



PRESS RELEASE

SPBD Promotes Luapene Lefau to Top Position as General Manager of SPBD in Samoa

For Immediate Release

APIA, SAMOA (13 March 2019) – The SPBD Microfinance Network, the largest microfinance provider in the South Pacific, is delighted to announce that Luapene Lefau has been promoted to General Manager of South Pacific Business Development (SPBD) Microfinance Ltd in Samoa – she is the first, Samoan-born national appointed to the top post.



Luapene brings more than 30 years of professional experience to her role. She has been with SPBD Samoa for the past 17 years, most recently serving as the Finance and Administration Manager, and has contributed immensely to achieving the vision and mission of the company over the years. Prior to SPBD, Luapene worked at the Secretariat of Pacific Regional Environment Program (SPREP) as well as in the finance departments of various government corporations.

In her new position as GM, Luapene will spearhead the continued growth of the organization, including the expansion of SPBD's credit, savings and remittance services as well as the launch of innovative products and new partnerships that will enable SPBD to continue impacting members' lives positively. As a local national, a woman and a mother, Luapene brings a unique perspective to her position, and she is a role model for many others.

SPBD Founder and President Gregory Casagrande said, "Over the years, Luapene has proven herself to be a tireless and exceptional leader and team builder. She is a significant reason that SPBD has achieved the success that it has. She is well respected across the broader SPBD Microfinance Network and within her community here in Samoa. I have no doubt, given her clearly proven abilities and extraordinary determination and dedication, that she will lead SPBD positively forward into the future."

Reflecting on her appointment to the top role, Luapene says, "First of all, I would like to give thanks to the Lord for blessing me with this prestigious position. I am very thrilled and truly honored to be named the first Samoan to fill the role of GM for SPBD Samoa. Attaining this position is proof that emphasizing women's empowerment and developing the capacity of the locals is a recipe for success. I was once a woman with dreams and ambitions; therefore, I would like to remind every woman out there that hard work and determination will lead us to success and achieving what may seem impossible at first."

Luapene adds, "I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to Mr. Gregory Casagrande, Founder and President of SPBD Samoa and the SPBD Microfinance Network, for having immense faith and trust in my capacity to lead SPBD Samoa. I commend his commitment and dedication in offering opportunities to enhance lives for underprivileged women and their families across Samoa. I would also like to acknowledge my former boss, Mr. Ajay Verma, for being the best coach and mentor personally and professionally. He contributed to improving my confidence to lead and be strong-hearted when a difficult situation arises, and those are the teachings I will forever cherish."

SPBD also recently appointed the first Tongan national to lead SPBD in Tonga. Mrs. Fine Tu'ipulotu is now the GM of SPBD in Tonga after serving as Finance and Administration Manager for 8 years.

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About South Pacific Business Development (SPBD) Microfinance Network

SPBD is a network of microfinance institutions working in Samoa, Tonga, Fiji, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. SPBD's mission is to improve the quality of life of underprivileged families by providing them meaningful economic opportunity to help lift them permanently out of poverty. SPBD is especially focused on empowering women to start, grow and maintain micro-businesses through the provision of access to financial and business development services as well as the opportunity to build assets, improve financial security and finance housing improvements and education.

SPBD's vision is to create a network of financially self-sufficient and scalable micro-enterprise development organizations throughout the South Pacific.

Since launching in Samoa in 2000, SPBD has provided more than 85,000 loans worth more than WST\$ 145M to Samoan women entrepreneurs to help them start, grow and expand small, income-generating businesses throughout the country. Across the larger SPBD Microfinance Network, SPBD has provided more than 198,000 unsecured loans worth USD\$ 130M to women for entrepreneurial ventures, basic housing improvements and childhood education.

Press Contacts

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Additional Information

- For SPBD social media, visit <https://www.facebook.com/SPBD-Microfinance-Network-190036957692661/>
- For SPBD videos, see <https://www.youtube.com/user/SPBDfoundation/>
- SPBD's website is www.spbdmicrofinance.com