

# DEVELOPMENT THEME SERIES

## GENDER

The Enterprise Challenge Fund (ECF) for Pacific and South East Asia is a A\$20.5 million AusAID-led Australian Government initiative. It gives businesses in ECF participating countries a competitive opportunity to obtain grants for help in commercialising business projects. To date A\$11.5 million in grants has gone to 22 business projects across eight countries: Cambodia, Laos, Philippines, East Timor, Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea, Fiji and Solomon Islands. The key rationale of the grants is to have a sustainable impact on poverty through employment, income generation and access to goods and services.

Technical review by Kate Nethercott,  
Coffey International Development Specialist



Women in Papua New Guinea sort vanilla

### Millennium Development Goal 3

Enact and implement equal economic rights for all.



### Why is considering gender important to poverty reduction?

A growing number of businesses are recognising positive business and development outcomes from supporting and empowering women. Development organisations have found that greater gender equality can 'enhance productivity, improve development outcomes for the next generation, and make institutions more representative' (World Bank 2012). Gender equality and empowering women is the third Millennium Development Goal.

Gender has been considered by ECF since the fund began in 2007 and was considered as part of the assessment criteria during selection. During ECF implementation and monitoring, significant attention is paid to the different needs, interests, priorities and roles of women in the business projects that received funding.

### Gender benefits and outcomes in the Enterprise Challenge Fund

As at July 2012, about 50,000 poor people, 48% of whom are women, had received positive changes to their income through supplying goods, obtaining employment, and accessing goods and services in ECF funded businesses. It is evident that a number of ECF funded projects have intended and unintended gender outcomes as they are implemented.

#### Working with women to improve supply chain

**Cagayan de Oro Handmade Paper** crafts was awarded an ECF grant to expand paper production and improve the supply chain for abaca, a fibre used to make their products. The organisation trained 88 local women to assemble and construct cards and paper products. The women have also trained family members to help assemble the products.

These women then earn an income from supplying these cards to the organisation, some an average of P95,000 (A\$2,000) a year, a very respectable income. The organisation also supports their home-based workers with school supplies and scholarships for their children because many women indicated that the reason they were working was to send their children to school.

### Employing women in leadership or traditionally male positions

**Nature's Way Cooperative** was established to undertake mandatory quarantine treatments on behalf of Fiji's fruit industry. Most of its 160 growers and exporter shareholders are small farmers. Nature's Way received a grant from ECF to improve quarantine treatment facilities and work with the industry to increase volume and exporting facilities. In the last two years the cooperative has taken steps to improve female participation and has appointed a female board member who is focused on increasing the number of female co-op



Cagayan de Oro employs women to assemble and construct the hand made cards

### Girls can do it too

In Mystery Island when the Carnival Cruise docks, most women earn an income by selling traditional crafts and services from market stalls. Carnival Cruises has trained two women, and two men, in the very non-traditional field of transit boat operators to ferry passengers between the ship and shore. In the Carnival team public-private partnership video, the women explained that being an operator was a good opportunity for them to mix with passengers and be a role model for other women – they want to show “to the other females, girls can do it too”.



members. There are currently 14 female members; when the co-op started there none. One-third of Nature’s Way employees are female; several years ago all were male.

**Reddy Farms’** ECF grant to support the duck project in Fiji included construction of a hatchery to produce ducklings for distribution to the grow-out contractors. Reddy Farms appointed Titilia, a 26 year old single mother, to be trained to operate the hatchery. Reddy Farms provided a house on the property for Titilia and her extended family to live while she works at the hatchery on a flexible basis. She is paid minimum wage of \$F2,100 per year (A\$1,100) as a trainee but there is no rental charge for the house, nor for electricity and other property costs.

As Hatchery Manager Titilia has learnt a great deal about hatchery processes, poultry management and equipment control. She has developed into a good manager. In an interview with the ECF Fund Director, she indicated that the opportunity had changed her life. Titilia and her extended family now feel secure, have free accommodation and have more money to spend on food. From a personal perspective, she has “learned a lot” and feels she now has a bright future.

### Lesson for future challenge funds

A number of management steps could help ensure greater awareness of gender and women’s economic empowerment.

- **Sector targeting** – Most projects awarded funds were in the agribusiness and tourism industries where women are traditional participants but women’s ownership of businesses is limited. Future challenge funds could specifically target increasing female ownership in these sectors to increase women’s economic empowerment.
- **Gender in the application** – As part of the bidding process, businesses submit proposals to outline the rationale for grant funding; country managers gave input and advice as requested or needed. When directed, companies were able to further consider the impact of the project on women and communities, and applications and ultimately projects were strengthened.

Future funds could strengthen the gender associated questions in the application by including prompting questions such as:

- How will women participate in project activities, compared with men? Are there any constraints or barriers preventing women or men from participating in and benefiting from the project activities? If so how will these be addressed?

- What access will women have to project resources such as jobs, training and income, compared with men?
- What immediate and practical needs of both women and men will be addressed through the project?
- **Monitoring for improved outcomes** – The monitoring approach of the ECF outlines, in partnership with the companies, key indicators for the business and social impacts. This process has value in demonstrating to the business operator, from the beginning of the funded project, the areas with potential impact and has enhanced their outlook and awareness of gender.

For future funds, the monitoring process could be used to discuss the impact of the project on women. Reporting on numbers of benefits should be disaggregated by gender and methods devised to review the qualitative impact of goods and services on women, families and the position of women in communities.