



Understanding Gender Inequality Actions  
in the Pacific:  
Ethnographic Case-studies and Policy Options

**Final report**



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## FINAL REPORT

# Understanding Gender Inequality Actions in the Pacific: Ethnographic Case-studies and Policy Options

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with contributions from co-investigators

**Understanding Gender Inequality Actions in the Pacific:  
Ethnographic Case-Studies & Policy Options**  
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# List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

ACP	Africa, Caribbean and Pacific Group
AOSIS	Alliance of Small Island States
AP	Annual Plan
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CEDAW	Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
CSP	Country Strategy Paper
CROP	Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific
CSO-LA	Civil Society Organisations and Local Authorities
DEVCO	Directorate-General EuropeAid Development & Cooperation
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia)
EEAS	European External Action Service
EAMR	External Assistance Management Rapport
EC	The European Commission
EDF	European Development Fund
ECOPAS	European Consortium for Pacific Studies
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
EPA	Economic Partnership Agreement
EIDHR	European Instrument for Human Rights and Democracy
EU	The European Union
EVAW	Eliminating Violence Against Women
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organisation
FIC	Forum Island Countries
FWCC	Fiji Women's Crisis Centre
FWRM	Fiji Women's Rights Movement
FSM	Federated States of Micronesia
GAP	Gender Action Plan
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GCCA	Global Climate Change Alliance
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEWE	Gender Equity and Women's Development
GFP	Gender Focal Point
HQ	Head Quarters
IcSP	Instrument for Stability and Peace
KFHSS	Kiribati Family, Health and Support Survey
LDC	Least Developed Countries
LMC	Lower Middle Income Countries
MCES	The Micronesian Chief Executives' Summit
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MFF	Multiannual Financial Framework
MIP	Multiannual Indicative Programme
MP	Member of Parliament
MSG	Melanesian Spearhead Group
MTR	Mid Term Review
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation

NIP	National Indicative Programme
OCT	Overseas Countries and Territories
ODA	Overseas Development Assistance
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
PACP	Pacific ACP countries
PCD	Policy Coherence for Development
PICTs	Pacific Islands Countries and Territories
PIF	Pacific Islands Forum
PIFS	Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
PNG	Papua New Guinea
PPDVP	Pacific Prevention of Domestic Violence Programme
PRIP	Pacific Regional Indicative Programme
PSIDS	Pacific Small Island Development States
PIDF	Pacific Islands Development Forum
RAMSI	Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands
RAO	Regional Authorizing Officer
RIP	Regional Indicative Programme
RMI	Republic of Marshall Islands
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
RSP	Regional Strategy Paper
SIDS	Small Islands Developing States
SPC	Secretariat of the Pacific Community
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection
TOR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
USP	University of the South Pacific
VAW	Violence Against Women
VWC/S	Vanuatu Women's Centre
WCT	Women Candidate Training
WHO	World Health Organisation
WTO	World Trade Organisation

# Executive Summary

The prevalence of violence against women in the Pacific region is among the highest in the world. Countries across the Pacific region have put in place policy strategies, legal frameworks and a raft of initiatives, but against their own and internationally accepted indicators there has been [poor progress](#) towards gender equality, despite the development cooperation efforts of many donors over several decades. [What are the cultural contexts shaping the contemporary situation? Why is the current paradigm underpinning gender policy apparently ineffective in grasping the social actions that produce gender inequality in the Pacific?](#)

This report presents the findings of an ethnographic pilot research project into a range of gender inequality issues in the Pacific - discrimination, violence, exploitation, representation - with particular focus on gender violence and women's presence in political and economic contexts. Project members include anthropologists, gender and development specialists, legal scholars and a film-maker who conducted [case-studies in ten countries across all three regions of the Pacific](#) - Melanesia (Fiji, PNG, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu), Micronesia (FSM, Kiribati, Marshall Islands and Palau) and Polynesia (Samoa and Tuvalu).

Researchers were given a free hand to work in their own conceptual register rather than within the confines of received terms and a defined framework, and for the first time in the long-experience of many team members to have an [opportunity to work with and through Pacific people's own concepts, relations, values and analyses of what is a stake in the cultural dynamics and social relations through which the everyday actions of gender inequality are produced](#). We believe that the research findings we report here bear out and justify the EU's vision and confidence in commissioning this study.

We follow retired PNG Minister, Dame Carol Kidu, in culturally contextualising gender inequality as '[an issue to do with the whole community and the family](#)', asking questions about '[how we can address rights-based issues within a communal society](#)', and focusing on Pacific people's '[own capacity to resolve things, in perhaps unusual ways](#)'. This creates a space to vividly illustrate and [foreground Pacific people's own understandings](#) and own complex analyses of gender inequality, and to propose perhaps [unusual options for policy action](#). Difference does not necessarily mean inequality – there are different ways in which equality is manifested not simply by things being the same or symmetrical.

Creating participatory spaces for dialogue was the centre-piece of a recent keynote speech in Brussels given by the Head of State of the Independent State of Samoa. His Highness Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Efi is one of the foremost Pacific thinkers and a respected expert on Samoan culture and philosophy, and has developed a method of using 'Samoa indigenous reference' as a means of engaging contemporary issues, and of promoting real dialogue whether critical or commending with one's own cultural assumptions about the world. The aim is to create an open space for dialogue that avoids both reverential adherence and unthinking abandonment, and to enable future orientations rooted in the cultural creativity of particular peoples and places.

By foregrounding Pacific ideas and a participatory method grounded in Pacific relations, our research has sought to follow the leads of these prominent Pacific Islanders and aims to better identify the problems from within, so to speak, such that solutions can be more effectively formulated and innovative pathways for change defined.

Gender inequality in the Pacific is a complex of historical and contemporary relations, values and concepts being remade in a transforming regional context that is responding to globalisation in highly distinctive ways. Concepts of gender in the contemporary Pacific are also the outcome of the interplay between the way people in different social positions see different kinds of value in such ideas – e.g. personal or political advantages or disadvantages. Different concepts will provide a different emphasis to social positions – e.g. gaining or diminishing in importance and changing the balance of power.



This report aims to enrich our understanding of the social actions involved in gender inequality in the Pacific, and of the cultural context in which action for change is located. In doing so, this report contributes to a better contextual understanding of why achieving gender equality in the region appears to be so challenging.

**Gender in the Pacific is not merely a matter of the biological difference between men and women:** the research evidence suggests that rather than such properties of bodies, it is the actions performed that gender a person. Gender is relational, performative, reciprocal, circulatory, fluid and dynamic. A woman is not simply a woman – e.g. she may act like a Wife or a Daughter, and in order to do so she needs to behave in the right way, and to be treated in the right way. Frictions develop when someone thinks they act in the right way, and yet thinks they are not treated in the right way. Even as a Wife she may act in a 'male' way if she happens to be the bread-winner, and frictions can develop when a Husband feels de-valued in being treated in a 'female' way.

Categories such as 'woman' or 'man' are just too generic and blanketing - for they lose precisely what is at stake in Pacific relations: whether a woman is acting in that moment as a wife, daughter, sister, mother, aunt, grandmother, kinswoman. A woman may suffer violence or inequality as a consequence of any of these and other specific relations and roles - but the effectiveness of our descriptions, analyses and interventions are greatly diminished if we simply take this as violence against a woman, without asking which woman, so-to-speak. The vital questions here are exactly eclipsed, the real situations are disguised, and appropriate forms of support are missed, by the imposition of a simplistic and impoverished conceptual palette.

The research reported here casts serious doubt on the conceptual, social and cultural assumptions that underpin the current gender policy paradigm, and also suggests that the dominant models for leveraging 'individual' and 'societal' behaviour changes misunderstand the tenets of Pacific socialites. Our research reports a series of findings that may well appear counter-intuitive to Euro-American assumptions.

Because Pacific people are implicated in each other's lives and participate in shared relations, they emphasise the specific social relations in which particular people are positioned at any one time. Pacific people say that they are made up of each other, and that they are not only their own persons. As such, they describe the ways in which they are vulnerable to the claims and actions of others. This attention paid to the specific relations activated in any given moment reflects the ways in which a person is activated, and also gendered, by interactions with other people: e.g. a woman is made a mother by her child, an aunty by a niece or nephew, a wife by her husband, and a sister by her siblings. Each of these roles are elicited and activated by relational interaction, and they carry different capacities, responsibilities and possibilities. 'Social identities' here are as much activated by a person themselves as by other people with whom they interact through relations.

It perhaps seems counter-intuitive to Euro-Americans that it should be social relations that elicit and produce the identities and responsibilities in people, and that other people hold such important, shaping, influence over other people as much giving them their identity as they do in eliciting it from them. Participating in shared lives and relations goes beyond familiar ideas of collective community. This report provides examples of the embedded existence of Pacific islanders in their families, kin groups and communities which gives rise to complex layers of mutual obligations, claims and expectations.

With the power to bring forth and make active a particular social identity, role or capacity (e.g. a woman as a sister in relation to a sibling), interactions between social relations are given primary attention. Connections can be made between the ways that a person's 'identity' can only be read from the guise of a particular relational moment, and the ways that 'gender' cannot be read from **what something is** but only from **what it does** (that is, how it acts - whether to female or male effect). Gender is afforded in the social moment, and reflects the particular relational context. Needless to say, Pacific people are adept at recognising and distinguishing between such relations and actions, and are highly responsive to the ways that relations and interactions gender their possibilities and motivations for action.

For example, in Papua New Guinea, relations between senior and junior men can be gendered 'male' and 'female', and similarly relations between certain clans and kin groups are conceived and play out by gendering the role and actions of one party as 'male' and those of the other party as 'female'. For example, the actions of the donor or giving party in an ongoing reciprocal exchange may be gendered as 'male', whilst the actions of the receiving party may be gendered as 'female'. As these roles and actions are reversed when an exchange is returned - donors become the recipients in turn - so the gendering of the parties is also exchanged. Here, it is the roles and actions that are gendered: Kin groups or parties to an exchange are only temporarily gendered as 'male' or 'female' depending on their positioning as donor or recipients.

This difference between a stable gender identity that derives from biological facts, and the temporary and contingent gendering of actions, is the crucial insight of anthropological analyses of gender in the Pacific. As such, it is important to understand that 'gender' in the Pacific is not simply a matter of the sexed differences between women and men: the gendering of relations and actions in the Pacific amounts to an thorough-going and integrated organising principle.

The research reported here also reveals how the conceptual, social and cultural assumptions that underpin the current gender policy paradigm have recognisable origins in Euro-American folk models that reduce 'gender' to the taken-for-granted differences between men and women. It should be no surprise that Pacific people's have their own folk models, and have conceptual, social and cultural assumptions of their own.

Of course, these assumptions and folk models have been mutually influencing each other for centuries, and it is important to grasp that the current context of gender relations in the Pacific is the historical outcome of global interplay. Understanding the cultural histories, exchanges, appropriations and translations here enhances the necessary insights into the social and cultural contexts in which gender inequality occurs in the Pacific region, and holds significance for informing initiatives to address these inequalities.

Pacific peoples have then, in similar and various ways, created their own ideas about social life, and have continually exchanged and innovatively absorbed new ideas. Of course, these home-grown theories about the dynamics and organisation of human relations are those which Pacific people deploy themselves in figuring the parameters, motivations and potentials for social action. In foregrounding these Pacific concepts, this research understands that they provide the clearest descriptive clarifications and most compelling social analyses of gender inequality actions in the Pacific.

Our advocacy for highlighting the everyday presence and social force of these Pacific ideas is specific and limited: we report here the ways in which - from the perspective of Pacific peoples themselves - the concepts and assumptions carried by international gender policy, and human rights frameworks provide alternative descriptions of how gender and social responsibilities operate in their own schemes and practices of social life. From this we can better understand the cultural interface between ideas, and better understand the conceptual work and social struggles that Pacific peoples are engaged in as they come to terms with how indigenous and globalised knowledges can be combined to improve gender inequality in their own lives.

The point here is simply to highlight and recognise that in order to understand the cultural roots of gender inequality actions across the Pacific, we have been guided to look at ideas of how persons are mutually constituted through their relations, and to look at the ways in which actions are gendered. We report our findings here as a contribution to better contextual understandings of why current policy paradigms have proven unsuccessful in describing, analysing and addressing what is at stake from the perspective of Pacific peoples.

Our research raises and responds to a number of core questions:

- Because gender in the Pacific is not reduceable to the biological difference between men and women, are Policy makers working with the best descriptions for understanding contemporary social issues?
- Because of the influence of colonial history, are Pacific peoples being criticised for acting out European derived ideas and social values?
- Because Pacific peoples do not separate out gender as a discrete issue or domain of action, does Policy exacerbate the problems by treating gender as a separate domain?
- Because 'gender' is already, so-to-speak, mainstreamed in social life, does this provide an entry point and pathway towards developing an alternative approach for Policy?
- Because Pacific peoples are the ones actually doing the cultural translation work between new and old ideas, and new and old social positions, can Policy look to them for answers to design programmes that identify and deal with the issues in the right terms and at the right levels through which change is taking place?
- Because concepts of gender in the contemporary Pacific are the outcome of a long and changing history, should Policy responses recognize that programmes for change need to be a combination of short-term interventions and the long-term building up of research capacity within the Pacific?

As a starting point then, the [Introduction](#) of this report gives precedence to the views of Pacific people, and engages with, and responds to, calls made from the Pacific region by the [ACP, PIF and SPC amongst others](#), and sets out the context for the research and details the scope, design, methodology and research findings. [Chapter 1](#) of the report provide overviews of gender inequality in the Pacific to understand the regional and national pictures of the situation and efforts to address it, and also sets out the platform of the EU gender policy framework in order to provide detailed recommendations on where the research findings can inform actions under particular funds and suggest political messages under existing instruments. We also consider other international partner programmes in this area in order to identify an 'EU niche' through proposals for policy options and alternative pathways for future EU programming. [Chapter 2](#) provides detailed country studies of Fiji, Kiribati, Micronesia, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. Each country study is designed to provide a stand alone briefing paper. They provide a social science introduction, an overview of gender inequality issues, a series of detailed first-hand case-studies, key defining features and provide an overview of current and possible actions.

[Chapter 3](#) provides the recommendations arising from the research: 1. Engaging communities in participatory community actions that implement research findings would provide a basis through which to learn and explore more, and to generate data and an evidence base for future policy and action, 2. How the EU's Gender Action Programme 2016-2020 might be implemented in the Pacific, 3. Summarises the research findings and appropriate options for action, by country and by region.

Vast spatial distances have never been a barrier to social relations for Pacific peoples. [Europe's geographical distance from the Pacific region is not necessarily a barrier to working more closely with Pacific communities](#). Geographic distance compels finding new ways of working collaboratively with communities to support their own efforts.

Working through a deeper understanding of Pacific social and conceptual relations will enable actions to adhere more closely to the realities of gender issues in the region. [Rather than geography, the keys to working more closely with Pacific communities are a strong participatory approach, and engaging the Pacific through its own forms of sociality and on its own conceptual terms](#). Pacific peoples and communities are best placed to bring their own understandings of indigenous and global knowledges into dialogue.

Lastly, this one year project has brought together a team of thirteen researchers from Europe and the Pacific, of whom ten conducted in country studies in the region in the period between July and October, spending between them approximately twenty four weeks in the field. We trust that these project deliverables demonstrate the feasibility, effectiveness and value of this type of project design.

# Introduction

## Framings: problems, questions, responses

Countries across the Pacific region have put in place policy strategies, legal frameworks and a raft of initiatives, but against their own and internationally accepted indicators there has been poor progress towards gender equality, despite the development cooperation efforts of many donors over several decades.

What are the cultural contexts shaping the contemporary situation? Why is the current paradigm underpinning gender policy apparently ineffective in grasping the social actions that produce gender inequality in the Pacific?

This report presents the findings of ethnographic research project into a range of gender inequality issues in the Pacific - discrimination, violence, exploitation, representation - with particular focus on gender based violence and women's presence in political and economic contexts. Project members include anthropologists, gender and development specialists, legal scholars and a film-maker (see Appendix 3: Research Team) who conducted case-studies in ten countries across all three regions of the Pacific - Melanesia (Fiji, PNG, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu), Micronesia (FSM, Kiribati, Marshall Islands and Palau) and Polynesia (Samoa and Tuvalu).<sup>1</sup>

This report aims to enrich our understanding of the social actions involved in gender inequality in the Pacific, and of the cultural context in which action for change is located. In doing so, this report contributes to a better contextual understanding of why achieving gender equality in the region appears to be so challenging.

The prevalence of violence against women in the Pacific region is among the highest in the world: data indicate that upward of 60 per cent of adult women have experienced physical or sexual violence during their lifetime, often at the hands of an intimate partner.<sup>2</sup> Throughout the region, international agencies have highlighted the human rights abuses associated with violence – primarily against women and children. Violence against women also slows down economic growth, with an estimated economic cost of lost productivity of between 1 and 2 percent of GDP — more than what most governments in the Pacific spend on primary education.

While gender parity has been achieved in primary and secondary education in most Pacific countries, there is a gender gap in tertiary education, particularly in technical institutes. Similarly, there is a gender wage gap, with men generally working in jobs that earn higher salaries. Land property is generally registered in men's names, and agreement on land use and ownership are generally settled by men, excluding women from land ownership. Women's political participation in national legislatures is lower than 10% in the Pacific Region, which is one of the worst records in the world.

In 2013, the European Consortium for Pacific Studies (ECOPAS) held a workshop in St Andrews and a policy roundtable in Brussels to unpick the thinking behind current gender policy in the Pacific, and to draw this into dialogue with research evidence of real-life practices and challenges, with the objective of delineating the shape and possibilities for an alternative research-policy agenda. The focus was on how a range of gender issues are conceptualised in the Pacific, and how we might go about discovering the dynamics in which these issues are practised and conceived in vernacular terms.

The need for this new approach to gender inequality in the Pacific was recently summed up by Dame Carol Kidu (retired PNG Minister, the sole woman MP throughout her decade's service):

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<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, the scope of this project and report was unable to extend to cover the OCTs in the same manner, but we recognise the presence of cognate issues and the value of a more comprehensive approach going forward.

<sup>2</sup> (SPC 2009, SPC 2010, VWC 2011)

'For girls and women, [the biggest challenge] is probably defining their space in a rapidly changing society because change can be confusing, frightening and even abusive. To educate girls in a way that doesn't fit for them within their society or in a way that does not respect their dignity and their rights in their own cultural context is a disservice to them. It's an issue to do with the whole community and the family - [an issue of how we can address rights-based issues within a communal society](#). So there are all those complexities that are often missed and not understood. And so the country gets labelled as being a country full of absolutely horrific men. But it's not. There's a breakdown in these roles'.

Dame Carol Kidu provided a vivid case-study to illustrate her point (a potentially violent encounter within a kin group resolved by the actions of a young woman's senior aunt), and which highlighted her main point - a call to focus on [Pacific people's 'own capacity to resolve things, in perhaps unusual ways'](#).<sup>3</sup>

In 2014, the European Commission recognised that '[In the Pacific Islands region, the extent and level of prevalence of gender based violence and the connections to other aspects of gender inequalities raise questions that donors have not yet been able to give answers to](#)', and gave this pilot research project the assignment of answering these questions: '[The aim of this study is to shed the light on this phenomenon, taking account of local culture and traditions, and transforming gender roles and relations, through a network of locally fluent and Pacific-based researchers](#)'. This report sets out our research findings and responses to the general objective: '[To culturally analyse the roots of gender based violence and other specific manifestations of gender inequalities in the Pacific Islands region in order to provide the EU with all the necessary information to be able to formulate possible initiatives to address it](#)'.

The Framework of Cooperation between the EC and the Pacific Region is set out in the ***European Community – Pacific Region, Regional Strategy Paper and Regional Indicative Programme 2014-20***. There are two other key strategy papers:

1. the 2006 ***EU Relations With The Pacific Islands - A Strategy For A Strengthened Partnership***
2. the 2012 statement *Joint Communication to the European Parliament, The Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: **Towards a Renewed EU-Pacific Development Partnership***

In these two strategy papers, gender inequality issues are featured as follows:

- 'While the situation differs from country to country, violence against women and polygamy constitute important problems and women still have far to go in terms of empowerment' (2006:17)
- 'Pacific countries have a poor record of ratifying human rights conventions and have high rates of gender-based violence and low proportions of women at decision-making levels' (2012:4)
- 'Coordinated EU-wide initiatives, responsive to Pacific priorities, would maximize the added value of EU external action in the region' (2012:6)

The 2012 strategy paper suggests that the EC's responses should be guided by 'Pacific ways of addressing development challenges' (2012:6), and in line with 'Pacific friendly delivery methods' (2012:8).

In responding to the assigned tasks and objectives, and guided by EU-Pacific policy directives, space was created for this pilot research project to vividly illustrate and foreground of Pacific people's own understandings and own complex analyses of gender inequality, and to focus on the mediating work of those Pacific people's involved and implicated in incidents and issues concerning gender inequality. The present study then, has aimed to learn from Pacific translations between old and new terms, values, relations

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<sup>3</sup> <http://devpolicy.org/dame-carol-kidu-on-why-things-are-getting-tougher-for-pngs-women-20141029/>

and complexities, and to understand Pacific actors' capacities to resolve things as they negotiate the predicaments and contradictions of globalisation.

This report gives precedence to views from the Pacific region, and engages with, and responds to, calls made by the [ACP, PIF and SPC amongst others](#). The recent [ACP Women, Actors of Development report \(2014\)](#), conveys a vivid picture of the challenges: 'women in the Pacific region endure some of the highest levels of violence against women in the world' (58); 'women and girls have been discriminated against in health, education and the labour market' (58); 'some progress has been made. [...] However, the rate of women in leadership positions across the Pacific remains pervasively low' (57); 'even when poverty levels are decreasing, gender, economic class, and other forms of inequality remain a major challenge for the equitable human sustainable development in the region' (57).

At the 43rd [Pacific Islands Forum](#) in 2012, Pacific leaders pledged: 'to act to end violence against women by progressively implementing a set of essential services to women and girls who are survivors of violence, enacting and implementing domestic violence legislation to protect women from violence and impose appropriate penalties for perpetrators of violence' (Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration).<sup>4</sup> Pacific leaders reaffirmed this commitment at the 46th Pacific Islands Forum in September 2015, noting that: 'There has been notable progress on gender equality in three of the six key Declaration areas: gender responsive policies and programmes, gender parity on education and ending violence against women'.<sup>5</sup>

As discussed in detail below, the EU already has in place a sufficiently well-developed policy framework. There are currently moves to highlight gender as a mainstream political, and not just cross-cutting development issue: in 2015 the EU has reviewed and renewed the [Gender Action Plan](#) as its central policy pillar, and also reviewed the institutionalisation and structure of [Gender Focal Points](#).

[2015 is an important transitional year](#): the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the [UN Beijing Platform for Action](#), and the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of [UN Resolution 1325 on Women & Elections](#), 2015 is also the first full year of the new European Parliament, and a period of on-going [EU and ACP](#) reviews towards the approaching post-Cotonou Agreement period. A [new PIFS Secretary-General](#) is pushing ahead with the replacement for the Pacific Plan, the [Framework for Pacific Regionalism](#). The [SPC](#) is currently defining a replacement for the [Revised Pacific Platform for Action on Advancement of Women and Gender Equality \(2005 to 2015\)](#). 2014 saw the Third [UN SIDS](#) conference hosted in the Pacific and the launch of the [SAMOA Pathway](#). 2015 is also, of course, the final year for achieving the [MDGs](#), and the culmination of the recent transition to the [SDGs 'Global Goals'](#) whose targets will be locally aligned, and which indicate a wider paradigm change in the moves away from donor-recipient models of development cooperation and towards more multiplex and [two-way development partnerships](#).

We also detect that [2015 is a transitional year in terms of the EU's internal awareness of changing paradigms, and the institutional structures, instruments and processes through which gender issues are organised and implemented](#). In particular, we have come to understand a growing awareness that 'gender' needs to be re-thought – and a recognition that emphasises on gender as a cross-cutting issue and as an issue to be mainstreamed, have made gender at the same time both ubiquitous and omnipresent, and yet curiously undefined and ephemeral, as if everywhere and nowhere. For example, the words 'gender' or 'woman' do not feature in the [EC Annual Report on the European Union's Development and External Assistance Policies and their Implementation in 2013](#).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.pacwip.org/resources/news/2012/43rd-pacific-islands-forum-communicue-annex-1-pacific-leaders-gender-equality-declaration.html>

<sup>5</sup> Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat 12 September 2015, 46th Pacific Islands Forum Communiqué

<sup>6</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/annual-report-2014-eu-development-external-assistance-policies-implementation-in-2013\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/annual-report-2014-eu-development-external-assistance-policies-implementation-in-2013_en.pdf)

Clearly, gender relations involve, and gender ideas index, rather more than just a taken for granted folk-model sexed difference between women and men. Certain responses and inputs to the [Gender Action Plan](#) review process gave the impression of a gender policy platform in search of a definition: for example, alongside recommending that the EU 'Dedicate sufficient financial and human resources to gender equality' and 'Instate true expertise on gender within all EU institutions and delegations', CONCORD urge that 'The new GAP should clearly state what is intended by "gender" in its suggestions under conceptual coherence.'<sup>7</sup>

The GAP review process is clearly seen by stakeholders such as the [ODI](#) as 'an important opportunity to accelerate support for gender equality and women's and girls' rights', and who argue that 'The EU has failed to deliver on its gender equality commitments [...] Fundamentally, it has not recognized or responded to the structural inequalities that perpetuate unequal gender relations', and go so far as to insist 'That a radical shift is needed'.<sup>8</sup> Both [CONCORD](#) and [ODI](#) voiced a widespread view that, in order for 'gender' to be taken more seriously, responsibility for implementing the revised GAP should rest with the [High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission](#).

