



Mr. Luke Simpkins MP
Chair, Human Rights Sub-Committee
Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade

Dear Mr. Simpkins,

Re: Submission by the Australian National Committee for UN Women and UN Women Fiji Multi-Country Office on Human Rights for Women and Girls – Indian Ocean-Asia Pacific Region

On behalf of the Australian National Committee for UN Women and UN Women I would like to thank you once again for the efforts of the Human Rights Sub-Committee to identify critical human rights challenges for women and girls in the Indian Ocean-Asia Pacific Region. Thank you for giving the National Committee the opportunity to come to Parliament last month to meet you all and to find how engaged and knowledgeable you were in the issues under discussion.

I would like to take the opportunity to provide you with the specific information you requested on Thursday as my colleagues from the UN Women Multi-Country Office have provided feedback on the Markets for Change (M4C) project running in Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.

1. Are the security guards in the markets paid for by the government or the project?

The security guards at the markets are paid by the respective local governments.

2. What has been the impact of the M4C project and how has this been measured?

The M4C project officially commenced early this year as per the work plans. We have seen some quick results after rolling out some of the activities in areas of women's leadership, as new market vendor associations have been formed whereby women vendors have assumed executive roles and are actively participating in decision making. Some existing market vendor associations held elections which saw more women vendors participating. The small grants infrastructure projects began late last year to provide basic amenities. These include water and sanitation, extension of sheltered market spaces, provision of tables and seats for market vendors and overnight accommodation facilities. Saving scheme opportunities were also expanded in the market in the Solomon Islands and more than 150 market vendors have opened bank accounts for the first time.

3. How are the market sites selected? Are they existing markets or new for the projects?

The market sites were selected after the scoping studies in 2009 and 2010. To ensure that a wider number of market vendors would be reached with the M4C projects the selection of markets was based on the largest municipal market sites from the three countries. We have a total of 20 market sites under the M4C projects, 10 in Fiji, two in the Solomon Islands and eight in Vanuatu.



4. How do you think such initiatives can be used to publicise the importance of supporting women's economic empowerment?

The Markets for Change - Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu - Project is a six-year initiative aimed at ensuring that rural and urban marketplaces in Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu are safe, inclusive and non-discriminatory and promote gender equality and women's empowerment. Market vendors are predominantly women, and marketplaces offer important venues to effect a change in women's social and economic status. In targeting female market vendors at marketplaces, the M4C project contributes to the broader Pacific Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) outcomes of creating secure, productive and sustainable work opportunities for women.

The M4C project demonstrates the opportunities to improve outcomes for women in the following ways:
The creation of inclusive, effective and representative marketplace groups contribute to women's social and economic advancement, the elimination of gender-based discrimination and violence, and expanded economic opportunities for women;
Improved economic security of market vendors strengthens their lives and livelihoods and improves the revenue base for local authorities;
Local governments and market management agencies are gender responsive, effective and accountable;
Marketplaces are more resilient to disasters and climate change, and are structured in a way that supports the economic and social advancement of market vendors.

Earlier this month the UN Women Multi-Country Office in Fiji organized a Pacific Markets networking event at the conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDs) conference at which stakeholders (a market vendor, a police women and a private sector partner) spoke about their experiences as partners in UN Women projects in the region.

5. Where did the figures come from in the submission?

The Markets for Change project has a total budget of USD18 million over six years. UN Women has received funding of AUD10 million from DFAT and has USD900,000 from UN Women's core funding. This means that we have a funding gap of USD7 million.

Should you require further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Jacky Sutton
Policy and Advocacy Manager
Australian National Committee for UN Women