



CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL
PRIVATE ENTERPRISE

COVID-19's Arrival in PNG: Impacts on PNG Women-Owned and -Operated MSMEs

SURVEY RESULTS ON CONDITIONS OF 298 PNG
WOMEN-OWNED AND -OPERATED MSMEs

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FOREWORD

Since 2013, CIPE has made remarkable progress democratizing opportunity in Papua New Guinea by breaking down barriers faced by women entrepreneurs. With this goal in mind, CIPE is working with universities to create new curriculum on entrepreneurship instruction, so that entrepreneurship is a viable career path for the next generation of women. At the time of this writing, nearly 200 Papua New Guinean university students are enrolled in new entrepreneurship courses – courses which would not exist were it not for this program. On the policy front, CIPE is leading the Women’s Business Agenda, through which Papua New Guinean businesswomen can make their voices heard in policy debates. The most ambitious undertaking is the **Women’s Business Resource Centre (WBRC)**, a walk-in facility where women of all backgrounds can access the resources and support needed to more freely and fairly engage in commerce. By early 2020, nearly 4,000 women directly benefited from WBRC services and training programs, several hundred of whom have expanded their businesses and incomes due to the WBRC. But then the coronavirus arrived, and life changed.



The following report presents the findings of a mixed method survey of WBRC users on the impact of the ongoing public health crisis on their respective businesses. The social and economic disruption engendered by the coronavirus constitute an infection point, after which all businesses must adjust in order to survive. As this survey will show, smaller businesses, informal businesses, and businesses owned by women bear a disproportionate burden. At the time of this writing, CIPE is crafting new WBRC offerings to meet these new threats to the economic empowerment of women, and to help WBRC users navigate these uncertain times. The lessons of this survey are guiding this effort.

CIPE's prioritization of *learning*, and of designing dynamic programs able to adjust to lessons learned, is shared across CIPE's global project portfolio. For example, in Turkey, CIPE is exploring how entrepreneurs from refugee communities can adjust their businesses against the backdrop of COVID-19. In Indonesia, Malaysia and several countries around the world, CIPE's Anti-Corruption and Governance Center is piloting innovative methods of mitigating the risks of corruption in the wake of COVID-19. In the Middle East, Eastern Europe and Africa, CIPE partners with business associations and chambers to enable them to serve and advocate for their members as they adapt to this new normal.

In the case of CIPE's WBRC initiative in Papua New Guinea, this need to learn, adapt, and respond is doubly important, because CIPE is replicating the WBRC methodology in nearly a half-dozen countries in regions including Central Asia, the Levant, and Central America. Consequently, the stakes are high in Papua New Guinea. Not only is the WBRC a completely unique institution in PNG that provides services, opportunities and safety that women cannot access elsewhere, but CIPE's attempts in PNG to navigate the new challenges of today will provide a roadmap for other countries to follow. This is why CIPE conducted the following survey, to gather data that allows CIPE to make informed decisions on how to position the WBRC for continued success in supporting women in commerce in PNG.

Gender inequality is among the paramount obstacles to PNG's future economic and political success, and CIPE is proud to partner with the Government of Australia and with the U.S. State Department on a groundbreaking initiative to economically empower women in PNG. CIPE is excited to share the results of the following survey, and to solicit feedback as we chart the next step forward.

JOHN MORRELL

Regional Director, Asia & The Pacific

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

BCFW	Business Coalition for Women
CIPE	Center for International Private Enterprise
CWEE	Center for Women's Economic Empowerment
DCDC	District Community Development Centre
DFAT	Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DFCDR	Department for Community Development and Religion
DRL	Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State
FSV	Family sexual violence
GBV	Gender-based violence
GoPNG	Government of Papua New Guinea
GWJ	Office of the Secretary for Global Women's Issues, U.S. Department of State
IPA	Investment Promotion Authority
IRC	Internal Revenue Commission
MSMEs	Micro, Small, and Medium-Sized Enterprises
PGK	Papua New Guinean Kina
PNG	Papua New Guinea
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
WBRC	Women's Business Resource Centre
WBA	Women's Business Agenda

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings of a mixed-method survey conducted to examine the operating environment of businesswomen in Papua New Guinea (PNG) in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Under the economic pressures of COVID-19, women entrepreneurs face high risks of business suspension and closure. Prior to the pandemic, many businesses were highly reliant on moving supplies, accessing markets, and responding to consumer demand. However, border closures, domestic lockdowns, and continued uncertainties have had significant impact on the ability of businesses to trade and operate. To better understand the environment under which these businesses are operating, the Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE) commissioned this assessment to examine the impact of COVID-19 on 298 women-operated or -owned Micro, Small, and Medium-Sized Enterprises (MSMEs) in PNG. Survey respondents are participants of CIPE's women's empowerment programming in PNG, such as the Women's Business Resource Centre (WBRC), an information and resource hub for women in entrepreneurship. A mixed method survey comprised of telephone calls, email communication, and in-person interviews were conducted by CIPE's PNG field office staff between April and June 2020. Questions aimed to collect indicators of the global pandemic's impact on women-operated and -owned MSMEs in PNG.



Key Findings

- Women entrepreneurs with lower education levels were more likely to operate unregistered businesses and have their businesses disproportionately impacted, resulting in more closures.
- While unregistered and registered businesses faced equally significant problems, unregistered businesses were more likely to temporarily halt operations as a result of COVID-19.
- Women operating start-up businesses faced more significant problems and faced higher levels of closures, while women operating established businesses still faced significant problems but faced lower levels of closures.
- Smaller businesses temporarily halted more than expected and larger businesses temporarily halted less than expected.
- The needs for learning were different based on various factors, including the registration status of businesses. The majority of women operating unregistered businesses that temporarily halted expressed a need for WBRC workshops to foster their business skills and the ability to implement business continuity plans.

Our detailed findings led us to make the following key recommendations for improving the entrepreneurial ecosystem and supporting the resilience of women entrepreneurs in PNG in the wake of COVID-19. A more complete list of recommendations is discussed at the end of this report.

Recommendations

Based on survey results, we present the following key recommendations to strengthen some of the building blocks for an improved entrepreneurial ecosystem that will ultimately lead to women's economic empowerment in PNG:

- Diversify and improve learning opportunities for women entrepreneurs of all stages for increased business resiliency, and guarantee the unique learning needs of marginalized communities such as members of the disabled community, informal business operators, smaller businesses, start-up businesses, and businesses with small yearly sales.
- Increase channels for information through cost-effective methods to ensure access to information that is affordable and practical for users, many of whom face obstacles presented by lower education levels and earn below the average per capita income.
- Increase women's participation in economic decision-making and increase access to information around where to source support and available financial assistance. This requires commitment by all stakeholders, including development donors and community organizations.



INTRODUCTION

One of the largest countries in the Pacific, Papua New Guinea (PNG) is a diverse country rooted in a variety of different cultures and languages. PNG's formal economy has experienced significant growth in recent times thanks to the country's rich natural resources, but it remains elementary and largely comprised of agricultural and resources industries.

Vulnerabilities within the economy continue to limit economic growth. Some of these existing challenges include the informal/formal sector divide, inequality of available opportunities between urban and rural areas, and issues rooted in gender bias. At present, the majority of business activities in PNG occur in the informal economy. A study by Deloitte in 2017 found that only 500,000 of the three million-person work force in PNG were in the formal sector. A lack of proper incentives to motivate those from the informal sector to join the formal sector remains a major reason the shift has not happened at a faster rate. Additionally, most Papua New Guineans reside in rural areas where access to quality infrastructure and social services are lacking, and economic opportunities are often limited to low-skilled agricultural work. Moreover, the gender bias against women has manifested in different ways, including as a high opportunity cost as a result of their limited economic participation.