A recent survey of the [Gender Focal Point](#) network revealed a lack of emphasis, time available, capacity and not least realistic if not in-depth expertise on gender – which professional social scientists know to be a complex field of theory that requires more than a passing familiarity with a cultural context and a long-term commitment to understand how gender is conceived and practiced locally.<sup>9</sup> But whereas this [GFP](#) network survey assumes that the 'challenge is primarily cultural and organisational' [we suggest that rather than looking for solutions in the culture and organization of the EU, a shift is required to grasp what is at stake in the cultural terms of the peoples of places such as the Pacific](#).

Accordingly, the underlying premise of this research is that better understanding the social relations and actions and changing value systems that enable and constrain gender inequality, and refining working definitions of the problems through vernacular terms and local exegesis, will lead to better informed options for policy support that are more likely to find local ownership and dovetail with PIC's own national strategies.

## Research Design

As social scientists, our research involves ethnographic description and conceptual clarification to refine the terms of analysis because our descriptions have real life consequences. Fundamentally, we have wanted to learn about the issues and to understand the realities in Pacific people's own terms and own ways, in order to make contextually informed recommendations for action to address gender inequality in the region.

Our research methods have emphasised a participatory approach and the principle of starting with Pacific people's own realities and analyses, and equally our recommendations for action also emphasise that any development action involving Pacific peoples must fully recognise that an effective 'participatory model is less oriented to the political-economic dimension and more rooted in the cultural realities of development'.<sup>10</sup> Throughout this research project, the aim has been to better identify the problems from within, so to speak,

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.concordeurope.org/publications/item/410-preliminary-recommendations-for-the-new-eu-gender-action-plan-2016-2020>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.odi.org/publications/8612-options-successor-eus-gender-action-plan>

<sup>9</sup> <http://capacity4dev.ec.europa.eu/public-gender/blog/gender-policy-and-practice-more-humane-approach-bridging-gap>

<sup>10</sup> Mefalopulos, Paolo (2008). *Development Communication Sourcebook: Broadening the Boundaries of Communication*. Washington DC: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank.

<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTDEVCOMMENG/Resources/DevelopmentCommSourcebook.pdf#page235>

such that solutions can be more effectively formulated and innovative pathways for change defined.

This project's research design and organisation and case-study methodology produced a series of small-scale in-country ethnographically informed case-studies by which to capture, foreground and privilege Pacific people's own analyses of incidents and issues, and workable future options. The project's research design, activities, methodology and expert team composition were put in place to address several key concerns and approaches:

- to culturally analyse the roots of gender based violence and other specific manifestations of gender inequalities, and to advise on future research capacity building, our research team includes several leading researchers on Pacific gender issues, extensive consulting experience on this issue, and a good number of Pacific Islands researchers.
- to avoid western cultural biases, and to identify any existing processes and culturally appropriate mechanisms, the expertise in our research team includes anthropology, legal studies, international development and a Pacific film-maker, and is embedded in long-term involvement with Pacific communities, and in several countries will be carried out by research centres in the Pacific, and by a combination of women and men researchers.
- to propose innovative pathways for EU actions, and to estimate the necessary financial envelope, the team involved extensive experience of international development consulting, and a development consultant with first-hand experience of DEVCO programming for the Pacific region

During the Inception phase we produced a desktop legal and policy review From Platforms to Actions, which surveyed current national and international provisions, and considered other existing programmes in this area. This initial report also provided orientation towards an 'EU niche', and guided considerations for policy options and alternative pathways for future EU programming.

During the Field phase, project team members conducted case-studies in 10 Pacific island countries across all three regions of the Pacific: Melanesia (Fiji, PNG, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu), Micronesia (FSM, Kiribati, Marshall Islands and Palau) and Polynesia (Samoa and Tuvalu), and also considered Pacific men's and women's involvements in the mobile and globalised fishing industry in the region.

During the Synthesis phase, 10 project team members convened for an intensive 4-day workshop focused on analysis and writing-up, and hosted by the Centro Incontri Umani, Ascona, Switzerland.<sup>11</sup> In this way we were able to draw together, discuss and analyse the findings from across the region, and to draw out significant points and working principles. As part of the workshop, project members also made a Skype presentation of the project's initial findings to DEVCO in Brussels. Following the workshop, two members of the project team made an initial presentation of findings and consulted with DEVCO and EEAS in Brussels.



<sup>11</sup> <http://www.ciu-ascona.org/a-eng/Activities/Actual.html>



## Research Methodology

Anthropological research is conducted through fieldwork and relies upon the development of linguistic competence, cultural insight and social relations developed through long-term fieldwork. A core disciplinary research method and practice, participant-observation, has been developed and debated, and is now appreciated for its flexibility to adaptation to the particular circumstances of the social relations in a specific context. Anthropologists have developed methods by which to scale and provide passage between different knowledges, contexts and levels of analysis. Broadly defined, ethnography provides a short-hand description of both field- and writing-practice, and denotes a specific method by which cultural data can be understood through its own terms, and through a reflexive relation with the researchers own cultural assumptions.

As such, ethnography affords a method by which the vernacular concepts and terms of local cultural analyses, political exegesis and social theory, can be applied as a source of scholarly analytical language, and to thereby respect, foreground, privilege and work with local analyses as primary theory. This involves looking for theoretical resources in the same places as we look for data, and basing academic analysis on local analysis. These methods have proven successful as a means of understanding the logic of local practices.

This common methodology (ethnography and local analyses), and common case-study format provides some coherence to a picture that is not intended to theorise gender inequality as much as prove the anthropological approach, to vividly present the realities, and to provide a basis for pulling out options for policy. This methodology then, provides a common method for the research team to work with, and to provide a flexible model that can be adapted to each site:

- to work in-depth and as far as possible in local vernacular terms
- to demonstrate the applicability of an ethnographic case-study method's ability to access and foreground Pacific people's own analyses of gender issues
- to demonstrate the validity and applicability of the project's findings

Each case-study comprises a description of a particular incident or issue, a commentary on the local analysis to clarify and draw out the relational nuances, and a country specific summary of gender inequality and policy initiatives.

In almost all cases, researchers were able to draw upon existing contacts and fieldsites, and were able to gather together a small group to select and discuss together an incident or issue:

- to foreground as much as possible the local terms of analysis for the actions, motivations, values and relations at work
- to dwell upon the problems and social predicaments people see in these situations in terms of transformed bases, shifts in power and contradictions and constraints
- to try and draw out the means people see as avenues for leveraging understanding and change.

Obviously, with each researcher embedded in longer-standing research relations in the particular chosen fieldsites, they were able to readily understand the cultural caveats and social circumstances. As far as possible, fieldwork discussions relied upon local analysis rather than prefigured terms in order to illustrate and comprehend the problems and possible ways forward most effectively.

## Research Findings

The research is reported through a series of [ethnographic in-country case-studies](#) which serve as stand-alone briefing papers and which foreground a vivid picture of the circumstances that any future programme has to be able to deal with in an appropriately Pacific way. Our research reports a series of findings that may well appear counter-intuitive to Euro-American assumptions - for example:

Fiji:

- While domestic violence is a key form of violence, a focus on the marital relationship alone is insufficient because it fails to capture the context in which such violence occurs
- Perceptions of inequality and inequity are focused on the relationship rather than on individual

Kiribati:

- Violence within the family context is seen as acceptable for maintaining the social relations between parent/child, husband/wife
- Shame or dishonour is not so much linked to committing violence as having others intervene

Micronesia:

- Sexuality of women in Micronesia was part of reciprocal relations and exchange between men and communities.
- Reciprocity of nurture and expectation of future returns can oblige sexual favours to someone who has a claim on one's own growth

PNG:

- Core commitments to reciprocity and equality in relations is also expressed through violence to rebalance relations (e.g. a wife or husband not treated as such can act in non-wifely or non-husbandly way)
- Clearly apportioning blame makes mediation unsuccessful

Samoa:

- Notions of human/women's rights are culturally problematic; human rights are seen as undermining Samoan culture.
- In cases of domestic violence women self-victimise as a dutiful response to domestic violence which is a culturally accepted method of maintaining household hierarchies of status and power.

Tuvalu:

- New legislation is viewed with suspicion and open to misinterpretation
- The geographical spread of people means that many are marginalised from positive efforts to address domestic violence or address gender inequality more widely

Solomon Islands:

- Gender equality has been neglected under other pressures to restore peace and order in the islands
- The geographical dispersal of people means that many are left out of interventions to achieve gender equality or escape domestic violence
- Getting young people on board in Solomon Islands seems to be having positive results

Vanuatu:

- Husbands are taken to also represent and stand for their wives in a form of shared identity
- People are not only their own persons - act through others, implicated in actions of others

Gender inequality in the Pacific is a complex of historical and contemporary relations, values and concepts being remade in a transforming regional context that is responding to globalisation in highly distinctive ways.

Gender in the Pacific is not merely a matter of the biological difference between men and women: the research evidence suggests that rather than such properties of bodies, it is the actions performed that gender a person.

The research reported here casts serious doubt on the conceptual, social and cultural assumptions that underpin the current gender policy paradigm, and also suggests that the dominant models for levering 'individual' and 'societal' behaviour changes misunderstand the tenets of Pacific socialites.

## Report Outline

**Chapter 1** of the report provide overviews of gender inequality in the Pacific to understand the regional and national pictures of the situation and efforts to address it, and also sets out the platform of the EU gender policy framework in order to provide detailed recommendations on where the research findings can inform actions under particular funds and suggest political messages under existing instruments.

We also consider other international partner programmes in this area in order to identify an 'EU niche' through proposals for policy options and alternative pathways for future EU programming. The report is also in dialogue with specific national strategies and interventions intended to eliminate violence against women and girls, and empower women to actively participate in the socio-economic and political arena. By way of supporting initiatives of the EU's international development partners (such as AUSAID's long-term Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development programme), to identify a **distinctive niche** for a European approach so as to add value through the qualities of the options for programming action.

**Chapter 2** provides detailed country studies of Fiji, Kiribati, Micronesia, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. Each country study is designed to provide a stand alone briefing paper. They provide a social science introduction, an overview of gender inequality issues, a series of detailed first-hand case-studies, key defining features and provide an overview of current and possible actions.

The country case studies in this report reflect the pervasiveness of this issue but also highlight the social and normative complexities that background and often justify this violence. They also draw attention to certain relevant aspects and issues, such as, examples of self-blaming by women, ambivalence of the church and misunderstandings about provisions to enhance gender equality and human rights.

**Chapter 3** provides the recommendations arising from the research: a detailed study of how the EU's Gender Action Programme 2016-2020 might be implemented in the Pacific, and provides summaries of the research findings and appropriate options for action, by country and by region.

**Accepting the established EU GAP policy platform as a starting point**, this research project has approached the complex problems of gender inequality in the Pacific as they are depicted in the concerns of regional and national agents in the Pacific, and **moves on from questions of making EU bureaucratic procedures more efficient and effective**, to focus on what the existing policy platform enables us to address: the questions of fully understanding the problems of gender inequality in Pacific terms, and of defining effective approaches and programming actions.

**Europe's geographical distance from the Pacific region is not necessarily a barrier to working more closely with Pacific communities.** Vast spatial distances have never been a barrier to social relations for Pacific peoples. Rather than geography, the keys to working more closely with Pacific communities are a strong participatory approach, engaging the Pacific through its own forms of sociality and on its own conceptual terms, finding new ways of working collaboratively with communities to support their own efforts, in order to enable development cooperation to adhere more closely to the realities of gender inequality action and in the Pacific region.

Finally, this one year project has brought together a team of thirteen researchers from Europe and the Pacific (see Appendix 3) and conducted ten country studies. A preliminary report was presented in March, and a draft final report in early November. Numerous meetings and calls have been held with DEVCO and EEAS, including an intensive four day workshop in Ascona, Switzerland. In November, four members of the team delivered a DEVCO Infopoint conference,<sup>12</sup> and met DEVCO and EEAS to discuss the findings.

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<sup>12</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/infopoint-lunchtime-conference-gender-inequality-pacific-ethnographic-case-studies-paradigm-shifts\\_en](http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/infopoint-lunchtime-conference-gender-inequality-pacific-ethnographic-case-studies-paradigm-shifts_en)

# 1. Overviews of Gender Inequality in the Pacific

*Pacific women are hardworking, creative, resourceful and resilient agents. Yet their pre-dominant portrayal is one of vulnerable victimhood distinguished by limited opportunities for empowerment and intractable gender inequality and gender violence. [...] Pacific women are doubly devalued by masculinist structures that have their origins in both indigenous cultures and the introduced culture of a globalizing capitalism in both colonial and contemporary epochs.<sup>13</sup>*

## Pacific context and concerns

In positioning this research project in the contemporary situation and depiction of gender inequality in the Pacific, our approach has been to recognise the value of respecting and understanding the issues and context as they are registered by Pacific island countries, and by the EU's key partners in the Pacific - the ACP and PIFS. Whilst details of national strategies, policies and initiatives are provided in the country studies below, we begin here with the ACP and PIFS.

The recent [ACP Women, Actors of Development report \(2014\)](#), conveys a vivid picture of the challenges: 'women in the Pacific region endure some of the highest levels of violence against women in the world' (p58); 'women and girls have been discriminated against in health, education and the labour market' (p58); 'some progress has been made. [...] However, the rate of women in leadership positions across the Pacific remains pervasively low' (p57); 'even when poverty levels are decreasing, gender, economic class, and other forms of inequality remain a major challenge for the equitable human sustainable development in the region' (p57).

The present project took a lead from the report's emphasis on 'the [added value of bottom-up approaches to women's empowerment in local contexts](#)' (p3). The [ACP Women](#) report also highlights that: 'The good practices presented confirm that development projects that take into account the [socio-political history](#) of a country or a region are more likely to have a long-lasting impact on local development and, in particular, can better guide policy decisions on where to invest and why' (p3), and how 'Several initiatives stress the [importance of indigenous knowledge](#) in projects aiming to empower women economically, showing that grassroots women are a gold mine in the strategic use of money: given their power to project themselves and their families into the future, they are capable savers and investors in social well-being - theirs as well as that of their families, in particular their children.' (p3).

The [11 EDF RIP](#) indicates that 'To realize this goal, Leaders commit with renewed energy to implement the gender equality actions of the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Revised Pacific Platform for Action on Advancement of Women and Gender Equality (2005 to 2015); the Pacific Plan; the 42nd Pacific Island Forum commitment to increase the representation of women in legislatures and decision making; and the 40th Pacific Island Forum commitment to eradicate sexual and gender based violence'.<sup>14</sup>

At the 43rd [Pacific Islands Forum](#) in 2012, Pacific leaders pledged: 'to act to end violence against women by progressively implementing a set of essential services to women and girls who are survivors of violence, enacting and implementing domestic violence legislation to protect women from violence and impose appropriate penalties for

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<sup>13</sup> Falling through the net?, Jolly & Lepani 2015.

<sup>14</sup> [http://www.forumsec.org/resources/uploads/attachments/documents/EDF11\\_Pacific\\_RIP\\_submitted\\_to\\_EU\\_Final\\_Draft\\_271014.pdf](http://www.forumsec.org/resources/uploads/attachments/documents/EDF11_Pacific_RIP_submitted_to_EU_Final_Draft_271014.pdf)

perpetrators of violence' (Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration).<sup>15</sup> Pacific leaders reaffirmed this commitment at the 46th Pacific Islands Forum in September 2015, noting that: 'There has been notable progress on gender equality in three of the six key Declaration areas: gender responsive policies and programmes, gender parity on education and ending violence against women'.<sup>16</sup>

However, and perhaps reflecting the renewed emphasis on a regional political rather than development remit, the new [PIF Framework For Pacific Regionalism](#) makes only one mention of gender - as one of six core values: 'We embrace good governance, the full observance of democratic values, the rule of law, the defence and promotion of all human rights, gender equality, and commitment to just societies' (p3).

## Contemporary indicators of gender inequality in the Pacific

Although there is a shortage of data for a number of Pacific island countries clearly in some areas, notably education, gender equality is being improved. However, the recent [ACP Women, Actors of Development \(2014\)](#) report shows that there is still a long road to travel before Pacific Island women have all their human rights protected, benefit equally from development outcomes, and can fulfil their aspirations ([See Annex 1: ACP Overview of selected gender equality indicators](#)).

Shortcomings on gender equality are highlighted in the [United Nations Periodic Review Reports on Pacific Island Countries](#) (first cycle 2008-2012). Key Recommendations relevant to gender equality that emerged from the first round of the UPR were:

- Draft and enact legislation on violence against women (VAW)
- Remove discriminatory provisions in existing legislation and Constitutions
- Increase training for law enforcement agencies and government officials on gender, human rights and VAW
- Ratify [CEDAW](#) and incorporate CEDAW into domestic legislation
- Increase women's participation at all levels of decision making.<sup>17</sup>

In particular women are adversely affected by domestic violence, inequality of economic opportunity, and, especially in urban areas, insecurity of land rights. The girl child is also subject to gender discrimination in terms of access to education, especially secondary education, and in some countries is vulnerable to arranged marriages, sexual and other forms of abuse (including high incidences of incest and sexual assault by relatives). In time of crisis or civil unrest, Pacific women (as elsewhere in the world) are increasingly likely to be subject to violence, poverty and homelessness. Infant mortality remains high as does maternal death, and disabled and elderly women, especially widows, may be particularly vulnerable to discriminatory treatment.

Development and changes in the economic structure of Pacific Island countries has also disadvantaged women, ranging from the loss of gardening land for the production of food to the absenteeism of husbands and other male family members engaged in working away from home. There is also some evidence to suggest that women are increasingly marginalised in decisions relating to the commercial use of land and other resources, and may be excluded or treated unequally in the distribution of benefits.

There is however, evidence to suggest that although it is unlikely that most PICs will have met MDGs, where opportunities are made available to them, women are engaging in some

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<sup>15</sup> <http://www.pacwip.org/resources/news/2012/43rd-pacific-islands-forum-communique-annex-1-pacific-leaders-gender-equality-declaration.html>

<sup>16</sup> Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat 12 September 2015, 46th Pacific Islands Forum Communique

<sup>17</sup> Secretariat of the Pacific community and Regional Rights Resources Team: Pacific Island States and the Universal Periodic Review, A toolkit for Pacific Island States to measure progress and compliance against Universal Periodic Review recommendations', pp9-10, 2012.

entrepreneurial activity in their own right often through accessing micro-finance, and an increasing number of women and girls are getting an education and enjoying improved health care. Examples of this can be found in Papua New Guinea where the first Women's Micro Bank was opened in August of 2014 and the National Development Bank has a dedicated women in banking section which has products designed for Papua New Guinean owned businesses and SME's.

Table 1: Pacific Island countries in The United Nations Development Programme, Human Development Report, Gender Equality Index (Table 4).

Country (Human Development Index ranking)	Gender inequality Index rank 2013	Share of seats in Parliament (World Bank % in brackets 2014)	Some secondary education 25+ female 2005-2012	Some secondary education 25+ male 2005-2012
<b>Fiji (88)</b>	-	-	57.5	58.1
<b>FSM (124)</b>	-	0.1(0)	-	-
<b>Kiribati (133)</b>	-	8.7 (9)	-	-
<b>Marshall Islands</b>	-	3.0 (3)	-	-
<b>Nauru</b>	-	5.3	-	-
<b>PNG (157)</b>	135	2.7 (3)	6.8	14.1
<b>Samoa (106)</b>	111	4.1(4)	64.3	60.0
<b>Solomon Islands (157)</b>	-	2.0 (2)	-	-
<b>Tonga (100)</b>	90	3,6 (4)	87.5	88.3
<b>Tuvalu</b>	-	6.7 (7)	-	-
<b>Vanuatu (131)</b>	-	0.1(0)	-	-

## Knowledge gaps

The population of the Pacific region is fairly evenly divided between men and women, but despite a continuing programme of national, regional and international initiatives, post the 1995 Beijing Platform,<sup>18</sup> by the EU and other agencies, the achievement of gender equality continues to present challenges. There are many dimensions which might be considered in looking at gender equality. A number of Pacific Island countries face particular challenges with respect to promoting women's voice, influence and empowerment – in both the private and public spheres.

## Domestic and other violence against women

Although gender-based violence remains pervasive in the (East-Asia-Pacific) region, the prevalence of violence against women in the Pacific is among the highest in the world. Data indicate that upward of 60 per cent of adult women have experienced physical or sexual violence during their lifetime, often at the hands of an intimate partner (SPC 2009, SPC 2010, VWC 2011). Throughout the region, violence against women is a serious

<sup>18</sup> Beijing Platform for Action emerged from the fourth world conference on women and urged governments to adopt action plans for equality, development and peace. Details available on the UNWomen website. The platform for action identifies a number of 'women and' areas: Poverty, Education and Training, Health, Violence, Armed Conflict, the Economy, Power and Decision-Making, Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women, Human Rights, the Media, the Environment and the Girl-child. Different donor programmes have tended to focus on different individual headings.

problem. Indeed international agencies have highlighted the human rights abuses associated with violence – primarily against women and children, in Pacific island states.<sup>19</sup>

The country case studies in this report reflect the pervasiveness of this issue but also highlight the social and normative complexities that background and often justify this violence.

In a discussion paper on 'Violence Against Women in the Pacific' published by the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre which acts as the Secretariat for the Pacific Women's Network Against Violence Against Women, it was reported that

"Vanuatu Women's Centre's statistics show that a total of 2,026 new clients and 4,329 repeat clients were attended to from July 1999 to March 2003 ... In Papua New Guinea, the Eastern Highlands Family Voice recorded a total of 833 clients from December 1999 to March 2003. There were a total of 349 domestic violence cases ... The Samoa Family Health and Safety Survey showed that 37.6% of women had been physically abused while 18.6% were emotionally abused."<sup>20</sup>

Concern about domestic violence in Kiribati and the Federated States of Micronesia has also been expressed,<sup>21</sup> and Amnesty International also reported on domestic violence in Papua New Guinea,<sup>22</sup> noting that violence against women in PNG was pervasive, including violence against the girl child, and that little was being done by the police, courts or other government agencies to prevent, investigate or punish such conduct. Even small countries such as Tuvalu are not exempt from high incidences of domestic violence.<sup>23</sup>

Domestic violence is only one manifestation of violence against women. Others forms of violence include assault, rape – including marital rape, incest, harassment in public places or in the work place. Often it may be difficult to draw the line around domestic violence and other manifestations of violence especially where people live in extended families or close knit communities. Indeed the very label 'domestic' can create problems because, as is evident in for example the country study of Tuvalu, all too often such violence is seen as falling within the private sphere, away from public scrutiny and outside the ambit of the exercise of powers by police or other authorities.

Governments of the region are not unaware of the problems and the issue has been addressed repeatedly in different forms and forums including in responses to international agencies such as the UN in country reports on human rights, at the regional level through the Pacific Forum and at national level, as is evident from the country reports. Since 2002 a raft of legislation has been triggered by the Universal Periodic Review process and the work of the Regional Rights Resources Team. Today, in the majority of Pacific island countries there is legislation addressing domestic violence and evidence of encouraging changes to the criminal law to include marital rape. Special units have been set up in the national Police and there is a plethora of awareness raising, training and advocacy. As the country reports reveal however, this infrastructure may fail to address root causes of violence, may be misunderstood or may be practically unworkable due to lack of resources. There is also the danger that having put in place legislation, national governments may become complacent about violence against women. For example at the 46th Pacific Islands Forum September 2015 at which leaders reaffirmed their commitment to the 2012 Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration it was stated: 'There has been notable progress on gender equality in three of the six key Declaration areas: gender responsive

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<sup>19</sup> The focus on women and children is triggered by two factors: 1. Women and children are most often the victims of domestic violence, 2. International agencies and treaties tend to be focused on violence against women and children, e.g, UNIFEM, UNICEF, CEDAW and CRC. While this is understandable it often serves to conceal violence against sub-groups such as the elderly, the disabled, those suffering from HIV/AIDS and homosexuals.

<sup>20</sup> (Accessed 12/12/08)

<sup>21</sup> US Country Report 2007. In 2009 The Kiribati Government stated that it would be spending 1.7 million aid money on research into domestic violence; Kiribati: Country Report <[www.un.org/esa/vawdatabase](http://www.un.org/esa/vawdatabase)> . It should be noted that this UN database has singularly little information on Pacific Island States.

<sup>22</sup> 'PNG: Violence Against Women; Not Inevitable; Never Acceptable!' (ASA 34/002/2006)

<sup>23</sup> Tuvalu: Amnesty International Submission to the UN Universal Periodic Review December 2008, p 5.



'Progress on gender equality in the Pacific Islands is gaining momentum following a pledge by political leaders'  
Catherine Wilson, theguardian.com 16 August 2014.

policies and programmes, gender parity on education and ending violence against women'.<sup>24</sup>

There is no room for complacency. UNICEF Report *Harmful Connections: Examining the relationship between violence against women and violence against children in the South Pacific 2015*, which looks at Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu shows that the lifetime prevalence of physical and/or sexual violence by intimate partner:ever-partnered women aged 15-49 or 18-49 is as follows:<sup>25</sup>

Fiji	64%
Kiribati	68%
Samoa	46%
Solomon Islands	65%
Tonga	40%
Vanuatu	60%

The UNICEF report concludes by stating: 'The challenge before governments and development partners is to address issues of violence against women and children holistically and in a complimentary way'.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat 12 September 2015, 46th Pacific Islands Forum Communique

<sup>25</sup> UNICEF, *Harmful Connections: Examining the relationship between violence against women and violence against children in the South Pacific Suva 2015*, p 4.

