



Catalyzing Women's Entrepreneurship Creating a Gender-Responsive Entrepreneurial Ecosystem

Fiji

POLICY INITIATIVES

SMEs

REPRESENT **97%** OF TOTAL ESTABLISHMENTS IN FIJI

(6)

MSMEs CONTRIBUTE **18%** TO GDP

(1)

19%

OF BUSINESSES ARE REGISTERED BY WOMEN

(5)

44.9% OF WOMEN HAVE BANK ACCOUNTS IN COMPARISON TO 55.1% OF MEN



(8)

INTERVENTIONS AND POLICY INITIATIVES TO SUPPORT THE SME SEGMENT INCLUDED:

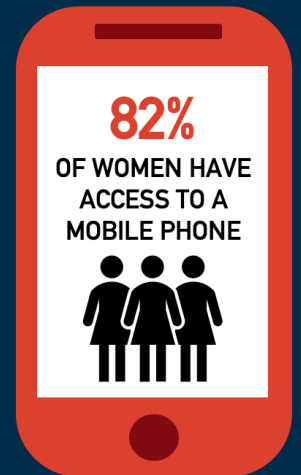
- Small and Micro-Enterprises Development Act (2002)
- The National Council of Small and Medium Enterprises
- Government Credit Guarantee Scheme
- National Development Program
- Agriculture Sector Grant Scheme

SMEs EMPLOY **60%** OF THE LABOURFORCE

(1)

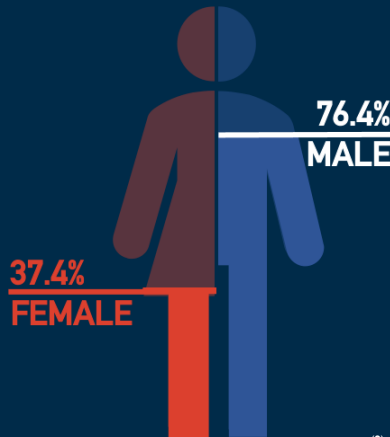
4 OUT OF 5 MARKET VENDORS IN FIJI ARE WOMEN

(2)



(5)

LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE



(2)

IN FIJI, IT TAKES **11 PROCEDURES AND 40 DAYS** TO START UP AND FORMALLY OPERATE A SME

(4)

WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE EARN **25% LESS** THAN MALES

(2)

THE MISSION OF MSME FIJI IS TO STIMULATE THE INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF MSMEs, ESPECIALLY FOR YOUTH AND WOMEN

- Through the formalisation, implementation and enhancing new and existing policies and strategies for the development of WMSMEs
- Facilitating business training, mentoring, advisory, incubation services and access to finance for MSMEs.

(1)



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ECOSYSTEM OF STAKEHOLDERS

The **national consultation**, in collaboration with the **Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation (MWCPA)**, brought together more than 50 stakeholders including policymakers from key ministries and experts in the field of gender equality, SME development, ICT, trade and finance. The national consultation facilitated a diverse dialogue around the opportunities and challenges faced by women entrepreneurs and served as a platform to assess the progress made by women-led businesses in Fiji. ESCAP's intervention in Fiji is based on needs expressed by stakeholders at this consultation.



CATALYZATION OF WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP

ESCAP's partnership with MWCPA has been formalized through a Letter of Agreement (LOA) that will provide the framework for implementing activities in Fiji. The LOA focuses on: a) inter-ministerial coordination group with representation of women entrepreneurs— a coordination mechanism to not only advise the project but also to discuss and advance policies for women entrepreneurs in Fiji; b) Based on case studies of 80 women entrepreneurs in the Suva Flea Market, a strategy for addressing the needs of women entrepreneurs in the informal and micro segment will be developed; c) technical advisory support for MSME Fiji with a focus on business registration processes for women MSMEs and d) ICT capacity building for women entrepreneurs on E-Commerce and Digital Marketing. A Training of Trainers (ToT) programme will be developed to enhance the skills of women entrepreneurs in the handicraft and cultural industries on using e-commerce tools and digital platforms.



BUILDING BACK BETTER

Building on the partnership with MWCPA and Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM), a rapid assessment on enabling policy environment for women MSMEs, including impact of COVID-19 has been undertaken. Specifically, the assessment has generated actionable policy recommendations for the Government of Fiji to consider in addressing the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on women-led MSMEs. This will be followed by a policy roundtable consultation that will bring together key stakeholders to discuss the recommendations of the study and develop a roadmap for implementation.



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FORMALISED MECHANISMS

An in-country **Women Entrepreneurs Working Group (WEWG)** was established under the National Task Force on Women's Economic Empowerment in Fiji. The first meeting, held in January 2021, was chaired by MWCPA and witnessed participation of more than 20 representatives from Government officials, financial institutions and the private sector. As a result, a formal institutional mechanism to advance coordinated policy response to address multiple barriers facing women entrepreneurs. Key interventions and synergies needed to advance women led MSMEs, especially those in informal and micro sectors, were identified. Additionally, other important stakeholders in women's entrepreneurship landscape in Fiji were mapped to be included in the working group.



TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

In collaboration with **MSME Fiji, Ministry of Commerce Trade Tourism and Transport (MCTTT)**, ESCAP has undertaken a review of the MSME Fiji policy framework to propose specific gender-related policy provisions for supporting women-owned MSMEs in Fiji. Accounting for unique and multidimensional constraints faced by women entrepreneurs in Fiji, especially in context of COVID-19, the paper lays out clear and actionable interventions for mitigating those challenges as well as gender-mainstreaming of MSME Fiji policy. Additionally, MSME Fiji's **Young Entrepreneur Scheme (YES)** has been reviewed to assess the extent to which women accessed the schemes and devise ways to increase the same. The reviews provide capacity development support to MSME Fiji to apply gender lens in all policies and support measures to ensure that the needs, interests and perspectives of WMSMEs are addressed.



EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY DESIGN

Building on the partnership with MWCPA and FWRM, a case study research is being undertaken with 80 women vendors in the Suva flea market, to assess the impact of market fire on their businesses. Based on the findings from the case studies, policy recommendations will be developed for MWCPA for addressing the barriers faced by women entrepreneurs in informal sector. The action research will further support the understanding and development of suitable policies, products, and services critical for women-run micro-enterprises and self-employed women in the informal sector in Fiji.



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ENABLING ECOSYSTEM

The second women entrepreneurs working group meeting was held recently to discuss the progress made on interventions under the programme as well as priorities for supporting women entrepreneurs in micro and informal segments. Chaired by MWCPA, the meeting provided a platform for stakeholders, including MCTTT, Ministry of Agriculture, Women Entrepreneurs Business Council to discuss gaps for women entrepreneurs. Specific gaps around women's unpaid labor in the agriculture sector and gaps in data available/ data sharing among government stakeholders were discussed to plan for 2022 priorities.

The Programme is active across
SOUTH ASIA, SOUTH EAST ASIA and THE PACIFIC.

With on-the-ground activities in:



BANGLADESH



CAMBODIA



FIJI



NEPAL



SAMOA



VIET NAM

(1) MSME Fiji 2020 (2) MWCPA 2020 (3) Reserve Bank of Fiji 2015, 2018 (4) The World Bank Doing Business 2020 (5) ADB 2018 (6) UN 2018 (7) IFC 2013 (8) Fiji Financial Inclusion Annual Report 2019



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