Enter COVID-19. Like many other countries, PNG's already struggling economy has been further devastated by the onset of COVID-19. Pandemic-related global and domestic movement restrictions and lockdowns have impacted consumer demand and affected commodity prices, severely impacting Micro, Small, and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs). Domestic lockdowns have hampered the ability

of businesses to continue to trade and operate. While the Government of PNG (GoPNG) has implemented crisis mitigation measures to offset the impact of the public health crisis, The World Bank's July 2020 Economic Update for PNG predicts that pandemic-related impacts will lead to an economic contraction in 2020, followed by higher unemployment and poverty than previously anticipated.¹ The World Bank predicts that real GDP growth will shrink by 1.3 percent and that PNG's overall fiscal balance will decrease by 6.4 percent in 2020.

As GoPNG introduces relief programs to revitalize the economy, recovery efforts will need to be inclusive and address the demands of MSMEs, in particular those in the informal economy, which is valued at one-fifth of PNG's GDP and employ over 80% of PNG adults², many of whom are women. The economic impacts from informal and formal sector shutdowns expose vulnerabilities among these women who are not guaranteed or are eligible for social security protections. Women face extraordinary challenges in family sexual violence (FSV) and gender-based violence (GBV) in PNG, and many are experiencing increased violence as a result of the economic and social stress associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.



Since 2013, CIPE has implemented cutting-edge women's economic empowerment programs in PNG through ongoing partnerships with Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development, an Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) program, and the Office of Global Women's Issues (GWI) and the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) of the U.S. State Department. To help create a

broadier entrepreneurial ecosystem, CIPE operates the PNG Women's Business Resource Centre (WBRC) in Port Moresby, a safe place committed to inclusive economic growth and democratizing opportunities for women of all backgrounds. The WBRC makes efforts to break down barriers for those

¹ "Papua New Guinea Economic Update, In the Time of COVID-19: From Relief to Recovery," World Bank, accessed July 23, 2020, <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/34079/Papua-New-Guinea-Economic-Update-In-the-Time-of-COVID-19-From-Relief-to-Recovery.pdf?sequence=4&isAllowed=y>.

² Eric Piet, "First Audit of Informal Economy," *The National*, September 27, 2019, <https://www.thenational.com.pg/first-audit-of-informal-economy/>

who are marginalized within PNG and remains a rare and valuable resource hub for a diverse group of women interested in entrepreneurial learning and professional learning.

Under the economic pressures of COVID-19, women entrepreneurs face high risks of business suspension and closure. To better evaluate the environment under which these businesses are operating, CIPE commissioned this assessment to understand the impact of COVID-19 on 298 women-operated or -owned MSMEs in PNG, all operator/owners of which are either members of the WBRC, have attended WBRC professional learning workshops, or have participated in other CIPE events. The results of this survey bring to light some of the true challenges that lie ahead for female entrepreneurs in PNG, many of whom face an uphill battle in securing economic recovery.

This report covers an assortment of survey questions covering education level, individual business information, and the impact of COVID-19, and begins with a methodology, followed by a summary of the demographics drawn from the survey analysis. The demographics are followed by detailed findings based on statistical significance analysis of the survey data, which are followed by strategic recommendations for improving the resilience of businesswomen in PNG in the wake of COVID-19.

METHODOLOGY

Data Gathering

Sample

A total of 16 questions were developed for 298 individual interviews. Participants were selected from a sample from CIPE's database of program beneficiaries. Calls were made to women on the WBRC Members list, as well as to women who visited the WBRC in the past for workshops and training sessions, such as the WBRC Guria Business Accelerator Program. Calls were also made to women who previously participated in other CIPE programs, such as the Academy for Women Entrepreneurs and the PNG Women's Forum, which connected participants from other provinces to CIPE.

Survey Administration

Data collection was conducted by four PNG field staff between April and June 2020. A mixed-method survey comprised of telephone calls, email communication, and in-person interviews was used to conduct the survey. The majority of interviews were conducted over the phone to ensure that a diverse participant pool could be reached, and to maintain social distancing.

The survey questions sought to provide an in-depth examination into the experiences of businesswomen and their resilience in response to COVID-19 in PNG. The kinds of questions asked were

to discern the severity of the global pandemic's impact on women-operated businesses. Questions were asked regarding details of Investment Promotion Authority (IPA) and Internal Revenue Commission (IRC) business registrations, monthly revenue generation, business location, as well as industry classification. A statistical analysis was conducted to better understand the severity of the global pandemic on the operations of businesses.

It is worthwhile to note that women from all levels of education and backgrounds are welcome to participate in CIPE programming in PNG. Indeed, the WBRC strives to provide an inclusive environment in which learning is accessible for all. However, the survey sample size was constrained by the proportion of women with low literacy and lack of access to digital communication. The data collection team was unable to reach several women in the database who do not own mobile phones or have access to email. Lack of digital skills and mobile internet access among some women presented itself as a barrier to expanding the size and geographic reach of the sample.

Data Analysis

Survey responses were tabulated and categorized in Microsoft Excel, while the data analysis was conducted in the IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Data analysis was primarily conducted using Pearson's chi-squared test to test for the independence of the category variables.³ When the category sets did not meet the requirements for Pearson's chi-squared test, Fisher's exact test was used as an alternative. A computationally more intensive method of testing the independence between two categorical variables, it is not necessary to test every data combination with this tool. Fisher's exact test provides the exact p-value whereas Pearson's chi-squared provides only an approximation. However, with the sample sizes that were collected, the differences between tests are negligible when all conditions are met.

³ Pearson's chi-squared tests for the independence of categorical variables examined what the probabilities are that two sets of categories occurred by chance. If the asymptotic significance (2-sided) is less than .05, one can reject the null hypothesis that the two variables are independent. Chi-square requires no more than 20% of expected counts be less than 5 and all expected counts be 1 or greater. When this is not met, it is indicated in the analysis. This analysis also allows for comparisons and highlights significant differences between cells by conducting z-tests.



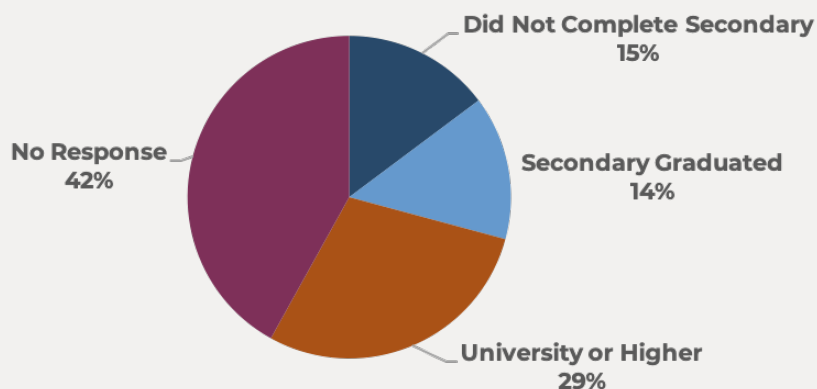
DEMOGRAPHICS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESPONDENTS

Demographic information was collected for all respondents and is summarized below.

Education Level

The survey asked about the highest level of education that respondents completed in order to understand and evaluate the educational attainment of women entrepreneurs. 14.8% of respondents have some or no secondary school education, 14.4% graduated secondary school, and 28.9% completed university studies or higher. 41.9% of respondents declined to answer this question. It is possible that many women were reluctant to share the status of their educational attainment.

Respondent's Education Level

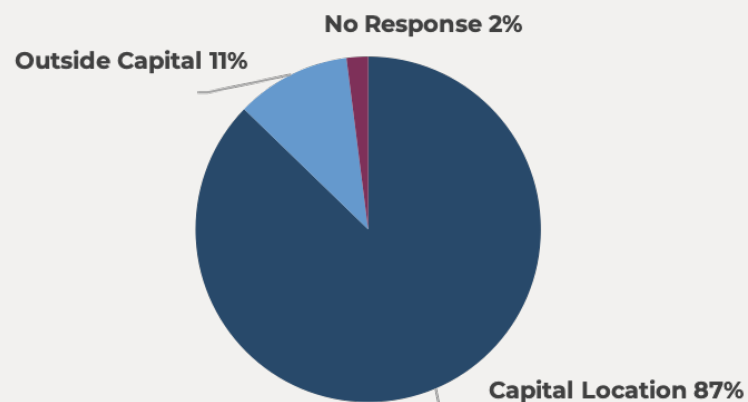


Note: The missing values indicate no particular pattern and that educational level has no impact on the credibility of data.

