

# Inspiring, developing and empowering women in business

Solomon Islands Economic Empowerment

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Project name: Support to Solomon Islands Women in Business Association

Project partner: Solomon Islands Women in Business Association

Total funding: \$719,600

Funding timeframe: 2014–2018

Members of the Solomon Islands Women in Business Association (SIWIBA) have worked together since 2004 to develop opportunities and support networks for women in business. With a focus on locally-led action, Pacific Women has partnered with SIWIBA since 2014, providing core funding for staffing and office rental costs, as well as targeted activities.



Winners at the 2017 SIWIBA Business Women of the Year Awards. Photo credit: SIWIBA.

‘Since I joined SIWIBA in 2015, they have become like a family to me,’ said Association member Rachel Rahii. ‘A family of women working with one vision: economic empowerment for each other and other women like them.’

In 2017, Pacific Women funded an adviser to assist the SIWIBA Board and staff to develop a strategic plan for 2018–2020. The plan includes four strategic goals to progress SIWIBA’s multi-faceted approach to support women’s economic empowerment.

The plan incorporates activities that SIWIBA had implemented well for years, including organising training opportunities, participating in legislative reform task forces, operating a savings club, providing information via a radio broadcast and celebrating success through an annual Women in Business awards night.

The plan also introduces some new activities including a business coach (through the Australian Volunteers Program) to work with members to help their businesses flourish. It also includes support for members to participate in international conferences and forums. In April 2018, seven SIWIBA members flew to Brisbane, Australia for the Women of World festival, which brought together women from 20 Commonwealth nations. Most of these members had never travelled out of the country before. The festival provided an opportunity to sell products, showcase Solomon Islands handicrafts and network with and learn from the international gathering.

Pacific Women has also provided funding to SIWIBA to develop a child protection policy and operate a Business Development Centre. ‘The Business Development Centre is very important to us, especially those of us who do not have an office in town, but use our homes as our base,’ said member Nerolyn Silas. ‘I didn’t realise the importance of having a Business Development Centre until I started using the facilities.’

SIWIBA has over 185 active members from both the formal and informal sectors in Honiara and approximately 700 affiliate members from women’s business associations in three provincial locations. Member Delight Niva highlighted the benefits of membership:

‘By being part of SIWIBA, I have more customers and increase a bit of my income and it really helps to finance my kids’ school fees and meet basic family needs,’ she said. ‘I am helping to grow the economy and I share my knowledge with other women.’