

Media release: 19 Graduate Economic Empowerment Training

Media release: Tonga National Centre for Women and Children.

Wednesday 29 July 2020, Nuku'alofa

Nineteen women started a new phase of their life journey today as they graduated from an 23-week economic empowerment training.

Surrounded by friends and family, they received certificates of completion and a pack of start-up resources from the Tonga National Centre for Women and Children (TNCWC).

The women are the second cohort of TNCWC's Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) training program, supported by Australia through Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development (*Pacific Women*).

Over the 23 weeks, training sessions focused on Cookery, Fabric Printing and Sewing with additional trainings on Financial Literacy, Budgeting for Home and Business and Confident and Effective Communication. Sessions were also delivered remotely for 6 weeks, including the two-week COVID-19 lockdown period.

'While it was a different approach for the training, as we included COVID-19 adaptive approaches, the participants found it useful,' said Emeline Mikaere, Economic Empowerment Supervisor. 'They were able to use the training materials as references to create a solid foundation by refining their basic skills.'

'We will continue to provide support and mentoring to the graduates and look forward to seeing their journeys continue and their endeavours successful,' said Fuiva Kavaliku, TNCWC Director.

The graduation event today was attended by the women's families, civil society partners and Australian High Commission staff.

Graduates shared the work they had produced during the training at the event venue as well as reflected on their experiences in song, poetry and speeches.

"Through warmth, winter and raining days,

We came together with the group, trying to find our way,

I just love to be with you, whatever we do,

As we fill each other with adventure and excitement too.

Many many thanks for the sewing machines, paints and stoves

Now we can cook, bake, fabric print and sew

We will wear fancy clothes, eat healthier food and expensive meals at home

Gain the confidence to start a business on our own."

– Toalea Kei

TNCWC's WEE project seeks to ensure that women and girls, including survivors of violence, have access to and control over expanded economic opportunities and are able to use them to make strategic life choices. The project is currently in its third phase, building on the work done and lessons learned in the inception and pilot phases.

Background

The Tonga National Centre for Women and Children (TNCWC) supports women and girls, including survivors of violence against women and girls, to have access to and control over expanded

economic opportunities and to be able to make strategic life choices. Several projects including its economic empowerment training and gender-based violence counselling is supported by Australia through *Pacific Women*, which is one of the largest global commitments to gender equality connecting more than 170 initiatives implemented by over 160 partners including TNCWC.