producer perspective... The draft Policy for Women in Agriculture, developed as part of the farming systems policy, aims to establish policy guidelines to promote women’s involvement in agriculture at all levels.
Objectives for women in agriculture address extension services, training and public awareness. (p. 31)

- Fisheries: “Women are involved in the collection of seafood from the reef and in selling fisheries produce in the market… A 1996 Mission Statement aims to ensure sustainable and optimum use of fisheries resources and to develop alternatives to inshore resources that have been seriously depleted. A new approach based on working with villages has been adopted whereby if an initial meeting with village matai (chief) is positive, MAFFM staff undertake a fact-finding exercise in the village and assist villagers to put together a management plan based on their own ideas and solutions to problems. Women are involved in this exercise as one of the three traditional groups with whom fisheries extension workers consult. Out of a total of 16 fisheries extension workers in 1997, only 4 or 5 were women.” (pp. 31-32)

- Rural Development: “Efforts to make land more easily available pertain only to Government land which comprised some 11 percent of the total in 1996. Since 1997, Government land can be subdivided on a 49-year lease. Leases are put to tender, with the highest bidder securing the lease. Rents are reviewed after five years. This system clearly discriminates against the poor, and consequently against women… Diversification of the village economy is to include the encouragement of handicrafts (through the Development Bank and the Small Business Enterprise Centre) as well as small-scale food-processing and tourism, especially in conjunction with environmental protection. These areas are intended to benefit women. The Ministry of Women's Affairs is promoting economic capacity building through training in activities such as sewing, flower arranging, vegetable gardening, cooking and small business development. The National Food and Nutrition Policy for Samoa includes the encouragement of small local entrepreneurs in food processing industries. This policy also calls for income-generation activities in rural areas. The present policy applies the same business fee to informal traders and large formal businesses alike, and there is no policy framework to promote, support or regulate small traders. Similarly, there are no policy measures in place to ensure that small-scale credit is available to the informal sector, though a micro-credit scheme has been initiated by the Ministry of Women's Affairs”. (p. 35)

Laws and regulations


This report presents quantitative indicators on business regulations and the protection of property rights that can be compared across 178 economies, and over time. Regulations affecting 10 stages of a business’s life are measured: starting a business, dealing with licenses, employing workers, registering property, getting credit, protecting investors, paying taxes, trading across borders, enforcing contracts and closing a business. This report allows a comparison of the economies not only with one another but also with the “best practice” economy for each indicator.

- Property registration: It requires 5 procedures, takes 147 days, and costs 1.75% GNI per capita to register a property in Samoa. Samoa is ranked 58 overall, as compared to the top ranking economy of New Zealand where registering a property takes 2 days. Efficient property registration reduces transaction costs, helps keep formal titles from slipping into informal status and is associated with greater perceived security of property rights and less corruption. “That benefits all entrepreneurs, especially women, the young and the poor. The rich have few problems protecting their property rights. They can afford to invest in security systems and other measures to defend their property. But small entrepreneurs cannot. Reform can change this.” (p.22)

- Access to credit: Samoa is ranked 135 overall for Getting Credit. “Where good-quality credit information is available and legal rights are stronger, more credit is extended. Benefits flow beyond those gaining access to credit. With better-functioning credit
markets, unemployment is lower, and women and low-income people benefit the most.” (p. 27)

Messages and statements

‘Samoa Finance Minister puts focus on business opportunities for the poor’, Radio New Zealand International, August 22, 2004

4. Timor Leste

Key trends and issues.


Sections A.1.a-c in Chapter 2 of this report (pp. 22-28) provide an outline of gender poverty issues in Timor-Leste. The report finds that most cash income in Timor-Leste is derived from informal work, which is undertaken by almost 93% of the rural and urban labour force, 40% of which are estimated to be women. There are gender stratifications within the informal workforce. Women generally run small kiosks, and sell fruit and vegetables, and small handicraft items. The report suggests that women tend to be concentrated in the lower income-generating areas of the informal sector, such as handicrafts and salt-making. They also face particular constraints in effectively tapping into opportunities in the informal sector, and these confine them to the less profitable areas of the informal sector. These include:

- lack of access to credit;
- low skill levels;
- lack of mobility, which is also limited by cultural factors, and prevents women from accessing information including informal information networks; and
- time constraints due to household responsibilities.