Business Location

Among those surveyed, 87.2% reported that their businesses have a location in Port Moresby, the capital, while 10.7% reported that their businesses operate outside the capital. Seven respondents (2.3% of total) indicated that their businesses operate in more than one location. Six businesses that were active in the capital with other locations were included into the “Capital” category, and one business that was active outside of the capital was incorporated into the “outside capital” category. 2% of respondents did not respond to this question.

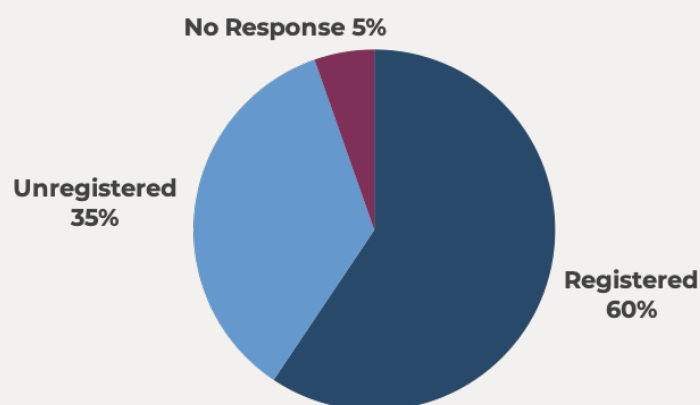
Where is your business located?



Business Registration

When asked about registration status with the Investment Promotion Authority (IPA) and the Internal Revenue Commission (IRC), 59.4% of respondents reported that their businesses are registered. On the other hand, 35.2% of respondents reported that their businesses are not registered, meaning that their businesses are not registered for tax purposes and are thus not incorporated into the formal economy.⁴ 5.4% of respondents did not indicate an answer to this question.

Is your business registered with IPA/IRC?

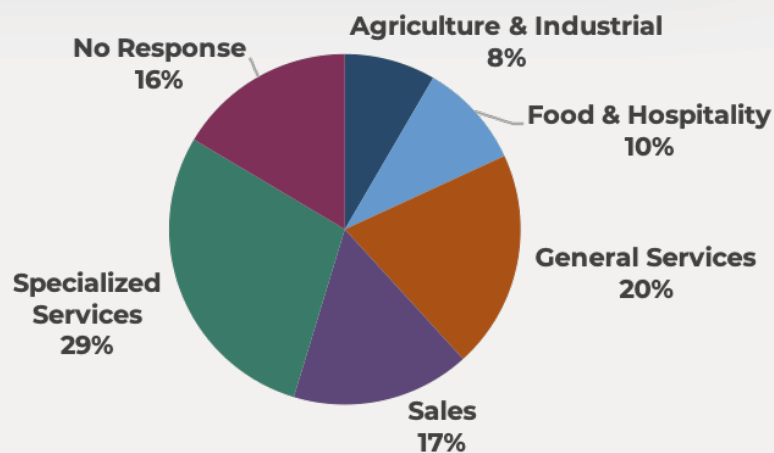


⁴ For purposes of this report, unregistered and informal businesses are used interchangeably.

Business Industry

28.9% of respondents indicated participation in “specialized services” which include consulting, real estate, education, health care, finance, and telecommunications, and 20.1% of respondents operate “general services” businesses which include IT and electronics, transportation, fashion and design, and hair and beauty. Additionally, 16.4% of respondents noted that their businesses operate in the sales industry. Among the remaining respondents, 9.7% operate food & hospitality businesses and 8.4% operate agriculture & industrial businesses. 16.4% of respondents did not respond to this question.

What industry is your business in?

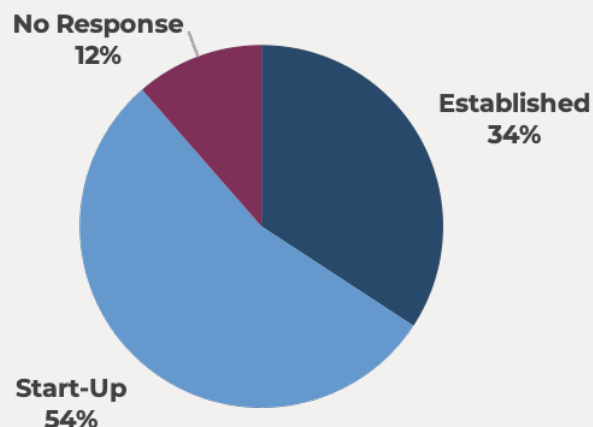


Business State

When asked to self-identify the state of their businesses, 54.5% of respondents reported that their businesses were in the start-up stage and 34.2% reported that their businesses were established. 11.4% of respondents did not provide an answer.

Note: Not all businesses that self-identified as established are registered with the IPA and IRC. For example, 14 respondents considered their businesses to be established, but have not registered with the IPA and IRC, indicating that they remain a part of the informal economy.

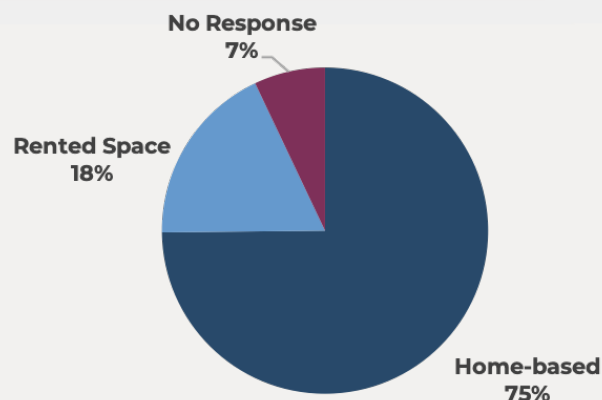
How would you describe your business?



Business Setup

74.8% of respondents said that their business operations are conducted from home, while only 18.1% reported that they operate in rented spaces. PNG has a customary land title system, which contributes to extremely high real estate prices. It is possible that high commercial real estate prices⁵ are a deterrence to renting workspaces, instead prompting businesses to operate out of homes. 7.0% of respondents did not indicate their business setup.

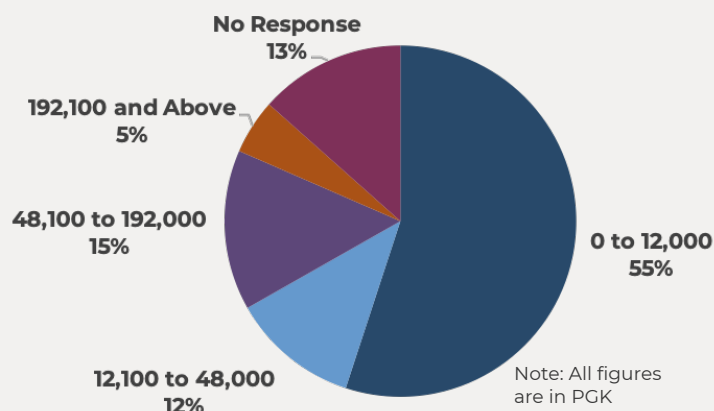
Which of the following best describes your situation?



Estimated Sales Per Year

Extrapolated from monthly sales, more than half (55.0%) of respondents reported earning 12,000 PGK (approximately \$3,452USD⁶) or less per annum. Furthermore, 11.7% of respondents reported an annual income between 12,000 PGK to 48,000 PGK (between \$3,452 to \$13,819 USD) and 14.8% of respondents reported an annual income between 48,100 PGK to 192,000 PGK (\$13,319 to \$55,276 USD) per year. In comparison, only 5% of businesses earned more than 192,100 PGK (\$55,305 USD) per year. 11.0% of respondents did not provide an answer to this question. The GDP per capita in PNG is approximately 12,850 PGK (\$3700 USD).⁷ Using GDP per capita as a metric, the survey results reveal that nearly half of respondents earn below the average per capita income.

