

Women in Hautio and Tatiri build a future

In 2017, realising that involvement of women in Blue Mountains projects was low, despite all best efforts, through local women we held a workshop with women from across the sub-district. Women were asked what their issues and concerns were and if they would like assistance from us in the Blue Mountains. The answer was a resounding “yes” – they wanted support, a kick start really, for a set of women’s groups that existed in a fledgling state.

Since then the Blue Mountains have continued to provide the assistance that we were asked for. Initially the groups asked for micro-loans so their members could start small enterprises (making concrete pots, ornamental flowers for funerals, establishing catering businesses, weaving tais, sewing bags and other clothing items for sale, roasting coffee).

The Blue Mountains have provided the raw materials for these enterprises that have mostly been so successful that the women have re-paid their loans, the capital owned by the group has increased and new enterprises spawned. We provided the loan itself and also items for the start-up businesses like coffee roasting machines, treadle sewing machines, cottons, needles and so on for sewing, items for their committee such as second hand laptops.

Maybe just as importantly, the Blue Mountains have provided training – now three years of this – with a focus on group functioning, money management, product development, women’s leadership. The women from across the sub-district come together and learn from each other.

The Hautio Group is most ably led by mana Isaura and meetings and activities (such as sewing) take place in the front room (sala vizita) in her home. The Tatiri Group (named “Grupú Feto DATRI”) built a makeshift centre for themselves. Each year rain and winds destroyed the small building. Recently, the Blue Mountains received assistance through the Andrew McNaughton Foundation to build a proper building that would withstand the elements. We offered the materials and the construction is occurring as you trek through local volunteers.



Grupú Feto DATRI - the Tatiri women's group sporting their group's T-shirt, mana Ricardina at left.



Grupú Feto DATRI outside their old makeshift women's centre (with Lesley Sammon and Jude Finch)



New centre under construction by volunteers in the community



Hautio group outside their meeting place. Leader, mana Isaura second from right



Members of Hautio women's group



Women attend training on how to keep their group strong



Lesley Sammon wearing women's products - ornamental flowers and a tais