Improving access to credit for women is a stated policy in several government documents, as well as donor reports and programmes. The experience with small loan schemes for small enterprise programmes has been mixed. The report highlights some evidence of gender biases in the World Bank’s Small Enterprise Project (SEP). There are several examples of microcredit programmes for microenterprises in the informal sector. The report states that according to anecdotal evidence the results of these have also been mixed.

The report also identifies barriers to creating marketing opportunities and improving income for women’s businesses:

- product development through application of processing techniques;
- access to skills training to be able to create opportunities;
- access to credit to invest in such initiatives; and
- a nationally coordinated marketing system to facilitate sales of produce, regulate exports, and set prices.

Land rights are also a major issue for women, as land is the main asset in rural households. Land rights are usually passed through the male line, and women, in general, can only acquire land through marriage. They also usually do not have any property rights, other than entitlements to use derived through a male relative’s right to land. The issue of women’s land rights has not been directly addressed in policy discussions around the government Sector Investment Programmes (SIPs). However, land ownership laws are currently being drafted, with the input and participation of Office for the Promotion of Equality (OPE).
Section D, entitled ‘Policy Environment’ (pp. 28-30), outlines the National Development Plan’s gender equality-based strategies. Table 9 on p. 29 provides details of the programmes and indicators to be implemented in order to reduce poverty and enhance security and safety nets, especially for women. However, the report argues that several of the strategies, programmes, projects, and indicators outlined in the NDP are absent from key policy and programme documents, such as the Agriculture and Private Sector Development SIPs. The Private Sector SIP, which has been targeted as a strategic sector for gender mainstreaming by the OPE - especially with respect to tourism and promotion of domestic business - contains no gender analysis and does not integrate gender issues in the development of these sub-sectors.

This article is available for purchase from Informaworld:
http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/content~content=a713993820~db=all~order=page

This article discusses the World Bank’s Community Empowerment and Local Governance Project (CEP) which aimed to assist with community reconstruction in a newly independent Timor-Leste. Beginning in 2000, the project provided funds to over 400 local development councils that had been newly created to meet their community’s development needs. The author argues that rather than creating genuine participatory structures, tight deadlines to disburse project funds and bureaucratic project rules reduced the councils’ functions to little more than channelling Bank-controlled funds. By bypassing existing governance structures, including that of the government, the councils also bypassed sources of local legitimacy and technical knowledge, which resulted in community conflict, indifference, and poor project sustainability. The author is critical of the CEP’s microcredit scheme. He argues that that it was poorly administered, and in the case of Timor-Leste, "credit often placed recipients in a precarious position, as many spent the money on urgent needs or ran what, for them and everyone else, was the only option - a kiosk. Overall, poor business health, combined with a lack of education about the scheme and a dysfunctional system of incentives to repay, has meant that only 30-40 per cent of credit will eventually be repaid" (p. 526). Instead of encouraging these kiosks, "development should promote local industries and agriculture and move beyond Timor-Leste's non-competitive advantage in selling other people's goods." (p. 527)


This guidebook aims to promote women’s entrepreneurship through green cooperatives. It is targeted at 12 countries in the Asia-Pacific region, of which Timor-Leste is one. The report identifies the overall status of green cooperatives and the use of ICT as a tool for economic empowerment; includes examples of good practice; presents strategies for the development of women’s entrepreneurship and e-business in women’s agricultural cooperatives; and makes policy recommendations to promote small-scale women’s green cooperatives and their use of e-business. The report identifies the constraints faced by women entrepreneurs: "Women entrepreneurs face unique barriers in entrepreneurship. Inequities in access to capital, resources and government support make it particularly challenging for women entrepreneurs. Women often cannot obtain loans for their businesses due to lack of status and property rights. In the agricultural sector, women farmers have scarce access to agricultural resources and services for production due to gender inequalities, the double burdens of farming and family responsibilities, and the lack of social services and government programmes to support women. Providing effective support for women’s businesses is crucial to promoting women’s entrepreneurship. This includes measures to facilitate the creation of women’s businesses such as training programmes providing women with essential entrepreneurship skills, mentoring programmes to give women peer support, etc. The establishment of business incubators is another important way of helping
to ensure the survivability of women’s businesses. It is essential that there be gender awareness in designing and delivering support measures targeted at female entrepreneurs”. (p.11)