What are your estimated sales per year?



⁵ Sally Andrews, "Papua New Guinea: Where Property is More Expensive Than Manhattan," *The Diplomat*, March 22, 2016, <https://thediplomat.com/2016/03/papua-new-guinea-where-property-is-more-expensive-than-manhattan/>

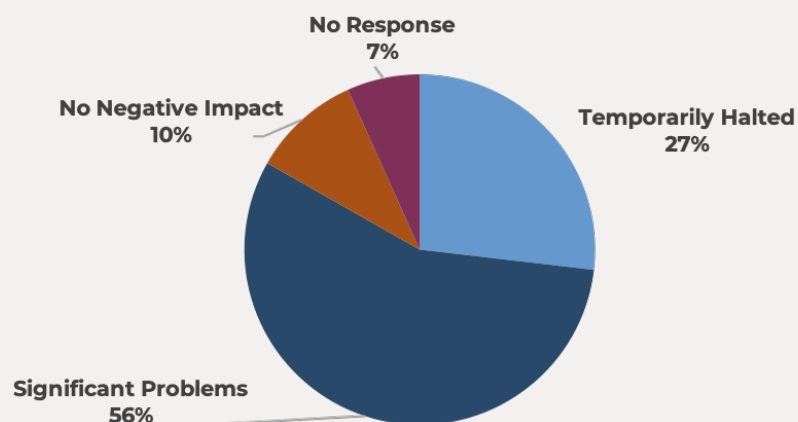
⁶ Currency exchange rate is based on mid-market rate of 1PGK=0.288USD (xe.com)

⁷ "The World Facebook: Papua New Guinea," Central Intelligence Agency, accessed July 23, 2020, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/pp.html>

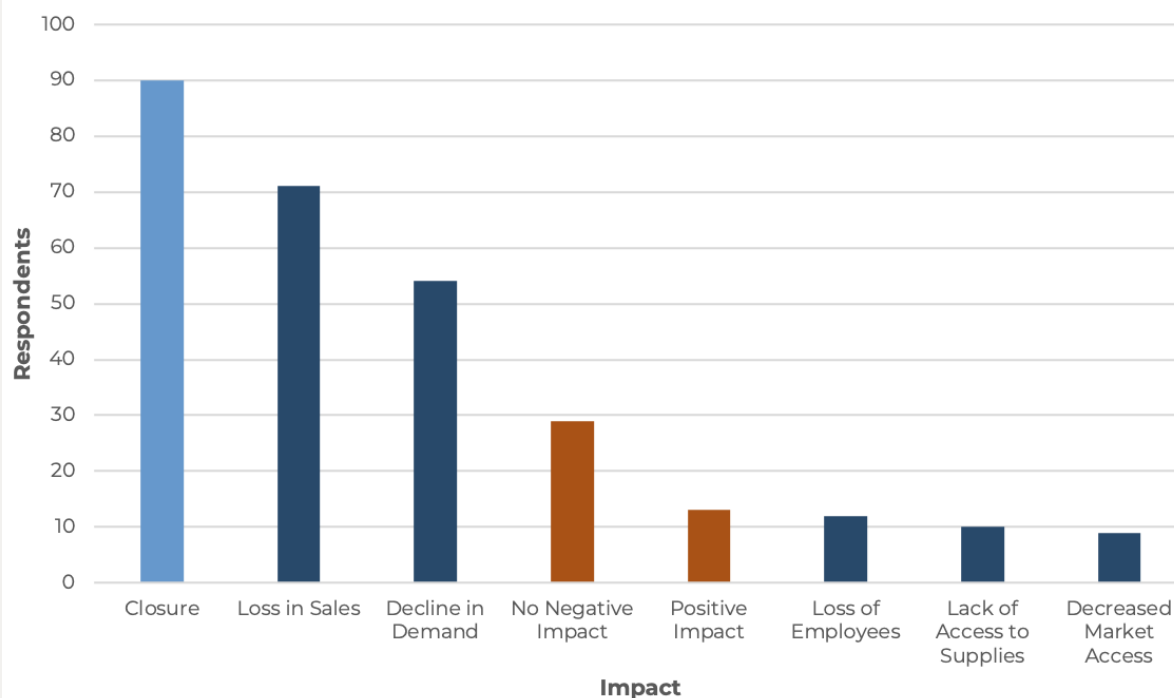
Impact of COVID-19 on Businesses

The survey found that 83.2% of all women participating in the survey were negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. As the figure below shows, 56.4% of respondents reported experiencing significant problems, while 26.8% reported temporary closure as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Interestingly, 10.1% of respondents reported that their businesses did not experience any negative impact, and among them, 3.7% of respondents highlighted that they experienced an uptick in business as a result of COVID-19. 6.7% of respondents did not indicate how COVID-19 has impacted their businesses.

How has COVID-19 impacted your business?



Detailed Impact of COVID-19 on Businesses

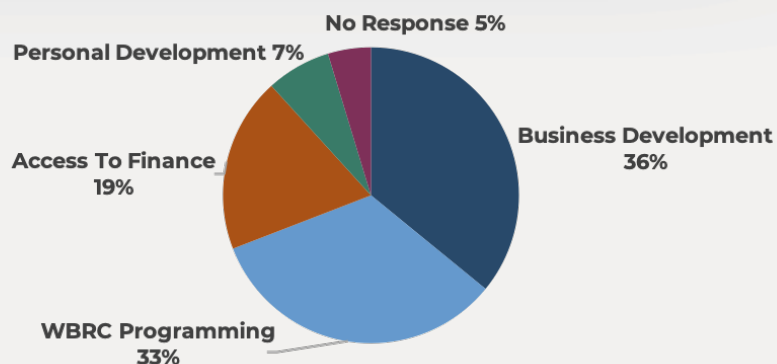


Desired Learning Sessions at the WBRC

Given the current circumstances facing their businesses, respondents were asked what types of learning sessions they would like to see held at the WBRC to improve their business resiliency. The survey indicated that 35.9% of respondents desired sessions for business development and 33.2% desired WBRC programming support. Those who requested business development sessions expressed interest in learning about IPA customs and IRC regulations, as well as the skills

and expertise necessary for marketing and expanding their businesses. Several respondents also revealed an interest in networking sessions to build long-term relationships. Respondents who expressed an interest in WBRC programming primarily highlighted the desire to participate in information sessions related to leadership, entrepreneurship, governance, and gender awareness. In addition, 19.1% of respondents expressed interest in sessions related to finance and banking services, and 7.0% conveyed interest in personal development sessions, citing the need for mentoring and motivation. 4.8% of respondents did not provide a response.

What sessions would you like to see at WBRC?



FINDINGS

Economic uncertainties and limited opportunities make it difficult for women to seek formal employment and secure the survival of themselves and their families. For many women, their engagement in the informal sector is often the only source of survival for themselves and their households, as their livelihood depends on being able to run their businesses on a daily basis. The survey data revealed that the crisis brought on by COVID-19 have had disproportionate impact on women with lower educational attainment operating unregistered businesses. Relevant statistical charts of findings are included in Appendix 2.

