



Women's Micro-enterprise Trade Network Pilot

Final Report

Policy Partnerships on Women and the Economy

November 2012

APEC project: GFPN 02-2011A

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APEC#212-PP-01.1

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Acknowledgements

The Women's Trade Network project evolved over four years and there are many words of appreciation that need to be said to those who helped us in this endeavour.

First, we would like to extend our deep appreciation to the APEC Secretariat for recognizing the value of this work and to the individuals who were always helpful with our efforts, all of whom made it a pleasure to work with them. The SME Working Group, in particular, was responsible for approving and monitoring the project and their support has been most welcome.

The Chinese Taipei Foundation for Women's Rights and Promotion and Development Director and staff members (especially Joy and Rene) were very kind, helpful and their input always made us more efficient as we tested the ability of enterprises to expand to include export activity. The work involved was intense and we greatly appreciate their efforts at coordinating project activities in their economy with several partners, including the representatives of the Council of Labor Affairs that took a great interest in the project.

Dana Peebles and Andrina Lever have also provided advice and input since the beginning, and I am very grateful for the support they have showed in making a difference in women's lives, especially for the women who face particularly difficult challenges. We also gratefully acknowledge the assistance Mistassini Whiteduck provided to this project.

In Canada, we would like to acknowledge the Canadian International Development Agency, and Industry Canada who both encouraged us to do the concept paper and pursue this work when it was first discussed and provided initial financial support in the project's early phases. Kathryn Fournier, and Barry Parker, from Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development provided insight into many aspects of the opportunities and brand development of products. We are also grateful to Human Resources and Skills Development Canada for providing support for training workshops for aboriginal women in Canada, and to the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade who helped us in the proposal development stages. Finally we would like to acknowledge the Assembly of First Nations who invited us to share this work, enabling us to reach a national audience at the various trade meetings that they sponsored.

The project also could not have been done without the commitment from the women in the partner economies. We would especially like to recognize the support of the Council for Women's Development in Viet Nam who supported the launch of the Trade Network in 2006. There are a great many women and organizations in Chile and Peru with whom we have worked and who have supported this work to whom we need to give thanks.

And to many others, to you, we say Megwetch!

Francine Whiteduck

List of Acronyms

APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
CWD	Center for Women's Development, Viet Nam
IWEBS	Indigenous Women in Export Business Seminar
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
ME	Micro-enterprise

Executive Summary

The Women's Trade Network is a project supported by the Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation SME Working Group and is designed to gain a better understanding of the supports women-owned and led micro-enterprises need to access new markets and participate in the opportunities that arise from free-trade in the APEC region. The report examines some of the conditions necessary to assist women-owned micro-enterprises in the region find and enter new markets, with a particular focus on women micro-enterprise owners in rural, remote and Indigenous communities who experience significant challenges to access markets.

The project coordinators and the Trade Network have worked with international suppliers, producers, and distributors, and organizations with a focus on women, to establish critical on-the-ground activities to link women micro-entrepreneurs in Chile, Peru, Chinese Taipei, and, Viet Nam to new market opportunities in Canada.

The project's objectives were to:

- Organize, implement and facilitate trade activities to better understand economic integration of women in APEC trade by developing the on-the-ground practices important to access new unique, niche markets for women entrepreneurs.
- Establish a "proof of concept/approach" to demonstrate the benefits and viability of establishing new niche markets
- Initiate the supports, programs and key activities suited to linking the targeted small micro-enterprises products to markets by finding and maintaining links to potential buyers, and test and implement the supply chain connectivity.

The project activities included:

- I. Examining supply-chain connectivity by identifying and establishing market access opportunities and solutions to facilitate product entry;
- II. Establishing the coordination activity, links, supports and strategies for integrating micro-enterprises approaches;
- III. Undertaking product matching and products assessments for a selection of products to realize distribution opportunities in Canada, and working with producers to test how the products could be successfully delivered.
- IV. Highlight products that were successfully launched.

Observations, Findings and Conclusions

Over 300 products from micro-enterprises trade network were assessed using criteria to determine each product's appeal and success potential in the Canadian market. The criteria includes: competitiveness, pricing, product tests, appropriateness to venues, material, restrictions relating to marketability, and existing supply. A different number of products selected from different economies made up the product mix that form part of the trade network and the selection depended on the channel of distribution that was pursued in Canada.

The results indicated that all economies have women-owned micro-enterprise products that are desirable in new markets, especially products from rural and indigenous women which tend to have a "green" hand-made, indigenous-made cachet and appeal. The feasibility of this market in Canada can be quite substantial based on the early and preliminary responses from buyers.

The marketing resulted in 52 different products ordered and another 50 under consideration for future purchase. The quality of the products were generally described as being excellent, good and superior or at a comparable level to other similar products marketed in Canada. Of the total products, it is likely at least 5% have potential to be "high quality" brand for in an up-scale market¹, while 20 % were not acceptable. Some of the products tested could become excellent with slight improvements.

The trade network pilot project provides some new information that addresses inclusion, an objective in the APEC Trade Agenda. We learned that with precise and effective strategies and supports, there is opportunity for women to shift their local business models to become export start-ups to enter new markets slowly at a pace that ensures their livelihoods from their micro-enterprise are assured.

The pilot also confirmed that there are niche markets to capture, and that despite the challenges identified, new opportunities are emerging for women to position their products in new markets and for brand creation for their unique production and the stories surrounding their production and community, family or individual intellectual property.

The Trade Network enables testing of new concepts/approaches for market development and helps to establish proof and some new possibilities for generating positive outcomes. These possibilities have the

¹ This does not include Indigenous producers in Canada whose products are being considered separately.

potential to contribute to furthering women's access to market and further their economic participation. However, it is important to note that in growing exporters from the small micro-enterprise seedlings, there is a need to implement substantial, on-going long-term supports that foster the transition from a local enterprise to a start-up exporter. To find new markets for women-owned and women-led micro-enterprises and assist them to make the transition to become an exporter, the following lessons learned are the most important:

Lesson #1: Clear strategies and mandates increased viability of women's micro-enterprises

Lesson #2: Strengthen engagement activities with potential exporters

Lesson 3: Assist women to build an understanding of competitiveness in export markets

Lesson 4: Create opportunity by supporting micro-enterprise products that promote tourism and cultural uniqueness as export products

Lesson 5: Develop pre-export readiness programs and certification processes to engage firms that want to explore export markets

Lesson 6: Clarify export product pricing with micro-entrepreneurs at an early stage

Lesson 7: Marketing and growing small-scale production micro-enterprises into new exports markets requires multiple product offerings

Lesson 8: Foster repeat business as a market building and sustainability strategy

Lesson 9: Use of External expertise with market knowledge plays a major role in finding new markets

Lesson 10: Delivery logistic are continually changing and consolidation of product delivery is necessary

Lesson 11: Promote an ease-of-doing business philosophy for micro-enterprises

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Part 1 - Background

Introduction

The Women's Trade Network is a project supported by the Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation SME Working Group to better understand the type of supports women-owned and led micro-enterprises need in order to access new markets and participate in the opportunities that arise from free-trade in the APEC region.

This report highlights the results of a pilot project that investigated the feasibility of developing a women's trade network as an approach to finding and entering new markets. A particular interest of this activity is the focus on indigenous, rural, remote women, who because of geographical and other barriers are often unable to participate in the trade opportunities that arise from the opening up of new markets arising from new trade agreements. The report examines some conditions necessary to assist women-owned micro-enterprises find and enter new markets and summarises lessons learned as women developed and pursued new export markets. A brief profile of four indigenous, rural, remote, women-owned micro-enterprises is included to give the reader a flavor of the unique characteristics of the enterprises and products of women, and how the enterprises play a significant part in the fabric of their everyday life and communities.

The project origins stem from the Indigenous Women in Export Business Seminar (IWEBS) hosted as an Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation side event a meeting of the Women's Leaders Network (WLN), held in Wellington, New Zealand in 1999. The goal of the IWEBS was to examine how indigenous, rural and remote women enterprises could participate more fully in the economic opportunities arising from the growth in trade and globalization. A set of recommendations were made by indigenous women from 16 economies who attended the event.

The needs first discussed during IWEBS were not forgotten as new policy towards women's economic participation in APEC continued to be developed and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) provided a small contribution to continue some of the work started at the IWEBS. The result was a concept paper that highlighted some of the opportunities and best practices that could be beneficial to rural, indigenous and remote women in export and trade. In 2006, a more in-depth project to provide training to women-owned enterprises was launched in Viet Nam. This since evolved into a pilot project which tested the feasibility of creating a network of micro-enterprise exporters.

The project has reached a significant number of women. Since its launch in 2006, more than 800 producers were engaged or received information about micro-enterprise development, and the research and pilot and feasibility findings have been widely shared in APEC economies. During this time, more than 2,500 WLN members at five WLN meetings contributed to identifying potential solutions and learned of the best practices being adopted by women in the APEC region. Close to 300 women participants, government officials and workers with NGOs, and other stakeholders had the opportunity to attend training in Chile, Canada, Peru, and Viet Nam or were engaged in developing trade network opportunities.

In September 2010, Chinese Taipei joined the project and actively identified and recruited additional producers to participate. At the close of this project in August 2012, over 300 product assessments had been completed for women enterprise owners to assist women in entering a new market.

The report is not intended to provide a critique of the approach or models employed by any specific economy. Therefore to avoid identifying individuals or individual enterprises, or NGOs, the results outlined provide general comments and except for a few examples, no specific information about participants or economies is given.

Project Overview

This project's primary focus is on establishing the foundation to launch a micro-enterprise trading network. The findings highlight the obstacles and challenges, and identify the practical steps that can be taken to strengthen women's participation in trade and increase their ability to access new markets. These findings describe solutions that capture the competitive advantages and unique features of women's enterprises.

The project builds on previous work supported by the APEC Secretariat to provide women with training to learn the skills to enhance the export potential of their products and develop new domestic and international market access. Women micro-enterprise owners in the APEC region are a target group, but the project is most notable for the special efforts being made to include Indigenous rural and remote women micro-enterprise owners, who experience significant challenges to access markets. The Trade Network links to international suppliers, producers, and distributors that involve other people from rural, remote and Indigenous communities. The network increases market access through value chain opportunities by working with women's enterprises and products and facilitates expansion opportunities to increase income and employment opportunities. Women can pursue different value

chain activity as they learn a variety of options and growth strategies including developing unique approaches for business or production.

Project coordinators worked with women and women's organizations to establish critical on-the-ground activities to link women from Chile, Peru, Chinese Taipei, and Viet Nam, to new market opportunities Canada.