<sup>26</sup> P22.



## Women in politics

Female political representation in politics in the Pacific is among the lowest in the world – the world average is 22.2% women and 77.8% men (as at June 2015). Although female political participation is relatively low worldwide – only 19.6 percent of the world’s parliamentarians were women in December 2011 – four of the eight countries in the world with no female parliamentarians were located in the Pacific.<sup>27</sup> Current representation of women in parliament remains low, according to Pacific Women in Politics the numbers as of June 1, 2015 were as follows:

Country	Total MPs	Women in Parliament
Cook Islands	24	4
Federated States of Micronesia	14	0
Fiji	50	8
Kiribati	46	4
Marshall Islands	33	1
Nauru	19	1
Niue	20	3
Palau	29	3
Papua New Guinea	111	3
Samoa	49	3
Solomon Islands	50	1
Tonga	27	1
Tuvalu	15	1
Vanuatu	52	0

After a period of no elected government in Fiji the 2014 elections saw eight women returned as MPs, one of whom subsequently became the speaker. Similarly in Papua New Guinea the election of three women in 2012 was matched only by female representation in 1977, and this number represents the highest female representation since PNG became independent. Pacific Women in Politics note however that ‘Like almost everywhere else in the world, politics in Fiji is still male-dominated, with men formulating the structures and rules of the political game’. However the same report also attributed the increase in female representation in parliament to the impact of women’s organisations and women’s active participation in community and church groups’ (Pacific Women in Politics <pacwip.org>).

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<sup>27</sup> World Bank East Asia and Pacific Regional Report ‘Towards Gender Quality in East Asia and the Pacific: A Companion to the World Development Report 2012, the World Bank, Washington www.ipu.org:2)



Certainly there is more evident activity directed at getting women into politics in the region, ranging from the above online network (pacwip) to local groups such as that recently established in Vanuatu: the Coalition Fund for Gender Equity in Vanuatu Parliament.

These groups and other agencies have been involved in a number of election awareness and training events. For example prior to the 2012 PNG elections UNDP ran a Practice Parliament training and the Centre for Democratic Institutions ran a PNG Women Candidates Training Strategy (both were organised by the PNG Office for the Development of Women, with the WCT funded through what was then Australian Aid). Prior to the 2014 election in Fiji, the Fiji Women's Forum, with support from the National Council of Women, the Fiji Women's Rights Movement, Femlink Pacific and Na Soqosoqo Vakamarama iTaukei, published a 'Women in Politics Campaign Handbook' to provide 'useful tools and includes practical advice, checklists and questionnaires covering all the key components for a successful election campaign.' Subsequently revised to take into account feedback after the elections the handbook is now available for women candidates throughout the region. There are also proposals to set quotas for female representation. For example, in Samoa amendments to the Constitution in 2013 provides for a 10% quota of women representatives in Parliament, with five seats reserved for women. Potential candidates for future elections are being supported by the Samoan Women's Parliamentary Programme. The positive aspects of this move have however, been rather undermined by statements from the Prime Minister that 'women should not let their drive and determination to enter politics make them neglect their God given duties as mothers'.

***'women should not let their drive and determination to enter politics make them neglect their God given duties as mothers'.***

In Vanuatu in 2013 there was a plan approved to have a minimum of 30% representation of women in parliament, however with rapid changes of government nothing seems to have come of this although seventeen women did stand for election in 2012, and there were reserved seats in municipal elections in 2014. The present President, Baldwin Lonsdale has called on the leaders of the country to put more women in parliament in the 2016

elections. In Solomon Islands a radio drama 'A time to Stand' was broadcast as part of the Strongim Mere project – a joint project of the EU, UN Women and Vois blong Mere, to encourage women to participate in the elections and stand for parliament prior to the 2014 elections.<sup>28</sup> In February 2015 a report released by the Solomon Islands Young Women Parliamentary Group found considerable support in principle for having women in parliament, although at present there is only one female MP.

Despite a number of initiatives by national, regional and international agencies to achieve greater gender equity there are still huge gender inequalities.

## International and national legal frameworks

### **Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)**

The commitment of national governments to national and international legal obligations is a demonstration of political will to address gender issues. Almost all Pacific Island Countries are signatories to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (See Table 2), although some quite recently, eg Cook Islands and Marshall Islands 2006, Kiribati and Federated States of Micronesia 2004, Nauru 2011 and Tonga has recently (March 2015) indicated that it will ratify the Convention although this decision may now be subject to a national referendum. With dualist legal systems commitments under international treaties have no effect in domestic law until incorporated into the national law. Only Vanuatu has done this. Consequently although all signatory states remain subject to the reporting procedures that accompany international conventions, the provisions therein cannot be argued in court as being part of the legal system unless specific provision is made to do so. Despite this however, there is increasing evidence that courts in the region are prepared to read the law so as to try and give effect to international human rights obligations. For this process to maintain momentum two things are necessary: lawyers need to be able to have open and free access to the legal decisions of other Pacific island countries (for example through the law data base PacLII); judges and lawyers need regular and sustained human rights training, including gender equality awareness.<sup>29</sup>

Some work is being done on this for example by the International Centre for Advocates Against Discrimination (ICAAD) which is running a project 'Access to Justice for Women and Girls in the Pacific',<sup>30</sup> the work of RRT (Regional Rights Resources Team) and the Australian Government funded 'Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development, launched in 2012 for a ten year period. While a number of judicial training programmes incorporate the Pacific with Asia meaning that few if any Pacific judges or magistrates can attend such events,<sup>31</sup> there was a Pacific Judicial Development Programme supported by New Zealand Aid and managed by the Federal Court of Australia, but this ended in June 2015. The University of Hawaii has also run judicial training sessions for judges in nearby Pacific island countries: Marshall Islands, Palau, Federated States of Micronesia and American Samoa.

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<sup>28</sup> A time to Stand <https://soundcloud.com/unwomen/sets/a-time-to-stand>

<sup>29</sup> A Declaration on Gender Equality in the Courts was made in 1997 (the Denaru Declaration), in 1999 The Tanoa Declaration on Human Rights in the Law was made and Pacific Regional Gender Equality Training for Chief and Senior Magistrates was held.

<sup>30</sup> Promoting Access to Justice for Women and Girls in Pacific Island Countries, CGI Commitment to Action: A Systems Approach to combating Violence Against Women and Girls in the Pacific, Clinton Global Initiative 2015 Commitment to Action <[globalgiving.org](http://globalgiving.org)>

<sup>31</sup> See eg UNWomen 'Regional Judicial Dialogue on Judging with a Gender Perspective' 27 September 2015. Although UNWomen are taking steps in the Pacific, for example by calling for research in Vanuatu into 'How women Experience the Laws in Vanuatu' October 2015.

## National Constitutions and Gender Equality

Most of the written constitutions of PICS incorporate statement of fundamental rights (Table 2) among which are prohibitions against discrimination on the grounds of sex and equality before the law. However this equality is, in some countries, subject to other considerations which also receive constitutional protection which may operate against gender equality. So for example in the Federated States of Micronesia the role or function of a traditional leader as recognized by custom and tradition is protected (and these tend to be men); in Cook Islands the House of Arikis consists of traditional island defined leaders and in Vanuatu the Malvatumauri brings together senior chiefs – again usually male. In Samoa, equality in the constitution may be undermined by national law which confers considerable local power on village assemblies (Fono) which again are dominated by men, and because only matai can be elected to parliament and most of these are men – indeed in some villages women cannot be matai, and in Tuvalu the fundamental right to non-discrimination is subject to Tuvaluan values and cultures and does not include discrimination on the ground of sex and does not apply to a range of excluded areas.

## National laws

There are areas of progress in achieving women’s human rights and gender equality in Pacific Island countries and territories (PICTs). In particular a number of countries have adopted laws to protect women and children against domestic violence (Table 2) and there is a better understanding of the need to integrate a gender perspective across all sectors of development; there are new initiatives promoting women’s political leadership; overall, women’s health and access to education are improving; and their contribution to national economies has started to be recognized. There are however still formal inequalities found in the law for example in the grounds of divorce, in the law of succession, in family law, in the rights to citizenship, in the law of evidence, laws relating to land and titles, and in employment law. Further, where, in plural legal systems such as those found in the Pacific, custom is recognized as a regulatory framework, there are a number of customs which operate to the detriment of women, including in respect of land and other property, inheritance, custody of children, freedom of movement and in situations where women are abandoned, divorced or widowed, and where women or girls are victims of crimes.

Table 2: International & National Legal Frameworks & Civic Responses

PIC	CEDAW	Constitutional protection against sex/gender discrimination	National legislation against Domestic Violence/VAW	Civic Organisations
<b>Cook Islands</b>	11 Aug 2006	All fundamental rights (sex)	Family Law Bill 2015	<i>Punanga Tauturu</i> (Women’s counselling Centre)
<b>FSM</b>	1 September 2004	Equal protection of the law (sex)		Women’s Association Network
<b>Fiji</b>	28 August 1995	Full equality – discrimination includes inter alia sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity and expression	Domestic Violence Decree 2009	Fiji Women’s Crisis Centre

<b>Kiribati</b>	17 March 2004	Freedom from discrimination but <u>not</u> on grounds or sex/gender	Family Peace Act for Domestic Violence 2014 ( <i>Te Rau N Te Mweenga Act</i> )	Crisis Centre
<b>Marshall Islands</b>	2 March 2006	Equality under the law and no discrimination on grounds (inter alia) of gender	Domestic Violence Prevention and Protection Act 2011	Women United Together
<b>Nauru</b>	23 June 2011	Equal rights regardless (inter alia) of sex		Nauru Women's National Council; Young Women's Council national multi-stakeholder Domestic Violence Committee
<b>Niue</b>	Extended via New Zealand 10 January 1985	No bill of rights in Niue Constitution	Family Protection bill in draft	
<b>Palau</b>	20 September 2011	No discrimination on the grounds (inter alia) of sex	Family Protection Act 2010	Belau Women's Resource Center; <i>Milad'L Dil</i>
<b>PNG</b>	12 January 1995	Equality of citizens regardless (inter alia) of sex	Family Protection Act 2013	Family and Sexual Violence Action Committee; <i>Meri Toksave</i> (online service); Kup women for Peace; Simbu Women's Centre, Kundiawa; Eastern Highlands Family Voice, Goroka; Leitana Nehan Women's Development Agency; East Sepik Committee Against violence Against Women, Wewak
<b>Samoa</b>	25 September 1992	Equal protection before and under the law, no discrimination on grounds (inter alia) of sex	Family Safety Act 2013	<i>Mapusaga o Alga Inc</i>
<b>Solomon Islands</b>	6 May 2002 + CEDAW Optional Protocol (6/05/2002)	No discrimination on grounds (inter alia) or sex	Family Protection Act 2014	National Council of Women
<b>Tonga</b>	Had indicated that it will ratify with reservations (March 2015)	Same law for all classes (no reference to sex/gender)	Family Protection Act 2013	Women and Children's Crisis Centre <i>Langa Fonua 'a Fafine,</i> National Centre for Women and Children <i>Ma'a Fafine mo e Familii</i>

<b>Tuvalu</b>	6 October 1999	Freedom from discrimination but no reference to sex and/or gender	Family Protection and Domestic Violence Act 2014  Police Powers and Duties Act 2009	
<b>Vanuatu</b>	8 September 1995 (given effect in national law under CEDAW (Ratification) Act 2006) + CEDAW Optional Protocol (17/05/2007)	Equality of right to all fundamental freedoms without discrimination on grounds (inter alia) of sex	Family Protection Act 2008  Civil Procedure Rules 2002	Vanuatu Women's Centre

## International partner initiatives

The Australian Government funded [Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development](#) aims to improve the political, economic and social opportunities of Pacific Women through:

- Increasing the effective representation of women, and women's interests, through leadership at all levels of decision-making
- Expand women's economic opportunities to earn income and accumulate economic assets
- Reduce violence against women and increase access to support services and to justice for survivors of violence.

This is a ten year programme (2012-2022) with funding of around AUS\$320 million. Full details can be found at <http://dfat.gov.au/geo/pacific/development-assistance/Pages/development-assistance-in-the-pacific.aspx>

Included under this programme is the Pacific Women's Parliamentary Partnerships which is funded by the Australian government and which is part of the Pacific Women in Politics initiative directed at supporting the professional and skills development of Pacific women parliamentarians and parliamentary staff; developing engagement between women in the Pacific region and their parliaments; and supporting research into gender equality and creating gender sensitive parliaments. The web site is supported by UNDP.

New Zealand's 2012-2016 [Pacific Prevention of Domestic Violence Programme](#) – NZ Aid, NZ Police, PICs Chiefs of Police, and since 2013 Australian Federal Police – Pacific Police Development Programme Regional aims to deliver advice, training and operational support on domestic violence to police forces and communities in the Pacific. PPDVP has produced baseline reports on Kiribati, Cook Islands, Tonga and Samoa

[Regional Rights Resources Team \(RRT\)](#), 'Changing Laws Protecting Women Project' started in 2009, funded by the UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women until mid 2012, now funded by Australia, is guided by the UN Handbook for Legislation on Violence against Women, and works in partnership with Fiji Women's Crisis Centre Regional Network, Pacific Prevention of Domestic Violence Programme, United Nations Population Fund, UN Women, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat Sexual and Gender Based Violence Reference Group. RRT is within the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC)

The (British) [Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015](#), extends to the Pacific. In particular the Commonwealth engages with youth in the Pacific to promote human rights, social justice and respect for human dignity. There is a Commonwealth Youth Programme Pacific Centre in Honiara, Solomon Islands, and two Pacific islanders were nominated as finalists for Commonwealth Youth Awards in February 2015. The Commonwealth is also promoting women's political participation under the theme 'Women's Political Leadership within Beijing+20 and the Post-2015 Development Agenda'. The Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers meet in Samoa in 2016. This will review the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality which ends in 2015. The Commonwealth has also established a network: National Women's Machineries, which met in New York in March 2015. The Forum Secretariat was represented and there were delegates from the Pacific.

The Asian Development Bank also supports Gender projects in the region through its [Gender and Development Cooperation Fund](#) (which also receives contributions from Australia, Canada, Denmark, Norway and Ireland) including activities directed at capacity building, gender impact assessments and gender and development partnerships. The fund was established in 2003, and funds across Asia and the Pacific. (10<sup>th</sup> Progress Report published March 2014). In 2013 ADB and FAO Asia and the Pacific held a consultation on Gender, Food Security and Nutrition: ensuring the Other Half Equal Opportunities (see Gender Equality and Food Security: women's empowerment as a tool against Hunger 2013)

The International Fund for Agricultural Development (an agency of the UN) (IFAD) also works in the Pacific, promoting economic empowerment to enable rural women and men to have equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from profitable activities. It has been involved since 2011 in PNG, Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu in supporting a [UN Women Partners Improving Markets](#) initiative. It is currently funding an Outer Island Food and Water Project in Kiribati with specific focus on women and young people; in PNG focussing on small scale farmers especially women, and has projects with co-funders in Solomon Islands, Tonga and Samoa.

UN Women Safe Cities for Women and Girls Programme funded an initiative in Port Moresby in 2012 to improve safety for women around the market place. UN Women Asia and the Pacific working with youth have developed a youth-friendly toolkit *The Change-makers: A Young Activist's Toolkit for Ending Violence against Women and Girls*, and in May 2015 a regional training for trainers was funded by the Government of Denmark to develop the skills of youth advocates and launch the toolkit.

UN Women have also developed a toolkit called 'How to design projects to end violence against women and girls: a step-by-step guide to taking action' funded by UNWomen New Zealand and Australian Aid. It was launched in July 2015. Its aim is to help community groups, local governments and others take action on domestic violence using a narrative to assist in identifying problems and developing strategy.

Amnesty International (New Zealand) is working in the region focusing particularly on the creation and enforcement of laws directed at violence and discrimination.

World Bank (Pacific Department) funds workshops on domestic violence and also publishes research into the economic cost of violence. Pacific Women's Network Against Violence Against Women funded by the World Bank produces material based on stories of victims.

# The EU Legal Framework for Gender Equality

Equality between women and men is a key principle and an objective for the European Union, both within Europe and in its external cooperation. Currently, the guiding framework for EU action on gender equality in development cooperation is the 2010-2015 Gender Action Plan. Following a period of extensive review and deliberation, it will soon be replaced with the 2016-2020 Gender Action Plan. More specific commitments for development cooperation in the Pacific including commitments related to gender are outlined in the Cotonou Agreement and EU-Pacific agreements. This section briefly outlines the broad EU legal framework on gender, GAP 2010-2015 and GAP 2016-2020, and gender commitments in the Cotonou Agreement and other documents to set the stage for a description of on-going EU development cooperation actions targeting gender as well as for recommendations for future gender actions under GAP 2016-2020 in the Pacific later in this report.

## Broad EU Legal Framework on Gender

Equality between women and men is enshrined in the **EU Charter of Fundamental Rights** (2000) that came into force with the **Lisbon Treaty** (2009). Actions towards gender equality and women's empowerment by the European Union generally take place under the umbrella of the **2010 – 2015 Strategy for Equality between Women and Men**. This document builds on the **2006 – 2010 Roadmap for Equality between Women and Men** and **the 2006 European Pact for Gender Equality**, and provides the overall policy framework for the coherent integration of gender equality in all areas of EU policies. It includes sections on external policies (development cooperation, trade, agriculture, migration) and encourages the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment worldwide.

The **2005 'European Consensus on Development'**, a joint statement of principles shared by the Member States and EU institutions, states that gender equality is a goal, a human right and a question of social justice. The document articulates gender equality as one of five essential principles of development cooperation and requires the EU to include a strong gender component in all its policies and practices in its relations with developing countries. The **2007 Communication on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment** presents the first more in-depth EU common vision on gender equality in development cooperation. It stresses the relation between achievements in poverty reduction and development and the empowerment of women, underlining that gender equality should be "a core aspect in the EU development policy's programming, implementation, monitoring and evaluation" (p. 2). The communication calls on the Commission and Member States to "promote clear objectives and indicators on gender equality by assigning clear tasks and responsibilities to lead donors to this effect in all sectors" (p. 5).

## The 2010-2015 Gender Action Plan

In 2010, a **Staff Working Document** outlining implementation of the 2007 Communication was published and subsequently endorsed by the Council and adopted as part of the Council Conclusions on achieving the MDGs as the **2010 EU Action Plan**. The Action Plan outlines a coordinated approach to deliver on gender equality commitments and to increase impact on the ground. Focusing on (1) political and policy dialogue with partner countries; (2) mainstreaming of gender in all programmes and (3) specific actions requiring targeted support, the plan establishes concrete steps to be carried out jointly by the Member States and the Commission and requires annual reporting against set targets. For this purpose, the plan specifies 9 objectives and 53 indicators.

Since the start of the Action Plan, gender has become a regular, separate item on the agenda of most **political dialogues**.<sup>32</sup> Similarly, for several years gender has been featuring separately on the agenda of bilateral policy dialogues. Efforts have also been made to ensure that gender equality is properly incorporated into **strategy papers** and EU

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<sup>32</sup> A study by One World Action in 2002 found that gender was rarely on the agenda in political dialogue at that time, with EU delegation staff in ACP countries rarely pressing the issue: [http://aprodev.eu/files/Gender/Pub\\_EverywhereNowhere02.pdf](http://aprodev.eu/files/Gender/Pub_EverywhereNowhere02.pdf)



staff has detailed guidelines on addressing gender equality in **country and regional programming**.<sup>33</sup> For its **day-to-day work**, the EU created a number of guidelines on how to include gender perspectives, most notable the November 2008 publication of a *Programming Guide for Strategy Papers* with a Programming Fiche related to Gender Equality, and the *Toolkit on Mainstreaming Gender Equality in EC Development Cooperation* (Third Edition 2009). As outlined in these documents, **all projects and programmes** should have:

- Gender aware stakeholders and gender specific target groups and beneficiaries;
- Coordination, management and financing arrangements that include equal opportunity policies, gender balanced human resource management, and gender budget initiatives;
- A monitoring and evaluation system that includes gender-disaggregated data collection and gender performance indicators;
- Gender budget analysis<sup>34</sup>

**Targeted actions towards gender equity** have been initiated under a variety of instruments, particularly the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), the Civil Society Organisations and Local Authorities Programme (CSO-LA) and the Instrument for Stability and Peace (IcSP).

### **From GAP 2010-2015 to GAP 2016-2020**

Lack of transparency and accountability around the elaboration stages and the roles of CSOs in the process, as well as limited capacity and financial resources undermined the legitimacy of the 2010-2015 Action Plan. After the 2013 Implementation Report, the Council published the **Council Conclusions on the 2013 Report on the Implementation of the EU Plan of Action on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development 2010-2015**. In these conclusions, the Council stated:

"The Council [nonetheless] expresses concern with the main finding of the report that the pace of progress in implementing the GAP is, as stated, extremely slow. In particular, most projects lag behind in achieving a satisfactory OECD/DAC gender marker score and the gender-sensitivity aspects of projects are often neglected. Moreover, there is room for improvement with respect to the allocation of gender-focused aid, gender-related training and regular and comprehensive monitoring and evaluation of programmes and projects. In light of the above, and taking into account the report's recommendations, the Council reiterates that the implementation of the GAP is a shared responsibility of the EU and its Member States and calls on all concerned to demonstrate leadership and deliver on their commitments to implement and report on the GAP."<sup>35</sup>

The Conclusions called on the Commission and EEAS to prepare a second action plan for the period 2016-2020.<sup>36</sup>

### **GAP 2016 – 2020**

Following a long period of preparations, on September 21 2015 a new Joint Staff Working Document was adopted, providing the framework for new results-oriented measures for

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<sup>33</sup> It should be noted that since the inception of EDF 11, Delegations may base Country Strategy Papers and Multi-Annual Indicative Programs on partner country's National Development Strategies, and are generally encouraged to do so with the aim of enhancing the partner country's ownership. However, in the case gender equality is not a priority for the partner country, this can result in weaker attention to gender issues in strategy documents.

<sup>34</sup> EU, 2009, *Toolkit on Mainstreaming Gender Equality in EC Development Cooperation*

<sup>35</sup> EU, Council Conclusions on the 2013 Report on the Implementation of the EU Plan of Action on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development 2010-2015, p. 2

<sup>36</sup> To feed into this process, in 2013 the DEVCO Evaluation Unit launched an evaluation exercise on how DEVCO has included gender equality in its activities since 2007, including a mid-term review of the Gender Action Plan implementation. The report became available in April 2015, and was overall rather critical of the achievements of the GAP 2010-2015. For its key findings and recommendations, see [https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/evaluation-eu-support-gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment-partner-countries-final-report\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/evaluation-eu-support-gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment-partner-countries-final-report_en)

**“Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment: Transforming the Lives of Girls and Women through EU External Relations (2016-2020)”**. The document contains three sections: the Staff Working Document itself acts as a political narrative; Annex 1 outlines the specific objectives (20 in total), indicators and expected activities (this is in effect the action plan); and Annex 2 discusses the monitoring and reporting process for the GAP 2016-2020.

The three-pronged approach of policy dialogue, gender mainstreaming and targeted actions is maintained in the new GAP. New in the Gender Action Plan 2016-2020 is a focus on thematic pillars. In the new Gender Action Plan, four pivotal areas have been identified that impact the lives of women and girls if action is taken. The three thematic pillars are:

- Ensuring girls' and women's physical and psychological integrity
- Promoting the social and economic rights / empowerment of girls and women
- Strengthening girls' and women's voice and participation.

There is also a fourth, horizontal pillar, specifically addressing staff commitment:

- Shifting the institutional culture to more effectively deliver on EU commitments.



**Figure 1: 4 pillars of the GAP 2016-2020<sup>37</sup>**

Under the new GAP, Delegations will have to choose at least one objective for each of the three thematic areas to focus interventions on, either through targeted gender actions or through mainstreaming gender equality in other actions (at relevant level depending on the type of programme). This leaves scope for different actors to concentrate development assistance in the area or areas most pressing in each context, and allows Member States to continue support to areas already prioritised in their aid strategies while contributing to the overall EU effort. Taking action to shift institutional culture is mandatory for all EU actors.

EU actors are expected to report transparently on progress and setbacks every year, for which a new monitoring and accountability framework is provided. Central to the new reporting approach is:

<sup>37</sup> [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_MEMO-15-5691\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-15-5691_en.htm), accessed October 18, 2015

- Annual reporting by all EU actors on the EU's contribution to the thematic areas, specifically the selected objectives;
- Systematic gender analysis for all new external actions undertaken (e.g. projects). EU actors reporting on these activities will use sex-disaggregated data whenever available. Possibilities for concerted efforts, where needed, to generate data will be explored including for opportunities to build statistical capacity to measure and report gender sensitive information;
- Systematic reporting on the institutional culture shift for all EU actors against the indicators set out in the document.

Regarding the first, the identification of objectives and indicators is to be finalised by mid-2016. It will be informed by the systematic gender analysis for new actions undertaken.

The GAP's implementation continues to be the joint responsibility of the Commission services and the European External Action Service (EEAS), promoting policy coherence with internal EU policies in full alignment with the EU Human Rights Action Plan. As such, it opens the way for efforts to ensure that what the EU does in the arenas of macro-economic policy, trade, foreign policy, security, migration and climate, for example, promotes and supports gender equality and respect for women's and girls' human rights.