Education Level and the Impact of COVID-19

Education level provided an insight on coping mechanisms in response to COVID-19. **Women entrepreneurs with lower education levels were more likely to operate unregistered businesses and have their businesses disproportionately impacted, resulting in more closures. Meanwhile, women with higher educational attainment were better able to respond to the changing landscape and pivot their business strategies to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in less closures.**

Among the respondents facing significant problems, 16.5% did not complete secondary school and 61.9% held a university education or higher. On the other hand, of the respondents whose businesses temporarily halted, 43.6% did not complete secondary school and 23.6% had a university education or higher. Additionally, of those who experienced no negative impact to their businesses, 66.7% held a university education or higher. The difference in proportion of how this level of schooling is represented in temporarily halting compared to the other two is significant. **Based on these results, it appears business owners with a university degree or higher were not closing down at the same levels as those who had not completed secondary school and were more likely to experience no negative impact.**

Moreover, education and registration appear to have a statistically significant association based on the Chi-square test. 72% of women running formally registered businesses were educated at the university level or higher. Only 11.5% of respondents who have their business formally registered did not complete secondary school. As a comparison, 47.7% of those operating unregistered businesses did not finish secondary school, while 12.3% have a university level education or higher. Based on these results, it can be stated that education level has a significant role in determining the level of vulnerability faced by women operating informal businesses. **In the informal sector, women who did not complete secondary school were much more likely to halt operations as a result of COVID-19 than women who completed university level education.**

Business Registration and the Impact of COVID-19

The survey tried to capture the depth of the impact of COVID-19 on informal and formal economic activities. Based on statistically significant association in the response patterns, **businesses not registered with the IPA and IRC halted operations more often than registered businesses.** Among respondents operating unregistered businesses, 44.7% reported that they were experiencing significant problems and 40.9% were temporarily halted. On the other hand, among respondents operating registered businesses, a higher percentage (64.9%) reported experiencing significant problems, but less (19.2%) reported temporarily halting. This phenomenon demonstrates that women entrepreneurs with registered businesses are more likely to possess more resources, advanced business skills, and social capital in order to remain resilient amid the economic shock of COVID-19. To be sure, the process of registering a business in PNG can be a challenge for many women due to a variety of reasons, including both administrative inefficiencies as well as lack of understanding for why registration is needed. That one has registered her business reflects deeper understanding of the larger business ecosystem as well as the tenacity to complete the steps for successful business registration.

Despite the challenges of COVID-19, the survey revealed that a handful of businesses were able to overcome difficulties by innovating and adjusting their business practices to adapt to the restrictions. Several unregistered businesses reported adapting in new ways to sell their products and services by shifting their services online. By transforming their strategy to focus on e-commerce, some businesses are now meeting the demands of the country's new normal. For instance, one respondent operating a physical boutique store prior to the pandemic pivoted her brand strategy and shifted her business online to sell her products on Facebook. While the transition was slow at first, her business gradually began to experience an uptick in sales.

In addition to expanding businesses online, other entrepreneurs have chosen to produce entirely different products to meet changing consumer demand. One survey respondent highlighted that her unregistered custom drapery business experienced a decline in demand during the pandemic. The respondent decided to pivot her business to instead sew *meri* blouses and market her designs on Facebook and Instagram. Her technology-driven delivery solution proved to be successful, enabling her to keep her business afloat.

Business Stage and the Impact of COVID-19

Women operating start-up businesses faced much more significant problems and faced higher levels of halting operations altogether. On the other hand, established businesses faced significant problems but halted operations far less than start-up businesses. Start-ups evidently struggled more to respond to the economic shock presented by COVID-19. Indeed, the data set indicates a statistically significant

association between business stage and the impact of COVID-19. Established businesses are associated more with significant problems rather than halting completely when compared to those that are start-ups. For instance, 54.8% of start-up businesses reported experiencing significant problems, and 34.8% have temporarily halted operations. On the other hand, among established businesses, 67.6% had significant problems and only 12.7% temporarily halted.

Despite the challenges imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, it is worthwhile to note that several women entrepreneurs were successful at adjusting their start-up business practices to suit the current environment. One such story of resilience is that of Mona Lisa Palme, who owns Print Pros, a digital printing start-up business. Print Pros was severely impacted by the pandemic as many of the company's clients were no longer able to pay for their orders, disrupting the company's revenue stream. In response, Ms. Palme diversified her income by renting out rooms in her home and by selling homemade cakes. By repurposing her assets, Ms. Palme was able to protect Print Pros and survive the economic shock.

Other businesses have found a fresh demand amid the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, one respondent operating a start-up water delivery business reported experiencing an uptick in demand for water delivery services under the restrictive lockdown in the capital. Panic buying of water fueled by the national lockdown enabled her water delivery business to continue providing services throughout the pandemic, benefiting both her business and her community.

Business Size and the Impact of COVID-19

In order to analyze the correlation between business size and the impact of COVID-19, the four categories for estimated annual sales were narrowed down to two: 1) businesses making less than 48,000 PGK and businesses making more than 48,000 PGK per year. Using these two categories for business size, the Chi-Squared Test for Independence indicates that there is a statistically significant relationship between a business's size and the impact of COVID-19. **Specifically, smaller businesses temporarily halted more than expected and larger businesses halted less than expected. Further, larger businesses also were more likely to see no negative impact whereas smaller businesses were not.**

While smaller businesses were more likely to halt operations than larger businesses, some respondents indicated that they managed to pivot their business strategy in order to keep their businesses afloat. Doris Karukuru, who operates a small start-up business, recognized the need to proactively market her business online. Her business, Das & Dodo Beauty and Tech Online Shop sold beauty and technology products such as smart watches through Facebook. Ms. Karakuru saw an opportunity to change the competitive environment by marketing products made by other MSME businesses within her social circle to reach a wider audience, reaching Facebook followers of other MSMEs as well as her own.

Desired Learnings from WBRC Sessions and the Impact of COVID-19

The registration status of respondents' businesses and the sessions they requested from the WBRC appear to have a statistically significant association. **Women operating unregistered business were more likely to express interest in WBRC programming sessions, the majority of whom did not complete secondary school.** For instance, 21.5% of those who temporarily halted their business voiced a desire for business development learning sessions, while 42.9% of those with significant problems selected similar sessions. Or, examined from the other perspective, among respondents desiring business development learning sessions, 67% had significant problems and just 16.5% temporarily halted. Both differences in proportions are significant. Additionally, of those respondents who had a temporary halt in business, 58.2% suggested a need for WBRC programming sessions, and of those who experienced significant problems, just 26.1% indicated desire for WBRC programming sessions. These proportions are significantly different.

Of all the respondents who indicated a desire for business development learning sessions, just 24.2% were unregistered, while unregistered businesses represent closer to half (44.4%) of respondents interested in WBRC programming sessions. Registered businesses represented the rest of the totals for the specific needed sessions (72.9% for business development and 49.4% for WBRC programming). Among all respondents operating unregistered businesses, 8.8% expressed interest in personal development workshops, 19.6% in sessions on access to finance, 25.4% in business development learning sessions, and 43.1% in WBRC programming sessions. Specifically, a vast majority of the women who expressed interest in WBRC programming indicated that they would like to participate in information sessions on leadership, entrepreneurship, governance, and gender awareness.

Other Factors

The data analysis found no statistical significance of association between the impact of COVID-19 with age, business location, industry, and business setup, indicating that COVID-19 has been affecting businesswomen regardless of age, business locations, industries, and operation setup.



RECOMMENDATIONS

The survey results show that the COVID-19 pandemic has drastically altered the business environment in PNG. This presents immense challenges for GoPNG as it considers competing priorities in its economic recovery plan. However, it goes without saying that these plans must include support mechanisms for the 90% majority of Papua New Guineans households whose incomes are from operating MSMEs in the informal economy.⁸ To date, GoPNG has focused on the economic recovery of SMEs by pledging financial assistance totaling K165.6 million (to agriculture and SMEs) and collaboration with financial institutions to offer accessible, low interest loans.⁹ Details such as to how to access these opportunities remain unclear not well-communicated to the public.

Given the challenging sociocultural context for women in PNG, our survey findings on the acute and severe difficulties faced by women-owned and -operated businesses reveal that more support is needed, and with a more focused gender lens. Many women remained unaware of announcements of business support or resources that would help them endure this crisis. This requires looking deeper into the nuances and complications that PNG women entrepreneurs struggle with in order to adequately position women-owned and operated businesses on strong footing for recovery.