Work focused on efforts made with government, NGOs, women's organizations and other stakeholders to help ensure that the appropriate supports exist to prepare women to bring their products to new markets. The market access opportunities provided through a Trade Network include product aggregation, wholesale and retail sector development, distribution, development of specialty and niche markets, and brand and trade mark development. Specialty and niche market channels represent lucrative opportunities for women and their families because typically they already have the capacity and skills, and cultural and artistic expression upon which they can build. They dominate the sector in their own locales, and in many cases their intellectual property and cultural and economic characteristics give them a unique competitive advantage despite their small scale of production.

Background

The 2008 Statement by Ministers Responsible for Trade welcomed the reports from the Gender Focal Point Network (GFPN) and Women Leaders' Network (WLN), and recognised the importance of integrating gender considerations into the development of trade policy, and the need to strengthen APEC's capacity in this regard. The statement reflects the desire to support the promotion of women exporters in the APEC region, particularly in developing economies, and reinforces the importance of continued cooperation between APEC and the business community to ensure that women entrepreneurs are able to both contribute to, and benefit from, free trade in the Asia-Pacific region.

The project supports direct action to strengthen women exporters involvement in trade and responds to the APEC SME Working Group's strategic plan to strengthen micro-enterprises' access to the international market and mission to promote the development of youth, women and minorities' SME's and ME's. These are listed as two of the SME Working Group's priorities as well as addressing the needs of micro-enterprises in increased access to information and market opportunities and enhance market development and promotion skills.

The project also responds to all five of Peru's priorities as stated in the WLN 2008 Recommendations to SME Ministers, Trade Ministers and Leaders as:

- Facilitation of Women's Access to International Markets
- Education in ICT
- Corporate Social Responsibility
- Rural Women and Trade
- Micro Enterprise and Micro Finance

Finally the project, also directly responds to the Osaka Action Agenda: Implementation of the Bogor Declaration in the section on trade promotion that indicates that APEC economies will work to:

- a. establish a network among trade promotion organizations in order to enhance linkages and cooperation among them;
- b. improve and convene training courses for the furtherance of trade promotion-related skills, and develop a mechanism for the exchange of trade promotion experts; and
- c. compile information on measures supporting and facilitating import and export activities in each APEC economy, and disseminate this to the business/private sector and trade promotion organizations.

This project follows work done in 2006-07 - *Models for Supporting Women's Micro-Enterprise Development: Best Practices and Guidelines Assessment and Recommendations from Phase III of a Four-Phase Study*. The three phases of this project are summarized below:

Phase I: assessed program and policy support models for micro-enterprises owned by women and indigenous people by conducting a review of existing programs (other than microfinance) to identify a set of best practices with regard to policy and program support for micro-enterprise development.

Phase II: involved a consultative process to obtain feedback from women's micro-enterprises about which of the best practices identified in Phase I would most effectively meet their needs. It also assessed the fundamental criteria that need to be in place to enable women's micro-enterprises to become sustainable, to shift from domestic to international production or to become suppliers to larger-scale exporters within their own economies. These models also examined different stages of micro-enterprise development and ways to build on raw products and enhance their supply chain value within both the domestic and international economies.

Phase III: focused on conducting feasibility studies to assess the support models. Additional consultative workshops, training sessions and site visits were held in three APEC economies (Chile, Canada and Viet Nam), complemented by interviews with trade show participants, site visits, meetings with NGO's, field missions, and presentations to the 2008 Women in Export and 2008 WLN meetings in Peru. Government

institutions, civil society organizations, indigenous and rural women and the private sector collaborated in all four economies.

The main findings of the workshops were consistent across both the developed and developing economies with rural and indigenous women, micro-enterprises and other stakeholders such as NGO's and government agencies in all economies confirming that women's micro-enterprises face multiple challenges related to the size and location of their businesses, the nature of their products, various types of gender discrimination, and the dual role of women as family providers and caregivers in most APEC economies. The consultations highlight a particular need for programs that address these challenges in specific ways and which would:

- Result in actual trade activity and trading partnerships
- Focus on assisting small producers in finding and accessing opportunities to promote products through enhancing their position in the economic value chain
- Foster collaboration between the private and civil society sectors, with the public sector or an NGO playing a critical facilitation role as a cross-sector coordinator
- Provide a continuum of services and training that take into account the different stages of growth of micro-enterprises and the gender issues involved
- Recognize the need for and impact of networking
- Facilitate product pooling at the local, regional, and economy-wide levels, and provide access to product pooling venues
- Increase access to expertise in product design, business development advice and training, information on potential markets, market information and new technologies, and product distribution
- Provide legal and professional advice
- Address intellectual property issues and their impact on indigenous women
- Make links with affordable credit programs.

The feasibility studies also confirmed that targeted supports for women-owned micro-enterprises need to meet minimum product, producer and program criteria. Through the consultations and feasibility studies, the research team developed and refined these criteria and formulated specific guidelines and recommendations for micro-enterprise support programs. The criteria, guidelines and recommendations constituted Phase III of the project and are the result of a careful review and analysis of the key elements required to ensure a successful micro-enterprise development and support program.

Phase IV focused on enterprise support programs in APEC economies where there are significant rural and indigenous populations and women's micro-enterprises. The objectives of this project were:

- To establish a sustainable trading network within the APEC region that features products produced by micro-enterprises, with an emphasis on micro-enterprises owned by rural women and indigenous peoples. This approach identified programs that can then be replicated in any or all APEC economies by including micro enterprises in the trading network.
- To develop a framework for supply movement that can be used by APEC economies to support micro-enterprise development and access to international trading opportunities and to facilitate their participation in the micro-enterprise trading network.
- To identify aggregated groups of micro-enterprise produced products in Chile, Canada, Peru and Viet Nam, analyze the related distribution issues and assess the most effective micro-enterprise support models and groups of partners for each economy.

Key outcomes of Phase IV was a better understanding of the approach for engaging potential exporters, and the creation of a group of women micro-enterprises who are more knowledgeable about the export process and of opportunities in export markets. Key findings during this phase include that:

- The use of product and enterprise criteria is instrumental in organizing an approach and is useful in creating the parameters for enterprises seeking new export markets, and further serves as a model to evaluate a product's marketability. Product criteria address quality and industry standards and should be flexible to respond to the key factors such as *affordability, skills and networks, and scalability* that impact many indigenous or rural and remote enterprises.
- Several partners can play key roles in identifying and coordinating the activity to assist with market access, as well as organizing the resources to make it happen. Shared commitment to long-term export activity and business development must be priority in the organizational mandate of potential facilitators. The role of on-the ground partner is to mobilize resources to achieve the objectives of getting products to market. Findings indicate that this role can require an extensive knowledge of market conditions of the new export market and the domestic micro-enterprise sector.
- Communication is essential to a successful partnership and to the success of a trade network including consistent and reliable communication including infrastructure as well as the practice and procedures for responding to inquiries. On-the-ground coordinators with language ability of the export market being targeted play crucial roles. Enterprises have more success in positioning their products are likely to be working with organizations and partners who have access to reliable and consistent communication whether it is through on-the-ground communication, internet access, group support or personnel.

- Development of memorandums of understanding (MOU) among the different potential partners can be a key component of a trade network and should ensure the partners have a role in creating more market access for women, set the parameters and scope of the involvement including the role they have with the groups they represent. Newer organizations take longer to conclude the MOU particularly when the organization is learning market development and export activity or is in the process of evolving from an informal organization to a formal legal entity.
- Knowledge of the product base of an economy's micro-enterprises is a necessary first step and an environmental scan is useful in identifying a range of products that are close to being market-ready as well as women producers. This activity assists women to define market niches, distribution opportunities, specialty markets and brand development, as well as the potential for distribution channels and clarifies:
 - The types of markets women are seeking
 - Product readiness for specific markets
 - Possibilities for inclusion in a specific trade network
 - Product aggregation potential (with other indigenous or rural specific marketing opportunities, for instance)
 - Existing or developing opportunities with potential distributors
 - Pricing requirements for export markets
- Support is the needed to increase the dialogue between government, the private sector, service providers and NGO's as well as a commitment to developing the micro-enterprise sector of the economy through government's own source funds is essential in smaller-size projects. Difficulties such as transportation, lack of access to information and to the internet, and financing of infrastructure require investment. Buyers, facilitators and other export agencies are interested in trade opportunities not development activity, and governments that are ready to support the facilitation process can foster quicker market access opportunities for the micro-enterprise and small business sector. Government can play a role in three areas: addressing the gaps in policy; providing resources to build capacity; and outreach to the marginalized communities (geographic, cultural and other factors) of their economy. It is important for one department to play the lead role and coordinate resources. Non-aligned policy and activity across different government departments and at an operational level hinder the progress of the micro-enterprises trade activity.
- Effective pricing for new markets is a huge challenge women face in pursuing new markets. Export agencies need to provide additional information to assist micro-enterprises to realize the optimum pricing formulas for export activity and to ensure women are better positioned to negotiate their market entry pricing. Many women micro-entrepreneurs appeared to have some challenges

understanding the difference between retail pricing for national and local markets and wholesale pricing for export purposes.

- Training must address pricing issues, fair trade and the cost-benefit of pursuing new export markets including the modification of the businesses to deliver their products as well as internet sales which also have a significant impact on the pricing structures. An important lesson learned from this project is that the pricing issue will impact the enterprises significantly, as well as the partners' effectiveness to help women deliver their products.
- The informal market plays a significant role in women's lives because it offers an ease of entry and accommodates women who often supplement income through this venue, but it also tends to keep selling prices low because of saturation, with women under-selling their products, and bringing down prices. This is evident in how labour costs are reflected in below minimum and average wage levels. Because many of these products are made by home-based businesses, the producer often does not factor in labour costs, or other normal costs of doing business, such as utilities and supplies. Sales in the informal economy offer little value-added opportunity and detract from raising products to a larger market appeal, where value-added pricing and profitability can occur in brand, luxury and niche markets development. Training approaches must address a range of revenue models that identify the "most successful" product that can offer the best potential for women to make the initial sales and begin to build the liaisons and relationships with buyers.
- The project confirms that a recommended approach is to ensure a product assessment phase is built into the training to offer women the opportunity to test their concepts and assist them in determining the revenue model that will be most profitable for their enterprise.
- One observation made during the training and throughout the project is that micro-enterprises demonstrate the ability to respond rapidly after sessions that provide market intelligence (e.g. preferred designs, seasons, colours, specialty customers, etc). Training that supports and builds this capacity should be a strategic priority for economies that want to focus on assisting micro-enterprises increase export activity.

Project Description

Building on the findings of the previous activity, a pilot project was launched during the final phase to determine how best to assist women-enterprise owners who had an opportunity to expand into a new market either as a new or existing exporter using a trade network approach to market the products. The goal of the Women's Trade Network Project is to identify the lessons learned while creating an

understanding of the key policy and other supports necessary to create a sustainable trading environment for micro-enterprises owned by women within the APEC region, including an awareness of the conditions that foster women's participation in export markets.

