

Women in the Cooks and Economic Empowerment

A Cook Islands Chamber of Commerce Position Paper
January 2015

Intro

To understand the diversity and levels of scope, interests, operations and skills of our women in the private sector is a fairly challenging task that would deserve some time and research effort. For our purposes the best at this stage to enhance Chamber and CINCW (and her affiliates) understanding is to get a good handle at least on what we could all be addressing.

On the same wave length

For this discussion the suggestion is we look at women and economic empowerment (broader sense) instead of the specific women in business in the Cooks.

Who are our women needing economic empowerment?

As mentioned above, women in the private sector is a diverse subject. There are:

- Those who have had the means, the skills, and the proposition to initiate and build their business and operations from scratch either through inheritance or good old business bullheadedness
- There are those who have had to find alternatives to make a living as the formal opportunities either don't allow entry or are biased against their participation
- There are our women in the informal sector that produce for the gift economy (that often spills into the monetary side of things)

Now within each of these very broad categories there are again diverse levels of skills, initiatives, and scope.

So to gear training along broad lines is not a very effective way to use the funding from the development friends if we have social conscience.

Guidelines for training and intervention support to assist our women

The matrix below begs for more input please, but it is our starting points to assist the project and our women especially receive targeted support that will help make a difference. Once again the categorisations are very general and more input from Lu, T, G and you will only help make this an important masterpiece.

The Groupings	Their Characteristics (what is strong and what is weak)	Recommendations for training, skill upgrading, facility support
Established women in business Young women establishing in business	This is the VAT grouping, who have by their own skills and means broken into their fields of operation They would be equal alongside any other formal business entity (owned by a male or a male/female team) in the Cooks in	- These are our mainstream women business operations, who will benefit if the current economic climate is

	<p>wanting good overall policies that encourage their growth (equal access to finance without burdens, transportation links, communications costs, etc) e.g are TAVs, the young Porter girls at Prime Foods</p> <p>Estimated numbers = 26-30 business units (there are a host of others where there are great husband/wife teams that make the mainstream businesses)</p> <p>Their estimated contribution to the Cooks economy...about 5% to GDP (\$15m conservative)</p>	<p>competitive, transparent and just.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Their needs would be on a need-be basis in terms of operations, product, marketing expansion etc (mentoring is an important partner if they require it) - Cheap loan finance would be a really great support to these entities if they were in the process of diversifying and/or expanding
<p>This is the medium to small (fall into both informal and formal sectors - taxed and not taxed)</p>	<p>Our mama marketers, our small shops, tailoring, cooking, catering, rental operations around the island, cultural entertainment</p> <p>A portion of this grouping may have full time jobs (government or private sector)</p> <p>Some church business operations (catering and entertainment) exist here</p> <p>They exist throughout the country</p> <p>Estimated number of units = ?</p> <p>Estimated input to GDP = ?</p> <p>Their operation works with their other important commitments to family, village and church obligations etc</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Some of this grouping can be assisted to expand and diversify if they wish to the formal (taxing) sector - They would do with more mentoring support – one on one, but need to identify them and their real needs - Many would welcome more favourable terms on a loan, or even better intensive grants that ‘start fires’ so to speak – e.g. the puka jewellery mum and her daughters selling a unique product
<p>The truly informal sector of women that are classified in the Census as home workers</p>	<p>Though this grouping may not seem to be in business, they do contribute economically to our country growth through their social/personal duties to child and family caring, destitute, elderly and disabled care</p> <p>For a portion of them while engaged in the above duties they also produce handicrafts and engage in sewing/ especially tivaevae for home improvement, gift economy and for sale to supplement home finances.</p> <p>Handicrafts range from the elaborate/price rito and black pearl products to the pandanus, kikau and shell ornaments for home and human adornment.</p> <p>Estimated Numbers – Census 2011 advises that the private sector is the main</p>	<p>If anything this grouping is outside the development policies that can help the first two groupings...however some of the policies geared to the above groupings can have a double edged effect on this grouping (i.e. it can be for their good...in terms of better access, cheaper and efficient transportation) or it can be bad....increased competition in the formal sector can drive them underground (i.e the case of the market nights at the Rarotongan have seen close-by cafe’s and small food outlets suffer)....</p>

employer of our people 65% of economically active
(need time to extract what we need)

Estimate contribute to GDP = ?

Great support to them would first be sensitivity to their business entity makeup
Better access to resources that keep them operating effectively the way they are
(they do have a gap to fill in in our society)