Indeed, it has been well documented that gender inequality in PNG is a major socioeconomic and political issue, with many women in PNG facing extraordinary challenges. GoPNG has committed to gender equality and the empowerment of women by instituting relevant policies and priorities, such as the National Policy for Women and Gender Equality (2011–2015), but implementation gaps remain. One major hurdle is the high prevalence of family sexual violence (FSV) and gender-based violence (GBV) in PNG, with more than two-thirds of women having experienced violence¹⁰ despite the passage of the Family Protection Act in 2013. In the COVID-19 era, this has translated to an increased likelihood of violence against women given the exacerbation of economic insecurity, poverty-related stress, coupled with quarantines under stressful conditions. According to Gianluca Rampolla, the United Nations Resident Coordinator in PNG, incidents of GBV in PNG have spiked since the outbreak of the

⁸ Piet, "First Audit of Informal Economy."

⁹ "Government Injects K165.5 Million Into Agriculture and SMEs," Papua New Guinea Joint Agency Task Force National Control Centre for COVID-19, accessed July 23, 2020. <https://covid19.info.gov.pg/index.php/2020/07/10/government-injects-k165-5-million-into-agriculture-and-smes>

¹⁰ Natalie Whiting and Bethanie Harriman, "The murder of a PNG woman sparks national outcry over domestic violence," ABC News, November 29, 2018. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-11-30/the-murder-of-png-woman-sparks-national-outcry-domestic-violence/10571718>

pandemic.¹¹ In June 2020 alone, 647 cases of domestic violence were reported in Port Moresby.¹² To this end, it is encouraging to see the recent outcries against domestic violence that has accelerated into a movement to eliminate GBV, such as the “End the Silence” protest rally in Port Moresby.¹³

A variety of other intersectional issues contribute to the complexities around women’s economic empowerment in PNG, but it is important to note is urgent not merely from a human rights perspective. There is a business case for gender equality: overwhelming data and research show that empowering women leads to greater “return on investment” for companies and economies.¹⁴ The PNG Business Coalition for Women (BCFW) highlights that when women have the opportunity to earn an income, they become productive members of the labor force and contribute to the economic health of their families and communities. Leveling the playing field for equal participation of women in the economy strengthens communities and countries.

For nearly 40 years, CIPE has worked with local partners around the world to develop business-driven solutions to socioeconomic problems. Growth and opportunity that arise from free markets help lift people from poverty to achieve a higher quality of life. However, a vibrant private sector is only possible in truly enabling environments - those with strong governance institutions and rule of law that ensure transparency and accountability, empower civil society actors, and provide equal opportunities for all. The following are recommendations that aim to strengthen some of the building blocks for an improved entrepreneurial ecosystem that will ultimately lead to women’s economic empowerment in PNG.

¹¹ “UN Calls to Redouble Efforts to Prevent and Respond to Violence Against Women and Children,” UNICEF Papua New Guinea, July 2, 2020, <https://www.unicef.org/png/press-releases/un-calls-redouble-efforts-prevent-and-respond-violence-against-women-and-children>

¹² Gabriella Munoz, “Business Says Enough is Enough: It’s Time to Stop Violence Against Women in Papua New Guinea,” *Business Advantage PNG*, July 15, 2020, <https://www.businessadvantagepng.com/business-says-enough-is-enough-its-time-to-stop-violence-against-women-in-papua-new-guinea/>

¹³ “Miss PNG Condemns Violence Against Both Genders,” *Papua New Guinea Post-Courier*, July 7, 2020, <https://postcourier.com.pg/miss-png-condemns-violence-against-both-genders/>

¹⁴ [1] “The Business Case for Women’s Economic Empowerment: An Integrated Approach,” International Center for Research on Women, Oak Foundation, Dalberg Global Development Advisors, WITTER ventures, 2014, 2.

[2] “Making the Business Case: Women’s Economic Empowerment in Market Systems Development,” U.S. Agency for International Development, 2015.

Recommendation 1: Improve learning opportunities for women entrepreneurs of all stages for increased business resiliency

The findings from this survey clearly reveal the correlation between education levels and the resiliency of women-owned and operated businesses in the face of severe economic shocks such as COVID-19. As mentioned above, Papua New Guinean women entrepreneurs with lower education levels were more likely to operate unregistered businesses and have their businesses disproportionately impacted resulting in more closures. Conversely, women with higher education levels were more likely to operate a business that was registered, and while struggling with significant challenges, were able to keep their businesses operating.

The benefits of education can manifest as various advantages in entrepreneurship, such as through increased social capital, expanded information networks and improved problem-solving skills leading to faster repositioning for business continuity. Further, experience and familiarity with government's institutional structure gained through participation in the formal education system can be an added benefit. However, it is well-known that access to education is a challenge in PNG. The introduction of the Tuition Fee Free Policy in 2012 improved children's access to education, but Human Rights Watch found that only 76% of children (boys and girls) were enrolled in primary school and a mere 33% in secondary.¹⁵ Unfortunately, this policy was discontinued in 2019, posing further uncertainties in access to education. Outside of formal education, opportunities to receive learning through informal education channels remains limited.

These limitations in educational opportunities has also meant chronically low literacy rates among Papua New Guineans. According to the National Literacy and Awareness Secretariat within the GoPNG's Department of Education, PNG's adult literacy rate is considered one of the lowest in the Asia Pacific region.¹⁶ Specifically, UNESCO's Institute of Statistics finds the literacy of Papua New Guinean women 15 years and older at 57.9%.¹⁷ Low literacy also impacts one's ability to access information, which is another major inhibitor to women's economic empowerment and overall agency. To be sure, access to information is limited by a confluence of other factors, both infrastructural and socioeconomic.

¹⁵ "Papua New Guinea: Events of 2018," Human Rights Watch, accessed July 24, 2020, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/papua-new-guinea#>.

¹⁶ "National Literacy and Awareness Secretariat," National Literacy and Awareness Secretariat, accessed July 24, 2020, https://www.education.gov.pg/NLAS/National_Literacy_and_Awareness_Secretariate-NLAS.html

¹⁷ "Papua New Guinea," UNESCO Institute of Statistics, accessed July 24, 2020, <http://uis.unesco.org/en/country/pg>

Thus, given the challenges of accessing formal education and the positive impact education has on business resiliency, there is a **need to diversify and increase the learning opportunities that are available for women entrepreneurs**. This includes tailoring content to the needs of marginalized communities, as well as diversifying channels of information for increased access. This will require immediate as well as longer-term action that will require robust financial commitments.

Immediate Responses

As mentioned above, one response that can be applied immediately is the intentional consideration and active inclusion of marginalized communities within the women's entrepreneurial community. Their circumstances and unique learning needs must be proactively included in recovery planning, given the added vulnerabilities and barriers they face. This includes those of various disabled communities as well as informal business operators and may result in the addition of more fundamental business skills courses or ensuring accessibility in trainings through sign language or Tok Pisin translation. Furthermore, the evidenced fragility of start-ups and businesses with small yearly sales in the current circumstances makes a strong case for trainings and education that ensure information tailored for smaller businesses.

Another immediate need is the diversification and increase in platforms and mechanisms to deliver information and learning opportunities for women entrepreneurs. Channels for delivery can themselves be a means to address some of the limitations in the access to information that women face, and is especially pertinent now that the social distancing measures have been declared vital to stopping the spread of the COVID-19 virus. For example, many respondents shared during the data collection process their lack of awareness regarding the government's support for businesses and lack of understanding of how to access such support. Efforts are necessary of both government and non-government stakeholders to increase outreach efforts through a wide range of platforms. The immediate future will require employing a variety of methods for information dissemination, some which may be unconventional in donor countries. These will need to include cost-effective methods to ensure access to information is affordable and practical for users, many of whom earn below the average per capita income.