This project builds on the research from the project, *Models for Supporting Women's Micro Enterprise Development* undertaken in conjunction with the SMEWG, WLN and the economies of Chile, Canada, Peru, and Viet Nam since 2006. It also takes into consideration and builds upon the previous GFPN projects including:

- *APEC Workshops on Microfinance and Micro Credit;*
- *Best Practices on Strategic Policy Development Workshop on Microenterprise Financing (6 August 2009, Singapore);*
- *"Public policies to promote women entrepreneurs" workshop held in May 2010 in Lima, Peru;*
- *Guidelines on public policies for supporting the access and increase of women's participation in e-commerce; and*
- *Supporting Women Exporters Report to APEC, 2004.*

The project has 3 key objectives:

- Organize, implement and facilitate trade activities to better understand economic integration of women in APEC trade by developing the on-the-ground practices important to access new unique, niche markets for women entrepreneurs including remote, rural and indigenous women-owned enterprise
- Establish a "proof of concept" to demonstrate the benefits and viability of skills and upgrading of women-owned micro-enterprises with a focus on the supply chain to demonstrate the benefits and viability of establishing new niche markets
- Initiate the supports, programs and key activities suited to linking the targeted small micro-enterprises products to markets by finding and maintaining links to potential buyers, and test and implement the supply chain connectivity.

A key element in this project is the special emphasis on inclusive growth by targeting micro-enterprises owned by indigenous, remote, and rural women as well as other NGOs that may work with women to

enhance their production skills. The project is designed to highlight the unique features of products that can be marketed through brands that promote: “made by hand”, sustainability, green, and environmental-safe and highlight if possible, one model of community-owned intellectual property as these relate to trade and export activity.

Partners

Four economies participated in this phase and much of the activity builds on previous work undertaken in Phases 1 to IV of the APEC Models for Supporting Women’s Micro-Enterprises Project. Past work and current activities have helped to build the conditions necessary to test a micro-enterprise trade network in the APEC region. Each of the four economies involved in the project have their own unique approach and emphasis on the cadre of women-owned micro-enterprises. The partners and coordinators in each economy determined their own approach to obtaining the products and hire their own local resources to assist with the in-economy activities that culminated with the process of completing an order.

A brief description of their respective approaches is described below.

Chile: Chile directly engaged a local Mapuche women enterprise and artisan craft association. The association and its enterprises have been involved in the project since its inception, and have worked through some of the export pricing issues. The participants from this association produce some promising items that may have a wide appeal, and present an opportunity to expand into an export market. In addition to their long-time commitment to the project their involvement highlights the utility of the one-product model approach cited as a best practice in the first project report. The familiarity with the project and the relationship built with the project proponents and the evolution of this enterprise and association make it a good candidate to test their capacity to deliver a small order and to identify the challenges associated with this process.

Peru: In this last phase, a local facilitator, QillaMaqi Peru, who had previously worked with the rural and the indigenous community coordinated the on-the-ground activity. This facilitator brought to the project the know-how to assist women in getting their products to market. Her relationships with different communities built over several years of working and visiting with them enabled her to pay particular attention to finding how products that are potentially in demand could be sourced by the local community groups.

Chinese Taipei: The Foundation for Women's Rights Promotion and Development served as the Project Overseer for this final phase and also was an economy participant in the project. Of particular interest to Chinese Taipei are solutions for the indigenous, rural, and other women in their economy, many of whom are experiencing the re-building and recovering from natural disasters that had a significant impact on their area. The project provides an opportunity to gain additional insight to the challenges and barriers that women face with respect to micro enterprise development, and the effect of disasters on women, as well as support programs that can be made available to assist women.

Viet Nam: The Viet Nam Center for Women's Development hosted and supported the launch of this project at the Women Leaders Network meeting in 2006. The Center for Women's Development (CWD), work with women on many different issues, including women from remote areas. The project highlighting products that are made by the Hill-tribes, and also learned from are other NGO social-enterprises and businesses working with women.

The Market Opportunities

Product distribution opportunities are being matched to potential markets available in Canada for several reasons:

- The project proponent, Whiteduck Resources Inc. team has extensive experience and unique knowledge of the partners as a result of their previous work and the knowledge of niche markets in Canada;
- Canadian First Nations communities, of which there are over 650, offer a favourable locale for doing business.
- The market place is ripe for attracting the "green" and environmentally and eco-friendly products that are produced by the micro-enterprises, and is the focus the matching opportunities;
- There are low entry barriers to doing business;
- The hand-made production, use of organic and eco- friendly material, the skills, as well as the narrative surrounding the mix different products and indigenous provide immense branding opportunities; and

- The potential relations with USA-based tribes and proximity to the USA add benefits of accessing a market for the products.

There is a thriving aboriginal high quality handicraft industry in Canada which could be tapped for export to other APEC economies thus setting up a two-way trade process.

Project Activities

A key element in this project is the special emphasis on inclusive growth by targeting micro-enterprises owned by indigenous, remote, and rural women as well as other NGOs that may work with women to enhance their production skills. The project is designed to highlight the unique features of products that can be marketed through brands that promote: “made by hand”, sustainability, green, and environmental-safe and highlight if possible, one model of community-owned intellectual property as these relate to trade and export activity. To do this, the project activities involve:

- I. Examining supply-chain connectivity by identifying and establishing market access opportunities and solutions to facilitate product entry;
- II. Establishing the coordination activity, links, supports and strategies for integrating micro-enterprises approaches;
- III. Undertaking product matching for a selection of products to realize distribution opportunities in Canada, and working with producers to test how the products could be successfully delivered.
- IV. Highlighting 4 profiles of women micro-entrepreneurs to demonstrate some of the women who have identified opportunities to successfully launch new products.

Product Assessments

The key to identifying distribution channels and opportunities is the **Product Assessment** which provides micro-enterprises that are new to exporting with information that allows their product to be tested in a new market. Some of the micro-enterprises producers were identified in earlier phases of the project and preliminary information about the products was gathered during visits made over the course of the final phase of the project.

The selection of products was based on two trade shows held in Canada in December 2011, and takes in consideration:

1. Competitiveness: Are there similar products in demand and is the pricing expectation similar to other similar Canada. Is quality high, lower, equal to similar items in the market? Is the product exclusive and unique? Can the export price support the market?
2. Pricing: Is the wholesale export price established based on the company's other exports? Is product mark-ups competitive at prices in Canada? Is the product pricing feasible?
3. Product Testing: Has the product been tested in Canada through its use, sales, feedback, price levels?
4. Appropriateness to venues: Is the product appropriate to the venue (retail, private showings, fit to part of a product mix). Does the product offer a new design that is of interest? What allowances are made for innovations and designs?
5. Material: Are there any restrictions on material? Are material used to make the product of the quality required to compete in the market place?
6. Restrictions relating to marketability: Is the weight of the product prohibitive? Does the product have to be tested because of regulation and laws? How much time is required to special order a certain type of product?
7. Existing Supply: Is the amount of product supply known? What is the capacity of the producer to deliver in a given time frame? How does the production quantity impact export price? Is there a need to enhance capacity at this stage to launch a product?

Over 300 products assessments were made based on the above criteria, and at least 90 were targeted for testing in Canada, with a total of 60 different items deemed as meeting the core criteria and as likely to have a market demand in Canada. Products that could fit "indigenous-made", "green" or "environmentally friendly", and/or a "fair-trade" banner that could also have market opportunities in niche brand markets were of particular interest.

Some samples of the products were brought to Canada and demonstrated to different buyers at different public and private venues. Additionally price comparisons were made at retail outlets offering similar products in order to determine the viability of the products, competitiveness, and appropriate product mixes for venues, quality, supply and material used in production.

PART 2 – Lessons Learned

Findings, Conclusions and Observations

This section provides a discussion of the key findings, observations and outcomes, and lesson learned about the supports and practices that contribute to the viability of micro-enterprise export business activity. Many lessons were learned about the potential and the feasibility of establishing a women's trade network and the supports and other considerations that are necessary if women are to succeed. There are many opinions, and a plethora of research and anecdotes about engaging women in trade, and still much work has to be done in this area. The examination of the actual trade activities that were undertaken within this pilot projects helps us to understand the realities of micro-enterprises that engage in export activity. While there are some enterprises that are “born global”, or other enterprises that can make a quick transition to an international export market, the reality is that a significant number of women enterprises owners are struggling with making a living while trying to grow markets and the solutions that are offered must be mindful of this. This struggle is even more visible among women who face geographic hurdles, or exist at near subsistence levels.

But, for many of these women there is opportunity in export markets and a growing potential for their products to flourish in niche markets. The quality, skillfulness, and demand for their unique products can lift them out of overly competitive and saturated zones and can prove feasible in new markets. The main goal of a Women's Trade Network pilot project is to help women find these new channels for distribution and trade opportunities. Central to this discussion and these findings is the gender mainstreaming approach in export strategies for governments, NGOs and others involved in supporting micro-enterprise growth for export markets. The Findings and Observations offer some details analysis of the processes that women must engage in as they choose to enter new markets, as well as some foundational elements to launch micro-enterprise trade. These findings are based on the interaction with women-owned enterprises, NGOs working with women, and some private sector intermediaries who work with Indigenous and rural communities.

The intent of this pilot approach is to better understand the micro-enterprise environment as women enter new markets and identify the practical steps that can be taken to strengthen women's participation in trade and increase their ability to access new markets. The lessons learned provides new information on how supports for enterprises can be enhanced and to contribute to helping APEC

economies develop regional programs to help small producers achieve greater efficiency and increase their competitiveness.

Lesson #1: Clear strategies and mandates increase viability of women's micro-enterprises

A variety of quality products produced by individuals or women who are members of an association or cooperative were identified within the four economies. Some of the products made by some associations or workshops are start-ups with objectives to re-establish traditional activity or build new designs, while others were older, well-established entities, generating stylish in-vogue designs targeting their own local markets. Some enterprise owners reproduce products using skills learned from generations of skilled family members, and most often these products are of an extremely high quality and design that border on art and collector items. There are also products made in limited productions, and often these enterprises are family-operated. The high quality of these products are attractive for new export activity, and these enterprises have developed important linkages within their domestic markets and have the potential to compete with products abroad.

Our work with the micro-enterprises found the process of exporting and the activity involved in exporting is often new to both the firms and intermediaries with mandates to assist women. As a result the product potential and saleability is often, mired in development issues and processes in which most buyers do not want to be involved, nor should they have to. From a market access perspective, the development of the micro-enterprise sector is an economy-level concern and those with mandates to foster women's economic participation, including NGOs and governments, have to decide who in their own economy should be the key player in export activity for women enterprises. Is it part of the women's machinery of government, NGO exporters, the private sector, or export development agencies?

