



PoWER Research Highlights

Women and girl's economic participation and empowerment in Papua New Guinea

Background

Women and girls face barriers in the enabling environment, in the supply of and in their demand for financial products and services, as well as in their sociocultural context. To address these challenges, UNCDF has developed a global strategy on women's economic participation and empowerment called Participation of Women in the Economy Realized (PoWER). As part of this strategy, UNCDF developed a country diagnostic to evaluate the access to usage of and agency¹ over financial services in ways that contribute to the greater economic empowerment for women and girls.

In 2019, Pacific Financial Inclusion Programme conducted the diagnostic in Papua New Guinea, examining demand and supply-side barriers, as well as ecosystem constraints. These research highlights share evidence collected from desk research, 28 key informant interviews, seven focus group discussions and a survey of 400 women and girls carried out in Port Moresby and the surrounding areas².

Insights

Demand: usage of financial services by women and girls in Papua New Guinea.

- The high poverty rate in Papua New Guinea has a significant impact on women, limiting their need and ability to access financial services and products.
- Sociocultural norms significantly influence women's control over their time and money.
- Low levels of literacy and lack of peer and or community level discussion limit women's awareness of financial products and services.
- Lack of awareness and negative user experiences by others in the community lead to mistrust of financial services.
- As a result, women continue with what they already know; saving at home and using money lenders for emergency funds.

This publication is brought to you by the Pacific Financial Inclusion Programme (PFIP). PFIP is jointly administered by the UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and receives funding from the Australian Government, the European Union and the New Zealand Government. PFIP operates from the UNDP Pacific Office in Suva, Fiji and has offices in Papua New Guinea, Samoa and Solomon Islands.

June 2019

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¹The definition of agency in the financial inclusion context refers to controlling the benefits of financial products and services use.

²There were some limitations to the desk research. While financial inclusion data is available, gender disaggregated data paint an accurate picture of inclusion is scarce. In particular, Finscope and Findex, which could provide detailed and comparable data on financial inclusion by various segment including gender, do not cover Papua New Guinea. While this study includes a quantitative survey and focus group discussions, the sample sizes were not representative and hence, the insights and observations in this document are not statistically valid.

Supply; how financial institutions are serving female customers.

- Financial service providers see women and girls as the next potential market segment. However, there are considerable challenges that need further work to provide tailored services and products and accessibility for women and girls.
- Financial products typically have high costs but low value propositions for women.
- Customer service can be improved. Improvements will lead to a better understanding of products and services by women.
- Rural communities can be better served. Limited access points in rural areas especially impact women and girls.
- However, some microfinance banks have created tailored products and service models to make products and services more accessible to women and girls.

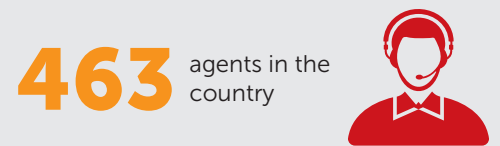
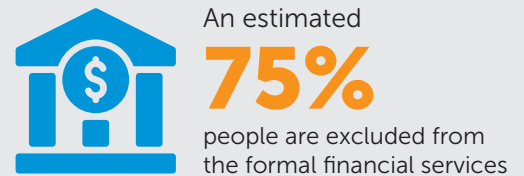
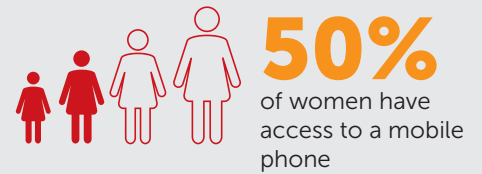
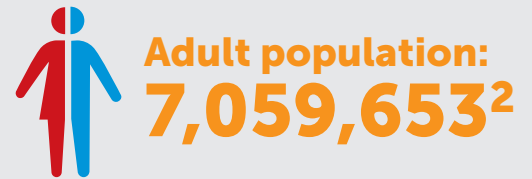
Enabling ecosystem; policy and regulations in Papua New Guinea today.

- While the National Financial Inclusion Strategy has targets for inclusion of women, implementation does not sufficiently address the gender gap.
- The lack of collaboration and coordination between organizations working to address women’s financial inclusion and economic empowerment impact the demand for financial services. Telecommunication challenges continue to adversely affect the quality and reach of digital financial services.
- As a result, there is an urgent need for increased investment in infrastructure.
- There is an need for innovative approaches to drive the inclusion agenda.

Recommendations

- There is a need for an overarching platform to coordinate efforts and enable continued focused funding for women’s financial inclusion. Such coordinated efforts, especially in partnership with the Bank of Papua New Guinea, can address common vision setting, joint data collection, shared learning and partnership building.
- Addressing the overall challenge of business viability in terms of reach, products and services for women requires creating a space and support for innovation, and learning from other markets. UNCDF could bring in global learnings to support, guide and scale initiatives in Papua New Guinea. UNCDF could also champion innovative partnerships for shared infrastructure and shared agents.
- Enhancing women’s financial inclusion needs a holistic approach to address overall economic empowerment, not just financial inclusion. This requires partnering with organizations supporting women’s livelihoods, e.g. Oxfam, UN Women.
- To inclusively support these efforts, continued research to drive robust data and insights is crucial, both for establishing a baseline and tracking progress. And for developing the business case and an informed strategy for financial service providers to serve women.

Facts and Figures



This research highlight was produced in partnership with



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¹<https://www.thecefi.org/fi-data-2018/>