



Independent State of Papua New Guinea

## Department for Religion and Community Development

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### **PRESS RELEASE**

#### **WOMEN EDUCATION ON INFORMAL ECONOMY AT WOMEN'S FORUM, HIGHLANDS REGION**

The Government of Papua New Guinea through the Department for Community Development and Religion, under the Informal Economy Office aspires to grow the Informal Economy which supports and cater for seventy-five percent (75%) of the country's population.

This was relayed to women from the Highlands Region who attended the PNG Regional Women's Forum for the Highlands Region at the University of Goroka (UoG) from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 8<sup>th</sup> of February, 2017.

Mr Steven James the Assistant Secretary for Informal Economy told the women folks in his presentation that the government has been concentrating only on fifteen percent (15%) of the country's population which is the Formal Economy, while the other 75 percent make up the Informal Economy with majority of the vendors or participants are women.

"Any form of income earning activities that does not operate under the Government's Laws is Informal Economy. In terms of the Informal Economy Policy and Act, both have been reviewed after consultations with the responsible government agencies and partners, with the Policy to be ready in March this year, and the Act called The National Informal Sector Development and Control Act which is also ready to be submitted to Parliament this year," said Mr James.

Mr James pointed out that the Informal economy is made up of the Urban and Rural while most of the mothers, youths, men or even the marginalized population have not been properly recognized by the Government to improve the resources that can be utilized by these groups to help with their income earning activities. And the main reason to have the Policy and Act endorsed and passed, is to help protect and improve the Informal Economy sector so that everyone benefits from it.

"Our mothers in the rural and urban areas are seen selling their goods under makeshift shelters, umbrellas or even on the ground without proper shelter, toilet facilities and water and sanitation. That is why the introduction of this Policy and Act is all about serving the interest of the Informal economy vendors or participants," said Mr James.

Despite the Policy been under review the Department through the Informal Economy branch managed to implement half of the Policy, according to Mr James. He said there are two arms to the department's action plan under the policy and that is Financial Inclusion and Public Goods and Services.

In 2013, a strategy on financial inclusion was launched and was implemented in 2014 and 2015 with the help of some financial institutions in terms of providing awareness and trainings to the informal economy

participants both in the urban and rural areas, and also providing them assistant through loans and such to help increase their capacity in whatever activities they do or plan to venture into.

Meanwhile, the presentation by Mr James in representation for the Department and the government was appreciated by the women participants, as it indicates that the Government is willing to work together with the women in the country to strengthen their voices in various cross-cutting issues affecting them.

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**APPROVED FOR RELEASE BY**

**Ms Anna Solomon**

**SECRETARY**

**Department for Community Development & Religion**