The trade network distribution channels that were tapped as part of the project demonstrate that women-owned ME products are viable and desirable in new markets but it is evident special interventions programs to make the linkages are also required. Regardless of which entity assists women to become exporters, there is a need for export capacity development and under-writing for some products aggregation and developmental costs (intermediaries, private sector inclusion, transportation subsidy, etc.) for a start-up period including making the investments to support optimum production levels that enable women to compete in international markets. Effective strategies need to state clear objectives for women's economic participation in relation to export to enhance the

coordination activity necessary to build these new markets and realize the opportunities. There is also a need to recognize the learning curve associated with start-up activity, and it is important to determine who can best serve the intermediary function required to assist women to increase their market access. For instance Products Orders were confirmed in the trade network, but it is not clear how many micro-enterprises could do this on their own, as the intermediaries played a significant role in helping the producers to confirm orders. It would also often be difficult for buyers to identify individual micro-enterprises from which to buy high quality products as many of these businesses operate in remote areas. More discussion on the cost-benefit, and alternatives for these intervention measures should be shared among agencies within economies.

To expand the opportunities for women to access new export markets, the trade network pilot identified these activities to be part of an effective export strategy that streamlines and promotes women-owned micro-enterprise:

- Engagement
- Product Assessment and Export Potential
- Matching Foreign Markets to Products Research
- Evaluating Distribution and Promotion Opportunities
- Export Pricing
- Commitment to Developing Exporting Readiness for International Markets
- Delivery and Documentation Requirements for Exporting - Program Practice

Micro-enterprise sector capacity to collect information and products knowledge and consolidate products is central to developing niche markets and this function critical to establishing trade potential for women. The trial approach used during this pilot found the match between product knowledge and promotion and the product aggregation costs too high to allow products to be competitive in new markets, and it is not clear at what point higher quantity orders would see significant savings to enable products pricing that is competitive. In some cases the private sector appears to be able to better (more efficient) absorb the on-the-ground coordination and aggregation costs but this sector lacks the development capacity to identify the enterprises and the opportunities in the international niche markets. What we did observe from the matching activity is a gap in the support for the start-up activity that enables the micro-enterprise sector to adjust to export opportunities.

Lesson #2: Strengthen engagement activities with potential exporters

One of the pillars of APEC's growth strategy is inclusiveness. The project responds directly to APEC growth strategy and stated goal of providing all citizens with opportunities for growth by promoting "inclusiveness" as a goal. To build on an inclusiveness strategy, it is necessary to reach those who are not highly integrated in to the economic structures and institutions, and create awareness of the opportunity to engage. But how should we begin to engage with women in the APEC region who have been on the fringe of trade initiatives, or for a number of reasons are disadvantaged in their ability or circumstances or face multiple challenges to participate in trade activities?

In each economy, we observed several different business models with varying levels of capacity to make the linkages with the women. The level of engagement with indigenous, rural or remote enterprises, vary in each economy with a variety of institutional players emerging to create linkages. Some of the institutional participants that we met with during the course of the project include:

- Women's organizations with a mandate to promote women's development including economic engagement
- NGOs with export mandates
- Private sector companies acting as agents with established relationships
- Academic institutions
- NGOs with non-business mandates
- Co-operatives and Trade Associations
- Micro-enterprises directly involved in export their products
- Intermediaries actively engaged in with their own community from which the products originate

While these agencies were not surveyed in-depth about their engagement practices with communities, it is obvious that most of these intermediaries are just beginning to work with enterprise owners from the rural, indigenous and remote communities and that most are in a formative phase of relationship building as they attempt engage women producers. It is also evident that the micro-enterprise sector has a desire to participate in the events and activities, but do so with a reluctance, because they lack of clarity on the roles of these agencies.

Not surprisingly, the long-established NGOs with an export and business mandate are most readily able to respond to product orders. Some of these NGOs promote their fair trade practices in their literature and advertising. These NGO relationships appear to be strictly business-oriented and these agencies have made investments in micro-enterprises sector for a long period of time promoting the women's skills and

products and have established the pricing strategies of the products. While the relationship between the producers and the NGO is well established, it is apparent that there is very little opportunity for the enterprises to be able to move up to increase their supply chain activity and realize a greater share of the income derived from the products they provide. Instead, much of the income derived from the value-added goes to fund the work the middle organization is doing to assist the micro-enterprises in their business and markets.

Generally, though, over the course of the project we observed that the products identified for the trade network are hand crafted made by small scale micro-enterprises and are likely to be one of the few exports where a large number of women participate. Often women are involved in all stages of the production and sales process with most women experienced in dealing at the retail stage, and often reliant upon the retailing as their main source of income. Their enterprise production and sales activity typically also involves other family members in their household and as such, could be considered to be a family business headed by a woman micro-entrepreneur.

Intermediaries play an important role in assisting women to bring their products to market because product exposure is mostly limited to local and regional areas. We found that it is difficult for potential buyers to “locate” original producers of the product, and that local producers do not have the capacity (resources, language skill, market knowledge, and required communications/technology) to seek out the markets where there is potential demand for their products. Given this situation it is expected that enterprises owners would be open to working with intermediaries to make market connections. But this was not always the reaction. Several enterprise owners had many questions about government intermediary involvement in the product pricing, and were often reluctant to discuss or negotiate pricing.

There was also concern about the liaison functions with expressed opposition to monitoring functions that are intertwined with the supports provided to women. Negotiating product pricing and sales is a delicate matter between buyers and sellers, and it appears the less experience the intermediary has with the process, the more reluctance producers have to discussing pricing. This is not unusual. Building trust with business partners and suppliers is the first step in successful relationships. We did observe the a need for intermediaries to strengthen business relationships with potential exporters to address the sensitivity information that is shared including pricing, work processes, and expectations of what the

benefits can be for a women-owned enterprise that embraces a change in their way of doing business, which is often a requirement to expand to export markets.

We also observed a number of organizations that did not have an export mandate, such as NGOs, craft associations, cooperatives and some private sector organizations working with women and attempting to represent them in developing the export linkages or assist enterprises to get their products to new markets. A few of these organizations were effective, but in many cases these organizations prove too inexperienced. There also appears to be an added cost to the product pricing structure when these models are utilized. It is our opinion that these added costs reflect *developmental costs* related to infrastructure, travel, transport, processing fees, and other costs which we could not identify. It also raises the issue of who should pay the cost of intermediary involvement. Is it fair to add an organization's development costs to the product pricing strategy of an enterprise already facing some huge development challenges in the early export development phase, and render these products less competitive? It is difficult for these remote enterprises to compete with enterprises that have infrastructure readily available in the cities.

The trade network project proved the demand for the product at competitive price ranges, but there is insufficient information about the ground coordination associated costs with marginalized participants to conclude the effective models that best assist women. (A fuller discussion of pricing will be provided in later sections of the report). Communication tends to be a challenge both in terms of access to reliable technology or systems that provide easy and cost effective communication. A stable communication platform is necessary to be established to help facilitate information exchange and provide timely assistance. It is apparent however, that the NGOs and the private sector still grapple with substantially high development costs.

One finding that holds promise is with the intermediaries who are from, and actively engaged with, the community from which the products originate. These intermediaries are familiar with the community and appear to be able to offer competitive pricing and understand the quantity amounts that yield the benefits for the producers. The reason for their ability to reduce the cost structure, while other intermediaries cannot is not clear, but it certainly makes a case for exploring the engagement of local entrepreneurs in the overall strategy of micro-enterprise exports.

These findings point toward the need to clarify the role of government and quasi-government agencies in the decisions related to exporting in engaging remote, rural and indigenous enterprises. Drawing from the observations made in the trade network we conclude that these types of interventions and activities can contribute to successful engagement practices:

- Representative engagement in developing intermediary supports and services and processes with local and regional participants and organizations.
- Provide direct support to organizations and entities that are part of the rural, indigenous women enterprises structures, including local entrepreneurs
- To ensure that micro-enterprises entering export markets are competitive governments should incent intermediaries providing export assistance to adopt strategies to reduce the organization's development costs that including a certification of export understanding and experience

Lesson 3: Assist women build an understanding of competitiveness in export markets

Over 300 products from micro-enterprises trade network were assessed using criteria established in earlier phases of the project, along with the criteria below to determine the product's appeal and success potential in the Canadian market. The criteria below (product assessment definitions are provided in the project description section) help to establish the extent to which products may be salable in the target market.

- Competitiveness
- Pricing
- Product testing
- Appropriateness to venues
- Material
- Restrictions relating to marketability
- Existing supply

A different number of products selected from different economies made up the product mix that form part of the trade network and the selection depended on the channel of distribution that was pursued in Canada. These distribution channels include sales at community shows with an emphasis on Christmas events which represent an estimated 60% of retail sales in Canada, trade shows, a national distributor and regional supplier association, as well as stores.

The number of products identified, selected, or tested by economy are indicated in the table below:

Economy	Number of Products Considered
Chile	25
*Canada	40
Peru	35
Chinese Taipei	90
Viet Nam	120
Total	310
*Canada served as the test market and some products were included although this was not the focus in this economy. Inclusion of the products was because of these are complementary to the overall product mix.	

The marketing resulted in 52 different products ordered and another 50 under consideration for future purchase. The quality of the products were generally described as being excellent, good and superior or at a comparable level to other similar products marketed in Canada. Of the total products, it is likely at least 5% have potential to be “high quality” brand for up-scale market (excludes Indigenous producers in Canada), while 20 % are not acceptable. Some of the products tested could become excellent with slight improvements.

The results indicate all economies have women-owned micro-enterprise products that are desirable in new markets especially products from rural and indigenous women which tend to have a “green” hand-made, indigenous-made cachet and appeal. The feasibility of this market in Canada can be quite substantial based on the early and preliminary responses from buyers.

It is also noted that some products are under-priced, under-valued and are what can be described as art-work based on community or cultural designs that are either family or community owned. We find that the enterprises or the intermediaries working with these enterprises often do not recognize this value. Yet, these products have significant appeal to markets Canada. In fact the uniqueness of the products can be one of their feature selling points. Enterprise owners must begin to understand how to market the value-added features of products offered to the purchaser.

The market research undertaken with potential buyers at different distribution channels, suggest these factors in the table below weigh in the decision to include the product as part of the mix that may be offered.

Factor	Weight factor
Product functionality/fit e.g. (theme) green, hand-made by women	20%
Product uniqueness and differentiation	30%
Micro-enterprise viability -product costs, capacity, availability, capital	20%
Export pricing strategy	25%
Other factors	5%

At the other end of the product value spectrum there are products that are too saturated in the market or common to all economies for these to be competitive. For example, some trade associations supported by government or NGOs are producing weaving that is of a poor quality with unsustainable pricing at this point in their developmental process.

The varying quality of the products, identified in the different economies, indicate the importance of a product assessment function in relation to the target export market. Economies that include his type of support may also find greater success for their enterprises in new markets.