Some things however remain unclear or weak, as pointed out in reviews of the new action plan by ODI, Concord and Plan. Key concerns from these three actors can be summarised as follows:

- The status of the paper as a Joint Staff Working Document. The status of a Communication would have given it great political weight, as it would be discussed, agreed and reviewed at EU Council level;
- While there is attention for internal institutional culture shift, the plan is weak on building human resource capacity, especially gender analytical capacity. EU Delegations must receive adequate support and gender focal points must have the authority to lead on implementing the GAP as a key priority area;
- While the plan calls for more financial allocation, there is little in the framework to indicate that the EU will review commitments under the current EU Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2014-2020. Without new money forthcoming, the scale of specific initiatives in the three thematic areas may be limited.
- Lack of about who within the EU Delegations will report, and at what level the report will be signed off;
- There should be transparent reporting on implementation with regular discussions with civil society.<sup>38</sup>

### **Gender commitments in the Cotonou Agreement**

Underlying all relations with the Pacific is the **Cotonou Agreement**, signed in 2000 with all 14 PACP countries and building on an earlier cooperation agreement called the **Lomé Convention** signed in 1975 with a group of newly independent African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries. The Cotonou Agreement is based on four main principles, including equality of partners and ownership of development strategies, participation, dialogue and mutual obligations, and differentiation and regionalisation. Political dialogue is one of the key aspects of the arrangements, as well as good governance.

The **Cotonou Agreement** holds commitments to gender equality, specifically Article 31 which reads as follows: 'Cooperation shall help strengthen policies and programmes that

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<sup>38</sup> See ODI, 2015, "The European Union's new Gender Action Plan 2016-2020 – Gender equality and women's empowerment in external relations, Plan International, 2015, "Plan International EU Office Response to the Council Conclusions on the Gender Action Plan 2016-2020", and Concord, 2015, "Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment – Transforming the Lives of Girls and Women through EU External Relations 2016-2020 – Policy Recommendations"

improve, ensure and broaden the equal participation of men and women in all spheres of political, economic, social and cultural life. Cooperation shall help improve the access of women to all resources required for the full exercise of their fundamental rights.”

All 14 Pacific ACP countries as well as Australia and New Zealand, through the Pacific Islands Forum, adopted the Pacific Plan in 2005. The Pacific Plan is described as the ‘master strategy’ for driving Pacific regionalism, providing the framework for collective action and defining the structure and functions of the regional organisations of the Pacific. The development of a number of regional sector policies is facilitated through these 9 regional inter-governmental organisations coordinating with each other. Together, these regional organisations are members of the Council of the Regional Organisations of the Pacific (CROP), chaired by the PIFS.

The **Pacific Plan** mentioned the need to improve gender equality. Initiative 12.6 calls on the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat to assist with the development of strategies to support participative democracy and consultative decision-making and electoral processes, while Initiative 12.5 calls for support for the implementation of human rights treaties, such as the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women.

As a response to the Pacific Plan, in 2006 the European Union adopted the **EU Strategy for a Strengthened Partnership with the Pacific** and in 2012 the new **Joint Communication: Towards a Renewed EU-Pacific Development Partnership**. Key priorities for the EU-Pacific partnership include: climate change, trade, fisheries, regional integration as well as governance and human rights. A review of the Pacific Plan led to the adoption of the **Framework for Pacific Regionalism**, setting out the belief that “deeper regionalism will help increase socio-economic and development prospects, expand market opportunities, improve service delivery, and contribute to security and good governance for Pacific people and for the region as a whole.”<sup>39</sup> Rather than providing a list of regional priorities, the Framework sets out a process through which regional priorities will be identified and implemented. The new PIF **Framework For Pacific Regionalism** makes only one mention of gender - as one of six core values: ‘We embrace good governance, the full observance of democratic values, the rule of law, the defence and promotion of all human rights, gender equality, and commitment to just societies’ (p3).

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<sup>39</sup> Pacific Island Forum Secretariat, July 2014, Framework for Pacific Regionalism, p. 1 <http://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/linked-documents/pacific-rob-2015-2017-sd.pdf> accessed August 25, 2015

## EU gender-focused cooperation actions in the Pacific 2010 - 2015

GAP implementation reports over 2011, 2012 and 2013 include submissions by the EU Delegation in Fiji, which covers Fiji, Tonga, Kiribati, Samoa, Tuvalu, Niue, Nauru, Cook Islands, RMI, FSM, Palau, as well as the Pacific OCTs: New Caledonia, French Polynesia, Wallis et Futuna and Pitcairn. However, relatively little information is available. The only point of information included on the Pacific in the 2014 Implementation report is the percentage of proposals having equality as a significant or principle objective. The percentage reported by the EU Delegation in the Pacific is 30%, which is lower than percentages reported by most other delegations.<sup>40</sup>

In this section we provide an outline of what has been done to implement GAP 2010 - 2015 in the region so far based on an overview of bilateral program commitments, regional program commitments and initiatives under thematic instruments.

### Bilateral Programmes

In line with new programming guidelines for EDF 11, most EDF 11 MIPS for Pacific countries rely on the Pacific Countries' own National Development Strategies/Plans. As such, the EU's development objectives in a partner country have been designed to align with the priorities identified by the partner country. This means that analysis and guidance on gender approaches has also largely come from the partner countries themselves.

When looking at the National Development Strategies for the Pacific one finds significant variation in the level of depth and nuance of gender analysis and commitments. Altogether, these Pacific National Development Strategies provided little direction for donors including the European Union, and where they do include commitments to gender, these were not always included in the MIPS for 2014-2020. With little attention for gender in these policy documents, there has been relatively little incentive for the EU to focus attention on gender. As a consequence, few funds have initially been set aside specifically for gender for 2014-2020; and where such funds existed, they are small compared to the overall size of EU donor assistance.

The table below provides an overview of the Pacific countries' National Development Strategies/Plans, as well as the overall objective of the EU response and its focal sectors and the implementation method. References to gender in the MIPS are also included.

**Table 3: Focal Sectors of EU Bilateral Development Assistance in the Pacific<sup>41</sup>**

Country	National Development Strategy	Overall objective EU Response	Focal Sectors including amounts	Implementation method	Gender Commitments in MIP
Cook Islands	National Sustainable Development Plan 2011-2015	"Contribute to the sustainable economic growth of the Cook Islands, through a viable management approach of its natural resources and ecosystem"	1. Water and Sanitation – 1.4 million EUR	Budget support	No reference to gender

<sup>40</sup> 2014 Report on the Implementation of the EU Plan of Action on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development (2010 - 2015), p. 14-15.

<sup>41</sup> Source: [https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/home\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/home_en)

Federated States of Micronesia	Strategic Development Plan 2004-2023	“To improve social and economic development, increase resilience to climate change and reduce poverty, especially in the outer islands”	1. Renewable Energy & Energy Efficiency – 12 million EUR  Other: - Measures in favour of civil society – 1 million EUR - Support measures – 1.2 million EUR	Budget support	“Particular focus will also be given to gender issues, with support provided to implement Convention on Elimination all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)” (p. 6)
Fiji	Roadmap for Democracy and Sustainable Socio-Economic Development 2010-2014	“To foster rural development through an effective transition to a sustainable and diversified agriculture sector to improve livelihoods of agriculture-dependent population and vulnerable sugarcane farming communities”	1. Sustainable Rural Livelihoods – 20 million EUR 2. Public Administration Reform and Governance – 7.5 million EUR  Other: - Support measures – 0.5 million EUR	Programme approach	Commitment to family law: “In this context, gender based NGOs may be of particular relevance when dealing with family issues” (p. 15)
Kiribati	Kiribati Development Plan 2012-2015 “Enhancing Aid Effectiveness to support economic growth”	“To contribute to the improvement of the social and economic development of Kiribati and to promote safer, healthier and cleaner environment as well as to increase climate change resilience while contributing to the overall sustainable living conditions for the i-Kiribati population and the country’s transition to a green economy”	1. Supporting the Inclusive and Sustainable Socio-Economic Development of Kiritimati Island – 20.5 million EUR  Other: - Support measures – 2.5 million EUR	Programme approach (shift to budget support under consideration)	Commitment to gender as a cross-cutting issue: “the [support measures] allocation will also support 1) mainstreaming of gender including the identification of actions and gender disaggregated indicators...” (p. 17)  “A special attention to gender issues will be given, in light of the high rate of violence against women, with support provided to implement CEDAW. In line with the Agenda for Change and the EU’s fundamental values, support to this area could be enhanced through regional or thematic envelopes, in partnership with the UN or other development partners.” (p. 17).

Marshall Islands	Marshall Islands Strategic Development Plan (SDP) Framework 2003-2011	“To improve social and economic development, reduce poverty and increase resilience to climate change, especially in the outer islands”	1. Renewable Energy & Energy Efficiency – 8 million EUR  Other: - Measures in favour of civil society – 400,000 EUR - Support measures (700,000)	Programme approach (shift to budget support under consideration)	“Particular focus will also be given to gender issues, with support provided to implement Convention on Elimination all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)” (p. 9)
Palau	Palau 2020 National Master Development Plan  Medium-Term Development Strategy 2009-2014	“To improve social and economic development and reduce poverty, contributing to an environmentally sustainable and low-carbon development path”	1. Energy Efficiency – 1 million EUR  Other: - Measures in favour of civil society – 200,000 EUR - Support measures – 400,000 EUR	Programme approach (shift to budget support under consideration)	No reference to gender
Papua New Guinea	Papua New Guinea ‘Vision 2050’  Papua New Guinea Development Strategic Plan (PNGDSP) 2010 – 2030  Mid Term Development Plan (MTDP) 2010-2015	“Improve sustainable and inclusive economic development and job creation, thus leading to poverty reduction”	1. Rural Entrepreneurship , Investment and Trade – 85 million EUR 2. Water, Sanitation and Hygiene – 60 million EUR 3. Education – 30 million EUR	Programme approach	Commitment to achieving gender parity in education and to consider gender dimensions in the WASH program.  Commitment to gender as a crosscutting issue: “A cross-cutting feature of the planned support will be mainstreaming gender equality and women's empowerment in all national and sectoral policies and legislation... Detailed gender analysis will be done during the identification of the specific actions” (p. 2-3)  Support measures will include support for “mainstreaming of gender including the identification of actions and gender disaggregated indicators” p. 14).

Samoa	Strategy for Development of Samoa 2012-2016	“Enhance environmental sustainability and resilience to climate change and natural disasters and to contribute to the transition to a green economy in order to ensure inclusive and sustainable growth for human development”	1. Water and Sanitation – 17.2 million EUR  Other: - Measures in favour of civil society – 2 million EUR - Support measures – 0.8 million EUR	Budget support	Commitment to gender as a crosscutting issue.  “Specific attention will be paid to gender issues, violence and discrimination against women” (p. 6)  Empowerment of women a specific objective of the Civil Society Support programme
Solomon Islands	National Development Strategy (NDS) 2011 - 2020	<i>unavailable</i>	1. Water and Sanitation - 2. Rural Development	Budget Support	<i>unavailable</i>
Tonga	Tonga Strategic Development Framework (TSDf) 2011-2014	“To improve social and economic developments and provide sustainable living conditions for all Tongans, contributing to an environmentally sustainable and low-carbon development path.”	1. Energy  Other: - Measures in favour of civil society – 600,000 EUR - Support measures – 500,000 EUR	Budget support (Sector Reform Contract on Energy)	“In line with the Agenda for Change and the EU’s fundamental values, a particular focus will also be on gender issues, with support provided for the country to work toward compliance to various aspects of the Convention to Eliminate all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Support to this area need not necessarily be large and could also come from thematic envelopes, in partnership with the UN or another relevant agencies.” (p. 9)
Tuvalu	The Tuvalu National Strategy for Sustainable Development 2005-2015	“To improve social and economic development and achieve safer, healthier and cleaner environment, contributing to the overall sustainable living conditions for the Tuvaluan population and the country’s transition to a green economy”	1. General Environment Protection – 6 million EUR  Other: - Measures in favor of civil society – 300,000 EUR - Support measures – 500,000 EUR	Programme approach (shift to budget support under consideration)	“Particular focus should also be given to areas related to public finance management, economic development, accountability and gender issues, with support provided to implement the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)” (p. 6)



Vanuatu	Priorities and Action Agenda 2006-2015	"Contribute to poverty reduction and improved livelihoods as defined in the Priorities and Action Agenda objectives"	1. Rural Development – 25 million EUR  Other: - Measures in favour of civil society – 3 million EUR - Support measures – 3 million EUR	Budget support	No reference to gender
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## Regional Programmes

In the 2014-2020 Regional Programme, the Pacific Region's commitment to 6 regional values is reiterated, among them "embracing good governance, the full observance of democratic values, the rule of law, the defence and promotion of all human rights, gender equality, and commitment to just societies."<sup>42</sup> The document explains:

"Leaders understand that gender inequality is imposing high personal, social and economic costs on Pacific people and nations, and that improved gender equality will make a significant, positive contribution to creating a prosperous, stable and secure Pacific for all. By adopting the Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration in 2012 Forum Leaders reaffirmed commitment in the following six, key areas: gender responsive government policies and programmes; improving women's participation in decision making; economic empowerment; ending violence against women; and, improving health and education outcomes, for women and girls."<sup>43</sup>

Based on this, progress in general equality is included as a specific objective under the third focal area ("Progress in Gender equality and Civil Society engagement in governance practices", see [Table 4](#)), specifically:

- "Enhance women and girls participation in decision making processes;
- Strengthen expertise on gender issues in the Pacific to provide analysis, advice and technical support to Pacific islands countries' capacity to mainstream gender into national policies and planning and improve governance practices;
- Enhance equal access to judicial and human rights protection mechanisms;
- Foster active engagement of civil society in national and regional policy formulation, implementation and monitoring;
- Support capacity development of civil society to influence and monitor policy development."<sup>44</sup>

About 11 million EU is reserved for this specific objective. To achieve the second gender-related specific objective - capacity to mainstream gender into national policies and planning and to improve governance practices - an important step would be to achieve broad gender mainstreaming in National Development Strategies, incorporating gender in a culturally sensitive and effective way.

<sup>42</sup> EU, 11th EDF Pacific RIP, p. 2

<sup>43</sup> EU, 11th EDF Pacific RIP, p. 4

<sup>44</sup> EU, 11th EDF Pacific RIP, p. 14

**Table 4: Focal Sectors of EU Regional Development Assistance in the Pacific**

Region	Regional Development Strategy	Overall objective EU Response	Focal Sectors including amounts	Implementation method	Gender Commitments in MIP
Pacific Region	Framework for Pacific Regionalism	“Contribute to the Pacific Leaders’ vision for a region of peace, harmony, security, social inclusion and prosperity so that all Pacific people can lead free, healthy and productive lives”	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Regional Economic Integration – 78 million EUR</li> <li>2. Sustainable Management of Natural Resources and the Management of Waste – 66 million EUR</li> <li>3. Inclusive and Accountable Governance – 22 million EUR</li> </ol>	Programme approach	<p>“Adequate incorporation of relevant cross-cutting issues including gender, youth, people with disabilities and Non-State-Actors”</p> <p>Gender is included as a specific objective under the third focal area, specific objective 2: “Progress in gender equality and civil society engagement in governance practices”</p>

### Individual Initiatives

Previous gender focused actions in the Pacific have included the following. In Suva, the [Promoting National Consultation Engagement in Fiji](#) project, which ended in April 2014, was established to promote gender equality and empower women. The 564, 085.46 Euro project, sought to enhance a consultative and participatory development process by encouraging and enabling youth, women and selected rural community members to develop capacities to take part in networks to participate in an inclusive national debate on Fiji’s constitution. Eradication of violence against women is seen to be key to enabling equal participation in the public and political forum.

Communication and the distribution of information play a central part in the activities undertaken by the European Union to promote gender equality in the Pacific. For example, a key element of the [Enhancing the Political Participation of Marginalised Women Voters](#) project, involved an FWRM media campaign, which provided accessible information on citizenship rights for Indofijian and young women. The project sought to enable women’s effective participation in national democratic processes through promoting and distributing information concerning gender and human rights in the form of media toolkits and training workshops. Additionally, journalists, equipped with basic human rights and gender knowledge, were targeted to enable better coverage of women politicians and women’s political participation.

Many of the activities carried out by EU Delegations in the Pacific raise awareness of violence against women and show support, often during high level events, for women who have been subjected to violence. Head of Delegation to Papua New Guinea, for example, took part in National [Haus Krai Day](#) in May 2013 and, in the presence of the Prime Minister and Senior Members of Parliament, showed support by publicly condemning the level of violence against women.

Enabling women’s participation in decision-making processes is a key aspect of the EU’s vision of gender equality and some activities have sought to establish opportunities for women to gain confidence speaking about their experiences in public. To this end, the

European Union has funded a theatre company, [Stages of Change Theatre Company](#),<sup>45</sup> in Honiara, in the Solomon's Islands, which has helped to create a space where women can confidently and openly talk about gender violence and the impacts that it has on people's lives. Other Fiji based initiatives, such as the [Live and Learn](#)<sup>46</sup> promotes women's political involvement via education, [Fem Link](#)<sup>47</sup> promotes gender sensitivity in media and political representation and [Women's Action for Change](#)<sup>48</sup> seeks to promote social inclusion more broadly, receive significant support from the EU.

Recognising the important role that is played by Civil Society Organisations throughout the Pacific region, the European Union has been keen to build on their capacity to promote gender equality and human rights. The Fijian [Homes of Hope](#)<sup>49</sup> project, which is run by American Pastor Mark Roche and his wife Lynn Roche, for example, was awarded a grant of EURO 452,690 (FJD 1.116,000) through the global call for proposals on 'Investing in People, Fighting Child Labour'. Fiji also saw a training seminar on EIDHR organised by EUD on the 24-25 September 2013 for the civil society partners to build the capacity of the CSO to access EIDHR grants. Other European Union projects and activities have focused on [conflict resolution](#),<sup>50</sup> providing services for those affected by [gender based violence](#),<sup>51</sup> [reproductive health awareness](#)<sup>52</sup> and [human rights policy development](#).<sup>53</sup>

Further links and details of other EU initiatives in the Pacific region are provided in the side-bars of each specific country studies in the next section.

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<sup>45</sup> The project is supported by the EU, the British High Commission, the British Council and the Solomon Islands Planned Parenting Association

<http://pidp.org/pireport/2014/March/03-14-12.htm>

<sup>46</sup> The project, Supporting Human Rights and Social Participation for Women in Remote Areas of Fiji, was supported with 200,000 Euros.

<sup>47</sup> Building for the Future: Community Radio and Women, Peace, Social Inclusion, Good Governance and sustainable Human Development, was supported with 74,100 Euros.

<sup>48</sup> Making Child Protection a Reality: Pursuit of Common Agenda for Human Rights and Democratic Reform, was supported with 92,297 Euros.

<sup>49</sup> Creating Safety Nets to Eliminate the Worst forms of Child Labour: Withdrawing and Preventing Children from Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking, was supported with 452,690 Euros.

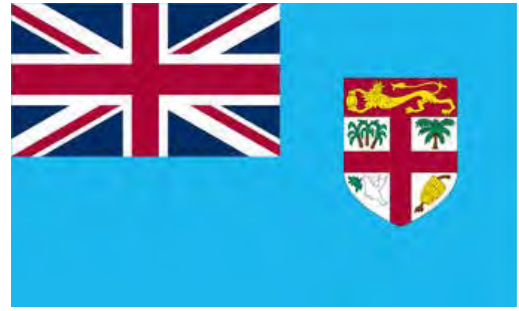
<sup>50</sup> *Leading Transitions: Building the Capabilities of Local Community leaders and enhancing the skills sets of community based organisations*, awarded 98,261 Euros

<sup>51</sup> *Integrating and Strengthening Services for Those Affected by Gender Based Violence in Fiji*, awarded 88,000 Euros

<sup>52</sup> *Strengthening rights of rural Women by Providing them with Knowledge, Access and Control of their Reproductive Health*, awarded 252,710 Euros

<sup>53</sup> *Assistance Towards the Rate of Pacific Islands' Ratification and Implementation of International Human Rights Treaties*, awarded 1,000,000 Euros.

## 2. Pacific Island Country Reports:



# Fiji

Lynda Newland and Ramona Boodoosingh

Fiji is an island nation known for resorts with ocean views under the coconut trees. Indeed, tourism is the largest industry in Fiji, with the vast majority of tourists from Australia. Other major industries include: manufacturing, motor vehicle sale and repair, agriculture (primarily sugar), transport and storage, and financial and insurance activities. Remittances have also played an increasing role in the nation's economy.

The largest islands in the roughly 322 islands of Fiji, Viti Levu and Vanua Levu, account for 85% of the land area, upon which approximately 70% of the population reside. At the time of the last census in 2007, the population was 837,271; 49% women and 51% men, with just over half (51%) living in urban areas.

Fiji is heterogeneous in both ethnic and religious composition, due principally to settlement through the colonial period and past practices of blackbirding and indenturing labourers for sugar plantations. According to the Fiji Bureau of Statistics, 57% of the population are iTaukei (indigenous Fijian), 37.5% are Indo-Fijian and another 5.7% are made up of other ethnic groups. In the period 1946 to 1987, the Indo-Fijian population outnumbered the iTaukei population, but has since decreased markedly due to the coups. Yet Indo-Fijian culture remains strong in Fiji, as demonstrated through Fiji's urban architecture, food, religious holidays and festivities. The religious statistics show that 64.4% of the population identifies themselves as Christian, 27.9% Hindu, 6.3% Muslim, 0.3% as having another religion and 0.85% as having no religion.

A British colony until 1970, Fiji's governance is marked by four political coups; two in 1987, followed by coups in 2000 and 2006. Fiji's

political instability affected the judiciary, freedom of speech and its political relationships with international bodies and other countries. Democratic elections were held in 2014 and won by the party headed by the 2006 coup leader and army commander, Voreqe (Frank) Bainimarama.

The national language in Fiji is English but Bauan Fijian (Standard Fijian) and Hindi are taught in schools. iTaukei have regional Fiji dialects and Indo-Fijians speak a local version of Hindi.

Children attend school between the ages of 6 and 15, until they reach the minimum age for employment, which is 15. In 2008, the gross enrolment in primary schools was 90% for boys and 89% for girls; and secondary gross enrolment was 78% for boys and 84% for girls.

The majority of underage employment in 2007 was held by rural boys between the ages of 10-14 at 11.7%. Many of these boys had left school after grade 8 to work as subsistence labourers.

## Culture and kinship

In most instances, Fiji's two main ethnicities (iTaukei and Indo-Fijian) live in profoundly different circumstances. The majority of iTaukei continue to live in villages in both rural and urban areas. These villages are hierarchical under a *turaga-ni-koro* or village head and public gatherings are usually focused around the *yaqona* (kava) ceremony under the leadership of the chief. The *yaqona* ceremony is primarily male-focused, although the extent of adherence to this depends on the district. In some areas, women are expected to abstain altogether.

Ideas about gender are conservative in iTaukei villages. Men are considered the leaders of the

house and women and children are expected to be obedient. These ideas tend to be supported by conservative Christian churches, whether Methodist or Pentecostal. As almost all iTaukei are Christian, conservative gender ideology is near universal in iTaukei villages.

Because iTaukei marriage across much of Fiji is virilocal (i.e. the wife moves to the husband's village), villages are usually comprised of the husband's kin. A woman loses claims to her natal village at marriage and depends on her husband for her status. In many areas, women traditionally married cross-cousins, which meant that the woman would not have to move too far away from her natal village, if at all. Whether or not her natal village is close, she may return to her natal family if problems emerge during the marriage. If this happens the husband and his clan may come with gifts asking for atonement in the ritual of *bulubulu*. However, the pressure will be on her family to persuade her to return to her husband.

Another major area of influence that a woman has over her natal family comes through her children, who will receive anything they ask for from the maternal siblings. Children in this kinship position are called *vasu* and their right to make such claims has been documented since early in the twentieth century.

Since colonisation, villages no longer move from one place to another as once occurred in response to war, climate changes or other factors. Migration of individual villagers was also discouraged by chiefs with the support of the colonial government. However, iTaukei individuals now travel on a regular basis for education, work, and to attend ceremonies.

ITaukei families who live outside of the villages may live in squatter camps (some of which are set up in a similar way to villages) or may have stepped on the ladder of upward mobility and

live a relatively middle class urban lifestyle, usually due to at least one partner working in the civil service or the military. Urban families are more likely to be based around the husband and wife's relationship, although extended family members may visit for lengthy periods.

By contrast, Indo-Fijians live in very different conditions. Around the year 2000, successive agricultural lease expiries forced many Indo-Fijian tenant farmers off the land. After a period in squatter camps, many migrated to Australia, New Zealand, the U.S.A. and Canada.

Urban middleclass Indo-Fijians tend to manage the supermarkets and shopping centres, and study and work in areas such as business and I.T. They often build or buy houses of two or three levels in order to live in one level and have grown children or extended family reside in other levels and to rent them to outsiders.

Not all Indo-Fijians have so fared well. Those in poverty may live side by side with iTaukei in squatter camps. Both iTaukei and Indo-Fijian women from squatter camps have contributed to the labour force of the garment factories, and are often regarded as the working poor. Both iTaukei and Indo-Fijian men work as taxi drivers and bus drivers, and iTaukei youths are usually the barrow boys at the markets (literally pushing a wheelbarrow for hire in order to carry fruit and vegetables between the aisles of the market and transport options).

