

Building projects, building women leaders

Autonomous Region Of Bougainville Leadership And Decision-Making

April 27, 2018

Project Name: Inclusive Development in post-conflict Bougainville

Project Partner: World Bank

Total Funding: \$2,500,000

Funding timeframe: 2015–2018

In Bougainville, women are changing community perceptions of the role of women as leaders by leading local infrastructure projects and using this experience as a springboard to other leadership positions.

The World Bank's Inclusive Development in post-conflict Bougainville project (Inclusive Development) is implemented through the Department of Community Development. Women's groups are trained in participatory planning and management and then prepare proposals for community projects, which require a 10 per cent in-kind contribution. Successful projects are funded through a grants scheme. Grants have been used to build water supply and sanitation systems, community resource centres, classrooms, aid posts and feeder roads. Grants have also supported awareness and literacy on village birth attendance, tailoring, and arts and crafts skills training. These community development projects are being delivered by 126 women's groups across all 43 Community Government areas.



This map shows the location of projects funded through the Inclusive Development in post-conflict Bougainville project. Photo Credit: Severina Betitis, Inclusive Development.

The resource centre built in Malasang 1 has had a transformative impact. The centre generates income for shareholders through rent and by supporting local income generation schemes. It is a hub for meetings and provides transit accommodation. It is used as a venue for women’s capacity building events and for fund raising for community needs and school fees. The centre has a positive ripple effect. Individual women have benefited from new networks, skills and income generation allowing them to pay for their children’s school fees. Increased confidence of women and demonstrated competence has led to them taking on more leadership roles within their communities. The centre has also increased community networking and income generation. With membership rising to 3,000, an extension is being built to include a kitchen and dining area to raise even more revenue.

If not already affiliated, grant recipients are linked with the Bougainville Women’s Federation, which operates initiatives to advocate for and support women. This has led to a large increase in the organisation’s rural membership.

The project facilitates Department of Community Development officers’ delivery of awareness on human rights issues and gender-based violence. Women human rights defenders, trained by the Nazareth Centre for Rehabilitation and involved in the Inclusive Development project, also share their knowledge on gender-based violence, human rights, and peace and conflict resolution with women participating in project trainings. Increased

awareness and growing confidence is helping women to work towards making their communities safer for women and children.

Leadership of these community projects is also opening pathways to political leadership. In 2017, community-level elections were held. Under new legislation, each ward is now represented by one woman and one man. Successful women candidates included 17 Inclusive Development project executives and 34 women human rights defenders trained by the Nazareth Centre for Rehabilitation.

Ms Charleen Kewono, Treasurer from Kawex/ Merko women's group, reflected:

'I feel empowered and I am now more confident in talking in public, in carrying out any community responsibilities. The community has now recognised what I am doing with women, youth, and the church activities and have voted me as their women ward rep in the Kamewotsk ward.'

*This Story of Change was originally published in the [Pacific Women Annual Progress Report 2016 – 2017](#). All values are consistent with that reporting period. For the most up-to-date value of activities, visit our [interactive map](#).