



Date: Friday, 11th February 2022

‘The PNG Business Advocacy Network Steering Committee Launches its first Women’s Business Agenda’

The Papua New Guinea Business Advocacy Network (PNG BAN) launched its first Women’s Business Agenda on Friday, 11th February 2022. The Women’s Business Agenda (WBA) identifies key issues limiting women’s social and economic participation in Papua New Guinea (PNG) and outlines policy reforms and recommendations to address these barriers.

The WBA presents a roadmap for the BAN in engaging government leaders and advocating for opportunities that advance the social and economic participation of women in PNG. Such advocacy is crucial as Papua New Guinea ranks in the lowest category, or 161st out of 162 countries globally, on the United Nations Development Programme’s Gender Inequality Index. Some leading factors in the limited participation of PNG women economically include inconsistent education and lack of access to financial and social welfare resources. To mitigate the effect of these factors the BAN conducted robust consultation within the community to identify four main pillars, to address in their first WBA, through targeted advocacy to the Government of Papua New Guinea.

These four pillars are the primary focus of the BAN and its inaugural Steering Committee, in reducing barriers for women entrepreneurs in PNG: (1) Lack of participation of women in politics, policy and decision making to create an enabling policy environment for women in business; (2) Lack of access to finance to participate in business; (3) Inadequate empowerment and participation of women in the formal economy through SMEs; and (4) Poor access for women to inclusive services including health, social welfare, justice, education, that limit women’s participation in business.

The WBA includes policy recommendations that fall under the four aforementioned pillars. Examples of reform recommendations include quotas for women in the PNG government to enhance political participation. To increase women’s access to finance, the WBA outlines the need for expanded financial education and tax incentives for women-owned micro, small- and medium-sized enterprises (MSME and SMEs). The WBA also recommends that the BAN advocate for policy reforms on subsidies and taxes to encourage the participation of women in the formal economy. In addition, the WBA makes several recommendations on how to tackle the external factors impacting women’s involvement, such as advocating for a more comprehensive national strategy against gender-based violence (GBV). Finally, the agenda outlines multiple recommendations addressing marginalized populations, specifically for the

inclusion of persons living with disabilities (PLWD) community. These recommendations focus primarily on increasing private sector policy for PWD inclusion and raising awareness for the community's needs. The PNG BAN, a coalition of 60 local business and civil society leaders, was developed during a 2020 coalition building workshop and is dedicated to promoting economic opportunity and inclusive development through advocacy. In October 2020, the PNG BAN announced the results of its first Steering Committee (SC) election. The BAN SC consists of seven members chosen to fill a leadership role and is designed to provide a leading body to promote and drive awareness, discussion and implementation of expanded opportunities for women in business in PNG. The members elected to the SC represent the diversity that the PNG BAN strives for, with backgrounds ranging from the tech sector to SMEs. It was imperative that the SC include a seat designated for persons with disabilities, currently occupied by Deputy Chair Jacqueline Boga Garoau, as well as a seat designated for youth, currently occupied by Secretary Bronwyn Kili. These designated seats ensure that the PNG BAN meets the needs of women in business from a variety of backgrounds.

Upon its formation, one of the BAN Steering Committee's primary goals was the development and establishment of their first Women's Business Agenda. The PNG BAN spearheaded the creation of the WBA, including outlining its priorities and goals, with support and guidance from CIPE. The Steering Committee and CIPE selected Dr. Pamela Kamyra, who has extensive experience in gender-focused projects across PNG and a PhD in Environment, Science and Engineering from Southern Cross University in Australia, as the lead researcher and writer of the WBA. The SC and CIPE led a joint effort in providing resources for Dr. Kamyra and approving the agenda.

With the publication of the WBA, the Steering Committee will now begin advocating to the PNG government to create and develop policies that align with the recommendations made in the agenda. CIPE will provide guidance, resources, and expertise throughout the advocacy process. The PNG BAN is supported by CIPE, a U.S. Chamber of Commerce affiliate, and this project is funded through the generous support of the United States Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor.

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Photo caption: 2020 Women's Business Agenda Workshop

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