The report argues that cooperative entrepreneurship in agricultural development can have significant advantages for rural women faced with gendered constraints which limit their access to entrepreneurial resources. By joining isolated and scattered resources, it can help marginalised farmers to acquire opportunities for entrepreneurship and to strengthen capacity for self-help. However, there are gender issues here too. In traditional cooperatives, men dominate by holding privileged positions at decision-making levels. The heavy work burden and time constraints of women caused by the gender dimensions of their societal role often leaves little time or energy for them to attend meetings or carry out other tasks. Women’s lack of access to resources can also impact either their participation in existing cooperatives or the setting up of new ones. Legal constraints can also hinder women's participation in cooperatives. The report cites a recent ILO study which shows that cooperative laws are generally “gender neutral” and do not discriminate directly against women. Yet women do face barriers to their participation in cooperatives as a result of related laws that discriminate against them with regard to property ownership and inheritance. Cooperative laws adopted by the members themselves sometimes indirectly contain discriminatory rules and regulations against women, stipulating ownership or control over land or property as a condition for membership, or allowing only one member per farm/household.

This article is available for purchase from Informaworld:
http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/content~content=a713993834~db=all~order=page

This article does not address women. However, as it focuses on key factors for pro-poor private-sector development in Timor-Leste, many of the challenges identified will be equally applicable to women who make up a significant proportion of the poorest sections of society. The article highlights a recent government survey which illustrated that micro-enterprises and SMEs are significant in there, and should therefore be the focus of pro-poor economic growth and development. The challenges for these include:

- **Poor infrastructure:** “Poor infrastructure such as unstable power supply and poor roads throughout the country has had a particularly limiting effect on market access and distribution of local products from rural production sites to urban markets. Transportation fees have also increased dramatically, making it difficult to trade goods and services.”
- **Wage distortion:** “Higher wages given to unskilled workers by donor agencies inflated their reservation wage levels. This increased local wage expectations.”
- **Credit market development:** “Credit markets are not well developed in Timor-Leste, and SMEs, the majority of businesses in Timor-Leste, have very little access to credit. There are some promising microcredit practices emerging to assist capital market development for Timor-Leste. The number of microfinance institutions has increased and credit unions have made a comeback. Although the number of microfinance institutions has increased in Timor-Leste, the amounts are not sufficient to cover many rural communities.”
- **Unclear product selection and weak marketing:** “Timorese products have very limited scope for export because of weak marketing and poor product selection. Information on external markets is another crucial factor, but the costs of gathering and analysing market information, including tastes and preferences of consumers in external markets, are too great for small economies.”
- **Weak production and business skills:** “Generally, Timorese lack production and business skills. For example, local farmers lack skills required to process farm crops and small traders have limited accounting skills. The quality of *tao* crafts is rarely controlled and, in many cases, the quality of *tao* products varies from one weaver to another. To raise these low skill levels, vocational training centres and schools were established. However, training programmes at these centres spend more on lectures.
than on practical production and business skills. Also, education, a good measure of the overall local human resource base, is weak in Timor-Leste. Timorese adults have low average literacy rates, which indicates that human resources and technical skills are weak. In addition, the problem of absenteeism lowers productivity significantly."

The article goes on to discuss policies that are needed to support SME development. The author argues that viable micro-enterprises and SMEs in Timor-Leste, which could diversify the sources of income for poor rural Timorese families, should be given first priority in order to help the poor to consolidate their fragile economic base in the post-conflict environment of their country.