Most Indo-Fijians are Hindu but Islam is also influential in the old cane areas of Western Viti Levu and in Labasa, Vanua Levu. With regards to gender ideals, Indo-Fijian Hinduism and Islam are both conservative. Over the last 5 years or so, increasing numbers of Muslim women have been electing to wear the veil.



## Contemporary Gender Inequality

### Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

In a national survey conducted in 2011 (published 2013), Fiji Women's Crisis Centre (FWCC) with the Fiji Bureau of Statistics and found that 72% of ever-partnered women had experienced physical, sexual or emotional violence from their husband/ partner and many had experienced the three forms of violence at the same time. One example is that 39% of ever-partnered women said they needed permission from their husbands before seeking health care for themselves and 28% experienced economic abuse where their savings were taken from them or their partners refused to give them money

Under successive governments in Fiji since 1995, a number of measures have been introduced in an effort to reduce the level of Gender-Based Violence (GBV), with a focus on physical and especially sexual violence against women and girls. In 1995, the 'No Drop' policy was introduced and the police set up the Sexual Offences Unit (SOU). It took three years for the policy to be implemented and the SOU faced problems of being seriously under-resourced over the following decade.

The Fiji government then started a 10 year plan in 1999 which aligned with commitments Fiji had made in Beijing. A raft of laws was introduced in this period, including:

- 2003 the Family Law Act permitting a no fault basis for divorce; restraining or protection orders; and establishing a Family Division of the High Court .
- 2009 the Domestic Violence Decree extending the powers of police and courts to prevent perpetrators from further assault.
- 2009 the Crimes Decree, Criminal Procedure Decree, Domestic Violence (Prescribed Forms) Rules and
- 2010 the Child Welfare Decree.

### Country snap-shot

- Member of ADB, ILO, IMF, SPC, UN, WTO
- Population (2007): 837,271
- Demographics: Women 49%, Men 51 %
- ITaukei 56.82% of the population Indo- Fijian 37.48% of the population, Other ethnic groups 5.7% of the population
- Under 0-14 -29 %, 15-24 -17%, 25-59-45%, 60 and older - 9% (UNFPA 2014:24)
- Median Age – 27.5: 24)
- Urban Population – 51% (UNFPA 2014:. 24)
- Religious Affiliation -52.9% Christian, 38.1% Hindu, 7.8% Muslim, 0.7% Sikhs and 0.5% others
- Land mass 18, 272 km2
- EEZ 1,290,000 km2
- Political Participation – Ranked 91 out of 143 (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2015)

In 2008, the Department of Women launched its initiative, Zero-Tolerance Violence-Free communities. The first of these communities was Koroipita, a town started and managed by Rotary in Lautoka. The initiative aims to change attitudes and behaviour towards women and girls through Human Rights education, media campaigns, and community training.

Another government stakeholder is the Social Welfare Department, which is required legally to provide care and protection for children and to also manage the disabled. Its officers are required to assess specific cases, and represent them through court. Its institutional requirements also involve paying out quarterly grants to the refuges that accommodate the children.

The major non-government organization working in Gender-Based Violence issues is the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre (FWCC), which is funded by DFAT and NZAID. While it primarily focuses on counselling and referral, it has run a male advocacy programme, at least since 2002. Other NGOs working in counselling include Empower Pacific.

In 2009, there were seven refuges catering specifically to women and girls, and all but one were operated by faith-based organisations. About eight other forms of accommodation also housed women and/or girls such as orphanages, girls looking for work, the poor and the mentally ill.

Despite all attempts to reduce GBV, the number of rape, attempted rape and indecent assault cases reported to the police increased between 2005 and 2012. The increase in reports may

## Gender snap-shot

- Female representatives garnered 16% of the seats in the 2014 elections (IWDA 2014)
- In 2008, the gross enrolment in primary schools was 90% for boys and 89% for girls; secondary gross enrolment was 78% for boys and 84% for girls (WHO: 2)
- About 72% women in Fiji can expect violence in the domestic sphere (FWCC 2013)
- 70% of rape victims know their perpetrators (FWCC 1999)
- Almost all victims of sexual abuse (94%) knew their perpetrators. A third of the perpetrators were fathers, stepfathers, and grandfathers (FWCC1999)

reflect greater public awareness and increased confidence in the police. The same cannot be said for the number of reported incest cases which remained low, with the maximum number of cases being 8 in 2008. However, the number of cases of other offences against public morality reported increased dramatically from 340 in 2005 to 2153. Assault occasioning actual bodily harm remained over 2500 annually for the period 2005-2012. The Division of Women reported 37 male victims of domestic violence and 291 female victims of domestic violence in 2012.



*The case studies provided here are a sample from a study conducted in Suva in July and August, 2015, using in-depth open interviews with 15 market-traders and 5 others about the tensions and conflicts in people's lives, and particularly those of iTaukei women.*

*The following sample includes 4 iTaukei women who are market traders and 2 other women, 1 Indo-Fijian and 1 iTaukei who talk about their experiences of violence from family members.*

## Case-Studies from Fiji

### Case One

D is an iTaukei woman who rents two tables inside and towards the rear of the market. D has lived in Suva for 36 years, but is descended from a village on Koro Island in the province of Lomaiviti.

D lives in a multicultural area and has part-European, Indo-Fijian and part-Chinese neighbours. They greet each other but have no further social interaction. She says she would help if they asked for it but she will not go to them because she is frightened of them. She hears Indo-Fijian neighbours (husbands and wives) fighting.

ITaukei are usually virilocal at marriage, meaning that women usually move to their husband's family in another village. This creates problems because the mother-in-law wants to be in control and does this by either directly controlling the daughter-in-law or through her son, but, D thinks that, when a man and woman marries, they have to do things their own way and, if there is too much conflict, the onus will be on the wife to move: "lo, yes, she have to move away from them, to take all her stuff. The mother-in-law will say, 'Okay, you don't want to listen to me, you can go.' That's how it's done." Meanwhile, the husband has to decide whether to stay with the mother or move with the wife. Some couples move out together but for others, "that's where the arguments start." Only the aunts or uncles can step in to change the situation and calm it down. Because of village hierarchies, if the aunts or uncles tell the wife to stay, she is obliged to obey.

D then explained that the hardest time in her life was separating from her husband. He was having an affair and D asked him to stop but he didn't, preferring to drink and continue with the affair. In her words, "From there, I talked to him but he don't want to listen. He keep on

doing it because he always go and take alcohol, eh? Drinking, eh? I ask him how many times, he keep on doing it, I said 'okay, I think it's about time for you to move. You find another, you go with that woman, I stay with the children.' That's the big problem I face." The aunts and uncles were not there to advise them because she was living in the city, so she sent him out of the house and raised their five children on her own. She continued that, "he want to come back to me and make trouble and I said no. 'I'll [call] the police'. I said, 'I had enough, I don't want to face this anymore.'" She didn't want his money and brought her children to the maternal side.

The children continue to have access to the natal family through their status as *vasu*, which obliges their maternal uncles to provide any resources that they request. Reflecting on iTaukei culture, D notes that the concept of *vasu* is changing. She worries that the government no longer wishes to acknowledge the *vasu* relationship. For D, the *vasu* relationship was critical for her survival because it meant that she could bring her children back to her natal family as her husband had nothing. 'Not enough land, place for living'. Without the traditions around *vasu*, D feels that the government wants them all to become 'kai India' (Indo-Fijians). If the *vasu* relationship is dropped, women will lose access to their only avenues of power and resources outside their husband's: that of their natal family. If a husband dies or leaves, women can return to their natal families but, without access to the customs that grant the woman's children, the *vasu*, anything they desire, women will have no rights to anything.

## Case Two

***‘If you got a good heart, you can’t fight. If you got a bad heart, you can fight. Use your hands.’***

The day I met her, R was selling *palusami*, an iTaukei dish in which corned beef is wrapped in taro leaf and cooked in coconut milk, *tivoli* (a type of yam), other types of yam, boiled cassava in plastic bags, and fried fish. All the food she sells is from her plantation, planted and prepared by her family. R commutes to the market every Thursday with her 30 year old son from her village in Tailevu (north of Suva). They leave the village at 4 am and arrive at the market two hours later.

R was one of ten children and her family struggled with poverty: ‘The school, you know, I’ll be fairly straight. My father and my mother, they struggled for the money. They can’t afford my school fees, they asked me to end my school, I stay in the village.’ She finished school at Form 5 when she was just 14: ‘Fourteen and I have to work in the pigs in Nausori and help my father and my mother look after this pig, help my father and my mother work in the piggery. The pay for that time, it’s about \$22, \$30 a week like that.’ Although R says she married for love, nonetheless: ‘In our village, Fijian marries Fijian, yeah? Our fathers and our grandfathers like that. They have to tell us, ‘You have to marry that man. He’s a good man.’ Or the blood of us, you know?’

R’s voice changes when she describes what makes her angriest in her village. ‘In my village, the things that happen in my village, they have to... sometimes some women... what I keep say, is um, you know, some women have to go and steal a man like that... They go and something, have a husband, somebody’s husband like that.’ If a wife finds out about a husband’s adultery with another woman in the village, she may approach the woman with the intention of beating her up. R noted angrily, ‘If you got a good heart, you can’t fight. If you got a bad heart, you can fight. Use your hands.’ Sometimes the preacher came to calm the situation and would refer to verses from the Bible. When I mentioned the verse about stoning adulterers, R said that she would be looking for the stones. Towards the end of the interview, we returned to men’s adultery, when R talked about having to go to church to pray for her husband.

## Case Three

***‘Sometimes they fight ... and sometimes they even run after each other with a knife. That’s very bad. The land is one of the most major issues in the area.’***

F is an iTaukei woman from a village in Tailevu, and lives on a plot of leased land in Nausori, near the airport. All the produce she is selling (cassava, taro, green coconuts) was grown on her own land. She commutes down to the market three Thursdays a month, waking at 4 am, catching the bus at 5:30 to arrive at the markets at 6.45. She doesn’t stay the full day, usually leaving around 2 pm. For F, the market is additional income on top of the income she receives from her chicken farm and her husband’s job as an electrician.

Regarding cross-cousin marriage as a village practice, F met and married her husband while undertaking tertiary studies. Despite her husband’s upbringing as a Seventh Day Adventist, he was drinking beer and kava and unemployed at the time that F married him, but he changed after they had two sons. She said her only technique to change him was to pray for him and to remind him that he may be hurt while he was drunk: ‘I just pray for him, this is what I do. Most of the time I tell him like this: “You go, you go, but make sure when you come back home, you don’t lose one of your ears or your leg, eh?” Because sometimes they go, they fight with their friends, they drink and fight like that, eh? Like this, they get in to a fight, don’t know where they are, eh? ... Sometimes they get hurt. Io [‘yes’], sometimes they get hurt, when they get drunk, somebody take off their watch, their shoes, and everything, eh, you know sometimes some people can do something bad to them. That’s why I tell you, if you go here and there, you don’t know, somebody might do you some damage. So make sure you don’t lose one of your leg[s] when you come home. So you better change yourself before something happen.’ When her husband came home drunk, she would make him sleep outside: ‘Sometimes I get a bucket of water and throw it on him, so my kids find it funny, yeah?’ Despite her assertiveness over his drinking, F knew she was expected to have dinner ready for him whenever he got home. ‘So we have to prepare good food for them. Never mind they go here and there, drinking, we have to be

kind to them, yeah? Do everything as a housewife, yeah?’

She says that complying with family obligations to the *vasu* is now difficult because it is too expensive: ‘Before in [iTaukei] custom, you know the *vasu* ...they are very important, yeah? So, like, for example, if they come home, they take anything from home, you can’t say anything. That’s their right, yeah? ... But now it’s changing. I think ... the custom changed because of the cost of living is very high, so ...if you’ve got something in the pot, you make it for dinner, they just come and eat it, so it’s very hard for you to cook another meal because it’s very expensive. And the supper too is different now, eh?’ F places the problem on the fact that the brother’s wife does not share the natal family’s concerns and



Suva Municipal Markets

comes from somewhere else, and therefore does not want to share. Yet, the problem can equally be reframed in terms of an economy that has changed from gift exchange to a cash-based economy.

Given that F lives in a peri-urban area in which the airport, agricultural land, and residential housing compete for space, it is not surprising to hear her say that the competition for resources is fiercest when it comes to land. Further, much of the land is tenanted and it is multicultural. Indeed, for F, there are two major areas that cause violence in her area: the land and issues between husband and wife. First, arguments break out over boundaries when surveys are not done and there is no arbitration, which results in neighbours fighting: ‘Sometimes they fight ... and sometimes they even run after each other with a knife. That’s very bad. The land is one of the most major issues in the area. Mm-mm.’ F is suggesting here that the neighbours are Indo-Fijian because it is a common-place to say that iTaukei tend to use their fists while Indo-Fijians

use knives (and, indeed, other traders interviewed also mentioned this).

Second, F talked of arguments between husband and wife, which arise from men wanting to control women and men’s expenditure on their own entertainment, particularly mistresses. F put it this way: ‘I experience it, yeah, this one... Husband got another wife [mistress], so he spend the money there so when he come to the real one [wife], the [wife] ask[s] for money. He didn’t want to give because no money there, so that’s how he starts swearing and fighting and speaking from there, eh?’

She noted that husbands and wives also argue about land, especially with regard to inheritance, and this time she talks clearly about iTaukei experiences. As iTaukei often avoid paperwork and bureaucracy, wills are often left unwritten. When the husband dies, the wife may assume that she owns the house but then discovers that it belongs to someone else because her husband never checked on the documentation: in fact, culturally, women have no right to their husband’s property after death. According to F, his family will come and take the house and everything in it. This point has led her to argue with her husband because she worries about her son’s future. Further, if F is widowed and is permitted to stay in the husband’s area with the children, she is obliged not to get married because this will nullify her right to stay.

#### Case Four

T, an iTaukei woman, is interviewed under the table, where she is preparing food to sell as packed lunches. Originally from Lakeba in Lau, T married a man from a village in Tailevu. Her first business was weaving and selling mats at home, but she found there was not the profit she needed from it, so she began coming to the market and selling food. T catches the bus at 5.20 in order to get to the market by 7.10 am from Monday to Friday and leaves at 4.30 pm to get home shortly after 6 pm. She does not work on Saturday because she belongs to the Seventh Day Adventists, who worship on Saturday. She now earns about \$FJD50 a day. This helps her pay for her child still in school and helps her eldest son who is running a business with her auntie in Kadavu, planting yaqona and taro to sell in the market.

T lives with her husband, a 6 year old daughter and her husband’s mother. She has another 23 year old daughter living elsewhere. She has been married for 23 years, but she

remembers arguments early in her marriage, particularly with her mother-in-law over the way she spoke to her sister-in-law about an affair with a married man in her village. The argument was heated enough that they called the village leader to arbitrate.

T's husband had been a soldier in the Counter-Revolutionary Warfare unit (CRW) and was therefore involved in the mutiny in 2000. He was jailed initially for three years and then for two more periods before he was released, and he was moved between several different prisons. During this period, she was still receiving her husband's salary from the military so she went back to school at the Fiji National University in Nadi, to learn baking and pastry-making. With the help of the social welfare and poverty education project funded under the SDL government, she got six certificates in business. She then applied for and got a licence, \$FJD 6 800 seed money from the Fiji National Provident Fund, and money from Australian and New Zealand aid. In all, she raised \$20 000 for her restaurant and opened it. However, she then got sick and hospitalized for one month and had to close the business down.

After a few months recuperation, she began a business selling food in a government building, which she maintained for nine years until her husband got out from prison and asked her to go to the village and look after his father, who was very sick. After a heated argument, she closed down the business and went back to the village to look after his father. She washed the clothes, cooked the food, and went fishing, prawning and crabbing to sell at the market and selling 'stuff' with the ANZ alongside her weaving business. Now, T says nobody can stop her from 'doing business'. T says that living in the village means spending a lot of time doing community work without receiving any money for it, but, at the market, a person can arrive in the morning and have money by the afternoon: 'When you come and sell something, get something out of it'. Now, her husband helps by scraping coconuts.

With regard to the rights of the *vasu* (of the children's rights from their mother's siblings), T says 'Actually, in Fiji that is our own custom, we have to believe in that at all times.' When asked if it's central to being Fijian, she says, 'Yes it's something we have to keep, eh? We have to expect good things from our mother's side, yeah? Oh, we need some live chicken, we need this, we need this. We can know what they can afford and what they can't afford.' She gives the example of when she took her

*Severe domestic violence is prevalent in both iTaukei and Indo-Fijian communities. During the research period, a major murder/suicide was being investigated in Kinoya, a suburb of Suva. On hearing that his wife had an affair, an Indo-Fijian man knifed his wife. While she was in hospital, he then hanged their children and killed himself. See, for example, <http://fijisun.com.fj/2015/07/26/the-house-of-death/>*

son to her brother's house. She says of her brother, 'He got big lands ... with a big house and everything, cousin everything, and then I took my son, my only son, and I took him there. And then he was asking for a big boat was outside... So, that same day, when we returned, the uncle put the boat in a big carrier with the engine, everything, for my son. Never pay any money because that's the *vasu*.' The fibre-glass boat was given to the brother from a Tongan friend at USP and the brother gave it straight to T's son, who uses it for diving and fishing for fish, octopus and turtle.

T says that the hardest years were the seven years her husband was not around, when he was in prison. During that period, she had to find money so that she could bring him his daily needs such as fruit, shaving implements, and underwear which, in Fiji, are not supplied by the state. The state provides food but not fruit. She said that those 7 years were very tough as she had to do her best to save for her family.

In another interview, T complains about boys roaming around, 'they are just roaming around, they never do things, they just lazy at all days'. While the married women come to the market and get something out of nothing, the boys never pass their examinations, 'never plant cassava, never weeding grass, never go and get coconuts, collect coconuts and sell it in the markets to get money.' They just roam about the village and ask their mother for money to go and buy a packet of noodles. Most of their fathers are also unemployed, go and drink *yaqona* (kava) at night, come home and sleep the whole day, and then leave to drink *yaqona* again. While women are trying to make ends meet, the men relax and the boys go searching for food and money for cigarettes, drink, cassava, bread and jam. T says, 'we are not living in the olden days now... People need money these days... the clothes to wear, food to eat, shoes to put on.' She tells me that she used to sit together with other women talking about this and how their relationships began romantically but ended in poverty. Mimicking a young girl in love, she says, 'We just, "Oh my husband, no money with the husband."' No

money with a husband [to] satisfy what you want and need. Which means that it is better not to marry the first time.

### Case Five

G is a 31 year Indo-Fijian woman who sits outside a bank not far from the market most days in her wheelchair. She tells me that until she was 14, she stayed at home on a farm. After that, she moved to Homes of Hope and then went for an operation. She was 15 when she returned home, and her father started raping her and did so at least 21 times, coming up under the floor. The house was on stilts and he would come up through the floorboards at night, threaten her with a knife. Apparently, he would tell her mother, he was going to check the cow. Her 9 year old sister was in the next room but never heard anything. Her father raped her only, because she was severely disabled and could not get away and he thought she would never be able to tell anybody. He beat her, locked her in her room and took her mobile phone, not believing that she was a 'normal' person. However, her mother was scared of her father and knew that he slept with other girls, including G's classmates. G told her mother about her father on Mothers Day. At first, her mother could not believe her, but then one day caught her husband in the act. At that point, she took G and her sister and went to live in the Hart homes. One day, G returned from a party to find that her mother had gone back to her father, taking all the furniture with her. There was 'No bed no mattress no anything'. G called the FWCC and was placed in the Homes of Hope. She was then moved to Mahaffy's Girls Home.

### Case Six

P is a professional iTaukei woman in her 50s, with a degree from the University of the South Pacific (USP). She married her husband because, as a Christian, she thought she had to marry the person she first slept with: 'But this man actually had raped me.' Prior to studying at USP, she was educated in New Zealand, where she first met her husband. She had attended a party held by Fijian students in New Zealand. She was sober and tired, so asked her friends if she could lie down in the expectation that they would wake her when they were ready to go. The door was locked but he climbed through the window and

raped her. She reported it to police and started proceedings against him, but realised she was on her own, explaining that the iTaukei community had got together and presented her with a *tabua* [whale's tooth used in the *bulubulu* ceremony], asking her to withdraw the charges: 'And when they presented the *tabua*, I saw myself sitting on one side of the room, and everybody else was on the other side, and – even the Fijian women – nobody came to me, to advise me, to side with me to say, you know, just carry on with it, you know, its ok, so I felt pretty alone.' She felt forced in to accepting the *tabua* and knew she could not go on with the court case, so she did not turn up. She said, 'the police were very angry with me, but, but at that time, you know, I thought to myself, it's happened. What else is gonna happen now? The only next step would be for me to marry him because I was brought up in that kind of family and ... that's why I married him.'

This was not the end of the trouble in her marriage. A year into her marriage, she was working as a teacher back in Fiji and her husband began insisting that she return home every day by 3.30 pm. He would call the next door neighbour and ask them to get her to come to the phone [a common arrangement in areas that don't have landlines]. If she wasn't there to answer the phone because the bus

*Rape of women and girls is common in both iTaukei and Indo-Fijian communities. At the time of research, people were talking about a case reported in the newspapers that involved an iTaukei man who raped a 9 year old girl on her way home from school (e.g. <http://fijisun.com.fj/2015/07/23/nakasi-girl-rape-suspect-quizzed/>).*

*The number of rape cases reported in the month of June was also inviting comment: <http://fijisun.com.fj/2015/07/07/rape-figures-shocking/>*

was late, she would get a beating from her husband. The husband would punch and kick. She says, 'He never stopped until he saw blood...and what he used to do was lock the back door lock the front door, because we were in a housing area and there were only 2 doors, the back door and the front door. And if I tried to hide the key, that meant more beating. And, it just went from bad to worse. And I kept telling myself, "Is this what life is?"

The relationship continued to get worse until one day the next door neighbor took her to hospital. Her mother came to visit but did not recognize her. P heard her sobbing and at this

point decided that she was going to survive as an individual. As a result, she went home, packed all her belongings, put them in the car and drove away. The husband later came and took the car, but she decided he could have it all, including the children (but, as it turned out, they grew up in her house).

P has now had many years to analyse this relationship. She says that she was always surprised that her husband was violent because he did not come from a violent background and he was also a professional, an architect. She now points to the fact that he used to go drinking with his friends, who were all having affairs, which she described as the way that iTaukei men show that they are not controlled by their wives. In doing so, they reinforce each other's behaviour. iTaukei women are expected to wait for their husbands to come home, and have their food ready when they arrive, regardless of what time it

may be. More than this, P was expected to wash his clothes, iron them, hang them up, 'and when he's ready to wear it, iron it again.' P notes that the notion that women should be servants to men is in iTaukei culture but that is also enhanced in boarding schools, 'like the one he went to.' According to P, 'it's all about total control. They just want their wives to jump when they say jump. They don't do to their children. But they do it to their wives.'

P has advised women in similar situations in a professional capacity. At one point, she came across 5 cases where the daughter had been raped. When she worked with the daughters' families, she discovered that the mother had also been raped, as had the grandmother. One of the women told her that, 'my mother told me 'deal with it, it's your fault, what were you doing there?' So she said, when her daughter got raped, she said the same thing to her daughter.

## Key Defining Issues in Fiji

The issues that emerged were overlapping and multi-faceted, and included battles over issues of control between husband and wife, which can erupt in violence against partners, children, or others perceived to be involved; and violence, including rape, of vulnerable groups including children, the disabled and the mentally ill.

Directly underpinning domestic violence are particular gender ideals. Among the conclusions of a national study conducted jointly between the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre and the Fiji Bureau of Statistics were that: 60% of women agree that "a good wife obeys her husband even if she disagrees". The most frequent situations disclosed by women where violence occurs were jealousy by husband, her disobedience, his desire to show "he is the boss" and drunkenness. FWCC found that women who had been victims of violence were likely to agree with justifications for violence and with statements which negate women's human rights. Almost 3 in 5 women surveyed believed that people outside of the family should not intervene if the man is abusing his wife. Women with tertiary education were less likely than women with primary or secondary education to support external intervention if a man was mistreating this wife. The case studies show traders and others navigating these attitudes and finding tactics to deal with their husbands' behaviour effectively.

The findings of the 2013 FWCC report coincide with the teachings of conservative religious institutions. For instance, many iTaukei Christian leaders claim to be teaching biblical interpretation of gender, although, in practise these are varying and contradictory. A more extreme view was raised by one iTaukei leader in a 2006 study who advocated that women should maintain old iTaukei traditions and crawl along the floor to show respect to their husbands. Church leaders had varying views on women's leadership at work but all maintained that the husband is the head of the household. Church leaders, however, had different views of extended families. While the Methodist Church leaders and many of the Pentecostal church leaders were emphasising the importance of the nuclear family, the Catholic Church leaders tried to use the extended family as a way of countering violence and abuse. However, the Methodist Church leadership has currently undertaken a massive change in direction, which includes an attitudinal change about women and children.

