

# Empowering Women is Smart Business

Solomon Islands Economic Empowerment

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Project Name: Empowering Women is Smart Business

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A new network dedicated to professional women in Solomon Islands has the objective of supporting women in their careers.

Women are more likely to be excluded from existing social networks that can help them advance their career. Dedicated women's networks are an important opportunity for women to plan for business growth, by accessing resources available through an organised network.

The Solomon Islands Professional Women's Network (SIPNET) is a network for professional women in business in Solomon Islands. SIPNET was formed to support professional women leaders to speak out and coach younger emerging women leaders in business. It is also a space for women to learn new skills, gain valuable insights and receive feedback on business innovation, processes, ideas and more.

SIPNET is a joint initiative of the Solomon Islands Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the International Finance Corporation's Pacific Women-funded Empowering Women is Smart Business program. The Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Hon Julie Bishop MP, launched SIPNET in December 2016. By the end of July 2017, it had already attracted 54 members. At the launch, Minister Bishop said:

'one of our main priorities in the aid program is gender equality and gender empowerment ... this network is precisely the kind of initiative that we look to support in our aid program.'

The Australian Minister for International Development and the Pacific, the Hon Concetta Fierravanti-Wells was also at the launch and said:

‘the evidence is clear—investing in women is not just the right thing to do; it makes smart business sense as well.’



SIPNET was launched by Australia’s Foreign Minister, the Hon Julie Bishop MP in December 2016. Photo: DFAT

Initially SIPNET targeted women who are employed in the private sector or in state owned enterprises. However, more women from civil society organisations and the public sector have also taken great interest in the network. Senior women often bring junior women colleagues along to the monthly organised events, giving younger professionals the opportunity to learn and be mentored in leadership and confidence building.

Members meet monthly to hear speakers of interest, develop leadership skills and build supportive personal and professional relationships. As a result, SIPNET has bridged a gap that has long been apparent in the largely male dominated society of Solomon Islands, ensuring women have a safe place to network and grow professionally.

Ms Uta Temahua, Manager of Strategy and Business Planning at Our Telekom, values being part of the network.

‘For me it would be having the venue to congregate and focus on getting down to business without preconceived judgements about my dress, speech, tone of voice, or family life from those around me. An opportunity to connect at a positive level and find mentors who provide alternatives by listening to their experiences.’

\*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](#).