Statistics and data


This report outlines the findings of the 2004 Timor-Leste Urban Enterprises Survey, which looked at 487 formal and 552 informal establishments in Dili, Baucau and Maliana districts. Some of the key findings include:

- Urban enterprises, even formal ones, are very small establishments.
- Informal enterprises seem almost entirely to be household ventures, operating with the labour of the owner or family members. The majority of the workers in household enterprises are family workers and many are either unpaid or paid in kind.
- The owners of formal enterprises are predominantly men. Only 16 percent of the formal, but almost 43 percent of informal, enterprises are owned by women.
- In waged work, the gender gap by skill level appears to be the most pronounced among manual, and less so among service workers. The gender gap narrows with higher skill levels, but administrative, technical and managerial workers make up such a small proportion of the total workforce in formal enterprises that this does not have a major impact on women's employment.
- Overall, over 93 percent of informal and over 60 percent of formal enterprises have an annual turnover of under USD 10,000.
- Urban enterprises in Timor-Leste are involved predominantly in trading and to a lesser extent in the construction and services sector. Informal enterprises are almost entirely small trading ventures – usually operating from the home and street stalls as vendors and hawkers, as well as petty repair shops.
- Over the last two years, the majority of enterprises - both formal and informal - remained unchanged in their number of workers. The informal sector in particular is virtually stagnant, with neither job creation nor destruction, reflecting the family nature of establishments.
- About one quarter of formal and almost 90 percent of informal firms have start-up capital of less than USD 1,000. Only about seven percent of either category use non-personal or family resources as startup capital, indicating that the limited availability of institutional sources for the purposes for financing these ventures.
- Underdeveloped credit markets - despite the impressive growth in recent years - and lack of aggregate demand both appear to be barriers to firm growth.

Policies and institutions

Webpage: Gender Brief – Timor Leste, World Bank, Washington DC

This webpage highlights that since 1999, the Government of Timor-Leste has committed to mainstreaming gender in its National Development Plan (NDP) and has formulated various other policies: These include:
- Gender equality guaranteed under the Constitution;
- Country signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;
- Gender mainstreamed in the NDP which has targeted education, health care, and gender based violence (justice and police) as priorities;
- Office for the Promotion of Equality (OPE) established to advice the various ministries and departments in promoting a culture of equality, empowerment of women and addressing gender based violence;
- Women appointed ministers, including: the Senior Minister to the Council Ministers, who is also the Minister of State Administration; the Minister of Public Works; the Minister of Planning and Finance; and the Vice-Ministers of Planning and Finance, Foreign Affairs, Education and State Administration.

The page highlights that a strong traditional culture remains an obstacle to women further assuming leadership roles and participating in decision-making process at community and family levels. The key sector issues for women are education; health; gender-based violence and trauma; and employment. Women have a higher unemployment rate than men in Timor-Leste and their labour participation is only 48.1 percent compared to 69.3 percent for men. The page highlights the World Bank's Small Enterprise Project (SEP): “Of those trained in Business Development Centers, 28 percent were women.


This report outlines the role of the Instituição de Microfinancas de Timor-Leste (IMfTL, the Microfinance Institute of Timor-Leste, or 'the Institute') which was established in May 2002 as a regulated quasi-bank. The Institute is licensed to extend credit, with a minimum of 65% of its portfolio to be devoted to microcredit. Thus it has a particular mandate for poverty alleviation, which is to be fulfilled through the provision of microfinance services to poor and low-income households, and especially to women. Among the products offered by the Institute are microfinance loans, including group loans with weekly repayments, which are extended mostly to women (some 1,250, with a mean balance outstanding of $46). About 290 market vendors have daily repayment loans at an average outstanding balance of $130. In addition, there is some seasonal crop lending (more than 500 loans with mean balance around $230) and a group of somewhat larger 'business' loans (180 at about $400). In general these loans all suffer relatively high delinquency rates, perhaps 25% across the board, with delinquency defined as 30 days or more overdue.” (p.38)