Until recent years, Gender-Based Violence in iTaukei villages went largely unchecked. Women in abusive marriages had very few options available to them. The most common response was for a woman to shelter at her brother's home, at which the husband would have to gather his clan and present her family with gifts (ranging from cigarettes to kerosene and whales' teeth) in the ritual

*'You gather here in Suva to discuss a crisis we must all address as a matter of urgency. – the appalling incidence of family violence in the Pacific. It is an issue of vital importance for every society, every government. And it is a fundamental test of our values as Pacific people which, I am sad to say, we are failing.*

*Because the current level of domestic violence in our midst is woefully, unacceptably high. It is, in fact, cause for regional shame. And we must all do a lot more to stop it.'*

*(Prime Minister Bainimarama, <http://www.fiji.gov.fj/Media-Center/Speeches/HON-PM-BAINIMARAMA-SPEECH-AT-THE-OPENING-OF-PACIFI.aspx> )*

called *bulubulu*. Due to the high store placed on communal living, the *bulubulu* places intense pressure on the woman's family to persuade her to go back to her husband. In 2010, Amnesty International reported the use of *bulubulu* to circumvent the law and shift the decision to report violence from the victim to her family. How this is done was highlighted in P's case study. In Fiji, the *bulubulu* has been used in the law courts to reduce or suspend sentences. Under s.163 of the Criminal Procedure Code, reconciliation is encouraged by judges and magistrates in several offences including domestic violence. While reconciliation cannot be used to drop the case, it remains a mitigating factor affecting sentencing.

Although this study focused primarily on iTaukei, the Indo-Fijian community also faces immense challenges with regard to its gender ideals and their relationship with violence. Murder-suicides like the one reported at the time of the research are not uncommon in the Indo-Fijian community, in which there is a greater emphasis on the idea that wives are an extension of the male sense of honour. More research is needed in this area.

However, marriage exists in a much wider field of relationships which reveal numerous other tensions that are played out within marriages. The case-studies suggest that marriages are most under pressure in relation to:

- Daughter-in-law/mother-in-law relationships;
- Yaqona (kava) and alcohol abuse;
- And the extent to which traditional obligations are expected in a cash economy.

Many of these problems lie in the broader context of increasing pressures of urbanisation, which include:

- Nightclubs with extended opening hours;
- Land division problems, particularly in the peri-urban areas;
- Poverty and unemployment, particularly of boys and men;
- The political situation and race relations between iTaukei and Indo-Fijians.

Government commitment towards change is high, but credibility is hampered by the fact that Prime Minister Bainimarama was the military commander who ousted a democratic government in 2006 and because of alleged incidences of domestic violence within his own family (Fiji Media Wars, 2015). However, government commitment has allowed a number of programmes to go ahead (as listed in the next section) and Bainimarama has mentioned the importance of working with the schools.

## Assessing Effectiveness in Fiji

In terms of attempting to prevent Gender-Based Violence, Shamima Ali, the head of the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre (FWCC) has been a vocal advocate for women facing Gender-Based Violence, as have activists in feminist NGOs such as the Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM). The centre has also run male advocacy programmes.

A number of organisations work in the field of counselling or housing women and children escaping violence. Many religious organisations (Christian, Hindu or Muslim) offer advice. Religious organisations include:

- The House of Sarah, an NGO established by the Anglican Diocese of Polynesia;
- The Methodist Church's Women's Department and Social Welfare Department;

## Key actors

- Fiji Women's Crisis Centre  
<http://www.fijiwomen.com>  
<https://www.facebook.com/Fiji-Womens-Crisis-Centre-148052941897105/>
- Ministry of Social Welfare, Women and Poverty Alleviation <http://www.welfare-women.gov.fj/>
- Empower Pacific <http://empowerpacific.com/>
- Regional Rights Resource Centre (RRRT) <http://www.spc.int/rrrt/>
- Fiji Women's Rights Movement

## Key programmes

- Fiji ratified CEDAW in 1995 and submitted CEDAW reports in 2002, 2009. The next periodic report was due in 2014. Shadow reports have also been submitted.
- CRC was ratified in 1993 and in 2011 a report which combined the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> reports was submitted.

- The Catholic Women's League;
- Localised Hindu organisations around the country (e.g. Ra Naan Parishad in Rakiraki and Sanatan Dharam Pratinidhi Sabha in Labasa);
- The Muslim Women's League.
- Secular organisations that offer specialised counselling services for gender-based violence include:
- Fiji Women's Crisis Centre and Empower Pacific.

If needed, women and children are referred to the following shelters:

- Mahaffy's Home and Independent Unit, Suva, for abused girls (run by the Salvation Army)
- Family Care, Suva, Lautoka, and Labasa for women and children (run by the Salvation Army)
- Homes of Hope, Suva (a faith-based NGO)
- Clopcott, Ba (originally set up by Department of Social Welfare, now administered by business volunteers)
- Dilkusha orphanage, Suva (run by the Methodist Church)
- St Christopher's orphanage, Suva (run by the Catholic Church)
- Treasure Home orphanage, Nadi (run by Assemblies of God in Sabeto)
- The Good Neighbour International, Suva, for single girls working in Suva (a faith-based NGO)
- Darul Iqama, Suva, for poor women and children (run by Muslim Women's League).

Women and children may also approach:

- Society of Vincent de Paul, Suva, for the destitute, mentally ill, crippled and blind (run by a non-profit organisation of lay people from the Catholic Church)
- The Ark of Hope, Suva, for the destitute (run by a self-supporting ministry)
- Hart Homes, around Viti Levu, for the poor (run by NGO called Housing Assistance and Relief Trust (HART) for the World Council of Churches)
- St Giles Hospital, Suva, for the mentally ill.

On August 30, 2015, FWCC announced plans to build 3 more shelters that are due to open at the end of the year

Various grants and schemes have been arranged to complement the existing infrastructure. Through UN Women, the Pacific Grant provides funding for civil society and government agency projects focused on violence against women (UN Women, 2013). The House of Sarah, for example, successfully applied for and received the fund in 2013.

The Home Ownership Schemes and the Public Rental Board Housing Assistance facilitate access to owning a home or rental accommodation for low income and vulnerable Fijians. This, however, remains too expensive for the destitute.



The Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation administers several social assistance schemes, including grants or vouchers or housing assistance. The Family Assistance Programme provides temporary financial relief to destitute families to supplement income. Approximately 13% of the population has benefited – but 35% of the population lives below the poverty line. The Care and Protection Allowance Programme assists needy families with children under 17 in vulnerable situations via a cash allowance. The Poverty Alleviation Scheme provides assistance and access to decent housing for low income earners. The food voucher programme provides a monthly voucher to help defray food expenses for vulnerable citizens.

Another initiative has been developed by the Fiji Government. In 2008, the Department of Women (now part of the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation) began a programme to create Violence Free Communities. By June 2014, 87 communities had participated of which 39 have been declared violence free (Fiji Government, 2014b). Spearheaded by the Ministry of Social Welfare, Women and Poverty Alleviation and run in partnership with the assistance of other government ministries and NGOs, the programme requires communities to go through 10 phases before they are classified as violence free. Training takes place over a period of 8 - 10 months and covers topics such as positive parenting, the Domestic Violence Decree, Gender Based Violence, anger and stress management and family empowerment. The initiative uses training and seeks to foster the ability of the community to respond to violence. The Ministry of Women has recently secured a consultant to review the progress of the Violence Free Communities Initiative.

Work with the Education Department to develop an educational package to schools focused on aspects of gender relations - the Ministry of Education has a Family Life and Education Curriculum; which includes society, culture and gender, could be used for discussion of gender norms present in Fiji and one module is devoted to Gender Based Violence which is very important as it brings this issue into the real sphere of students' lives

However, research conducted in 2009 suggests that the sector as a whole has suffered from being seriously under-resourced, under-staffed and centralised in Suva. Shelters are not necessarily the most effective response to gender-based violence for both practical reasons and because they signal values alien to many women, especially iTaukei. However, in iTaukei culture, there is the possibility of using certain classes of kin as safe houses as it is customarily taboo for husbands to visit some kin. P suggested that wives use these taboo kin when difficulties arise with their husbands. Sometimes chiefs can be approached also and they are likely to have space for guests which can be used in these kinds of situations.

FWCC (2013) indicate that Indo-Fijian women have less access to culturally sanctioned ways of dealing with gender-based violence, one reason they are reported as using the FWCC more than iTaukei women . More research needs to be conducted with Indo-Fijian families on gender-based violence.

The case studies of the market traders also show that tension within families, and particularly between spouses, may benefit from programmes on substance abuse, nightclub opening hours, more timely land surveys in peri-urban areas, unemployment of boys and men, and continued emphasis on the enhancement of multicultural relationships. Both communities also share violence outside of that usually inferred by gender-based violence, such as daughter-in-law/mother-in-law violence and violence between the wife and the husband's other partners.

## Useful links

- UN Women <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tx0-4bflxqk>
- European Union International Cooperation and Development [https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/countries/fiji\\_en?qt-node\\_tabs\\_country\\_1#qt-node\\_tabs\\_country\\_1](https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/countries/fiji_en?qt-node_tabs_country_1#qt-node_tabs_country_1)
- RRRRT <http://www.spc.int/rrrt/country-activities/fiji>
- FWCC <http://www.pacificwomen.org/pacific-links/fiji-womens-crisis-centre/>
- FWCC – Somebody’s Life, Everybody’s Business <http://fijiwomen.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/1.pdf>
- Fiji Ministry of Social Welfare, Women and Poverty Alleviation <http://www.welfare-women.gov.fj>
- Crime Statistics Fiji <http://www.statsfiji.gov.fj/index.php/other-statistics/53-other-statistics/crime/129-crimes-offences>
- UNFPA <http://countryoffice.unfpa.org/pacific/>
- Violence Free Communities <http://www.fiji.gov.fj/Search.aspx?searchtext=violence+free+communities&searchmode=AnyWord>
- UN Women Multi-Country Offices Fiji
- <http://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/countries/fiji>
- House of Sarah – Pacific Fund Grantee <http://www.unwomen.org/~media/field%20office%20eseasia/docs/unwomen-pac%20fund%20brief%20pdf.ashx?v=1&d=20141202T12032>

## Options for Action in Fiji

- Community discussions facilitated with videos about issues such as: healthy gender relations, gender-based violence, and possible localised safe houses following local kinship relations;
- Discussion with government and nightclub owners over nightclub hours (which currently extend to 5 am);
- Work with iTaukei Land Trust Board (TLTB) on land surveys and arbitration of boundaries;
- Review violence-free communities;
- Further research needs to be conducted on Indo-Fijian marital violence (in particular, on murder-suicide);
- Further research also needs to be conducted on the relationships between substance abuse, pornography, unemployment and gender-based violence.



## Kiribati

### Tammy Tabe

Kiribati is comprised of 33 islands located in the Central Pacific. The islands are characteristically low lying atolls and lack land and vegetation and because of the smallness and low elevation of the islands, they are also highly susceptible to sea level rise and other climate change effects. The lack of land and salt water intrusion influences the type of vegetation on the islands and also limits people from growing a variety of food plants. Most of the plants grown on the islands, particularly on south Tarawa include pumpkin, banana, pawpaw and breadfruit trees and cabbage which are mainly grown in wooden boxes. Pandanus and coconut trees grow everywhere on the island because of their ability to withstand saltwater. However, the means of subsistence for the majority of people living on south Tarawa are limited to a few cultivated fruit trees and plants and fisheries resources, but most of them rely heavily on imported foods particularly rice and canned food.

Kiribati per capita gross domestic product (GDP) is among the lowest in the Pacific. The main sources of revenue for the country are derived from fishing licensing with limited revenues from copra and remittances and about 90 percent of the country's national revenue is spent on food and fuel alone. South Tarawa, the capital of Kiribati is centre to all major economic, political and social activities and it is also where half of the country's population resides. In 2015, the total population of the country was estimated to be 104,607. The high concentration of population on south Tarawa has an increased rate of unemployment, crimes and overpopulation. About 21.8 percent of the people live below the poverty line, which means that one fifth of the households are struggling to meet basic living expenses.

Kiribati is largely a patrilineal society where men are traditionally dominant in leadership roles, decision making in the families and

communities, and are heads of households. Due to men's superior roles, they are accorded particular respect, while women are expected to be submissive to whatever the men say and comply with the social obligations they are expected to perform. The relationships and roles between men and women in Kiribati are culturally differentiated. Men are the main providers and protectors of the family, while women's roles are comprised of household chores, child rearing and caring for the family. Silence is observed by women during social or village gatherings and they are not allowed to speak openly or voice their opinions during such events. When women fail to perform their social obligations as expected or raised their voices and try to overpower their husbands, fathers, and elders in the community; they are often disciplined by being physically beaten up.

Physical beating has traditionally and is still observed by I- Kiribati people as a form of disciplining and is usually practiced on children at a very young age. When a child does something wrong or bad, he or she is usually smacked to indicate that what he or she did or said was wrong and therefore must be punished. Smacking them is used as a form of disciplining and also to generate fear in order to prevent them from committing the same wrong act. At times, parents apply other physical punishments besides smacking such as pulling the child's hair or ear, or yelling at them while smacking them uncontrollably, or even slapping their heads and this is common throughout Kiribati. Due to the fact that is viewed as a form of disciplining, the physical and psychological effects of this form of punishment on children are usually undermined.

The same concept of disciplining is applied to women who are considered inferior to men. When women act against men, the physical form of punishment is also applied to discipline them. However, not all forms of disciplining

involve physical violence, others would verbally and emotionally abuse women to hurt them or put them to shame for failing to comply with social obligations or for committing an offence.

However, in situations where violence is committed against women at home or elsewhere, it is uncommon for victims to report the case due to social and cultural pressures from families and to safeguard the family's reputation. Domestic violence is considered a private matter for I-Kiribati families which should be resolved within the family. Outside interference and assistance is often not accepted. Kiribati has just recently implemented Te Rau n Te Mwenga Act that became a law in 2014 to address issues of discrimination and gender-based violence (GBV).

For many years, the level of violence against women in Kiribati remained unknown due to the lack of reliable data and information. This strongly encouraged the Kiribati government through the Ministry of Internal and Social Affairs (MISA), today known as Ministry of Women, Youth and Social Affairs (MWYSA) and the National Statistics Office (NSO) to undertake a survey in 2008 on the state of violence against women and children in the country.

The survey: the Kiribati Family Health and Support Study (KFHSS) was implemented by the South Pacific Commission (SPC) to quantify the prevalence of violence against women and children in Kiribati, and also to

identify the most common form of violence and strategies that can be implemented to address them (Kingi and Roguski 2011). The Study was conducted in the southern and northern Kiribati islands including the Phoenix and Line islands. Not all the islands in Kiribati were covered but 2,000 households were randomly selected throughout Kiribati for the survey.

The survey revealed that 68 percent of the women in Kiribati were reported to have experienced at least one act of physical or sexual violence. About 35 percent of women who experience intimate partner abuse have been victims of both forms of violence. The most common forms of violence reported by most of the women include being slapped or have something thrown at them, being pushed and hit with the fist or an object. About 46 percent of the women experienced severe physical violence rather than moderate physical violence. Half of the women who reported having experienced physical or sexual violence had at least being injured once.

Almost 90 percent of the women between the age of 15 and 49 who have had partners reported experiencing at least one form of controlling behaviour by their intimate partners. The most common factors that lead to intimate partner violence are jealousy, disobedience of women to their partners and alcohol. In total, about 73 percent of women between the age of 15 and 49 have at least experienced some form of physical or sexual violence by their partners.



## Contemporary Gender Inequality

- The government of Kiribati has taken initiatives to address Gender Inequality and Eliminate Sexual and Gender Based (ESGBV) Violence in the country.

- In 2004, Kiribati ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The initial State report was due in 2005 but compliance reporting has been very slow and articles of the Convention have yet to be incorporated into the legislation; however, the non-compliance of the customary law with CEDAW is still a major concern (Kingi and Roguski 2011). On the national level, the government has played an active role in the implementation of policies that empower women and supports the elimination of violence against women and children across the country and is still actively involved today.

- In 2005, the Family and Sexual Offences (FASO) Unit now known as Domestic Violence and Sexual Offences (DVSO) was established as part of the Tarawa Police headquarters through the Pacific Regional Policing Initiative.

- On November 25, 2006, Kiribati commemorated the first National White Ribbon Day which was followed by 16 days of campaign on violence against women. White Ribbon is Australian's national male led campaign to end violence against women and is commemorated on 25 November every year.

- In 2007, the White Ribbon day was commemorated by 16 days of advocacy on the Elimination of Violence against women.

- In 2008, the Kiribati Family, Health and Support Survey (KFHSS) was conducted by the Ministry of Internal and Social Affairs (MISA) known today as the Ministry of Women, Youth and Social Affairs (MWYSA) with assistance from the South Pacific Commission (SPC) and the Pacific Prevention of Domestic Violence Programme (PPDVP).

- In 2010, results from the KFHSS were released which showed alarming rates of GBV in Kiribati. This triggered the implementation on action plans to eliminate violence against women.

- In 2011, the National Elimination on Sexual and Gender Based Violence (ESGBV) Policy was developed along with a National Action Plan to support the implementation of the policy.

- In 2012, the MWYSA developed a Shared Implementation Plan (SHIP) that included both internal and external key stakeholders to assist with the implementation of the National Policy and Action Plan and to address issues of sexual and gender based violence in the country.

- In 2014, the Te Rau n Te Mwenga Act (Family Peace Act) was implemented.

### Country snap-shot

Kiribati gained its Independence in 1979. It is a member of ACP, PIF, MSG, UN

Population: 104,607 (ADB Report 2015)

Demographics:

Women: 50.4 %

Men: 49.6 %

Landmass : 810 sq.km

EEZ: 3,550,000 sq.km

### Gender snap-shot

**Women in Parliament:** Only 4 women have ever been elected to Parliament.

**Women in Economy:** Women are still under represented in the economy although since 2007, 50% of the women were recorded as being engaged in employment, however only one third of them occupy paid jobs

**Violence against Women:** Around 68% of partnered women have been reported experiencing at least one act of physical or sexual violence or both by an intimate partner and Kiribati is by far the highest in GBV (SPC, 2010).

### EU snap-shot

There are currently no EU funded projects on Discrimination and Gender based violence in Kiribati

## **Women and the Law**

- Despite the ratification of CEDAW in 2004 and other anti-discrimination provisions, these do not include sex as a protected ground, which means that discrimination against women in Kiribati is theoretically legal and laws which discriminate against women cannot be held to be unconstitutional. The common laws that require evidence of physical resistance in order to establish the absence of sexual consent are still applied.

## **Women and Economy**

- The country of Kiribati has a subsistence economy supported by a small labor force. In 2006, 6.6 percent of women were recorded as unemployed but records showed 3.8 percent of women engaged in agricultural activities in 2012. Since 2007, more than 50 percent of the women comprised the workforce but only a third of them occupy paid jobs. There is however an increase in the number of girls at both secondary and tertiary schools, with more girls in education than boys but women are still highly under-represented at all levels of decision making. Women have limited access to opportunities and resources even though some of them are traditionally entitled to inherit land and properties. They are often restricted to responsibilities such as meeting traditional and social obligations and carrying out housekeeping and childcare responsibilities.
- There is a lack of funding and initiatives to support women in business in Kiribati. Most of the women in employment are involved privately in family businesses while others engage in small marketing businesses of cooked foods, fruits or the sale of fish.

## **Women in Leadership**

- In 2012, 4 women were elected to Parliament but since then, no women have been elected to Parliament.

## **Violence against Women**

- In Kiribati, an overall 73 percent of women have been reported to have experienced some form of physical or sexual violence, of which 68 percent of women between the ages of 15-49 percent are reported as experiencing either physical and sexual violence, or both by their intimate partners. Around one in five women aged 14-49 had experienced physical or sexual violence by a non-partner. Around 90 percent of women were reported to experience some form of controlling behaviour, and 31.4 percent had experienced rape involving physical force and 41.1 percent had sex with a partner because they were afraid.

## **Gender Based Violence on South Tarawa, Kiribati.**

This study is an anthropological analysis of how gender based violence is conceptualized in Kiribati in relation to cultural traditions on domestic violence and newly introduced Laws on discrimination and violence against women. The study was carried out over a period of two and half weeks on south Tarawa where the majority of the population resides. It involved interviews with key stakeholders who have been involved in the implementation of national policies and action plans and also those who have been highly engaged in the facilitation of various projects and awareness programmes to try and address the issue of GBV in the country.

The study also involves a review of published materials on implemented policies and action plans in Kiribati. The lack of data on domestic violence cases in Kiribati is a drawback to the study. The MWYSA has just recently implemented a Safenet that works in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and the Police that operates as a database gathering data and information on domestic violence cases throughout the country while at the same time tries to improve services and assistance to victims.

It was quite difficult to conduct specific case studies on GBV victims or even consult individually with them because this issue was treated as a private matter and therefore was not talked about openly by those involved. Although, I was informed informally by some people who have heard and witnessed incidences of domestic violence, it was quite difficult as an outsider to approach the victims and talked to them about the domestic violence they had experienced.

Given the short period of time spent on the island, it was also impossible to work closely with the Police and Women's Crisis Centre on the issues of GBV and domestic violence. Due

to the fact that much of the information on victims of domestic violence is held confidentially, it was challenging to get the key stakeholders such as the Police and Women's Crisis Centre to talk about the victims in detail, rather, they would just use different cases in general as examples.

## The Cultural Conceptualization of Domestic Violence in Kiribati

Gender Based Violence is a newly introduced subject in Kiribati. For decades, I-Kiribati people have viewed domestic violence as a form of disciplining women and girls when they fail to adhere to their social roles at home and in the community. This form of disciplining has also been institutionalized as a cultural tradition given the patrilineal context of Kiribati societies. It was only after the dissemination of the Kiribati Family Health Support Study's (KFHSS) alarming results, that people became aware of domestic violence as a major issue in the country.

In Kiribati, GBV has been categorised into physical beating, sexual harassment, and emotional abuse to distinguish the different forms of violence committed against women, children and men. Domestic violence is very common among families in Kiribati but has always been considered as a private matter and not requiring outside interference. Domestic violence has historically and traditionally been observed as a normal practice among I-Kiribati families and is manifested in forms of physical beating and emotional abuse of women and children especially by men.

Results from the KFHSS research showed that the physical beating of women accounts for 60 percent of all types of domestic violence which is the highest among the different forms of violence categorized under GBV. Emotional harm accounted for 47 percent and 46 percent for sexual abuse. Based on the study, Kiribati was rated the third highest in the world in terms of GBV, but the highest in the Pacific Islands (MYWSA Awareness Group 2015).

The dissemination of the KFHSS research results was used as an approach to increase awareness programmes on domestic violence and it was also a driver towards the implementation of new laws against violence and discrimination of women. It was only then that people became aware of GBV as a crime in the country. However, in Kiribati, culture seems to be used to condone domestic violence as a crime because it has historically and traditionally been used as a form of discipline for children and women who disrespect or fail to comply with social obligations and norms of the family and community. The difference of power relations between men and women have also disregarded women's rights and forced them to become submissive to men so when women try to overpower men, they often ended up being beaten to ensure that they do not try to override men in decision making or in power relations. Men have the mentality that they are the bosses and are superior to women and therefore women should always be subjective and obedient to them, and always do as they say; and if they fail to do so, they should be beaten or insulted as a form of punishment and discipline. This type of mentality among men has been normalised for generations among I-Kiribati people.

Although many claimed that domestic violence or beating up of women and children is a form of discipline and has always been observed as a tradition in Kiribati, it is difficult to know how widely it was practiced in the past because men and women knew of their roles and observed them carefully as expected so there were low incidences of domestic violence. Some claim that in the

past the I-Kiribati tradition of safeguarding females' virginity for courting and marriage also encouraged young women and girls to be confined at home and carry out house chores rather than be allowed to wander around like men and boys. The lack of western influences and amenities, education and employment opportunities also contributed to women's confinement to households. These practices have been observed as traditional ways in which women should behave in families and communities. The fact that Kiribati is a patrilineal society also emphasizes the belief that men should always be accorded particular respect as head of households, leaders and primary providers of households.

In many cases, it is often not the failure to comply with social obligations and house chores that really causes domestic violence but the unequal use of power relations between the men and women, in that, when the food is not ready as expected by the man of the house, he uses his power as the head of the household on the woman by beating her up sometimes to remind her of who is the boss in the house or for failing to do her social chores as a woman.

From the KFHSS research, several factors were identified as contributing to and influencing domestic violence in Kiribati and the most common factor is *koko* (jealousy). Jealousy is a traditional lifestyle observed by men in Kiribati. Men have the mentality that while they have the freedom to socialise and participate in activities outside of the house, their wives are expected to remain at home. Jealousy is often caused when a man suspects his wife of having an affair or is flirting with another man. This always leads to domestic violence between men and women and sometimes among men and can sometimes result in the death of the victims.

Domestic violence has also been identified to occur more frequently when men are under the influence of alcohol. Alcohol is like a fuel that increases the chances and extent of violence committed on women. Sexual abuse and conflict between partners also contribute to domestic violence in Kiribati. It has also been a tradition that physical beating of women and children is practiced as a form of punishment and discipline and is socially and culturally accepted. Therefore, when women misbehave or do not perform their social roles as expected by the husband, family and community the application of physical beating is treated as form of disciplining them.

It is a cultural tradition and outlook that disciplining children by beating them will help them grow up into respectful and well behaved persons. As head of households, men are obligated to ensure that their households' members are confined to their social roles and are well-behaved and prevent any shameful acts that will ruin the reputation of the family. In many cases, the use of physical beating on children and women can be supported by the community or extended members of the family especially if the children and women misbehave or failed to perform their social obligations as expected by the community or family.

Poverty and lack of land are also factors that might not obviously contribute towards domestic violence but have been identified as influencing violence on Tarawa. Most of the people live in extended families because they cannot afford to live on their own. The lack of land also limits people from establishing their own houses and live as nuclear families, thus, many end up constructing small houses within the small land plot in which other extended families live.

