



Gina Vun | Photos by Suzanne Lee

Introducing Gina and Anette

Gina runs an online jewellery boutique called Exotic Borneo Treasures, which sells handmade indigenous products from Malaysia. With a background in education, Gina had visited rural villages and realised that many children were out of school because their mothers couldn't afford their school fees. She decided to create an online platform where these women could sell their products and earn money to support their families. However, without business skills or IT experience, she didn't know where to start.

Through a partnership between the Cherie Blair Foundation for Women and Qualcomm Wireless Reach, Gina received intensive training on business, ICT and English skills, as well as a tablet and a data plan to enable her to access the programme's online platform. She was matched with Anette, an entrepreneur from Sweden who founded her own management company and had significant expertise in business planning, IT and communications.

Relationship focus

Together, Gina and Anette wrote a business plan and strategised the most effective way to market Gina's business. With Anette's support, Gina developed the design and content of her new website. Using resources from the programme's online library, Gina also worked on her branding, created a marketing plan and launched social media accounts.

Throughout the year, Anette encouraged Gina to further empower the artisans she was working with by involving them in the development of the business. This not only developed the women's skills, but also helped Gina balance her workload and build her management skills. Over the course of the year, Gina successfully launched her business and started to turn a small profit.

She gained over 100 customers and sold products both domestically and internationally to the United States and Australia. Gina is currently working with 20 indigenous women and hopes to expand this number as profits increase.

Gina's reflections

Gina attributes her success to Anette's patience and support. She believes the biggest change has been the development of her leadership, communication and teamwork skills, which have helped create a collaborative work environment. She also commented, *"The most valuable thing was the relationship we built; it has set me up for building other relationships in the future."*

Anette's reflections

Anette said she built her communication skills and was inspired by Gina's passion. She said, *"It's one thing to give advice to someone else, but then you have to think about what you do. I learned from Gina's responses – they made me think more strategically."*

