

Successful businesses, successful lives

Federated States Of Micronesia Economic Empowerment

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Project name: Pacific Women Growing Business

Project partner: The Pacific Community

Total funding: \$154,800

Funding timeframe: 2017–2019

Pacific Women is supporting the Pacific Community implement the Pacific Women Growing Business project in FSM to scale up women's businesses by providing training and one-on-one support for women in small and emerging businesses in Pohnpei.

Business counsellor, Herolyn Movick, supports the project's women participants. As a business woman, Mrs Movick knows what it takes to develop a successful business and is also aware of the additional barriers that Pohnpeian business women can face.

'If we can address the issue of cultural gender-based inequalities and biases, I think we will have addressed the issue of getting the same opportunities as the opposite gender,' Mrs Movick said. 'And I think we will address the issue of women lacking self-confidence [and] self-esteem and having access to capital, networks [and] resources as well.'

The project has partnered with the College of Micronesia to provide six workshops on different business topics in 2018. 'We will provide hands-on learning that meets the practical needs of women and their business partners in Pohnpei,' said Timothy Mamangon, Executive Director of the college's Center for Entrepreneurship.



Participants of the Pacific Women Growing Business workshop in May 2018.
Photo credit: Australian Embassy, Pohnpei, FSM.

An accounting training in March 2018 was delivered to 20 women. Most of the participants were business owners with loans through the Small Business Guarantee and Finance Corporation (SBGFC) in Pohnpei State. ‘The SBGFC clients are mainly women who already have loans to start or grow their businesses,’ said Maire Dwyer, Gender Equality Adviser in the North Pacific. ‘They are exactly the group we hope will benefit from this program.’

Mrs Movick connects the project’s work on economic empowerment with other aspects of gender inequality. ‘This program is not only about providing an opportunity for women entrepreneurs accessing finance to upscale their businesses, increasing economic opportunity or contributing to economic growth,’ she said. ‘This entire exercise is about empowering women, giving them independence, a voice in which to have their own decisions and be able to contribute to the wellbeing of their families. When we have domestic violence, I think the issues are more challenging when women are not able to provide for themselves. And I think this is an opportunity to have them stand up and say, “I am able to provide for myself and my family”,’ she said.

This approach reflects a growing body of research, such as the Do No Harm study undertaken by the Australian National University and International Women’s Development Agency, that recognises the connections between women’s economic empowerment and violence against women.