Millennium Development Goal 3
Enact and implement equal economic rights for all.

Gender benefits and outcomes in the Enterprise Challenge Fund
As at July 2012, about 50,000 poor people, 48% of whom are women, had received positive changes to their income through supplying goods, obtaining employment, and accessing goods and services in ECF funded businesses. It is evident that a number of ECF funded projects have intended and unintended gender outcomes as they are implemented.

Why is considering gender important to poverty reduction?
A growing number of businesses are recognising positive business and development outcomes from supporting and empowering women. Development organisations have found that greater gender equality can ‘enhance productivity, improve development outcomes for the next generation, and make institutions more representative’ (World Bank 2012). Gender equality and empowering women is the third Millennium Development Goal.

Gender has been considered by ECF since the fund began in 2007 and was considered as part of the assessment criteria during selection. During ECF implementation and monitoring, significant attention is paid to the different needs, interests, priorities and roles of women in the business projects that received funding.

Employing women in leadership or traditionally male positions
Nature’s Way Cooperative was established to undertake mandatory quarantine treatments on behalf of Fiji’s fruit industry. Most of its 160 growers and exporter shareholders are small farmers. Nature’s Way received a grant from ECF to improve quarantine treatment facilities and work with the industry to increase volume and exporting facilities. In the last two years the cooperative has taken steps to improve female participation and has appointed a female board member who is focused on increasing the number of female co-op

Cagayan de Oro employs women to assemble and construct the hand made cards

Cagayan de Oro Handmade Paper crafts was awarded an ECF grant to expand paper production and improve the supply chain for abaca, a fibre used to make their products. The organisation trained 88 local women to assemble and construct cards and paper products. The women have also trained family members to help assemble the products.

These women then earn an income from supplying these cards to the organisation, some an average of P95,000 ($2,000) a year, a very respectable income. The organisation also supports their home-based workers with school supplies and scholarships for their children because many women indicated that the reason they were working was to send their children to school.

The ECF is a competitive opportunity for businesses to obtain grants that assist in commercialising business projects in ECF participating countries. ECF is an Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID)-led Australian Government initiative. For more information please visit www.enterprisechallengefund.org
Girls can do it too

In Mystery Island when the Carnival Cruise docks, most women earn an income by selling traditional crafts and services from market stalls. Carnival Cruises has trained two women, and two men, in the very non-traditional field of transit boat operators to ferry passengers between the ship and shore. In the Carnival team public–private partnership video, the women explained that being an operator was a good opportunity for them to mix with passengers and be a role model for other women – they want to show “to the other females, girls can do it too”.

Lesson for future challenge funds

A number of management steps could help ensure greater awareness of gender and women’s economic empowerment.

- **Sector targeting** – Most projects awarded funds were in the agribusiness and tourism industries where women are traditional participants but women’s ownership of businesses is limited. Future challenge funds could specifically target increasing female ownership in these sectors to increase women’s economic empowerment.

- **Gender in the application** – As part of the bidding process, businesses submit proposals to outline the rationale for grant funding; country managers gave input and advice as requested or needed. When directed, companies were able to further consider the impact of the project on women and communities, and applications and ultimately projects were strengthened.

Future funds could strengthen the gender associated questions in the application by including prompting questions such as:

- How will women participate in project activities, compared with men? Are there any constraints or barriers preventing women or men from participating in and benefiting from the project activities? If so how will these be addressed?

- What access will women have to project resources such as jobs, training and income, compared with men?

- What immediate and practical needs of both women and men will be addressed through the project?

- Monitoring for improved outcomes – The monitoring approach of the ECF outlines, in partnership with the companies, key indicators for the business and social impacts. This process has value in demonstrating to the business operator, from the beginning of the funded project, the areas with potential impact and has enhanced their outlook and awareness of gender.

For future funds, the monitoring process could be used to discuss the impact of the project on women. Reporting on numbers of benefits should be disaggregated by gender and methods devised to review the qualitative impact of goods and services on women, families and the position of women in communities.