Quality is the distinguishing factor for these products and the protection of their intellectual property is weighted in the distinguishing characteristics of the product and the marketing approaches promoted by the distributor. But, unfortunately, the intellectual property cannot always be protected, especially if economies themselves do not have measures or take action to protect their enterprises. While the lack of protection of intellectual property is a challenge for enterprises entering new markets, which can be exacerbated by the lack of enterprise protection within their own economy, there are other issues that crop up to impact the product quality or its perceived quality. Enterprises are faced with competition from their own economies in the informal market within the target economy.

We found several examples of products in Canada from specific economies selling far below the minimum export price range that was quoted. The different pricing is confusing to the consumer and raises questions about quality when similar products are sold at street kiosks for a fraction of the export price. Adding to this pricing confusion, are those products from other economies that are of similar, and sometimes higher, quality offered for lower prices. Women must be aware that some products are easily replicated once they are introduced in new economies, an issue facing all enterprises that sell their products into new markets.

Assisting women become to become knowledgeable of export markets for micro-enterprises wanting to enter a new market, requires an understanding of the product appeal factor in the new market. Providing women with a preliminary test for product competitiveness is a key starting point to assist those who are interested in exporting. Supports such as economy data and market intelligence can enable women to determine if their products are suited to exports, or understand their competitiveness in new markets. During the product assessment phase, product comparisons with at least 3 to 5 other similar products in the new export market (Canada) proved to be a good gage to judge product feasibility.

The women's trade network pilot takes an active approach to match women's products and opportunities to increase export activity and goes beyond the export promotion typical of most export programs. In taking this approach we quickly discovered the need for export planning education and toolkits. While different export toolkits are available in many economies, product-specific reports (test basis), and toolkits that offer projection models can best help women to decide if they can bear the risks associated with export activity. It also could enable them to understand the changes necessary to their existing pricing structures, production and pricing for new market entry strategies. These tools must be designed to assist women make the management decisions and commitment to undertake an export focused mandate. Until the enterprise owners increase their knowledge, and gain an understanding that the export experience is a significant way to increase their incomes, there is little motivation for women to risk changing their existing formulas that help them earn a living that supports their families.

Lesson 4: Create opportunity by supporting micro-enterprise products that promote tourism and cultural uniqueness as export products

Many facets of culture set the tone for the marketability of different products. The cultural base of these products can set a foundation for a brand identity to target new niche markets. Rural, remote and indigenous products are often steeped in the geographical identity and natural ecology and have origins in ancient connections to beliefs, stories, and knowledge. The promotion of different products in the trade network uses these features to accentuate to potential buyers: products designed around a sense of cultural immersion and expression by highlighting the history, the design used by generations, or the hand-made quality and the utility and function of products. Understanding the culture and tourist appeal of products, we noticed, can change the outlook of product potential and create a brand associated with the reputation of the particular economy. This approach can increase export

opportunities by harnessing consumer knowledge and awareness of an economy or the tourist appeal of a products for which an economy is well known.

A substantial number of the products identified for the women's trade network have unique characteristics that can have a broad appeal in export markets but go unnoticed because there is a lack of familiarity about culture or the community characteristics that could readily add to its brand and marketing dimensions. Understanding the culture can change the product's potential. An excellent example of this approach is evident in the local and international trade fair Chinese Taipei sponsored to highlight indigenous-made jewellery and beads. Through this process we learned of the master bead designers and makers in Chinese Taipei who earn tattoos on their hand as they increase and acquire skill over a lifetime. This practice would be of interest to the tattoo market explosion in North America and Europe as a way of promoting their beads to a broader audience. This community practice also lends itself to creating a much higher value-added bead that is produced by these masters.

The products of indigenous, rural and remote locals are also steeped in unique stories related to the cultural ties to the land. Products that are perceived to be green or environmentally friendly are also part of a growing trend in consumer choice. Added to these evolving consumer sensibilities is the desirability of socially-responsible products in market places where there is very little distinction in products. The organic hand-made qualities and limited production of the majority of products in the trade network create a cachet for brand development. We observed examples of the family stories created in some of the weavings from Peru which add another interesting dimension to the product. There are many similar examples of un-recognized added value in many products in the trade network, including products that support women's development which itself is a story that appeals to the socially-conscious consumer.

The original IWEBS meeting of indigenous women entrepreneurs in New Zealand predicted the feasibility of an approach that could create a brand for a niche market that targeted the consumer the emerging consumer sensibilities. The popularity of these items in preliminary trade network sales suggests the vision for this development is achievable but to be viable requires a range of products choices from a number of different economies. Not only can a brand be used to market highly unique products to consumers, but a brand that recognizes and promotes the authenticity of the products can be an effective measure to safe-guard the intellectual property of individuals, and protect the assets that are family-owned and community-owned. A brand or mark of quality can also serve to weed out

products common to all producers but uncompetitive and too saturated in many markets. The objectives identified at the original IWEBS remains a goal in trade development, and marketing approaches. The trade network was able to prove that this concept has merit to create new market entry opportunities.

Economies that have an objective of to assist women in rural, indigenous and remote regions may want to pursue partners and form alliances with other businesses both within and outside their own economy to explore further this potential. The opportunity for joining forces to build partnerships in Canada, is ideal because there are few entry barriers, these niches markets are already founded and being expanded, domestic production is steadily declining and there is a growing need for imports, e.g., 79% of apparel in Canada is imported and clothing manufacturing is decreasing while imports are increasing and demand is stable. Conditions are similar in the USA. (Source: <http://export.gov/apparel/index.asp>).

It is these conditions that made it opportune to undertake the pilot project in Canada. But there are also opportunities for a brand to be promoted in other Asia-Pacific economies too. For example, the unique Alpaca garments of Chile or Peru for which their economy's brands are well known can a fit with markets that have cooler weather or winter conditions. The marketing of some products can contribute to the economy reputation and transcend world-wide markets when wise investments are made to enhance a unique appeal. An example of an effective utilization of this strategy is the *Polar Bear* Diamond brand developed in Northern Canada that is now well known and in demand around the world.

In finding and examining products, we took notice that there are under-priced, under-valued products, some of which, no doubt, are art pieces and should command much higher prices than what is currently being paid to the women by their current buyers, including fair-trade NGOs. It is also evident that many of the unique designs of the products are being replicated, copied and marketed in some economies, although these copies lacked the quality of the masters, but it is likely that this inferior product design will soon improve its quality.

A brand that promotes a mark of quality, hand-made by women from rural and remote areas or that signal indigenous-made promoting women's unique story, or a the story of the product, can garnish increased consumer interest, as we seen in the trade network pilot. The attractiveness of these products are not unfamiliar to distributors catering to niche markets, and the products associated with one economy can form part of the mix in different market segments that have a wide appeal. For example, we learned different distributors in Canada, one with a national reach and the other a regional

reach are interested in the products from indigenous women and are ready to providing shelf space for products because it is of interest to a segment of the population they are currently marketing to as part of a market development strategy.

Several products in the trade network have similar potential but governments must be prepared to invest in this development, as was the case with the Polar Bear Diamond brand North West Territory government in Canada. The in-economy sponsorship of these local enterprises to participate in forums is a good and less expensive first step to provide assistance for enterprises to obtain the information to create an understanding among government officials, entrepreneurs, NGO's and other intermediaries how this product appeal can open new export markets. Seminars, trade fairs targeted to specific markets should form part of product assessments information that is shared with women producers trying to access new markets.

Lesson 5: Develop pre-export readiness programs and certification processes to engage firms that want to explore export markets

The trade network pilot project is a useful tool to examine the costs associated with development of the micro-enterprise sector, allowing us to examine the different costs structures in the export process. One factor that is consistently observable in the process is the costs associated with the lack of export-readiness of many enterprises and the intermediaries that serve women.

There is no doubt that all of the economies promote and develop an export sector and commit resources to increase exports. The trade network pilot enabled us to reach the desired population, mainly women whose economic participation is challenged because they face significant challenges because of geographical and other barriers, including gender-based issues. Many of these women are from rural, remote or from indigenous communities, and do not have export experience or access to market knowledge and information that would help them make the decision to pursue export activity. In reaching out to this group of women we observed the majority are not aware of the export potential of their products, or the activities involved in exporting or the commitment necessary to become successful to establish new markets for their products.

There are several enterprise owners who have a desire to export their product but in practice are not ready or able to make the changes to their business model or pursue the activities that are necessary.

Additionally, we observed that some women are on the cusp of successfully exporting their products and a pre-export support program and certification could prove valuable to them as well as potential buyers who are interested in purchasing their products. Some of the issues that can be addressed in pre-export education and product readiness certification:

1. Buyer behavior and expectations
2. Export pricing
3. Competition

A hindrance that women encounter in marketing their products is their ability to respond to the more involved steps of making product samples available to purchasers, even when purchasers are willing to pay for the samples. Women create excellent samples for exposure creating interest in their products but have limited capacity to produce or meet order(s). In several cases it was noted only one product sample display is available in some of the shops, and the women are reluctant to part with their display material.

Buyers want to be able to choose from a range of products, be involved in the selection of products, and want to see, touch, and test product samples before a commitment is made for larger orders. Unfortunately buyers could not be always be given or sold sample products to further develop orders that were being contemplated, and in at least six cases there was a high likelihood of even bigger quantity purchases being made. Pre-export certification courses can raise awareness of the buyer expectations as well as help women to identify strategies and programs to accommodate the export activity.

Product readiness certification in a pre-export training program can be designed to improve the viability of the enterprises, help women to prepare and determine if these new markets are viable opportunities to pursue, and address the changes to the business models including creating an understanding of export pricing (see **lesson 6**), and become aware of the competition they face in new markets (lesson 3). As women work through these business challenges they can begin to discover the optimal level of sales and production that makes responding to international markets viable. For example we observed that some established exporters indicate a production run of 30 items to be an optimal level. But it is necessary for the business owners to do these projections as part of their ordinary business development. Other valuable lesson relating to product readiness is the need to help women develop,

- Export plans with a focused initiative
- Management commitment with a focused mandate; and to

- Take the risks associated with the changes in their business models to become exporters

The certification, whether it is offered by a trade association, a community college or developed as a new program, can help governments or agencies to effectively invest in those micro-enterprises that stand a chance at succeeding at exporting or have proven their potential. It is these successful enterprises that emerge in new markets, take the lead, and that then can draw more possible start-ups into production.

Lesson 6: Clarify export product pricing with micro-entrepreneurs at an early stage

Export pricing is a significant factor in the decision-making of buyers, and is a discussion point that most buyers want to address quickly when making purchasing decisions. A significant number of the enterprises participating in the trade network were not able to provide firm quotes or information on their prices. We also observed tremendous price changes in pricing, some as high as 400% above the original price quotes. Product pricing know-how is a persistent issue for micro- enterprises in every economy. Several factors impact the pricing or the price changes that are made or contribute to pricing volatility we observed.