Laws and regulations


This report argues that there are critical gaps to be addressed in land law, land and property registration, leasing and collateral, bankruptcy, business licensing, accounting and auditing, competition policy, intellectual property rights, social security, and key sectoral legislation in areas of important potential in the economy such as tourism, manufacturing and trade. Despite gaps in the legal and regulatory framework, the biggest challenge now facing the Government is not the drafting of laws and regulations but the building of the capacity needed to enforce and administer them. “Even in those cases where laws and regulations exist, there are widespread complaints that they are not being adequately administered. Despite recent progress, the court system is so
overburdened with criminal cases that it has devoted hardly any time at all since 1999 to
criminal dispute resolution, debt collection or other civil cases. There have been widespread
complaints about the difficulties in registering a business. Bureaucratic hold-ups at the port have
been a major problem. Getting approvals from Government departments, across the board, is a
problem, capacity in the civil service is very thin, there are bottlenecks caused by the
centralization of decision making at higher levels, and there have been anecdotal reports of
corruption in some public entities. The professions needed to service a market economy such as
lawyers, accountants and auditors are either in short supply or nonexistent in the country.” (p.2)
The report highlights recent government efforts at institutional development. In addition to
progressing the legislative agenda, the Government is in the process of strengthening the
Business Registration Unit. It has created and strengthened the foreign investment and export
promotion agency, Trade Invest Timor-Leste (TITL), and the domestic enterprise development
agency (IADE), which focus on administering the investment laws and promoting external and
domestic investment respectively in Timor-Leste. In mid-2005 Government initiated a formal
dialogue with the private sector on legal and regulatory matters, under the Chairmanship of the
Prime Minister. The report also goes on to suggest some priorities and approaches for developing
the business regulatory environment in light of Timor-Leste’s capacity limitations.

Messages and statements

‘In a “wise” move Timorese women venture into business after a decade of conflict’,
United Nations Development Programme, July 14, 2008

‘Thai weavers leave lasting impression in East Timor’, UNIFEM East and South East Asia
Regional Office, 2003
http://unifem-eseasia.org/newsroom/timor%20weaving.htm

5. Papua New Guinea

Key trends and issues

Cahn, M. and Liu, M., 2008, ‘Women and Rural Livelihood Training: A Case Study from
This article is available for purchase from Informaworld:
http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/content~db=all~content=a791301914~tab=content

This article describes the Integrated Agriculture Training Programme (IATP) in Papua New
Guinea (PNG) which aimed to improve the livelihoods of rural communities in the East New
Britain Province, by providing targeted training and information services to both men and women.
The article argues that despite the programme having considerable success in implementing
appropriate training for women, meeting the needs of rural women, and making positive impacts
on women's livelihoods, its success in responding to gender concerns has been limited by
constraints which are themselves due to gender inequality. These include:

- A prevailing culture of gender inequality: the ward councillors and district rural
development officers responsible for selecting the course participants were almost all
men, and had no gender training. As a result, female participation was lower than
expected.
- Low levels of education: With mixed groups, educational differences can be
disempowering for women. Further, women with lower educational levels may be
excluded from the training because they feel they cannot manage certain courses, or
because they are discouraged from attending.
- Household and domestic responsibilities: Introducing new activities for women to
undertake in livelihoods is very problematic, unless women are fully supported by family
members to reduce the time used for other activities. Further, women may be unwilling
to implement change that may cause any conflict with their husbands or male relatives, or women are unable to implement change without their husband’s/male relatives’ approval and support. “Training often advocates more work and new activities for women.” (p.140)

- Other issues: “Despite the training courses successfully providing some women with the skills and knowledge to improve their livelihoods, this is often not able to be fully implemented when the women return to their villages. Women may be constrained due to problems of regional isolation, poor markets and transport, and lack of savings and credit facilities; all constraints that are common to PNG, but often more pronounced for women than for men.” (p.140)


This paper presents a case study of the introduction of a more gender equitable payment scheme for oil palm smallholders in Papua New Guinea. Women are now paid separately from their husbands for their work on family oil palm plots thereby increasing the economic incentives for them to commit labour to oil palm production, i.e. by collecting loose fruit. The study highlights three key lessons emerging from the Mama Lus Frut Scheme:

- An understanding of intra-household labour relations made it possible to identify mechanisms to improve smallholder productivity and women’s access to commodity crop income. Whilst low rates of loose fruit collection were acknowledged as a major constraint on smallholder productivity prior to the introduction of the Mama Lus Frut Scheme, earlier interventions failed to address unequal gender relations of production within households. By recognising and devising ways to overcome these gendered labour constraints, the Mama Lus Frut Scheme provided a range of incentives for women to engage in oil palm production and enabled more co-operative household labour strategies to emerge.