Living in extended families might reduce expenses of living alone as a nuclear family and also contribute towards the welfare of the extended family but the association of different spouses within the same household can trigger violence. An example is when a husband suspects his wife is talking a lot with his sister's husband or sees both his wife and brother in-law joking causally and decides to beat up his wife because he suspects that she is flirting with his brother in law. There are some incidences such as these that have occurred in Tarawa but have been blamed as being a result of poverty and lack of land that prevented families from living on their own, instead encouraging many to live in extended families.



## Are the new laws on violence against women really addressing the issue of Discrimination and Sexual and Gender Based Violence, or not?

***‘We have observed our culture for generations and it defines who we are, but are the new laws on violence against women implemented to nurture our***

The KFHSS research results and the implementation of the National policies and action plan on the elimination of sexual and gender based violence have increased awareness of GBV as a crime in Kiribati. Those who are mainly affected are women and children, but more specifically women who are mostly victims. Many but not all of the awareness programmes conducted by the MWYSA and other organizations on Tarawa have used the KFHSS results as a basis to raise awareness and convince people of the high rates of GBV in Kiribati. However, the team from MWYSA often experience difficulty dealing with the audience during awareness programmes because many of them, particularly the

elders, often raise questions about the implementation of new laws that are against forms of discipline and roles of women that have been observed culturally by I-Kiribati people for years. Some of the members have also been criticized for trying to educate parents on how to discipline their children and tell them how to deal with their families accordingly.

I attended an awareness programme conducted by the MWYSA team in one of the communities in Betio in South Tarawa. The audience was comprised mostly of men and a few children but there were hardly any women. The men were engaged in kava drinking during the awareness. The awareness presentation was conducted in different segments by members of the team who outlined findings of GBV from the Kiribati Family, Health and Support Study, the presentation of figures on the types of violence committed under GBV in Kiribati, and a male advocate who talked about violence on behalf of women and children. After the presentations, there was a summary of the overall presentations followed by questions. Although the focus of the awareness was on women and children, during the questioning period, most of the men queried about the disciplining of children and culture in relation to the new laws, while disregarding questions relating to violence against women and women’s rights, which I found interesting. Perhaps the reluctance to discuss women’s rights was a result of the conflicting perceptions of culture as the Kiribati way of doing things that should be maintained and negative views of any new laws that undermine men’s power and authority.

Taking into account the cultural context in Kiribati, the government of Kiribati through MWYSA and assistance from external NGOs has implemented *Te Rau N Te Mmwenga Act* (Family Peace Act). The Act was implemented to include the entire family rather than focusing on women alone. It was implemented to address gender inequality between men and women but also to promote peace within the family as an approach to minimize and address domestic violence. It was aimed to include men, women and children without exclusively focusing on women. The Act emphasizes that if peace is maintained in the family, domestic violence will surely decrease.

However, men have argued that the Act only focuses on women and is empowering them to overpower men, which contradicts the cultural role of women as inferior to men, and thus many are not supportive of the Act. Under the Act, men are subject to imprisonment if they commit violence against women. In some cases, women have also used the Act against men to threaten them that will go to jail if they beat women up. Some of the key stakeholders involved in addressing issues of GBV in Kiribati have indicated that several incidences have occurred where female victims were beaten up or stabbed to death because the men considered that if they were going to be imprisoned for beating up their wives, they might as well make it worthwhile by killing them if they are suspected of having an affair or flirting with another man.

There is a general lack of knowledge and compliance with the new laws on violence against women but increased awareness in communities have begun gradually educating people on domestic violence as a crime and have also made them become more aware that violence committed against any man, woman and child should be reported so that the perpetrators can be punished and violence can be reduced in families and community.

## Key Defining Issues in Kiribati

While the development and implementation of policies and action plans on eliminating sexual and gender based violence in Kiribati is significant for addressing the issue on a national level, it is common that people seek cultural and religious interventions to address domestic issues rather than going through the legal processes for justice which places more emphasis on human rights and gender inequality. However, there are many issues associated in trying to address issues of sexual and gender based violence in Kiribati.

1. Culture has been used to criticise the implementation of new policies and acts on the elimination of sexual and gender based violence
2. The implementation of the Family Peace Act sparked conflicting reactions particularly among men who do not fully support the Act because they assume that it only focuses on empowering women and their rights which they see as contracting the traditional values of the Kiribati culture.
3. The Family Peace Act has also been used by some of the women against their husbands to threaten them with imprisonment if they commit violent acts on them.
4. The Family Peace Act has been viewed by many women as contributing to the break-up of families instead of maintaining them. The Act encourages the reporting of domestic violence and imprisonment of the perpetrator. However, many women are reluctant to report domestic violence committed against them because they fear that it will lead to the imprisonment of their husbands. Although this would be beneficial for the female victim, it will greatly affect her family because there would be no one to provide for their family. The reluctance of reporting by the victims also affects the database records of domestic violence incidences.
5. While many activities and programmes have been conducted to empower women and recognize their rights, some women still maintain that they should remain submissive to their husbands because of biblical doctrines. However, such conceptions are often misinterpreted by people; thus to submit to their husbands does not mean to submit to violence.
6. Domestic Violence is a private matter and does not require outside interference
7. Misinterpretation and misunderstanding of the concepts of Women's rights and empowering women. Women's rights and empowering women is conceptualised as encouraging women to overpower men or be equal to men which is culturally unacceptable in Kiribati.
8. Violence is culturally accepted and normalised as a form of discipline
9. Need to change men's mentality of women as inferior to them

## Assessing Effectiveness in Kiribati

### Key actors

List the key government and non-government and church actors here - provide names and websites

- Ministry of Women, Youth and Social Affairs (MWYSA)
- Domestic Violence and Sexual Offences (DVSO) Unit
- Women's Crisis Centre
- UN Women (Kiribati)
- Tetoamatoak (NGO for disabled people in Kiribati that also advocates through drama for preventing violence against people with disabilities including women).

### Key programmes

List key country programmes here - either government or other actions to implement national strategy or conventions etc

- Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) documents (2004)
- Elimination of Sexual and Gender Based Violence Policy (ESGBV) (2011)
- National Action Plan (NAP) (2012)
- Male Advocacy (MWYSA)

### Ministry of Women, Youth and Social Affairs (MWYSA)

The governmental sector oversees activities and affairs that concern women and youths in the country. It played a key role in the administration of the first Kiribati Family, Health and Support Study (KFHSS) in 2008 with support from SPC.

Results of the study led to the development and implementation of a National Policy and Action Plan to eliminate sexual and gender-based violence in Kiribati. MWYSA is actively involved in the implementation of the national Policy and Action Plan through the administration of an ESGBV Frontline Project. Under the ESGBV project, MWYSA has developed a Shared Implementation Plan (SHIP) to assist with addressing sexual and gender-based violence.

The SHIP was implemented in 2014 as a 4 year project with 5 main outputs that include:

1. Governance and Leadership
2. Access to Justice
3. Capacity Development
4. Improvement of Services (SAFENET)
5. Prevention and Advocacy

By having different outputs under the SHIP project, MWYSA has been able to provide avenues with which national and international organizations can assist based on their expertise and interests, while it is also engaged in improving each output where they have the human resource and capacity. For instance, under output 4, MWYSA has set up a SAFENET as a database in collaboration with other governmental sectors such as the Police, Health etc to gather data and information on gender based violence in the country. The SAFENET also works to improve services and provide assistance to victims of violence.

MWYSA has tried to change its approach in raising awareness in communities and utilize men because of equal power relations to advocate to other men on behalf of women on the issue of GBV rather than having women, who are condemned and denied the rights to speak, to instruct men what they should do.

MWYSA has used Male Advocacy in raising awareness to allow men to convince other men of the issue of GBV. The involvement of men in advocacy also balances the power relation which does not exist with women if they advocate about GBV to men. The involvement of men also assists to change other men's mentality. The Male Advocacy initiative agrees that only men can convince other men. There are 110 men all over Tarawa who have volunteered and committed to advocating on behalf of the women on the issue of GBV and have been invited to south Tarawa to undergo training and to empower them to reach out to other men.

MWYSA has also provided training to teachers to provide counselling in schools as a method to educate and raise awareness among young students and children on ESGBV because they have room to learn new things compared to adults who have fixed mentalities about things. A new booklet on how to counsel and assist children who have experienced violence at home has recently been launched and is now distributed to schools on Tarawa.

## Useful links

[http://www.spc.int/hdp/index2.php?option=com\\_docman&task=doc\\_view&gid=211&Itemid=4](http://www.spc.int/hdp/index2.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_view&gid=211&Itemid=4)

[http://www.who.int/sdhconference/resources/draft\\_background\\_paper4b\\_kiribati.pdf](http://www.who.int/sdhconference/resources/draft_background_paper4b_kiribati.pdf)

<http://www.unicef.org/pacificislands/evaw.pdf>

<http://www.ppdvp.org.nz/wp-content/media/2011/03/Final-Kiribati-PPDVP-Baseline-Update-25-February-2011.pdf>

<http://www.pacificwomen.org/resources/stats/kiribati-country-plan-summary/>

## Domestic Violence and Sexual Offences (DVSO) Unit

Kiribati is part of the Pacific Prevention of Domestic Violence Programme (PPDVP). PPDVP was an initiative of the New Zealand Aid Programme (NZAID) administered under the International Development Group of Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, New Zealand Police (INZPOL) and the Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police (PICP). The programme supports and builds on previous NZAID and NZPOL support for the prevention of domestic violence in the Pacific. The programme works in collaboration with the Police Department in Tarawa, particularly the Domestic Violence and Sexual Offences (DVSO) Unit to provide ground sustained support for the development of Police Domestic violence policy, strategy, action plans, systems and training programmes. An NZPOL mentor was assigned to Kiribati to support the work (Kingi and Roguski 2011).

The establishment of the DVSO Unit in 2008, previously known as the Family and Sexual Offences (FASO) Unit led to improved awareness programmes in communities and increased the number of staff from 4 to 6 who were trained under the PPDVP. At present, the DVSO Unit has been very active in

- Conducting community policing in communities on domestic violence and sexual offences
- Continuing training its police officers on how to deal with gender based violence and laws on violence against women and human rights when policing communities.
- Setting up support stations in each of the communities on Tarawa staffed with DVSO officers to assist victims
- Providing a comfort house for victims for a night before transferring them to the Women's Crisis Centre.
- Playing an active role in dealing with domestic violence cases and record keeping
- Improving data collection and partnerships with assistance from PPDVP

## Women's Crisis Centre

The Centre is administered by Catholic Sisters. Victims have to go to the Police first and are then taken to the hospital for medical assistance before they are brought to the Centre as a safe house. The Centre is home to the Nuns but was transformed into a safe house for female victims in 2000. The victims are allowed to stay at the Centre for as long as they need to, sometimes with their children. While taking shelter at the Centre, they also receive counselling from the Sisters, which at times includes their husbands, especially if they visit the Centre and want reconciliation with their wives to return home. The Women's Crisis Centre is privately operated by the Catholic Sisters and they share with the victims what they have. Many victims have reconciled with their husbands through counselling offered at the Centre which does not only involve the couples. The victim is only allowed to leave the Centre when she feels she is ready to go home and be with her husband, but if not, her case against her husband will go through the court. In other cases where women and their children cannot return because it is not safe, they can be sent away to be with relatives on another island or where they originally come from in order to be safe.

## Useful links

<http://www.ppdvp.org.nz/wp-content/media/2011/03/Final-Kiribati-PPDVP-Baseline-Update-25-February-2011.pdf>

[http://www.spc.int/hdp/index2.php?option=com\\_docman&task=doc\\_view&gid=211&Itemid=4](http://www.spc.int/hdp/index2.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_view&gid=211&Itemid=4)

[http://www.who.int/sdhconference/resources/draft\\_background\\_paper4b\\_kiribati.pdf](http://www.who.int/sdhconference/resources/draft_background_paper4b_kiribati.pdf)

## Options for Action in Kiribati

There is a significant need for an Action Plan that takes into account cultural and religious interventions as a form of resolving issues of domestic violence besides having the Police and other actors to assist. At the moment, the new Act is used against perpetrators as an approach to addressing GBV in the country and although this is important in addressing the issue on a national level, it has generated a lot of misunderstanding and resentment among people who have previously observed cultural and religious interventions when it comes to resolving issues such as these. The new law also prevents the reporting of violence incidences among the victims for fear of imprisonment of their partners who in most cases are the only providers of the family. Many see that although imprisonment of the perpetrators prevents the reoccurrence of domestic violence at home, it breaks up families and does not really resolve the issue of maintaining peace at home as provided for by the Family Peace Act.

The establishment of a proper counselling centre and a safe house for victims is required in Kiribati. Although the Women's Crisis Centre plays this role, it needs to set up a proper Crisis Centre and Safe House for the victims. The Centre provides a safe house for the victims and also counselling by the Catholic Sisters but is very small and can only accommodate a few victims and because of this, many victims have to return to their relatives or their homes where they were exposed to violence.

MWYSA plays a very active role in awareness programmes and the team has become creative in their responses to people when culture is used to condone domestic violence as a crime. There is a need to conduct another Study to evaluate the effectiveness of their awareness programmes and plans on the elimination of sexual and gender based violence but this needs funding.

Caritas Australia works in collaboration with Teitoiningaina (a Catholic based Association), Alcohol Awareness Family Recovery (AAFR) and Women's Crisis Centre to provide training to I-Kiribati women to carry out outreach programmes across the country on GBV. The operation is part of Output 4 under the Shared Implementation Plan administered by MWYSA. Training has just commenced and therefore is still underway, but it would be interesting to follow up on the outcome of this initiative and the role that women play in reaching out to other women in the country.

Given the recent introduction of domestic violence as a crime and the implementation of the new law on violence against women, there is a significant need for increased awareness programmes and activities that facilitates the involvement of men, such as the male advocacy which is a volunteer initiative administered by MWYSA. It is believed that changing the mentality of men and generating more awareness on the issue will help them acknowledge and support women's empowerment and rights, and decrease GBV in the country.



## Micronesia

Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Republic of Palau (RP),  
Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI)

### Dr Manuel Rauchholz

The region of Micronesia under analysis here comprises three island nations: the Republic of Palau (RP); the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), with the four States of Yap, Chuuk, Pohnpei and Kosrae; and finally, to the east, the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI). With the exception of Yap proper that follows a patrilineal system of inheritance, all 11 ethnic groups in Micronesia are structured primarily along matrilineal descent groups that trace their origin to a female ancestor. These female descent groups are named and ranked into named clans. These clans are organized and defined around collective land holdings that are an important part of a person's identity. In severe illness or death one ideally returns to these localities of identity. Localized clans are then sub-grouped into smaller units of matrilineages and nuclear families. In the past, clans and matrilineages shared the same hearth, and also formed villages and districts and had established relations linking themselves with other clans. Marriage relations were forged with people of another clan (exogamy) and on smaller islands where land resources were scarce cross-cousin marriage between two clans across multiple generations was common. Ideally, the eldest male relatives of a matrilineage or clan were the public face of this group. They were the spokespersons, chiefs, religious, political and military leaders of a group and represented or defended the interests of their clan, foremost the honor of their elders, "mothers" and "sisters". Sibling sets within one generation are considered to be the building blocks of Micronesian societies (Marshall) and their relationship more essential than marriage ties. Culturally speaking children first belong to their mothers' and their matrilineage and the

mother's brother is still considered to be a key provider and decision maker in important family affairs (i.e. marriage, educational choices etc.). Hence, fathers of children have played a secondary role in the raising of children. In urbanized settings this has changed where wage labour has become the main source of support for everyday livelihood. Here, family structure has undergone massive changes with a stronger focus on the nuclear family and the strengthening of the role of the father as the provider for his children. Often elder women are seen to be challenging these practices and accusing men for not caring sufficiently for their "real children", their nieces and nephews but investing too much time and resources in their wives children. This unethical behavior may result in forced divorce by the extended family. In rural and atoll settings or islands removed from the population and economic centers subsistence is essential to survival. On larger islands (Palau, Yap proper, Pohnpei proper and Kosrae) agroforestry is commonplace and men and women may be involved in both gardening and fishing practices. Traditional sailing, fishing, and navigation is still commonplace on a few Atolls in Chuuk, Yap (amongst the Chuukic speaking minorities) and in the Marshall Islands. Here sailing canoes are used to fish and commute between the islands as public transportation is very irregular. Otherwise transportation is reduced to the operation of fiberglass dinghies and is very costly. Coastal reefs are therefore overfished around and close to inhabited islands because fuel and motorized vessels are too costly to operate (ca. 9 USD/Gallon on remote atolls with wages at ca. 1.20 USD/hour). Housing usually consists of wooden structures, often

built on elevated platforms. In recent years cement houses have become commonplace when families can afford to build them. Many families though might not have more than one room in their home which is mostly used for shelter at night only and might not be more than 12-25 sqm. Most people still do not have access to electricity, modern communications or clean drinking water and sanitation. Lack of sanitation is a threat to the safety of children at public schools (kids, and especially girl children do not drink in the mornings because there is no safe place to relieve oneself other than in the jungle where one may be preyed upon by waiting males).

Yap's patrilineal kinship system is coupled with a caste system based on land ownership and titles to land that define a person's cultural rank, title and obligations. The system includes serfs. Women lose all property and inheritance rights and rights to their children if they leave or divorce from a violent or abusive spouse. Not only are women marginalized, here but also people of lower rank and Chuukic origin who live on the outlying atolls surrounding Yap proper, have limited residence rights on Yap proper and who by custom may not obtain a primary position of leadership in Yap.

With the economic success of Asian countries such as Japan, Taiwan and South Korea in the 1980s and 1990s, and most recently the Peoples Republic of China, these islands have seen a surge in tourism and imported labor from Asia. Palau has been leading the way with over 140,000 tourists visiting the islands in 2014 and up to 5,000 foreign laborers (25% of the population) registered as residing in Palau in recent years, most of whom are involved in manual labor (males) domestic helpers and "entertainers" (females). In the 1990s a tuna fishing industry emerged, but the government-run efforts to boost the local economy failed. Today, fleets of Asian, American and European fishing vessels sail the seas of this region in search of their prized tuna estimated at an annual market value of over 7 billion USD. The ocean area falling within the borders of three nations is 7.2 million square kilometers, an expanse so large that, given Asian, American and European interests in its tuna, is far from being controllable by these small island nations. In recent years the Marshall Islands have become the main hub for transshipment of ca. 500,000 tons of tuna annually at Majuro Atoll. The influx of foreign sailors during certain times of the year seeking entertainment on Majuro may amount up to 1,000 or more. In Pohnpei where regulation is more lacking, fishing vessels pre-arrange the number of sex partners to be provided by local bars and business partners prior to the arrival of a vessel. An unidentified amount of laborers on foreign fishing vessels may be considered as slave laborers.

The overall population in the Micronesian region presented here is close to 200,000, scattered across an ocean area the size of the continental USA with limited patches of land.



## Contemporary Gender Inequality

The Micronesian countries have been addressing gender inequality at different levels. At the international level FSM and RMI have ratified CEDAW in 2003 and 2006 respectively. Palau though, is one of six countries worldwide that has not signed The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. This is connected in part to the dominance of women in many areas of Palauan society that have seen a greater neglect of male children versus female children. Nevertheless, various key government planning documents reflect an attempt to include gender equality. These include:

### Country snap-shots

Independent since 1986 (FSM, RMI), 1994 (RP). Member of ACP, PIF, PNA, SPC, UN, WCPFC, etc., aspiring to ASEAN.

- Population (2015 est.): 105,216 (FSM); 21,265 (RP); 72,191 (RMI)
- Demographics (2015 est.): Women 49%, Men 51% (FSM, RP & RMI)
- Age structure (FSM, RP, RMI)
  - 0-14 years: 31%, 20%, 36%
  - 15-24 years: 20%, 17%, 17%
  - 25-54 years: 38%, 46%, 37%
  - 55-64 years: 7%, 9%, 6%
  - ≥65 years: 4%, 7%, 4%
- Landmass/EEZ: 702 km<sup>2</sup>/2,996,419 km<sup>2</sup> (FSM) 459 km<sup>2</sup>/603,978 km<sup>2</sup> (RP) 181 km<sup>2</sup>/1,990,530 km<sup>2</sup> (RMI)

### Gender snap-shot

- Lifetime experience of sexual violence of women at 33%, with 24% experiencing this violence within one year (FSM).
- 35% of ever-abused women never told anyone about the violence (FSM).
- Two independent studies amongst college students point to sexual violence at about 69-90%.

### 1. Republic of Palau

- Palau National Master Development Plan 2000-2020 (PNMDP)
- Palau ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1995. This is the only Human Rights Convention to which Palau has acceded.
- Palau has taken an active role in regional and global forums on children and social development.
- Palau has endorsed the Beijing Declaration, the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and the World Fit for Children goals at the highest policy levels. These documents are used to guide national development (see PNMDP).
- Numerous reports and national strategy plans for education, health, etc.

### 2. Federated States of Micronesia

- FSM Strategic Development Plan (2004-2023)
- The FSM ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1993
- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was ratified in 2003.
- The FSM has adopted the following international platforms:
  - Pacific Platform for Action on Women (PPA), 1994
  - Cairo Platform for Action on Population and Development, 1994
  - Global Platform for Action on Women (GPA), 1995
  - Beijing Global Platform for Action (GPA) in 1995

### 3. The Republic of the Marshall Islands

- The Strategic Development Plan Framework (2003-2018)
- The RMI have ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1993
- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was ratified in 2006.



## EU snap-shot

- EDF spending only for sustainable energy supply, climate change adaptation, environmental protection and resource management.
- Fishing vessel with highest fines for ecological and fishing rights violations sails under the flag of an EU country (Albacora Uno, Spain).

## 4. Summary

Some customary laws and practices in the Micronesian island region are not in harmony with key UN conventions on human rights, the rights of the child or women as these societies hold on to views of the person that do not subscribe to the principle of equality, individuality and autonomy of person as do some of these conventions. The search for equality between women, children and men must consider these differences in research, policy and programming options as change for the well being of all members of these societies can only come from within. Historically, boy children have been more neglected and discriminated against with regards to access to resources than girl children in the predominantly matrilineal societies where girl children are more treasured than boy children. This is a factor often overlooked by Western policy makers and human rights activists. Much of the violence in later life is a result of poor treatment and neglect during early childhood. Young males in Micronesia account for the highest suicide rates in the world. My research findings point to the identification, analysis and use of indigenous value systems, including those of masculinity, religion (faith and culture) to effect change for the common good. Traditional concepts of the person are what has kept Palau from becoming a signatory to CEDAW – among others. Nevertheless, actions have been taken to improve equality at the workplace. But as long as cultural perceptions in support of inequality and neglect prevail, many of these actions or provisions remain without effect on the everyday lives of women, men and children.

## Case-Studies from Micronesia



Children are most vulnerable to educational neglect, exposure to violence, and sexual exploitation.

*The case studies from Micronesia focus on sexual and labour exploitation. They highlight some prevailing culture-historical perceptions and practices surrounding human sexuality and the boundaries of the use and abuse of the human body. The examples here reflect societal ills that are not shared in practice by the majority population, but often tolerated for multiple reasons grounded in views related to family honor, stigma, and shame.*

### Cultural-Historical Introduction

Sexual and labour exploitation is not a new thing in Micronesia. During the 1800's Black Birding was common. In Pohnpei, American and other whaling fleets spent their leisure time on the island, with sailors and local men exchanging goods for girls, most of them being under the age of eighteen. Many Pohnpeian girls at the time ventured onto the whaling ships, some voluntarily, and yet others were coerced by family members to do so with the intent of accessing prized goods such as muskets, machetes and fishing gear (Hanlon 1988). Eventually these girls gained greater independence from their kin and traditional social responsibilities. Their family members also benefited from their sexual activities (Hezel 1995).

The idea of sexual servitude for the benefit of the social group a person belonged to was a standard practice in Micronesian cultures of the pre-colonial and colonial past (Hanlon 1988, Hambruch and Eilers 1936, 77 for Pohnpei; Schlesier 1953 for Palau and Yap). Today these practices continue to a yet unexamined magnitude domestically and in service of tourists, the US military servicemen, and sailors of the tuna fishing fleets in the Micronesian islands, on Guam and in Hawaii, where many Micronesians have migrated to and often lack economic resources and the education to seek other forms of income. In Palau and Yap systems had been developed that institutionalized such practices in the context of the men's club-houses. Before marriage and soon after puberty, young girls were sent by

their families to live with and entertain the community of men residing in such a house. In exchange for sexual and household servitude, a young girl and her family were richly rewarded with many gifts that improved a family's wealth and prestige. After some time, the girls would marry one of their many suitors (Schlesier 1953; Rauchholz 2015, 9-10).

In Chuuk and Pohnpei people of rank and status would often seek sexual access to women and girls, awarding traditional compensation, such as food or land, to the families of the women and girls for sexual access. In Chuuk, in particular, if word came to a chief of a beautiful girl, he would either send for her or more commonly go to visit and reside on her clan land with her senior male clan mates, who would then send the girl to "massage the chief's legs" (rawaani pecheen ewe samwoon). Because it was common practice for the people of an island or district to feed their chiefs and his extended family, the best kinds of food were always plentiful wherever the chief resided. The young women and girls were encouraged and utilized this way to bring prestige and power to their lineage and clan.



Illegitimate sexual relations and unwanted pregnancies may lead to acts of violence between related descendants over property rights.