First, it is apparent that micro-enterprises owners have difficulty in switching from the retail prices of products sold in their local economy to export prices because women rely on the sales of the products for their livelihood. Coupled with this reluctance is the lack of experience in defining the selling point at which it becomes profitable for enterprises to make the shift to exports pricing and to identify the quantities at which profitability can occur. The pricing issue can also be further exacerbated by the knowledge or lack of knowledge they have about new markets. As potential exporters with limited knowledge there is minimal awareness of the competition they must face with other products of similar quality, and the fact that consumers and buyers don't distinguish by economy - they compare across price, quality and availability.

Product price comparisons with at least 3 to 5 other similar products, was one of the criteria used to select potential products in making the product assessment. This comparison provides a range of realistic pricing that can be expected in the export market unless there are truly unique characteristics that set the product apart from its competition (the master bead makers, earning the tattoos as a mark of quality, for example) it is unlikely that consumers will pay higher prices for products of similar quality.

However, we found a great unwillingness to take this competition in to account. The competitiveness of the products selling price makes the need for pricing data or the ability to research price a key starting point for those interested in exporting and a must-have tool in the micro-enterprise toolkit. It provides women with a preliminary test for product competitiveness which must figure into their pricing.

A second factor contributing the price inflation is the mark-ups being added to the original price as a cost to the organization development which is effectively a development cost being charged. Different intermediaries we spoke with add different mark-ups per product, often rendering the product uncompetitive for the export market although the micro-enterprise may have originally offered a workable export price to the intermediary organization. Rural, remote and Indigenous women already face unfavorable conditions complicated by transportation costs, poverty, lack of financial capacity and sometimes political and corrupt practices and are already significantly disadvantaged by additional development factors in getting their products to market. Yet, these entrepreneurs display the production capacity and product quality that can find favour in international markets and the pricing practices of the intermediary organizations are sometimes impeding the probability or success of micro-enterprise products accessing the export market.

While operational and export costs factor into the product price structure as an ordinary business costs it is important to divorce development costs from the enterprise productivity. In some case it appears that the private sector and some organizations have been able to ferret out and absorb certain costs to keep the pricing structure competitive, but there are as many organizations that do not. Buyers know that selling price is based on cost per unit, labour, mark up, and margins in similar industry and are savvy to the hourly wage in a given economy, and will use this measure as a guide to understand the fair price value. Grossly misaligned prices that are too far from the hourly wage likely to be earned raise red flags about the business opportunity.

Finally, the export price seems to be effected by transportation costs at the domestic and international level and the micro-enterprise sector that want to venture into new markets abroad will have to find ways of deliver products economically. Private delivery firms are costly, and in some of the economies, the cost of transportation is too high. However in all of the economies, enterprises appear to be able to deliver to the bigger city centers, as the products are sold in local markets without substantial mark-ups. Although it was beyond the scope of the project activities to investigate, it came to our attention that in

some cases, storehouses of products exist at the city level.

Generally, there are few domestic transport costs solutions to address small scale production and quantities, and the cost of aggregating products, are borne by different entities. Strategies to achieve slight costs reductions in all points supply chain could support greater market activity, but requires an intermediary to negotiate this reduction. Private sector distributors appear more readily able to negotiate such costs, but more information is necessary to better understand the transportation costs details, before a solution can be found. Economies that are tackling the issues may want to consider under-writing some product aggregating and developmental cost (intermediaries, private sector, transportation, subsidies) in export capacity development programs. Indonesia's work in APEC sponsored initiatives on trading houses may shed some light in this process.

Another observation made during the project is that there appear to be some price controls on products that are sold. Discussion of pricing in two economies mentioned minimum allowable prices on some products. More transparency around these controls can help buyers and enterprises agree on appropriate pricing ranges and contribute to the negotiations around pricing.

Lesson 7: Marketing and growing small-scale production micro-enterprises into new exports markets requires multiple product offerings

One assumption in earlier phases of the work predicted the identification of a cadre of suppliers of different products to be necessary to build confidence in the micro-enterprise sector in general, and this is proven in the trade network. Enterprises can grow in different ways, most notably by supplying transnational companies that have a manufacturing presence in their respective economy with one key product or by developing their own wholesale and retail trade objectives. Alternatively, as is the case with the trade network, the enterprises can pursue new markets by working with new and mid-level buyers and suppliers to distribute their product. One of the lessons learned in working with small quantity ordering is the need to have suppliers of multiple products identified because operating at small scale production requires buyers to be able to substitute new product offerings if and when supplies are limited. Multiple products allow the distributors and buyers to begin to rely on a regular trusted source that is able to deliver products.

As observed in the trade network, big orders are predicated on small quantity delivery performance, and it takes some time to build these relationships. Few companies big or small, searching for new products, will start with large size orders, rather they will test-run the performance of the supplier. We discovered during the product confirmation process that suppliers are willing to deal with smaller quantities if they also have choices to make from additional products. This finding would indicate that multiple products can be offered in the marketing stages as a way to provide assurances regarding micro-enterprises capability to supply products. It allows relationships to be developed and creates test markets for the start-up micro-enterprise to grow. Growing small quantities orders into bigger purchases in the market place enables the enterprise to continue functioning while producers adjust their models for export markets. It also counteracts the concerns about supplies especially when samples are not available for the buyer.

Buyers dealing with enterprises for the first time and supplying to other mid-level enterprises know in dealing with small quantity orders, that hand-made, limited production runs, social objectives such as supporting small enterprise owner livelihoods, are part of the product's unique attributes. They supply markets where these product characteristics appeal to consumers who value these characteristics.

Taking this small step approach to market development for the enterprise sector is not without its drawbacks. At the enterprise level, the sales cycle will be very slow at first while the relationship is being built and buyers deal with the many enterprises. Growing slowly also has implications and may require different models such as social enterprises with the ability to coordinate some of the start-up activity, perhaps support incentives to finance local entrepreneurs to undertake this role including learning the functions, or otherwise find innovative ways to support producers linkages for products to be marketed. The experience with the trade network indicates that it is probably more economical for intermediaries to coordinate the activity during this phase, providing translation, and assisting with products orders until some good practices are set into place, and the enterprise is processing its own orders.

Supporting small scale opportunities with growth opportunities until optimal levels are reached requires a large cache of desirable products. The network proved to be a somewhat successful approach for dealing with multiple products but it is incumbent on organizations, NGOs and governments to foster the scaling up of successful initiatives, and work closely with partners to ensure the sustainability of the

product introductory phase. The Indonesia Trade House project, previously mentioned may also be an approach worthy of further analysis in this regard.

Lesson 8: Foster repeat business as a market building and sustainability strategy

Repeat business is one of the biggest assets that a business can develop. It not only provides cash flow, but grows it as well. Many opportunities for sales were highlighted in the trade network including some additional purchases of particular products and some important lessons relating to processing orders and product life cycles emerged.

Some of the products were re-ordered in 3 different economies, after creating excitement in the initial sales channels that were tried. But subsequent orders did not exactly match the original order when the products arrived, or the enterprise informed us the products were unavailable or sold out and could or would not be re-produced, offering a choice of new products instead. Although very small, the changes in the product are noticeable. The changes are the result of new styles and designs adopted by enterprises. Some of the changes relate to materials used and early testing of these particular items indicates the product allure is changed. It is still not clear at the time of writing how these product changes will affect the sales, and it is too early to comment if the changes are satisfactory.

In other instances, as we learned, opportunities are missed because the enterprise discontinues making a specific product that is in demand. We also observed that some businesses may be more profitable if they produced only one product, but chose to develop several different products. For some of these producers, concentrating on a one-product approach could yield a more effective market strategy, but women require the training to understand the potential.

Because women's livelihoods are tied to their production, promoting a repeat business strategy may require greater encouragement, and again it is noted that the notion of optimum production level for micro-enterprises may be a strategic enterprise support as a first step toward exporting. But such a strategy must also balance the buyers' need to test small product orders and prove performance before larger and regular quantities can be ordered. Examples of this leadership are evident in some economies such as Chinese Taipei where it is obvious that investments made in women and indigenous communities are paying off and is reflected in the skill of the enterprises and the quality of their

products where repeat business is occurring, and in Viet Nam where some NGOs have worked with women from remote regions.

An example of the supports provided to microenterprises in Chinese Taipei, demonstrate how comprehensive supports help businesses to grow. *The Micro-Business Start-up Phoenix loans* available for women aged 20-65 years old and 45-65 years old. The maximum loan amount is NTD 1 million (about USD 34,650), the interest rate is currently 1.87% (floating-rate adjustments), the first 2 years is interest free without the need for collaterals, guarantors and profit registration certificates, and 95% credit guarantee is provided. Families with special circumstances, victims of domestic violence, post disaster households, victims of crime, low-income households, households affected by natural disasters, and labor affected by trade liberalization are entitled to 3 year interest free period and the 1.5% fixed interest rate starting the fourth year. The interest difference is subsidized by the government. From 2009 to the end of July 2011, a total of 1,915 women were granted the loan, which totaled about USD 33,104,713.

The Micro-Business Start-up Phoenix Program and the existing Phoenix business resources combined provide entrepreneurship practicum opportunities for entrepreneurs interested in learning the Phoenix operators' actual operation, management methods, and experience sharing in order to enhance the success rate of entrepreneurship and establish Phoenix enterprises that contribute to new Phoenix business start-up models. Capacity and Skills Building is central to encouraging women's enterprise development. The Program offers a series of free courses including entrepreneurship introductory class, intermediate class, advanced class, online learning, and digital courses. From March 2007 to the end of December 2010, 370 sessions of introductory classes, 197 sessions of intermediate classes, and 146 sessions of advanced classes have been conducted, and total of over 40,000 women have participated. The Program contributes to enhancing the general public's digital entrepreneurship capacity and the use of network marketing and evaluations indicate for those whose business start-ups had not been successful their employability was enhanced because of their entrepreneurial experiences, thus increasing the chances of re-employment.

There are also incentives for Women's Leadership. The government selects 10 outstanding micro-business start-up role models every year, and an awards ceremony is held to award certificates and medals to the recipients in recognition of their spirit of micro-business start-up. In order to foster the concept of women entrepreneurship, the government regularly invites successful women entrepreneurs, entrepreneurship consultants, experts, scholars, government units, financial institutions,

and representatives from other areas to organize women entrepreneurship forums in order to lead the women entrepreneurs in exploring the contents of digitalized and knowledge-based entrepreneurship, eliciting awareness for innovative entrepreneurship, arranging entrepreneurship feedbacks, and participating in international conferences for the exchange of experiences.