- Second, institutional arrangements can improve household relations and the participation rates of women in commodity production. The Mama Lus Frut Scheme, as well as other studies of commodity production in PNG and elsewhere, shows poor remuneration of female labour or women’s dissatisfaction with men’s disposal of the income from commodity production to be a significant factor limiting smallholder productivity and incomes.

- Commodity firms can play a role in reducing some of the economic pressures within families that are the source of intra-household conflict. Conflicts, struggles, and negotiations over labour and income which characterise many smallholder households illustrate the competing responsibilities, obligations, and interests of individuals within households. Such conflicts over oil palm labour and income partly reflect the economic pressures on families resulting from population growth, social change, and resource constraints.


This article argues that domestic, informal sector markets can play an important role in the livelihoods of rural women in Papua New Guinea. Based on a survey of women food vendors in significant roadside markets, it finds that they earned a weighted average income of more than three times the minimum wage. The author argues that the relative economic success of these roadside vendors is based to a large extent, on access to good-quality customary land and
proximity to major roads. For these women, the main problems are not finance, but the theft of goods, high school fees, domestic problems and bargaining pressure. All in all, the women vendors benefited from the short value chain of their local markets, by selling directly and avoiding middlemen. This could explain their apparent preference for domestic markets over export crops. However, the author argues that processes of land leases or diversion of land into oil-palm operations could threaten access to good-quality customary land. The rich diversity of local crops could be compromised by the introduction of large monocultures. “The advantages women experience through use of their own land and direct control of their own enterprises could be compromised by relegation to lowerpaid formal employment or subordinate engagement in schemes such as the Mama Lus Frut scheme, associated with oil-palm.” (p.71) However, the women would benefit from investment in better roads. The author highlights previous studies that have shown that poverty in Papua New Guinea is predominantly rural and is associated strongly with lack of access to services, markets and transportation.


This study explores the degree to which women are able to participate in and benefit from the revenues generated by the artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) sector in Mount Kaindi. The author uses both historical and ethnographic evidence to argue that “local women face serious obstacles to full participation in mining, including a variety of cultural factors such as pollution beliefs, land tenure practices, the unequal control of household resources, and the gendered division of labour. Far from being simply intrinsic to indigenous culture, however, I will argue that the current male dominance of Kaindi’s mining landscape also related to the gendered history of the colonial goldfields and to contemporary national and international law and employment practice in the formal extractive sector. Similarly, I will suggest that local understandings of the roles women should or should not hold in mining are neither homogeneous and unambiguous, nor resistant to change.”

The article also offers a case study of a Hamtai woman who, with support from two local small mining companies, was able to obtain control of and operate her own mining tribute. This case study provides a summary the main issues debated in the various sections of the paper, and demonstrates how women could benefit from enhanced freedom to take an active and independent role in the ASM sector.

This article is available for purchase from Informaworld: http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/content~content=a787134250~db=all~order=page

This article uses two years of intra-household data from one area of the Papua New Guinea Highlands to examine the impact of gender relations on household coffee production. The author argues that poor relative returns for women and unequal distribution of tasks within the household exerted considerable influence on the level of household success in cultivating coffee. He argues: “World markets and domestic pricing policy set the general prices facing households. These ‘efficiency’ prices are transformed by the pervasive nature of patriarchy within households which generate individual incentives that do not equate to economic efficiency. They generate a very uneven intra-household distribution of economic benefits which discriminate very heavily against women. In this case women were marginalized from household coffee production to such an extent that the returns from food production yielded a higher direct (an accessible) return despite having an ‘average’ labour return that was only one-third that of coffee. If women are allowed to act as rational economic beings this necessarily reduces household incomes unless other
household mobilisation processes can outweigh the effect of this intra-household economic resistance. The evidence presented in this study would suggest that these are only partially effective and therefore considerable market failure exists within this production system. The market cannot provide efficient outcomes whilst such heavy economic and social discrimination exists against women” (pp. 67-68). In conclusion, the author argues that “meaningful analysis of household economies require a detailed investigation of intra-household processes set within the context of the historical and cultural influences pertaining to the society in which they are located.” (p.68)