The business registration process is an example that can be improved through the application of the above two recommendations, for the benefit of women entrepreneurs specifically but also male entrepreneurs more generally. Through the experience of the WBRC, CIPE is aware that many PNG women find the business registration process daunting. This is in part due to a lack of understanding regarding government institutions and the need for business registration more generally, as well as confusion regarding the actual steps and documents needed to register a business. As a result, the

WBRC has created a step-by-step guide entitled “How to Start a Business in Papua New Guinea.” However, additional outreach and resources are needed to encourage and inform formalization and to ensure that the process is a transparent one. Resources in non-English languages spoken by many Papua New Guineans such as Tok Pisin and Hiri Motu are currently unavailable but could benefit a large population. While improving the business registration process is not a COVID-19 specific response, findings from this survey shed light on the fact that it currently remains a barrier for women entrepreneurs to access resources that will ensure the survival of their businesses.

Snapshot of Informal Businesses



85.7% of unregistered businesses were negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic; 44.7% reported experiencing significant problems and 40.9% reported temporarily halting operations.



Among unregistered businesses, 47.7% of women entrepreneurs did not complete secondary school, while 12.3% completed university or higher.



Among unregistered businesses that temporarily halted, 59.4% of women entrepreneurs did not complete secondary school, while 2.7% completed university or higher.



Women operating unregistered businesses expressed the greatest interest in WBRC programming sessions to enhance business skills.

Long-term Responses

In the long-term, further institutions are necessary to support women entrepreneurs. In this context, GoPNG’s plans to open nine District Community Development Centres (DCDC) are a welcome development. According to the Department for Community Development and Religion (DFCDR), which houses both the Office of Development of Women and the Gender Development and Human Rights Branch, DCDCs are aimed to “strengthen collaboration, partnerships and operational

frameworks to improve services, protect families, and empower communities to enhance their social and economic status.” It will also facilitate a variety of programs encompassing topics such as child protection, women’s empowerment, and informal economic development. The first DCDC is set to open in Imbonggu District of Southern Highlands Province in August 2020.¹⁸

CIPE has also made efforts in this regard, through the aforementioned PNG Women’s Business Resource Centre (WBRC) in Port Moresby, which aims democratize opportunities for women of all backgrounds through the provision of resources and business skills trainings for aspiring and established women entrepreneurs. As a resource hub for entrepreneurship, the Centre aims to target other inherent obstacles presented by lower education levels, a key one being limited access to information. Women can increase their channels for information through trainings and connections made at the Centre, and through the Centre’s available WIFI, overcome barriers to accessing information as a result of costly internet prices. In fact, reoccurring feedback encountered during data collection was regarding how frustrated women were from not knowing where to find information, as not everyone was online or had a Facebook account.

The continued demands and resulting impacts of WBRC are proof of concept that such inclusive institutions are needed throughout PNG. Since opening its doors in November 2016, over 3800 women have received trainings at the WBRC, and over 1200 women have reported increased knowledge of how to start or grow a business. Additionally, 220 women reported an expansion of their business in terms of access to finance, rise in income, expansion of staff, or new contracts.

Perhaps the most important impact of an institution like the WBRC has been the increased confidence many women experienced as a result of their expanded business knowledge and business-related networks. WBRC member Helen Gorogo, who was able to kickstart her tailoring and arts and crafts business and experience financial growth through WBRC programs shared that “the WBRC opened my eyes, my heart and my mind. Joining the WBRC, attending sessions, and networking improved my communication skills, built my confidence, and really helped me come out of my shell.” Another member, Rebekah Ilave of Niunet PNG, Ltd. echoed this sentiment: “[the WBRC] challenges [women’s] own thinking about their pre-defined roles in society and the economy. The WBRC helps women find relevant training, experiment with business practices, to be connected to opportunities to market products and seek capital and be around like-minded women and men. This helps women entrepreneurs gain the emotional and mental support they need to achieve their business goals.”

¹⁸ “First DCDC Building Ready for Official Opening,” *Komuniti Lukaut Newsletter* 11 (January-March 2020): 1, http://dfcd.gov.pg/images/pdf_files/2020-1st-Quarter-Newsletter.pdf?fbclid=IwAR2P69eVK5glvFFi9QonfQZq89zFwEfBoqvCfRvACmQXvyREANo78y8VNuw

Indeed, confident, tenacious mindsets will be key for women to successfully navigate their businesses in the midst of storms like COVID-19.

Recommendation 2: Increase women's participation in economic decision-making

Part of improving the entrepreneurial ecosystem for women entrepreneurs requires increasing women's participation in economic decision-making, beginning within their homes all the way to the National Parliament House. Too often, women's voices are excluded from decisions that affect their daily lives and businesses. Being silenced and not having a channel to voice one's thoughts and needs is a debilitating environment that ultimately stunts economic growth. This was confirmed by many respondents of this survey who expressed this very frustration of not being heard.

According to the World Bank's *Women, Business and the Law 2020* report, there is ample evidence that reforms and policies that empower women boost economic growth. Unfortunately, women around the world currently only have approximately three-fourths of the legal rights afforded to men.¹⁹ In fact, PNG ranks in the bottom 20 percent of countries in the *Women, Business and the Law* Index, with a score of only 60 percent.

Efforts to increase women's participation in economic decision-making will require commitment by all stakeholders. Community organizations, through the support of development donors, have begun to implement programs aimed at improving family support and decision-making for women, such as CARE's Family Business Management training through the Coffee Industry Support Project (CSIP). Supported through the Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development Program, a program of Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, trainees reported increased income levels compared to households that were not trained.²⁰

One example of national-level programming is the Papua New Guinea Women's Forum spearheaded by the U.S. Embassy in Port Moresby. For five years, the U.S. Embassy, in collaboration with the DFCDR, has provided local champions for women's rights a platform to network and directly present recommendations on some of PNG's most pressing issues related to women's empowerment. In fact, a key message raised by participants of the 2019 PNG Women's Forum was the need and potential for women to play decision-making roles in the PNG economy given that so many are currently involved as

¹⁹ "Women, Business and the Law 2020," World Bank Group, 2020, 1, <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/32639/9781464815324.pdf?sequence=10&isAllowed=y>

²⁰ "Papua New Guinea," Pacific Women, accessed July 24, 2020, <https://pacificwomen.org/our-work/locations/papua-new-guinea/>

employees, women entrepreneurs, and as consumers.²¹ Many local partners have built on this and other recommendations from the Forum. CIPE has taken recommendations to heart by launching the Women's Business Agenda with support of the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, which utilizes advocacy methods adapted from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce to drive forward an agenda raised and prioritized by a coalition of champions for women's businesses.

With the beginnings of these efforts already underway, coordination will be critical to build synergies and augment the impact of the collective.

In Closing

This report examines the impacts of COVID-19 on women-owned and operated Micro, Small, and Medium sized Enterprises (MSMEs) in PNG. Findings are meant to add to the existing literature and research that is currently available to better support thoughtful assistance for PNG women entrepreneurs. It is acknowledged that the scope of the survey is limited, and that findings offer but a small part of a larger portrait that reveals how women-owned and -operated MSMEs are faring in the current circumstances. This said, more research is necessary to take into consideration the many dynamics that make up the immensely diverse communities that make up Papua New Guinea. Some of these considerations include exploring the differences of rural and urban settings, levels of access to information, digital literacy, and fluency, as well as generational dynamics.

This is especially pressing now, where at the time of writing, COVID-19 cases are now back on the rise in PNG. These efforts will ensure that support programs and policy development that lead to inclusive growth are founded on a robust body of information for a stronger, more prosperous Papua New Guinea.



²¹ "2019 PNG Women's Forum," PNG Women's Business Resource Centre, accessed July 24, 2020, <https://www.pngwbrc.com/application>

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What is your name?
2. What is your age?
3. What is your education level?
4. Where is your business located?
5. Is your business registered with IPA/IRC?
6. When was your business established?
7. How many employees work for the business?
8. What industry is your business in?
9. How would you describe your business? Start-up, Profitable+growing, Established and growing/emerging or Established and stable/stressed?
10. Which of the following best describes your business set up? I operate my business from home, I rent a space, I own a space, I rent a space in a co-working/shared space?
11. What is your turnover per month?
12. How has COVID-19 affected your business?
13. What are some changes you are experiencing in your business?
14. How would you describe your business now?
15. How can WBRC help you or be more useful to you?
16. What other sessions would you like to see at WBRC?