Lesson 9: Use of external expertise with market knowledge plays a major role in finding new markets

An outside (of the economy) consultant or expert has a huge role in the matching opportunities identified as demonstrated in the in the trade network activities. The activities of the trade network provide a model to better understand how to serve an under-served group to locate and match products to new markets new markets but it requires expertise as follows:

- Time and resources to meet new customers
- Knowledge of specific markets to identify opportunities
- Awareness of potential product mix of enterprises in (different) economies
- Cultural awareness of a group (indigenous and rural women)
- Sales experience
- Business skills to do product assessment and pricing
- Awareness of the Asia-Pacific opportunities
- Networking events at the national and international level
- Opportunities to promote the enterprises
- Credibility
- Understanding the gender impact in micro-enterprise activity
- Distribution experience
- Financing
- Training/Awareness support for buyers to profile products (match opportunities)
- Language translation
- Knowledge and connections to the micro-enterprise sector in different economies
- Support for the on-the-ground coordinators

These supports represent the costs that are associated with developing a segment of the enterprise sector to find new markets, and the level of commitment necessary to launch enterprises in new markets. Large companies hire personnel to market their products, trade associations and industry consultants can work to promote opportunities that can be realized in their sector but women-owned enterprises, especially those that face significant challenges, do not have this support system. Yet, there

are potential markets for them to develop, and the trade network outcomes give a preliminary indication that buyers want their products.

The question of where these supports can best be realized is left to each individual economy to determine how to engage this expertise and whether they see the benefits of such commitments. Language creates a barrier which does require local intervention. Most rural communities have either limited or no English capabilities and this therefore requires either on the ground support to the supplier or someone within the buying side to be able to communicate.

Economies that recognize the difficulties for potential buyers to “locate” original producers of the product and attempt to accommodate buyers by continually promoting and profiling their micro-enterprises, will find the markets. They must also engage expertise outside of their economy to assist in identifying opportunities.

Lesson 10: Delivery logistics are continually changing and consolidation of product delivery is necessary

Deliveries of the products purchased through the trade network arrived on time with few problems.

However, we learned that consolidation of products and shipments is most likely the only cost effective way of obtaining reasonable shipping rates and reducing time and resources spent on customs and processing. This does require understanding of processes, requirements and procedures as well as an entity to act as an intermediary.

A problem occurred when a private delivery service failed to provide an accurate list of products being delivered. Monitoring by Canada Border Service Agency personnel noted the packaging list to be inaccurate and faulted the delivery service, because the service named only one type of item being delivered when in fact there were over 20 different items. The penalty for this error is a \$200 fee imposed on the importing buyer. Further discussion with Border Agency personnel were helpful in pointing out that often first-time buyers have experienced this problem and recommends closer scrutiny of the service deliver.

In one case a smaller order delivered through the postal service arrived efficiently and quickly. There are instances where the product origins did not properly display rules of origin, but the fact that the delivery parcel was well-documented posed no issues. Paperwork and declarations can be onerous and must be precise, and the partners in the process that coordinated orders spent a significant amount of item ensuring the proper paperwork. There is a learning curve for micro-enterprise and intermediaries to establish product confirmations. Future efforts must be prepared for all the intricacies and on-going exchanges to ensure proper execution.

One of the difficulties in the logistics is with the payment process. There is a wide variation in acceptable payments transfers which prove quite costly. Fluctuating exchange rates, exchange rate charges and transfer costs are high relative to the total product purchases. In one case there was a requirement for the intermediary to open an export bank account and moneys to be paid into an account, an apparent requirement for exporters in this economy. Payment to micro suppliers is difficult when funds are coming in from overseas or outside of the economy. Micro and specialty enterprises have narrow margins and it is therefore essential to find alternative methods for fast, inexpensive and secure payments.

The payment for small quantity orders is an area that needs more research to find suitable solutions. Some preliminary enquiries and anecdotal evidence made about PayPal and similar payment sources suggest the terms are costly and we learned that most enterprises want to deal directly with cash transfers or accepted familiar credit cards such as Visa. Credit card agencies now offer services for small entrepreneurs, and may warrant more investigation on how they can support the payment process.

Lesson 11: Promote an ease-of-doing-business philosophy for micro-enterprises

Big companies were at one time little seeds with new ideas, and economies that want to promote micro-enterprises must commit to developing leadership that leads to the growth of micro-enterprises and the sector. Investments, research and a willingness to try new ideas that create an ease-of-doing business philosophy will attract interest in the microenterprise sector of their economy. The trade network is a novel approach that allowed for some work to be undertaken with micro-enterprises that are, really, new export start-ups.

Many of the potential suppliers we met with over the course of the visits are new to export markets, and the presentation of the available product samples led to inquiries and interest, but buyers require firm export pricing to be established, as well as quantities that can be produced. Creating an ease-of-doing-business philosophy creates the environment and information that will enable the producer to better understand export pricing, production quantities and price structures, strategies, and the material and labour costs, all of which relate to the viability of the product for export development. It will also enable the producer to determine if the export development is the right fit for their business, and to define an approach that allows them to pursue the resources in their economy to make the transition from retail.

What lessons can be extracted from the trade network experience? Some of the lessons that emerged relate to measures that can create an ease of doing business philosophy. A number of key messages may be helpful to those looking to provide assistance to strengthen women's participation in trade, and increase their ability to access new markets:

1. Organizations, NGOs and governments have to decide who should be the key players in export activity for women enterprises, and where investments should be made.
2. Export capacity development requires under-writing some functions such as aggregating and developmental cost (intermediaries, private sector, transportation subsidies) in the export start-up stage. Developing the exporter and the export market is a long term commitment which may take some time to provide a return on investment but is doable.
3. Development must include investments to support optimum production levels that enable women to compete in international markets and information on pricing strategy to be developed hand-in-hand with new market entry strategies to support ME sector including making use of product-specific market reports tools
4. An international market for certain product groupings exists, but requires the knowledge to be gathered
5. Women-owned ME products are viable and desirable for new markets but require special interventions programs to make the linkages - More discussion on the cost-benefit, and alternatives for these intervention measures should be shared in the economies
6. Capacity to aggregate information on ME sector products knowledge is central to developing niche markets

7. Environmental scans that focus on identifying and targeting market introduction conditions is an intermediary function to which the majority of enterprises have no access
8. There is a need to create test markets through small scale activity, underwrite the costs of providing samples in prospective new markets and create leverage in brands that bundle complementary women-owned enterprise products
9. An Indigenous Brand is doable but indigenous participation must be seen along the entire supply chain and not just at the production level
10. Explore some social enterprise models with mechanisms to support the export start-up stages (expecting the poorest and most disadvantaged to pay this is unrealistic)
11. Carry out more projects that engage more community-based entrepreneurs to promote distribution activities and engage them in developing fair and realistic strategies
12. Engage outside the economy resources and external expertise who know the target market of interest to contribute their market knowledge to the development of the overall micro-enterprise development strategies.
13. Bring to scale the smaller tested concept with promising viability

Conclusion

The goal of the women's trade network is to enable women, especially those in poor, rural, and remote regions to improve their access to markets so that they can raise their incomes, strengthen their economic participation and realize a bigger part in all aspects of the value-chain activity in which they are involved. Despite the challenges identified, new opportunities are emerging for women micro-entrepreneurs to position their products in new markets, solidify brand creation for their unique production and profile the stories surrounding their production and community, family or individual intellectual property. The creativity and artistic ability of Indigenous women and those in rural and remote areas are emerging on a more international front. The skill and art of their nature-based products, practices and uniqueness will continue to be in demand as the world becomes more global. Investments to address the gaps identified in this pilot trade network project can give women micro-entrepreneurs, an advantage to launch into new and profitable markets. This in turn, will increase their

economic participation and raise their living standard for the benefit of themselves, their families and their communities.

While the challenges are significant, they are not insurmountable and have potential returns that include solid increases in sales volume, higher profits, reduced vulnerability, new knowledge, improved competitive position and the development of new international relations and markets. Project partners indicated that what worked well in developing this pilot to investigate trade development as the:

- Genuine recognition and understanding of the need and importance to develop such a project and program
- Strong commitment to the success of the project from a high level
- Commitment of resources to work with the project team

There is also considerable interest among the different partners and stakeholders involved in both expanding and continuing the project with other economies. This would include identifying additional markets in other economies based on the existing model and approaches.

The trade network pilot project provides some new information and trade and business development approaches that address inclusion, an explicit objective in the APEC Trade Agenda. It has enabled the testing of new concepts and approaches and helped establish proof of their effectiveness. It has also identified new possibilities to generate positive outcomes that help further women's access to markets and contribute to the women's development and economic participation. To take full advantage of these possibilities, each economy will need to provide varying levels of support to indigenous and rural women's micro-enterprises to facilitate the transition from a focus on local to international markets and help overcome historical and geographic challenges/disadvantages while they develop their business strengths to the level at which they can compete internationally effectively and independently.

PART 3 – Microenterprise Profiles

CHILE

The Enterprise

Rayen Cutral is a business a small enterprise that has been working to get into the export business, and has its origins in cooperative established to promote weaved, knitted and crocheted women's ware. One specific type of product has captured the interest of many purchasers in Canada – a classic weaved wool shawl, and a wrap made of course wool. Work to import this product to Canada has been the focus of the Trade Network activity.

Her Story ~ Teaches Persistence

Herminda Quintriqueo Carimán from Coquimbo is Mapuche women and has a passion for promoting women's skills.



Herminda attended the APEC forums since 2008 when Chile hosted the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation. What she observed strengthened her resolve to work to promote a local coop and artisan organization to create new markets and get involved with trade in order to change the circumstances of women.

After seeing the potential for trade, Herminda encouraged women to prepare and show their products to the world by participating in the Coops first international trade show where the weave wool shawls, and a wraps were a hit and purchased by women from all over the APEC region. The interesting appeal of the shawls is that it keeps you warm when you are cold and yet can be the perfect accessory for a hot summer night. It's the nature of the material, according to Herminda.

Herminda became interested immediately in the work that was undertaken to start the Trade Network. She has been persistent in obtaining information and keeping up contact with different women she has met in APEC. While she was busy learning how to use the network she was also busily expanding the work of the coop and her small enterprise and has managed to start a small shop near her home where she can promote her products. It has taken her several years to build up to the business but she knows that if she keeps at it and does not give up, and continues to make inquiries and reach out to people she will be able to reach her goals. Her work with the Coop is an example of how women multi-task to create opportunities. The picture below shows her weaving the products for her small shop of which she is proud.



Facts about Chile

Indigenous peoples: There are an estimated 692,000 self-identified persons of indigenous origins in Chile who form about 4.6% of the total population (15,116,435). The Mapuches, from the south, account for approximately 85% of this number. There are also small populations of Aymara, Quechua, Atacameño, Kolla, Diaguita, Yaghan, Rapa Nui, and Kawaskhar.