http://www.spc.int/coastfish/News/WIF/WIF12/Kinch.pdf

This article argues that although women’s involvement in harvesting, processing and marketing are increasingly acknowledged and studied, women are still poorly represented in national fisheries agencies, fisheries training courses and fisheries meetings; and are often not included in fisheries development and management planning processes. The authors also highlight that a lack of analytical, gender-specific information has worked to inhibit development opportunities for women in the fisheries sector, and this has resulted in economic planners not viewing women as stakeholders. This is partly because much of the work done by women is poorly remunerated or not at all and therefore little valued in financial terms. The emphasis placed by donors and governments on commercial fisheries development, especially offshore fishing where women have virtually no involvement, has also contributed to the lack of recognition and support of women’s role in fisheries. The authors also argue that gender-specific programmes have not proved successful in PNG and therefore, better gender analysis, using more rigorous methodological and analytical tools, is needed to highlight the different roles and behaviour of men and women in production, reproduction and management.

**Laws and regulations**

http://devnet.anu.edu.au/db%2070-%20pdfs/DB70.pdf

Based on a survey of vendors and inspectors, this article assesses the impact of the Informal Sector Development and Control Act 2004 on the informal sector in Port Moresby. The Act was designed to encourage and regulate the development of the informal sector, and to protect public health and safety by controlling where operators can conduct business, along with product quality and safety. The Act makes it legal to start and operate many informal businesses. It also aims to create awareness among vendors of the rules of their operations, control product and service quality, establish penalties for non-compliance, as well as measures to ensure vendors are dealt with fairly. Most of the vendors interviewed felt that areas designated by the authorities were too remote for their customers; almost all vendors complained they had not received counselling before the rules were enforced; many vendors claimed they were given insufficient time to vacate their original stalls and relocate; many accused inspectors of favouritism, bribery, fraud and corruption. Vendors disagreed that penalties were determined fairly and almost all of the vendors and the majority of inspectors stated that due respect was not given. Both vendors and inspectors felt that the growth of the informal sector in Port Moresby was not being encouraged by these rules. The article concludes that further studies, with a larger sample covering areas not included in this study, are required. Particular attention should be given to the cultural and other factors contributing to the underdevelopment of the informal sector in the country.
Secretariat of the Pacific Community, ‘New World Bank project offers cash for Pacific women’s business projects’
http://www.spc.int/women/women_CSW51_info2.html#art01


‘IFC sponsors training for Papua New Guinean women in the seafood sector’, International Finance Corporation, March 27, 2007

6. Solomon Islands

Key trends and issues

Ward, M. W., 1995, ‘Women and Employment in the Solomon Islands’, Australian National University, Canberra
This book is available for purchase from Asia Pacific Press:
Note: I have not been able to review this book. The summary below is adapted from the publisher’s website.

Women make a substantial contribution to the growth and development of the Solomon Islands economy. They have most of the responsibility for subsistence agricultural production - on which the welfare of most Solomon Islanders depends - but the importance of their contribution is often ignored by development planners and policymakers. Women also make a substantial contribution to both the household and national economy through their participation in formal and informal sector employment including self-employment. The author examines the status of women in the Solomon Islands and outlines the measures currently underway to address women’s subordination. In particular, she looks at women and education, employment, unemployment, self-employment, and work in subsistence agriculture. She argues for change at all levels of government to address the status of women and provides specific recommendations on how to achieve full participation of women in the development process.