APPENDIX 2: STATISTICAL CHARTS AND FINDINGS

Respondent's Education Level

COVID-19 IMPACT	DID NOT COMPLETE SECONDARY	SECONDARY GRADUATED	UNIVERSITY OR HIGHER	NO RESPONSE	GRAND TOTAL
TEMPORARILY HALTED	24	18	13	25	80
SIGNIFICANT PROBLEMS	16	21	60	71	168
NO NEGATIVE IMPACT	2	2	8	18	30
NO RESPONSE	2	2	5	11	20
GRAND TOTAL	44	43	86	125	298

Is your business registered with IPA/IRC?

COVID-19 IMPACT	REGISTERED	UNREGISTERED	NO RESPONSE	GRAND TOTAL
TEMPORARILY HALTED	34	43	3	80
SIGNIFICANT PROBLEMS	115	47	6	168
NO NEGATIVE IMPACT	18	11	1	30
NO RESPONSE	10	4	6	20
GRAND TOTAL	177	105	16	298

How would you describe your business?

COVID-19 IMPACT	ESTABLISHED	START-UP	NO RESPONSE	GRAND TOTAL
TEMPORARILY HALTED	13	54	13	80
SIGNIFICANT PROBLEMS	69	85	14	168
NO NEGATIVE IMPACT	14	16		30
NO RESPONSE	6	7	7	20
GRAND TOTAL	102	162	34	298

What are your estimated sales per year?

COVID-19 IMPACT	0 TO 12,000	12,100 TO 48,000	48,100 TO 192,000	192,000 AND ABOVE	NO RESPONSE	GRAND TOTAL
TEMPORARILY HALTED	57	9	8	2	4	80
SIGNIFICANT PROBLEMS	91	22	25	8	22	168
NO NEGATIVE IMPACT	13	4	8	2	3	30
NO RESPONSE	3		3	3	11	20
GRAND TOTAL	164	35	44	15	40	298

What sessions would you like to see at WBRC?

COVID-19 IMPACT	ACCESS TO FINANCE	BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT	PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT	WBRC PROGRAMMING	NO RESPONSE	GRAND TOTAL
TEMPORARILY HALTED	11	17	5	46	1	80
SIGNIFICANT PROBLEMS	38	69	12	42	7	168
NO NEGATIVE IMPACT	4	17	2	6	1	30
NO RESPONSE	4	4	2	5	5	20
GRAND TOTAL	57	107	21	99	14	298

APPENDIX 3: [PNG WOMEN'S BUSINESS RESOURCE CENTRE](#)



PAPUA NEW GUINEA ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEM FOR WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT IN PNG



DURATION: NOVEMBER 2015 - OCTOBER 2020

PROJECT BACKGROUND:

The overarching mission of this CIPE project is to create an entrepreneurial ecosystem for women in Papua New Guinea by providing assistance through the Women's Business Resource Centre (WBRC), integrating entrepreneurship into the curriculum of Papua New Guinean universities, and providing technical assistance and advocacy trainings to women's business organizations. The project launched in 2015 as a joint initiative between the Australian and US governments.

Women in PNG face daunting legal and cultural challenges that make engaging in commerce difficult. As a result of the CIPE project, women are empowered to play an increasingly important role in the political and economic life of PNG, and are less frequently the victims of domestic violence.

PARTNERS:



CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL
PRIVATE ENTERPRISE

PROJECT OVERVIEW:

CIPE's initiative consists of three major components:

- Establishment of the WBRC in Port Moresby on November 2016: The WBRC is a resource hub for women of all economic backgrounds to access vital resources for economic empowerment, the lack of which is crippling female entrepreneurship in PNG. The Center provides training opportunities to women entrepreneurs, as well as hosts mentorship programs, networking opportunities, and guest speaker events. It also provides a fully equipped childcare facility for its users, so that women with children are not excluded from receiving the WBRC services.
- Integrate entrepreneurship into the curriculum of PNG universities: CIPE is partnering with four leading universities in PNG to help them incorporate instruction on entrepreneurship into their curriculum, with the goal to make entrepreneurship a more viable career path to young Papua New Guineans. CIPE has partnered with William Davidson Institute (WDI) at the University of Michigan, which is the world's leading expert on entrepreneurship education.
- Provide technical assistance to women's advocacy groups: CIPE has played a key role in building advocacy groups and continuing to provide technical assistance to a variety of women's groups in PNG. Current CIPE efforts in this space are around affecting public policy change that support women in commerce and to address challenges women in business face in PNG.

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APPENDIX 4: WOMEN'S BUSINESS AGENDA



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Papua New Guinea Women's Business Agenda: Reducing Barriers to Women's Economic Empowerment in PNG

Women in Papua New Guinea (PNG) face systemic barriers to gender equality, both socially and economically. To advance women's empowerment in PNG, CIPE is working with local business leaders to advocate for regulatory reforms that promote women's participation in the economy. CIPE is sharing its proven Women's Business Agenda (WBA, or "business agenda") model with advocates for women in the private sector to push for lasting change. Women's business associations and networks in countries around the world have used WBAs to level the playing field and create new opportunities for women in business.

Local businesswomen, activists, and other private sector stakeholders in PNG have formed a coalition to launch a business agenda. Based on a set of recommendations generated through the November 2019 PNG Women's Forum, this coalition plans to work with members of the business community in PNG to develop proposed policy solutions for pressing economic issues. The coalition will release a list of their priority reforms to the public and advocate to policymakers for their policy recommendations.

A business agenda is both a **process** and a **product**:

- The **process** is cyclical and ongoing: convene champions for women in the private sector, build consensus on key issues, develop policy prescriptions, advocate to policymakers, monitor the policymaking process and evaluate the effectiveness of advocacy, and reconvene to begin the process again with an updated set of issues.
- The **product** is a document containing research and data on barriers to women's participation in commerce and a set of policy recommendations vetted and endorsed by a diverse group of influential private sector stakeholders.

CIPE's role in the process is to facilitate the convening of local advocates for women in the private sector, provide technical support for the research process, and ensure that all priority issues identified by the business community are properly documented as a final product. In the initial stage of the WBA, CIPE provides key funding for public events, research, communications, domestic travel, and other needs that the coalition has for completing the WBA process and product efficiently. Coalition members serve as the key agents for change, identifying priority issues for reform through community dialogue, generating written policy recommendations, and advocating to decisionmakers for adoption of proposed policies.

The coalition is accepting new members with a background in the private sector or advocacy related to gender issues. Both representatives of groups, including business associations, chambers of commerce, and civil society organizations, and individuals are welcome to join.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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ABOUT THE CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL PRIVATE ENTERPRISE

The Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE) is a non-profit international affiliate of the United States Chamber of Commerce and a core institute of the National Endowment for Democracy. Founded in 1983, CIPE's mission is to strengthen democracy around the globe through private enterprise and market-oriented reform, fulfilling our vision of a world where democracy delivers the freedom and opportunity for all to prosper. CIPE does this by partnering with local business associations, chambers of commerce, universities, think tanks, and advocacy groups to advance democratic and economic reforms worldwide. CIPE is headquartered in Washington, D.C. and currently has regional offices and representatives in more than a dozen countries, as well as a vast network of partners past and present. A wide range of donors directly support CIPE's work, and CIPE regularly collaborates with other international development and democracy organizations to carry out joint projects.

The Center for Women's Economic Empowerment (CWEE) leads CIPE's efforts to ensure democracy delivers opportunities for women's equal participation in the economy. Women entrepreneurs worldwide face legal, regulatory, and social barriers to conducting business, including laws and policies that restrict their access to credit, markets, and other financial opportunities. CIPE believes that equal participation by women in the economy strengthens both free markets and democracy. CIPE fosters women's economic empowerment through partnerships with civil society, the private sector, and governments. CIPE's network spans more than 70 countries. More about CWEE can be found at <https://cwee.cipe.org>.



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