Women’s roles, impacts and benefits of local businesses based on customary land in Papua New Guinea

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Hennah Steven
(PhD Candidate – Massey University, NZ)
Outline

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• Study context
• Data collection method
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• Key learnings
• Business benefits for women
• Conclusion
PhD research

Women’s contribution to and benefits of successful businesses based on customary land.

“The Land has Eyes and Teeth”: Customary owners’ entanglements with economic systems in the Pacific

Introduction
The aim of our project is to explain how communities across the Pacific have been able to establish distinctive models of economic engagement that allow them to pursue successful business development while retaining control over their customary land and upholding community processes and values.
In this presentation

Findings on women’s contribution to the success of 3 case study businesses based on customary land and the benefits they receive will be presented.
Study Context

- Customary land ownership – 97% (could be less than that).
- Diverse inheritances rules
- Supports 800 plus ethnic groups
- Supports 7.3 million people and provides jobs for 3 million farmers

Women work on customary land in most parts of PNG
1. Blue Kona Business, EHP
2. PNG Beekeeping Supplies, EHP
3. Clem’s Place-Surf camp, Tunnung Is, New Hanover, NIPs
The Vanua Research Framework guided my research on three case study businesses utilising

I. Stori/Talanoa sessions (informal conversations, interviews)
II. Observation
III. Participation
IV. Field notes
V. Application of business sustainability tool
Case Study 1

Blue Kona Farm activities
✓ Mini coffee plantation,
✓ commercial property,
✓ Tilapia fish farm
✓ Small scale vegetable farm and piggery.
✓ Currently developing a small scale sea cucumber in Manus Province.

Women’s contribution to business success

Direct business roles
Initially manage and sold farm products; book keeping, manage workers’ payroll; banking; book keeping; manage and supply tilapia fish for local consumption; maintain network with customers/clients; manage farm in the absence of male owner

Socio-cultural and spiritual roles
Maintain relationships within family and community; support social obligations; maintain spiritual values; manage household chores; peacemaker

I am meant to support my husband in whatever he does. That is my responsibility, my God-given responsibility…
(Maggie Pupune, 2018)
Case Study 2

PNG Beekeeping Supplies

✓ Construct and supply bee boxes, frames and other beekeeping materials
✓ Breed and sell queen bees
✓ Provide training for beekeeping
✓ Produce and supply organic honey for local consumption.

Women’s contribution to business success

Direct business roles
Extract, bottle and supply honey for local consumption; manage business income; banking; make purchases for business equipment; provides home economics training for women; maintain network with customers;

Socio-cultural and spiritual roles
Maintain relationships within family and community; support cultural obligations; active participation in church activities; manage household chores; peace-maker

We share the workload and lighten each other’s burden
(Damaris Loie, 2018)
Case Study 3

Clem’s Place – Surf Camp activities
✓ Provides Lodging
✓ Organises
  o Diving,
  o Game fishing
  o Rafting
  o Snorkelling,
  o Surfing,
  o Biking along Boluminski H/way

Women’s contribution to business success

Direct business roles
Cook and feed guests; manage surf camp in the absence of male owner; manage finance; prepare food for village participants and distribute income; organises village jewellery makers for visiting tourists; maintain general cleanliness; maintain network with customers/clients

Socio-cultural and spiritual roles
Maintain relationships within family and community; support social obligations; lead in church activities; manage household chores; peace-maker
Key Learnings

- Firm connection to church
- Constant spiritual connection to God
- Maintain connection with networks
- Support wider community needs
- Power brokers: maintain *wanbel* and wellbeing within household and businesses
- Manage household needs

While working directly in the businesses, women maintained the local concept of *wanbel* within the businesses. Keeping wellbeing/harmony gained support from workers, relatives and communities.
Business benefits for women

- Raised social status
- Able to make/influence decisions at home, in business and in the wider community
- Increased confidence and public relations
- Social benefits

Performing both business and socio-cultural roles along side men increased women’s confidence in business matters. This allowed them to influence decisions at home, in business and in the wider community.

Education, networking opportunities, etc.
Conclusion

Women’s unequal ownership of land and lack of decision-making power in PNG has been widely accepted as:

- A cultural challenge
- Creates gender inequality
- Barrier to economic development


However, whether women have land ownership or not, they significantly this study showed that they influenced decisions on customary land through strong social, spiritual and entrepreneurial roles and connections in the businesses based on customary land.

Thus, they help retain land for their families.
This also shows that customary land ownership is not a barrier to economic development. It supports different forms of developments for women and entrepreneurs in the case studies.

Thus, there is a need to understand economic-centred intentions alongside social-cultural needs to allow for relevant, context-specific development for people in rural communities in PNG.

L.D. Meo-Sewabu, (2015). Tu ga na inima ka luvu na waqa*: (The bail to get water out of the boat is in the boat yet the boat sinks): the cultural constructs of health and wellbeing amongst Marama iTaukei in a Fijian village in Lau and in a transnational Fijian community in Whanganui, Aotearoa (*Doctoral thesis*).