Bourke, R. M. et al, 2006, ‘Solomon Islands Smallholder Agriculture Study’, AusAid, Canberra
http://www.ausaid.gov.au/research/pubout.cfm?ID=4088_5412_1071_6193_2813&FromSection=Publications&Type=All

This study is a series of five volumes which document the development of recommendations for a set of agricultural interventions supporting both subsistence agriculture and income-generating activities for rural communities in Solomon Islands. Volume 2, Chapter 3 (pp. 44-52) provides an overview of the issues relating to gender, culture and social structures that influence agriculture and rural livelihoods. It discusses and examines the roles women and men play in food production and cash economies. The key points include:

- Although women are the major food producers in the subsistence economy, they have less access to agricultural training, information, planting materials, extension support services, and proper infrastructure. Appropriate programmes should be designed to improve food production without exerting pressure on women’s time and the other limited resources they have. Particular attention should be given to women in inland
communities, because their agriculture and nutritional needs are different from women of coastal communities.

- Men dominate and control cash crop activities, and cash is generally associated with status, power and wealth. Women's involvement in the cash crops domain is limited to time-consuming and tedious activities, such as brushing, clearing, weeding, pruning and harvesting. These activities receive minimal payment and increase the load that women already bear from existing social commitments to family, community, school, church and women's group activities. However, women's access to cash, though limited, is a breakthrough of the gender boundary, because control of money has traditionally been considered a man's domain. This development allows women to participate with men in cash cropping, marketing and owning a business enterprise. Although cash cropping is essential as it gives access to cash for rural communities and increases economic growth, it can have a negative impact on women's roles in terms of pressure on land, pressure on their subsistence agriculture roles and pressure on family responsibilities. Cash cropping that is cost-effective and fits in well with traditional farming systems, such as kava, coconut, honey, cocoa and indigenous tree crops, could be considered as suitable cash crops.

- Women comprise the majority of the market vendors compared with men at the majority of market outlets, selling mostly food crops. Most rural women choose to remain at home and sell at nearby rural markets, because of transport difficulties, transport costs and travelling distances. In some instances, women take up the challenge to bring their markets to Honiara and take control over cash earned. While marketing is an incentive to cash earning, women and men experience hardships, such as sleepless nights, loss of time, transport expenses by boat or trucks, paddling a canoe or walking for longer distances to access a market. Lack of proper infrastructure, transportation and communication makes marketing a risky, dangerous and demanding job.

Section 3.5 (p. 49) lists recommendations for improving agricultural decision making, and therefore improving rural livelihoods. These recommendations include:

- improving women's training in agricultural activities;
- increasing women's representation in agricultural activities;
- improving agricultural business and management training for rural communities; and
- encouraging and facilitating income-generating activities in rural agriculture.

Shrestha, S., 1997, ‘Women’s Time Allocation in Rural Areas in Solomon Islands’, Development Issues (Canberra), No. 5, pp. 75-99
This article does not appear to publicly available. It may accessible through AusAid’s library services.
Note: I have not reviewed this publication. The summary below is adapted from CAB Abstracts: http://www.cababstractsplus.org/google/abstract.asp?AcNo=19981803992

This article notes that it is important to evaluate the effect of the transition from food gardening to cash crop production, in the Solomon Islands, on women's time allocation, and to evaluate both economic and non-economic factors affecting household behaviour. The following objectives are discussed: whether the adoption of cash crop production has affected women’s welfare in terms of their workload; where the labour for cash cropping is coming from; whether labour is derived by taking on additional workload; or whether labour for cash cropping is made possible by changes in labour allocation to food gardening, work at home and leisure.

This book does not seem to be publicly available. It may accessible through AusAid’s library services.
Note: I have not reviewed this publication. The summary below is taken from the Pacific Island Books website: http://www.pacificislandbooks.com/solomons.htm#2258
The book’s five chapters begin with a survey of the general situation of women in Solomon Islands, followed by detailed case studies of the problems faced by rural women in southern Malaita (the traditional and modern life-styles and development prospects of rural women), the Christian reaction to the traditional ‘Are’ practice of brideprice (the socio-cultural institution of brideprice), and the trials and tribulations of Honiara’s market women. The collection concludes with a survey of the guiding principles and work strategies of the Women’s Welfare Division, Government of Solomon Islands.

Messages and statements


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Websites visited

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