Fiji

In February 2016, Cyclone Winston devastated Fiji, destroying the Rakiraki Market. Livelihoods of market vendors such as Varanisese Maisamoa were compromised. Through UN Women’s Markets for Change (M4C) project, Maisamoa, 39 years, has become a strong leader in her community. As leader of both the Rakiraki’s women’s group and the Market Vendors Association, her insights were critical in helping to adapt the M4C project to give humanitarian support to vendors impacted by the cyclone.

Papua New Guinea

Two in three women experience gender-based violence in Papua New Guinea. However, against all odds, women across the country are speaking out, not only in defence of their own rights, but those of others in similar situations. Twenty-five-year-old Joanna Oala, herself a survivor of sexual violence, has become a champion to end violence against women and girls as part of a UN Women-led campaign, SANAP WANTAIM, which works to make Port Moresby safer for women and girls.

“It has been an emotional and mental battle for me but today, I am a proud advocate of women’s safety [and] a volunteer with UN Women’s ‘SANAP WANTAIM’ Campaign, which has provided me with a platform to talk to other girls and women and raise awareness among communities.”

“We want to empower our market vendors to be climate resilient.”
– Varanisese Maisamoa

“It’s better to speak up and let your voice be heard.”
– Joanna Oala
Solomon Islands

Fifty-one-year-old Janet Ramo is the President of the Auki Market Vendors Association in the Solomon Islands, a key site for UN Women’s Markets for Change project which is supported by Australia. The programme has helped Ramo to gain important leadership and business skills. “Before, we struggled with saving […] but after the Markets for Change financial literacy training, I saw the benefits of saving and investing for my cooperative business,” Ms. Ramo explained. “With this project, I see myself as a business woman—I no longer look down on myself—I am happy.”

“[Previously] decision-making positions were held by men and we never saw the benefits. Now seeing women as strong, it motivates me.”
— Janet Ramo

Cambodia

Samen Phalla, 44 years old, is leader of the Cambodian Network of Domestic Workers. She cleans three houses every day. “Being a domestic worker is a physically hard job,” she said.

Domestic workers are not protected under the Cambodian Labour Code for safe working conditions and health care. Now, with the Interactive Voice Recognition Service technology, developed with UN Women’s support, domestic workers can call a toll-free number for legal assistance on labour rights and prevention of domestic violence.

“If we have a health issue and we don’t know what it is or what to do, we now call the phone service for support.”
— Samen Phalla

Photos: above left: UN Women/UN Women/Marc Dozier; above right: Lisa Taieb

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