

# Ideas to lift the barriers to women's economic empowerment

Palau Economic Empowerment

July 13, 2018

Project Name: Stakeholder workshop on economic empowerment

Project Partner: The Pacific Community

Total Funding: \$150,000

Funding timeframe: 2017-2019

In April 2017, stakeholders gathered to validate and inform a Pacific Women scoping study undertaken by the Pacific Community's Gender Equality Adviser in the North Pacific, funded by Pacific Women. The study analysed the barriers to women's economic empowerment in Palau.



Participants at the women's economic empowerment scoping study workshop – Minister Baklai Temengil Chilton (centre), Dr Unaisi Nabobo-Baba (second from left), Jodean Remengesau (right), Olympia Morei, (left) and Julita Tellei (second from right). Photo Credit: Maire Dwyer, The Pacific Community.

Whilst Palauan women are active in the economy, own many businesses, and have high labour force participation by Pacific and world standards at almost 75 per cent, they also face many challenges. Women are less likely to be employers than men and they account for only one third of all self-employed people in Palau.

Stakeholders agreed on three priority areas to support women's economic empowerment in Palau: support for women in business, increased availability of childcare services and mandatory paid parental leave in the private sector.

To support women in business, stakeholders discussed holding a Women in Business Summit to focus on the specific needs of women entrepreneurs.

To reduce women's unpaid workload and support women's economic opportunities, stakeholders championed regulated childcare and afterschool services. The *lukel a klechad* childcare model that emphasises Palauan community values, philosophy, language, history, and cultural heritage was discussed.

The issue of mandatory private sector paid parental leave was referred to the Palau Labor Advisory Group, which is looking at labour law reform. Ms Carolyn D Ngiraidis is a representative on the Group. She is also the Chief Financial Officer for Dolphins Pacific Inc, on the Executive Board of the Pacific Island Private Sector Organisation, and a former member of the Palau Chamber of Commerce. She commented:

'Palau has some good labour laws, but [they] require improvement. The Palau Chamber of Commerce's position is uniform basic benefits across the board for all, such as minimum wage, pension plan, maternity policy, vacation / sick leave policy. However, there are many small 'mom and pop' stores who cannot afford much. We are fortunate to be working closely with International Labour Organization who has provided assistance in reviewing our current labour laws.'

Ms Ngiraidis also drew on her personal experiences to contribute to the study's understanding of women, family, and work dynamics in Palau.

‘Palau is a small country. Our society is close-knit, so you see a lot of women wear different hats at different meetings. We share the same beliefs, concerns, and are vocal on issues relating to Palau’s future for women and particularly our children, as we see it five, ten years from now. We just need to get our national leaders to think about tomorrow and not just today.’

\*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](#).