

Voices from the vendors

Fiji Regional Solomon Islands Vanuatu Economic Empowerment

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Ms Leisavi Joel presenting a speech. Photo: UN Women

In just over three years, UN Women's Markets for Change (M4C) project has made substantial progress towards achieving its outcomes. The best people to explain how the project is supporting different facets of women's economic empowerment across three Pacific countries are the market vendors themselves.

'Before the training, I do not have a bank account and my husband had control over the money I earned,' says Ms Betty Fresa,

who has been selling fish for more than 15 years at the Honiara Central Market in Solomon Islands. Since receiving financial literacy training through M4C, Betty has changed the way she manages the money from her stall.

‘I know how to look after as well as take control over my earnings to meet my family’s daily needs. I also opened a bank account with Bank of South Pacific after the training, through which I save part of my earnings.’

In Fiji, Ms Sunila Wati has attended five M4C agricultural productivity trainings. Through them, she has improved her farming techniques.

‘I learnt to use manure more now and less fertilizer – just how they explain during the training – and the new tools [digging fork, gardening knife] that I received.’

When her crops were ruined in the December 2016 floods, she knew what to do.

‘I planted the seeds that I received after the floods, utilising the soil after the floods, and the leftover seeds I have shared to another farmer who also supplies to me in the market.’

Despite the disaster, she is expecting increased productivity in 2017.

Ms Leisavi Daisy Joel is the Vice President of the Silae Vanua Market Vendor Association in Vanuatu. After participating in M4C financial literacy, agriculture, communications and leadership training, she decided,

‘I have some good knowledge that makes me want to learn more.’

Ms Joel successfully applied for a DFAT scholarship to study for her Certificate 4 in Community Development.

‘If you see an opportunity to improve your life through education, then go for it! Some women think they don’t have a

good enough education. But let's not think like that. Let's just come together and see what's happening.'

M4C works to ensure marketplaces in rural and urban areas of Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu are safe, inclusive and non-discriminatory, promoting gender equality and women's empowerment.

**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](#).*