



# Enterprise Challenge Fund for the Pacific and South East Asia

## Women's economic empowerment in the Pacific Lessons from the Enterprise Challenge Fund

# About the Enterprise Challenge Fund

- Grant program partnering with private sector = A\$14.5 million for grants over 6 years funded by Australian Government - AusAID
  - Grants of A\$100,000 – A\$1.5 million available to 9 countries Asia / Pacific
  - At least 50% of project funded by private sector company, pro-poor outcomes and potential for systemic impact
- Total 21 projects in progress - 14 projects in the Pacific (66%)
- In 2012, 50,000 people had been employed, increased incomes and accessed new goods and services = A\$1.5 million *additional income per year* for people living in the region (ref ECF Annual Portfolio Report 2012)
- No explicit objectives for women's economic empowerment

# A focus on the results from the Pacific

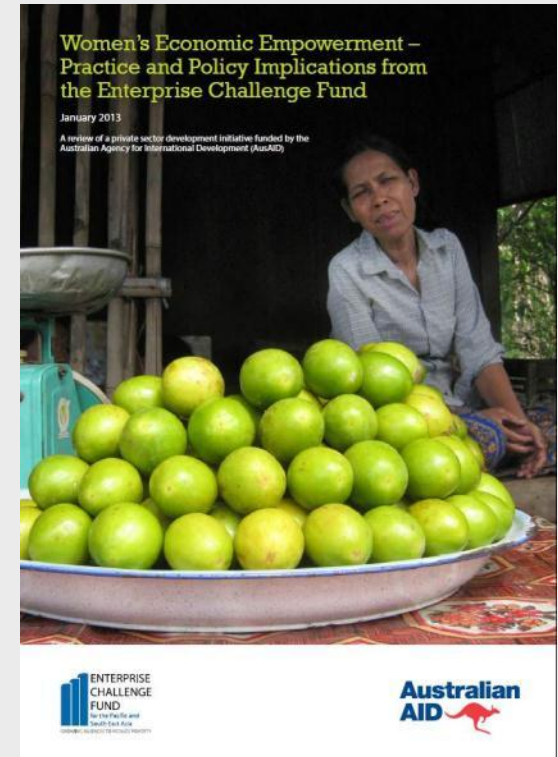
- 16 projects in Pacific Islands = A\$ 9.4 million
- Focus sectors - agribusiness, tourism, renewable energy link to supply chains and export markets
- 50,000 people benefiting 4,590 are in the Pacific (~10%) and of \$1.5 million per year – \$532,323 is income to the Pacific (35%)
- Women are a key part of this supply chain as employees, agricultural producers, suppliers and customers



# Women's economic empowerment – a review of the experience through the ECF

In 2012, Gender Adviser Kate Nethercott and Marianne Jago-Bassingthwaite worked with the ECF team to review

- How private sector programs can support women's economic advancement – how this leads to empowerment
- From the ECF examples what can / does this look like?
- What are the lessons that we can learn?



# What role did ECF play?

- Selection of the right companies to work with – much of the results were because of the private sector's own initiatives
- Marketing to women's business groups and associations
- Gender disaggregated data provided spot checks and a focus on inequality
- Specific focus groups for women as part of monitoring process – feedback to companies
- Coffey's Gender Adviser (a co-author of the paper) provided input during design of monitoring

# Flexible working conditions support women to work



- Volcanic Earth creates beauty products with female customer base - uses a supply chain for tamanu nuts involving both men and women
  - 1) Men gather nuts & work in factory to process oil sold to Volcanic Earth
  - 2) Women work in groups of up to 15 women (in local communal areas) to peel, clean, sort and pack nuts for re-collection to the factory to process oil.
- Women report they use income for household and contribute to community (church) groups

# Improved access to technology means more women can (physically) participate

- Nature's Way in Fiji operates a factory heat treatment facility. Factory work was heavy as packing and grading was done manually
- An ECF grant provided new technology
  - 1) Heat treatment facility to expand access to export markets in NZ / Australia
  - 2) Automated packing and grading machines to increase production
- Resulted in more women being able to work on the factory floor and increased demand in supply increased the number of women farmers



# Focus on roles where women excel



- Mainland Holdings in Papua New Guinea processes vanilla for export and employs female workers for vanilla curing
- Extension workers are training both women and men in vanilla growing. Extension workers found women were better at pollinating the plants – noting their skill in detailed work and focused training to the females

# How this links to empowerment

- Women employed in seedling nursery in Fiji earning good wages indicate this has increased their confidence - & on-the-job training in seedling maintenance has improved their home gardens (increased self efficacy / increased household resources)
- Applying EEO policies of the private sector led to more women being trained as boat operators in Vanuatu (increased participation)
- A female board member at a company in Fiji led to more services for women resulting in more women farmers (increased bargaining power) -



# Lessons in private sector development

- Considering the context of different societies across Asia and Pacific – what roles do women and men have on supply chain in Pacific? Women have economically benefited - what can we learn from this?
- Highlight the business case for involving women further and work with the right companies
- Donors can target funds to sectors where women are involved and where resources are lacking
- But gender inclusion or mainstreaming is not enough to ensure a targeted focus on women's economic empowerment

# Enterprise Challenge Fund for the Pacific and South East Asia

*“The ECF grants are just one way we can help improve the economies of Pacific Island countries in the long term, and through them the Australian Government is helping the private sector to play its part in alleviating poverty across our region,”*

Hon Bob McMullan MP, Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance

[www.enterprisechallengefund.org](http://www.enterprisechallengefund.org)

