



## ***Changing Faces Women's Leadership Seminar***

Women as Innovators and Entrepreneurs

**July 7 – 20, 2019**

Oahu ♦ Maui

### **Draft Action Plan**

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#### **“EMPOWERING WOMEN WEAVERS”**

##### **Issue/Problem Statement**

I am a newly self-employed nofotane woman in Samoa. In Samoa, nofotane refers to a married woman living with her husband's family. They are regarded as servants and do not have a voice or paid employment opportunities.

Through the Economic Empowerment Programme with the Samoa Victim Support Group, I have been able to provide for my family by collecting raw materials and recycling plastic to weave bags, coasters and table mats. By using plastic trash such as coffee sachets, I, along with over 100 other nofotane women whom I have trained, have helped our community have a cleaner environment whilst providing for our families.

In January 2019, the Samoan Government passed legislation to ban the use of plastic bags, straws and other plastic supplies. Although this new law is good news for our local environment, this means it is difficult to weave new products from plastic trash. For me and the 100+ nofotane earners, if there is no trash, there is no product which results in no income. If the nofatane women in our community are unable to earn an income for themselves and their families because of the shortage in plastic trash, then they could lose their skills, independence, and confidence, and they will suffer financially.

To resolve this issue, we have to go back to using Pandanus leaves, widely grown in our forests, environmentally friendly and easily available to the weavers in our community. We will take the skills gained from weaving plastic trash and use it to weave different products from the Pandanus leaves, or even coconut leaves.

##### **Mission & Project Description**

My mission is to help the nofotane women weavers in Samoa diversify their woven products using environmentally friendly resources.

This will not only sustain their income generating activities, but most importantly, it will be their contribution towards national climate change resilience initiatives, for our families today, and the generations of tomorrow.

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## **Personal Role**

I grew up weaving traditional fine mats and sleeping mats for my family, a valuable skill I learned from my mother. As a nofotane woman living with my husband's family, I was able to show a 'can do' attitude by weaving plastic waste into beautiful products such as handbags, table mats, fruit baskets, and more. I am a fast learner, so I managed to learn how to weave plastic trash within a day.

I am in a unique position to take on this project because I have the experience and passion to empower other women weavers in my country, to go back to the old ways of weaving, that is, through using coconut leaves and the Pandanus leaves.

I am enthusiastic to learn how to be more flexible, to diversify my product range and to be more competitive in the local market by continuing to improve on the products I can weave.

My role will be to "train the trainer," and empower other nofotane women like me, so that they too can become self-employed, confident, and able to support themselves and their families.