PERU

The Enterprise ~ (ARTEX) - A family building an enterprise together

The enterprise is a small textile production typical of the Ancash Region of Peru. In the fabrications of their products and designs, this family of accomplished weavers uses knowledge and skills that have been learned and passed down for generations. They are weavers who are developing a specialized Peruvian handicrafts market that ties to local tourism and exports to improve their living conditions (education, health and nutrition has gained in).

The recovery and enhancement of this rich tradition of textile production is an alternative for the agricultural population and enables the products they produce to add value to the agriculture pursuits. The products are sold in the city of Huaraz, capital of the Ancash Region in peak national tourism and to tourists who travel to the community. Products are also made to order for the Lima market (retail sale made through QillaMaqi).

The Story – Encourages Pride and Tradition

Pedro Castillo Olimpio De Paz and Magdalena Urbano Rappey, are Quechua from the Pampamaca, District of San Miguel de Aco, Province Carhuaz, Ancash, which has a population of less than 500. The family of five (daughter, Thalia, 14 years old, son, Junior, 12 years, and son, Julio, 11 year old son,) work after school, with their parents to learn the business, and have sent small quantities samples to the U.S. and Europe. The family owns a farm plot and the house they built and in the Andean tradition, the land will be transferred to the children to own.

The advice they pass to other rural and indigenous micro-enterprise owners is:

“Achieving the dream of recognition of the heritage of the Ancash Region is a most important objective of my micro-enterprise. Persevere and do not lose our identity of our traditions and ancient customs.”



QillaMaqi rep with family



*Photo: Francine Whiteduck with producers,
and products for the Trade Network*

One of the essential features of the art of the textile tradition is a very ancient and pre-Hispanic Peru which goes back more than eight thousand years BC. The knowledge of the ancient traditions found in the Andean weaving is an expression of the stories and traditions relating to the Quechua culture which is being repatriated through the products that the family produces. In Andean culture, the tissue or wool cloth is associated with the Goddesses Spinners, with the power of destiny, with the pace of life and death that characterize the existence within time and way. The fabric, like all art forms, speaks of the past and present, of humankind, their lives and their desires and so the best way to refer to a piece is to put it in its historical and social context.

Members of the family weave the symbols into the products they make telling the story of how certain symbols and meanings came to be. In doing this work, they have been able to preserve and portray the history and special knowledge held by the family, and the community including Quechua stories relating to the importance of living in balance with nature, and nature's gift offered to humankind. The restoration of the culture guides the family in their

business pursuits, and they see the opportunities being provided to hold onto their sacred way to lead a good life. This is an art that perfects mastery over matter and the profusion of color and design that is given by the earth (Pachamama).



Photo: This satchel tells the story of the wind

Raw materials used in textiles are the "hemp", natural cotton and wool from llamas and vicunas, all grown and made in the valley. The family is re-telling these stories in the ancient weave patterns, and creating an eco-tourist appeal by also making people aware of the natural dyes, and how they can be made from the local plants. A growing local tourism sector is trying to demonstrate dynamic rural communities that maintain their textile tradition located in tourist circuits around Ancash, but this activity is just starting. Recently, a few tourist buses began to stop at their weaving studio and learn the natural processes to make the products.

QillaMaqi SAC is an on-the-ground facilitator very immersed and has for over 6 years, worked with communities on ways to recover their art and Andean cultural heritage. She provides support in designing and marketing their products. For over 20 years she has promoted research and working with rural communities in the region of the Callejon de Huaylas, Ancash and another regions of the country, always learning more of their customs, traditions, aspirations and tenacity, and she sees the value of their heritage as a means to create wealth for their communities. She says a goal of an association of artisans and producers formed and operating in a pilot such as the trade network can harness the benefits for women and families, and communities.

Where the family expects to be in 5 years: Growing and being known regionally, nationally and internationally.

Facts about Peru

Indigenous population:

Peru is the fourth most populous country in South America with a total population 29,248,943. About 45% of the population is indigenous of which 97.8% are Andean and 2.1%, Amazonian. In the Amazonian region, there are 16 language families and more than 65 indigenous groups.

CHINESE TAIPEI

The Enterprise

Chun-Ju Lai (her indigenous name is Tjuku) is the Owner of the Do Leather Workshop producing fine leather products Chun-Ju Lai and is senior high school graduate and has learned design and creation of leather carvings. She exported three types of carved leather bags (in blue, yellow and red) in the first small quantity order to Canada.



Her Story Inspires

After following her brother into the construction business Tjuku with great energy took over her brother duties after an accident befell him on a construction site. To do this she had to build up her confidence and ability and prove what she could do, to many people who doubted her skill, including herself. With her persistence and many helping hands, she finally conquered her fear and gained courage. At that time, there was only one thought in her mind - "I shall never give up no matter how difficult the work is." When the first blueprints that she drew were recognized by her boss, she gained confidence, becoming a competent electrical and plumbing engineer for many years.

Another shock at the peak of her career in construction occurred when her daughter became seriously ill, which left Chun-Ju Lai unable and unwilling to work for two years while she helped and support her daughter in fighting the disease. Even though she did everything she could, becoming mentally and physically exhausted, she failed to save her child. She says she felt totally beaten, helpless and so resentful. To help her during this period Chun-Ju Lai turned and handed over all her sorrows and hurts to God. She said she recovered and now vigorously blooms again like a chrysanthemum in the spring. To her, life was just like a question of choosing how we see life and life will treat us accordingly.

Chun-Ju Lai dedicated herself to leather carving and painting frequently visiting the local elders to ask them to teach her about the culture and totems of her tribe, the Paiwans. She uses this knowledge to combine the classical style of beauty with her own artistic concepts thus evolving her unique style. The fellow villagers who saw Ms. Lai's works were deeply impressed by the soft contours and surging emotions of her leather carvings. Her relatives thus encouraged her to establish her own studio and use her talents in leather carving to not only propagate the beauty of Paiwan culture but also to pass on the tribal cultural traditions. Ms. Chun-Ju Lai since then has set up her own business from zero to the current Do Leather Workshop with ten employees.

Paiwan totems are extensively used in Do Leather Workshop's leather carvings. The existence of the Do Leather Workshop is not only for handing down the tribal cultural inheritance, but also for providing indigenous women with a stable employment. One of the most notable achievements of the workshop is its being recognized by the Ping-Tung County Government, who saw the success of the leather carving workshop, to host vocational training courses there after the typhoon Morakot disaster in 2009 where local women were trained in leather carving, enabling them to start their own micro-enterprises.

At the time Chun-Ju Lai started her business, the government was hosting a Sustainable Employment Plan. She believed that this was a chance for her to completely change her life, so her hopes were ignited. She recognized that leather carving is a job through which she can support her family economically and learn something new, so she cherished this chance particularly. Learning hard made her gain more from the teaching sessions than anybody else. After the Sustainable Employment Plan courses were over, the Majia Township Office hired her to teach leather carving to other women and in this way she had the opportunity to interact with many tribal women. Afterwards, with many people's encouragement and with her family's support, she set up the Do Leather Workshop. With her talent for Paiwan art, Chun-Ju Lai made it possible to recreate the culture in her works. Thus, her works are very popular and the fame of her workshop has spread widely.

The workshop has been operating since 2002 with many people's support, so every order is valuable and significant.

Her Support: friends, family, children, husband, hired staff, community members, NGO, marketing reps, other(s).

Where she expects to be in 5 years: We hope to help more unemployed women to find their goals, and to make more high-quality leather carvings. Also, we hope to create leather carvings that fuse traditional and contemporary artistic designs.

Facts about Chinese Taipei

Indigenous/Ethnic minority Population:

The term “home-province person” often refers to "native people" in Chinese Taipei. About 98% of population is of Han Chinese ethnicity. Of these, 86% are descendants of early Han Chinese immigrants. This group contains two subgroups: the Hoklo people (70% of the total population), whose ancestors migrated from the coastal southern Fujian (Min-nan) region in the southeast of mainland China starting in the 17th century, and the Hakka (15% of the total population), whose ancestors originally migrated south to Guangdong, its surrounding areas and Chinese Taipei. About 12% of the population are known as "out-of-province person"), The other 2.25% of the population are about 522,942 indigenous people in Chinese Taipei, divide into 14 major groups:

Ami, Atayal, Bunun, Kavalan, Paiwan, Puyuma, Rukai, Saisiyat, Sakizaya, Sediq, Thao, Truku and Tsou live mostly in the eastern half of the island, while the Yami inhabit Orchid Island

Definition of micro-enterprise: The definition of the micro-enterprise is referred to an enterprise with fewer than 5 employees

Number of enterprises: Women-owned and women-led enterprises accounted for 35.82% of the total number of enterprises (1,248,000) in Chinese Taipei with 89% of the revenues from domestic sales.

VIET NAM

The Enterprise

Cooperative Brocade Ninh Thuan brings the combined hand-made production of traditional craft villages of the Chẵm people in Viet Nam to market using patterns steeped in the identity of the Chẵm people. New to export markets, their brocade bags designs are gaining interest in foreign markets and some opportunities were identified in the Trade Network.

Nguyen van thieu started the Coop in 2002 to consolidate the silk and plant fiber hand-made and hand colored products being made by families in the region, mostly for their own household use. She saw the cooperative as a place to focus on individuals' production as a commodity exchange with other cultures.



Photo: Hand-made and coloured products of the Cham people

The Story – Building community skills into international markets

This is her first foray into business. It has taken ten years to establish a regular production process and like many other people in the area this business supplements the family's rice and fruit growing. She has invested a huge amount of time finding out what and people in her region are capable of producing as well as the consumption of the products. This knowledge has helped her to aggregate products around the culture of the Cham people, and to market their specialty skills. According to Nguyen van thieu the products appeal to tourist who want to learn about the region. A big challenge with the marketing relates to the costs associated with telephone calls, couriers, money transfers, and limited mail and technology available.

She has also faced difficulty in finding bigger orders and the support she needs to learn to make designs to create a broader appeal for using the skills, designs and material to make other products.

Where she expects to be in 5 years: Exporting to specialty international markets and that can potentially be available through the Women's Trade Network.

Facts about Viet Nam

Population: Total population is 89 million, rural population is 60 million

Ethnic minority Population: Viet Nam has 54 recognized ethnic groups; the Kinh represent the majority, comprising 86%, and the remaining **53** are **ethnic minority groups** accounting for around 14% of the economy's total population of 89 million. The term ethnic minority is used interchangeably with indigenous peoples in Viet Nam. The Thai, Tay, Nung, Hmong and Dao, are fairly large groups, each with between 500,000 and 1.2 million people. There are many groups with fewer than 300,000 people, however, sometimes only a few hundred. Around 650,000 people belonging to several ethnic groups live on the plateau of the Central Highlands (Tay Nguyen) in the south.