In Pohnpei, Hambruch and Eilers (1936, 71) report that the upper nobility could not be refused the request to take a girl or woman if they wished to do so. Even married women could be requested by the Nahnmwarki or "King" and would then be released by their husbands to serve the Nahnmwarki's sexual desire. According to a comment by the German governor Hahl cited by

Hambruch and Eilers (1936, 71) the husband would be highly praised for his generosity. As in Chuuk, wife-sharing between friends and

relatives of the same clan was common, while adultery was often severely punished. To provide a visitor of status with a sexual partner for the duration of his stay in the village or on the island he was visiting was considered being part of genuine hospitality and true male friendship. This practice can be seen in parallel with wife-sharing between brothers or persons who valued each other and also shared other things such as land, food, children and knowledge. In general, the sexuality of women was part of reciprocal relations and exchange between men. The diaries of the German Capuchin father Laurentius, who resided in Chuuk between 1910-1918, note that a number of Japanese government officials also made it a point to request young girls for sex whenever they traveled through the communities.

According to Hambruch and Eilers (1936, 76-77) girls on Pohnpei between the ages of 4-5 were often given to old men, on the one hand to introduce the girl children into sexual practices but also to do the old men a favor. Older girls, (still minors based on current law) were also given to old men to be introduced into the art of lovemaking. In traditional Pohnpeian, Chuukese, Palauan, Marshallese or Yapese thought then, the body and sexuality of a boy child or girl child, of a young man or woman did not necessarily belong to themselves as an individual but to the group they belonged to. We can also gather that as individuals, women or girl children did not necessarily own their sexuality, but that it was controlled or controllable by more senior kin. This is why families in Yap gave their daughters to men's houses for sexual and domestic servitude in exchange for shell money and other valuables or why young girls in Palau were encouraged to do the same in exchange for local currency to enhance the wealth of their clan and elevate their personal prestige within their clan. Whoever owned someone or something could do with it whatever he or she wished to do. In fact, to willfully destroy something or severely beat up a young adult, child or even a spouse could and can be seen as an (public) expression of ownership and belonging together (Rauchholz 2010). Even the slightest act of aggression by an unauthorized non-kin person on the other hand could lead to family feuds and even war (Rauchholz 2015, 11). So while the sexuality of the female was utilized as a commodity, the male body was used for its physical strength to wage wars, fight an enemy or anyone who might have harmed his own kin, foremost his classificatory sisters and female relatives.

*The "Blue House" case becomes the first major human trafficking court case to unfold in Micronesia after a police raid of the lounge in Tamuning, Guam on January 13, 2008. Up to nine women from Chuuk, FSM are forced into prostitution and kept under servitude with the support of local police officers over the course of four years. A male relative of the victims is tried in the FSM and found guilty of trafficking in persons in 2015.*

<http://archive.guampdn.com/article/20130729/NEWS01/307290021/The-Blue-House-case-unfolds>

### **Case 1: FSM - Chuuk**

An interlocutor from Chuuk told of a man on his island who coerced teenage boys, most of them his junior relatives, into having sex with his wife. Over the course of a number of years he made more than twenty boys "the offer of turning them into men by having sex with his wife." She would "introduce them into the art of lovemaking." Most of the fourteen- to sixteen-year-old males could not resist the offer, given the pressure of the older male, who as their senior within the kinship structure, commanded their respect. But that was only part one of the scheme. The purpose of these "gifts" or "generous offers" was to elicit a return gift sometime in the future, when these boys would eventually have a girlfriend or spouse of their own. All the boys who had sex with this man's wife would feel very much obliged (kilissow) to return their uncle's generous offer should he ever ask them for sexual access to their girlfriends or spouses. The uncle had provided them with utmost pleasure and something of greatest personal value. Even the sexuality of his wife had not been withheld

***"It is my right to have sex with this girl. I pay for her education, she eats from my table and lives in my house."***

from his junior male kin. This act of intimate generosity could be taken to signify the greatest level of intimate belonging, of unity and loyalty between men of the same kin group. In response, their disposition towards their uncle would be one of wanting to reciprocate some day (ééchúweeytiip). In this way, the senior man was building a solid basis to have sexual access to multiple young women in the future. His generosity laid the

***“You cannot graduate from my high school a virgin!”***

***Why not?***

***“Because we have no toilets at school and have to go to the bushes where we are raped by men waiting for us as we relieve ourselves.”***

foundation for the efficacy of any future requests (efisifis tingór). The idea and ideal of “sharing among relatives” (Marshall 1976; Rauchholz 2010), which is key to understanding not only Chuukese but other Micronesian and Pacific Islander adoption practices and the exchange of children among relatives, is a valued virtue that can be applied to the gratification of male sexuality and sexual desire in ways just suggested.

One might also want to inquire on the motives of the wife in the case just described who obviously supported her husband in his efforts. Summarizing and inferring from other like cases I was able to discuss with interlocutors, she would be pursuing at least two things: 1. Being the first woman to engage sexually with the male teenagers and 2. Using her own sexual engagement with the kin of her husband as a tool to establish control over the future female spouses of her husband’s younger kin. Taken together, sexual engagement with younger kin such as with affines can be interpreted as a method of social control and affirming social hierarchies (Rauchholz 2015, 6-7).

### **Case 2: FSM - Chuuk**

A recent case documented by the Chuuk Women’s Council saw an elderly woman exploit the sexuality of her minor niece of no more than 14 years of age. The elderly woman was an extended member of the household of an extended kinswoman married to a wealthy man. After observing a relational crisis between the prominent couple of the household she coerced and ordered her minor niece to wait in the bedroom of the head of the household and to sleep with him. Her intent was to eventually see the couple separated and her niece becoming the new mistress and possibly later wife of the wealthy man, thus increasing her power and control over the

man, his wealth and the other people in the household lest the affair become public and the man lose more than his face and dignity.

### **Case 3: FSM - Pohnpei**

A number of Pohnpeian men asked why they had sexually exploited children living under their care within their household claimed it was their felt right to do so since they were paying for the children’s education and other physical needs. As one of them explained: “It is my right to have sex with this girl. I pay for her education, she eats from my table and lives in my house“. So as long as these children “had their feet under their table” they argued they had the right to sexual access in exchange for nurture. These cases reveal how reciprocal thought patterns that permeate Micronesian societies might still be used to justify sexual exploitation. The same fate was commonplace for female newcomers to an island without kin relations. Their sexuality was the commodity that became part of the reciprocal arrangement for their fellow kin and allowed for access to valuable land resources. Likewise the labour of men who may have drifted to an island where no kin relations existed would have been killed, or at least become slave labourers.

### **Case 4: FSM - Pohnpei**

This case involves young women, girls and boys who are sent by their families to sell local produce to visiting fishing vessels. With a surplus supply of local produce already available to them, foreign fishermen ask for sexual access to the children instead. In Pohnpei these children or persons are therefore called “bananas“ or “taxi“. The latter term has become popular because taxi companies have become the providers of prostitutes for visiting fishing vessels and their drivers have become “pimps“. Some taxi companies have been put under curfew in a government effort to curb these activities. A few deaths of girls have resulted for refusing to pay the taxi drivers what they are asking for. A most recent case involved an alleged prostitute who was found hanging from a tree with one hand cut off and people claiming she had committed suicide.

### **Case 5: Palau**

Under the former government, Palau has received some negative publicity in the region for its unsupportive efforts towards 2-3 legal initiatives or court cases by its former Attorney

General (AG) targeting trafficking in persons. The Ministry of Justice had claimed in a public, congressional hearing, that the AG office was overemphasizing trafficking in persons thereby neglecting other important legal activities under its jurisdiction when in fact the AG office could show that only 2-3 out of nearly 170 court cases in the year under scrutiny involved activities related to trafficking in persons. The dispute led to the resignation of the female AG of Palau in 2014. At the same time the FSM government, which has been viewed as a source country for victims of trafficking in persons (see box) declared January 22nd 2014 the first National Anti-Human Trafficking Day. Foreign labourers are seen to be at risk in Palau where certain legislation promotes serious labour violations making it illegal for a guest worker to change the employer within the first three years in the island state without the permission of the first employer. People hiring domestic helpers commonly take advantage of this policy. One man from Bangladesh who I had interviewed came to Palau in search for a job because his father had injured himself and the family was unable to sustain their livelihood. They sold all of their farm land in Bangladesh to enable their son to work in Palau after he was offered a contract to earn 500USD/month (net pay). Upon arriving to Palau he was presented with a new contract guaranteeing him a net pay of 80USD, then eventually 100 USD a month whereby the employer deducted 60-80 USD each month for housing, food, water and electricity. Workdays began at 2am in the morning and ended at 10pm at night six days a week for four years. On Sundays, his day off, he was able to work on a farm for 20 USD a day from 8am to 6pm so that he could send 80USD back home to Bangladesh to support his family. He was often humiliated by his employer, forced to wash and kiss his feet or beaten too. The influx of tourists from Asia has seen numerous women being victimized as well in the emerging sex industry on Palau. The current government is seeking ways for improvement.

#### **Case 6: Palau**

Numerous cases have been reported in past and present involving older men and youth not engaged in everyday subsistence (gardening or fishing activities) or in wage labour in the urban centres. Pre-school and younger children are often loosely supervised during daytime hours and often and easily victimized. In one case, a Palauan youth began raping all the small girls (6 girls between 4-12 years of

age) in a household during their daily afternoon nap time or in the mornings when other adults were out tending to their gardens and fishing on week-ends. This went on for three years until he was exposed and sent away to reside with some other relatives. The problem in such cases is that the person exploiting minors sexually will most likely continue practicing sexual abuse in the new community of residence. Likewise, during the absence of the working members of a kin group or family, old men are often found to lure children with candy, beetle nuts, cigarettes and other treats in exchange for sexual engagement or to bring them within their reach only to take hold of them and exploit their sexuality. Two recent surveys amongst upper middle class, college educated women in Micronesia showed that their rate of experiencing sexual abuse was by far higher than the rates revealed through the UNFPA study (up to 33%) lying between 69-90% of the respondents. Oversight over children is left to whoever is often available and hence nobody really feels responsible for the protection of the children allowing for youth and other persons to exploit the unsupervised situation and engage in sexual practices with children. In some communities, people will laugh about the "meek attempts" of males incapable of courting a real woman and speak of having pity on them. The effects of these sexual actions on the psyche of the child is mostly not considered, especially if the child is from a marginalized family or household.

#### **Case 7: Yap**

A young, bright woman returns home to her island from college in the USA. There she can or gets used to hanging out with friends and relatives for a drink or two, no serious drinking, just for socializing. She does not remember or even think about the possible social dangers associated with women seen to be drinking in Micronesia in the presence of men, especially if they are close relatives or cousins. To many men just the fact that she is drinking alcohol (regardless of the amount) may signal sexual accessibility or availability, a loose character, and an opportunity to take advantage of the female. In their mind, drinking alcohol is often associated with the intent to allow for behavior outside the cultural box of norms. Many also believe that even just a little alcohol makes a person drunk and thus unable or even unwilling to control their socially normative behavior. Since the woman is drinking with them, acting outside their perceived normative behavior for her, this might be enough to justify

their actions outside the norm to eventually rape the woman, regardless of whether she is a female relative “taboo” to them for sexual relations or not. Hence, many girls are raped in connection with social events where alcohol is involved. As elsewhere in the world, male friends may attempt to get a woman very drunk to exploit her sexually while she is lacking mental control. Likewise, a woman or child with a physical or mental disability will also be viewed as being outside the norm thus inviting deviant sexual behavior. Two examples may illustrate this:

Example 1: A male medical health professional is approached by three teenage boys who told him their sexual adventure. One of the teens had a girlfriend and had been wanting to have sex with her for some time, but she had been unwilling thus far. One day he asked his friends if they could help him buy a bottle of hard liquor so he could get his girlfriend drunk and have sex with her. The three put together all the money they could get and bought a bottle of vodka. The boyfriend and girlfriend went out together into the “bushes” right outside their village to drink. After the girl was drunk the boyfriend had sex with her. After he was done he was approached by his friends who were waiting nearby. They began to pressure him for sexual access to his girlfriend. They argued that it was their right as well because they had all contributed to purchasing the vodka allowing for the boyfriend to have sex with his girlfriend in the first place. The boyfriend conceded, and one after the other the two friends raped the drunk girlfriend. When they were done they went back to the village and found one or two boys under the age of ten and asked them if they wanted to learn to have sex. They led them to where the female victim was still lying and coerced the boys into having sex with the nearly lifeless girl – to everyone’s amusement. Finally, some of their activities with the body of the victim were recorded on camera. The health professional was frustrated over the lack of awareness that this is simply an unacceptable form of behaviour and that he saw much fault in the absence of moral education on behalf of the parents and relatives of the youth involved in this case of gang rape.

Example 2: A young girl in a Micronesian village is injured by a dropping coconut. It hits her head but the majority of the force fractures her hip and thigh. She is left with a limp and a very slight speech disorder possibly caused by some slight hemorrhaging to the brain. As a result she is defamed as being “crazy” literally

meaning “being a person that behaves or in physical appearance is outside the norm”. Her actual name is dropped and she is now called “the crazy girl”. During the course of her lifetime she is raped multiple times by multiple men and consequently all of her children are fathered by another man. Eventually, they too are in greater danger of becoming victimized or exploited by the “normal” people in town.

### **Case 8: Micronesia**

Another form of sexual exploitation has been through foreign professionals, mostly educators from the USA or sometimes catholic priests who as pedophiles have created communities of boys who they could sexually engage with on a regular basis. I have also documented numerous such cases from males who have been victimized. These communities have taken great care to reproduce themselves and one of them had been found to have been the first entry point for HIV into the Micronesian island region, according to health officials and women’s rights activists. The most prominent self-admitted adult engaging in sexual relations with boys was the former Nobel Prize laureate Carleton Gajusek who had adopted ca. 25 boy children from Micronesia and educated them in the USA. The labour and sexual exploitation of boy children is a topic completely neglected by women groups and NGOs so far according to Kiki Stinnett, president of the Chuuk Women’s Council who has therefore started work on a project with other researchers and service providers inquiring into male victimization. One male who shared his experience said he had always wondered, why his one time experience of sexual exploitation as a child was causing him regular nightmares while the numerous near death experiences he had had as a teenager during serious fights involving the use of knives and machetes never haunted him the same way.

### **Case 9: Marshall Islands**

The Marshall Islands are the hub of Western Pacific (Micronesian) tuna transshipment. Currently over 500,000 tonnes of tuna are transshipped at Majuro Atoll annually (ca. 2 bn USD worth of sales). Thousands of foreign fisherman frequent the small island of Majuro each year with its mere 20,000 inhabitants in search for entertainment and sexual pleasure after an average of three months at sea. The government has taken severe measures to curb the openly visible activities often involving minors as fisherman fear contracting sexually

transmitted infections which seem more likely the older the partner is. To this date the RMI lack an understanding of how these activities are currently still under way as this issue has never been researched. Government officials and women organisations like WUTMI have expressed a sincere need to analyze these activities as they are having a major impact on reproductive health in the Marshall Islands and an uncontrollable influx of sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Aside from Majuro Atoll, Kwajalein Atoll is home to a US military installation. The military base is supported through a workforce of Marshallese housed on Ebeye island, across the lagoon from Kwajalein. Ebeye is the slum of the RMI, is crammed with people, without sanitation and running water.

### **Case 10: Marshall Islands**

The RMI also have Micronesia's only large scale tuna canneries. Most of the labourers there are local women who refrain from working in full-time employment because relatives or husbands will end up "eating up" or "drinking up our salaries". They prefer to work so long as they can fulfill their own and their nuclear family's immediate needs with essentials only cash can provide and then just quit working before other family members end up taking their money. Full-time employment is therefore not advisable under these circumstances where full reliance on a cash economy is not necessary due to subsistence activities. Also, with women working multiple shifts children are often left at home without the needed protection and more easily exploited. The foreign companies operating the canneries are ignorant of the local socio-economic structure and cultural practices and have yet to adapt business practice to local island culture. Expecting Atoll island people to work under conditions like in urban east or south-east Asian is not an advisable business model. Here too, gender sensitive employment structures need to be considered if women and men are to benefit from a globally induced market economy.

## Key Defining Issues in Micronesia

1. With the exception of Palau and to a lesser degree in the Marshall Islands, Women in the FSM are largely (self-) excluded from political office or leadership, although women are more than equal in modern education and about equal in employment. Traditionally, public speech was reserved for men as spokespersons for their matrilineal kin group or clan and their power was limited because titles to land and inheritance ran through the female line. The western political system has added singular control over funds and resources through political offices which has reduced the influence of women. The political, public sphere, is often the only space where men feel they can be amongst themselves and are “important”.
2. The male gender is viewed as the weaker gender with regard to self-control in the area of sexuality and violence. Masculinity and femininity are constructed as polar opposites. Hence, women are mostly blamed for the sexually exploitative acts of males, for not taking the necessary precautions or measures to protect themselves from the untamable male sexual drive etc. Males often feel threatened by females and revert to violence to establish dominance.
3. The female gender is viewed as the stronger gender with regards to self-control, and seen to be capable of absorbing violence, procuring peace, even if it means to absorb physical suffering for the sake of unity and keeping a family together or maintaining peace in a village. Here (point 2-3) is where change of thought needs to begin through educational programming and actions.
4. The non-confrontational nature of Micronesian cultures make it difficult for lower ranking persons to express dissatisfaction, anger and neglect. Alcohol provides the vehicle for deviant behaviour. Alcohol is used as an excuse for any kinds of deviant behaviour and accepted as providing males with a culturally accepted platform to express their discontent with other male relatives, their family etc. Alcohol is involved in over 80% of violent behaviour and in many cases of sexual exploitation of children.
5. Culture change: in the past it was more common for brothers to take away their sister from her husband if he mistreated her. They might have also beaten him up for violating their sister. Today different residency and mobility patterns, economic dependencies and interdependencies have become more complex with the introduction of a market and cash economy.
6. The adversary legal system influenced by Roman law and the US legal system along with its severe punitive measures is also put into question for solving serious disputes involving sexual exploitation and violence against women and children. Restoratory, restitutive or compensatory measures are not part of the system which previously defined local practices of conflict resolution, including cases of exploitation. Without such measures living together in limited space becomes a severe challenge to peace.
7. Child rearing practices and underlying value systems convey to male children their inability to learn, be disciplined and behave in a mature and respectable way. In rural areas boy children are often raised to be prepared to engage in violent acts related to defending the sisters and family. Oftentimes, women are behind the physical violence depicted by related males in public.
8. The role of clergy and the churches in addressing gender equality, violence and sexual exploitation has been neglected by external programming. They are the largest independently organised institutions with transformative capacities not utilized by government and policy makers to promote gender equality.
9. Violence is a culturally accepted method of maintaining household hierarchies of status and power (physical punishment generally accepted)





Life skill development: improvement

## Assessing Effectiveness in Micronesia

### Republic of Palau

3. Victim Services of Violence and sexual exploitation: One key actor in is Mrs. Rebecca Koshiba. She has been serving victims of violence out of Palau Hospital for numerous years and serves between 40 to 50 victims of violence and child sexual abuse per year. Cooperation with medical professionals and the Palau Public Safety (Police Department) has improved over the last few years.

4. Two other key players are the female paramount chiefs of Babelthaob (north Palau) and Koror (south Palau). Without their support, not too much can be achieved. One issue over the years has been protecting the rights of foreign women working in bars and massage parlors. Many traditional female leaders see them as “stealing” their men and not as victims of sex trafficking. Any attempts to provide services or support in this area of Palau needs to be undertaken with caution as the US promoted programmes have led to major political conflict.

5. A third player in addressing sexual exploitation is Micronesian Legal Services Corporation which has been serving victims of labour and sexual abuse and exploitation across the whole of Micronesia (FSM and RMI). The MLSC office is responsible for representing the rights of people without access to legal representation in the FSM, RMI, Palau among others. Lee Pliscou is the current director.

### Federated States of Micronesia

1. In the FSM the most prolific persons active in promoting gender equality have been women involved in the local women organisations and in government positions, usually in the Department of Health. The most prolific and active non governmental organisation is the Chuuk Women’s Council under the guidance of Kiki Stinnett. Key women in this organisation hold positions in the Department of Health or in their churches of different denominations but have united for the cause of promoting gender equality.

2. Dr. Vita Skilling, former Director of the FSM Department of Health was a key proponent for gender equality in the otherwise male dominated FSM cabinet.

3. They have developed programming for battered women, sexually exploited girls and recently a programme for neglected children, mostly boys who have become homeless after their parents migrated overseas in search for employment.

4. The Chuuk Women’s Council has a child care centre, sewing room, offers computer and traditional weaving courses and other services to women and children in need. Often lack of education or life skills push women into poverty leading to sexual exploitation. By providing a place of learning, young women can develop skills needed to pursue a better life.

5. Unfortunately their work is mostly limited to the main island of Weno, but links have been established with the desire to extend programming with their partners to other regions of Chuuk. Talks

#### Key actors

- Dr. Vita Skilling, former Secretary FSM Department of Health & Social Affairs
- Kiki Stinnett, President Chuuk Women’s Council.
- Emeliana Musrasrik, Migrant Resource Center Micronesia
- Rebecca Koshiba, Coordinator Victims of Crime Assistance, Palau Ministry of Health
- Women United Together Marshall Islands (WUTMI)

#### Key programmes

- FSM: Gender Strategic Planning Matrix; National Women Advisory Council; Women’s Conference
- RP: Women of Palau Conference
- RMI: Commission on the Status of Women

#### Useful links

- UNFPA Family Health & Safety Studies: FSM, RMI, RP (<http://countryoffice.unfpa.org/pacific/?publications>)

are under way but lacking funding to establish programming beyond economic centres. The CWC is also well connected to Faithwalk Christian College in the western Chuuk Lagoon on the island of Tol.

6. The Department of Education is planning a large educational initiative that will bring vocational trainers, English teachers and include Participatory Action Research on the ethics of violence and conflict resolution as a means to include local community stake holders in addressing the prevalence of violence, gender inequality, and declining education.
7. Chuuk Women's Councils leadership has cooperated with outside researchers, local lawmakers and judges to reduce violence and develop policy, one example being the raising of the age of consent for sexual acts from 13 years of age to 18 years of age in 2014.

### **Marshall Islands**

In the Marshall Islands WUTMI is the main spokesperson in public society on issues related to gender equality. WUTMI's leadership are well accepted in society and work along the same principles as does the Chuuk Women's Council. What they desire is more training dealing with trauma and understanding the activities going on between sailors and the local island population.

WUTMI works closely together with women in government. In the RMI more women are found in prominent government positions than in the FSM.

In Sum, all organisations would like to have additional facilities to house and treat battered women and children as these resources are still lacking. Networking across national boundaries is essential when dealing with victims that have no place to go or hide on a small island.

## Options for Action in Micronesia

- Consider and identify cultural factors and research based policies and strategies that might promote or be utilized to decrease inequality between men and women and reduce the sexual exploitation of persons. Children in particular are the most vulnerable as are marginalized populations such as ethnic minorities (i.e. in Yap, and Pohnpei in particular), disabled or rural populations living far removed (100s of miles) from government centres.
- Consider and respond through educational programming and Participatory Action Research to cultural views about the construction of male and female gender and sexuality with the male understood as being the weaker and the female as the stronger. Utilize cultural experts with other professionals on the ground for effectiveness.
- Consider kinship systems and embedded expectations of reciprocity within these and between these systems of relationships.
- Consider economic factors involved, imbalances in access to resources and power which lead to exploitation in a subsistence economy.
- Consider the effects of a market economy and western-based educational system that influences kinship and relations and creates spaces for vulnerability of children (i.e. parents at work from 9-5, leave children under care of “relative”, opens door for abuse, exploitation etc.).
- Develop educational material and programmes to address these issues on a community-based level including all social groups with respect to gender equality (Participatory Action Research).
- Consider cultural factors in the analysis of sexual and labour exploitation. Here comprehensive research is lacking. Small island societies provide a good basis for research.
- Consider marginalized populations, traditional and contemporary life skills development, vocational and educational (gender, self-esteem) development in rural areas.
- Conflict resolution via participatory action research. Develop clear rules and procedures when violence does occur within a community. Identify spokespersons and mediators.

### Useful links

- Protestant churches and Catholic dioceses in Micronesia.
- Chuuk Women’s Council (<http://cwcfiinchuuk.org/>)
- Women United Together Marshall Islands
- Joint educational development cooperation between Chuuk State Department of Education, Fosen High School & Faithwalk Christian College

### Include Religious Organizations

- Religious organisations (Protestant and Catholic Churches/Denominations) are the largest and strongest independently functioning social organisations in Micronesia.
- Christian religion is a key identity marker in Micronesian societies.
- A church/religious group in every village or on every island.
- Able to raise large amounts of funds for common interests, organise events and provide facilities for protecting women (nobody will harm someone in a church building).
- Support educational institutions (K1-12, higher education); key (elite) educational institutions are run by churches/religious organisations.
- In the past have often been excluded from research, policy and development in these decisive areas of society (gender violence and equality) where they hold a powerful stake.
- Religious leaders or persons of faith are key figures in activities against violence, abuse, or inequality in Micronesia.



## Papua New Guinea

Dr Fiona Hukula and Dr Simon Kenema

Situated in the Western Pacific, Papua New Guinea is the largest island in the South Pacific. Generally known as Melanesians, the population of Papua New Guinea is close to 7 million, with the majority of the country's population being rural based. Papua New Guinea gained political independence in 1975. The Papua New Guinea Parliament consist of 111 members of Parliament of which 89 members are elected as 'open members' and 22 are elected as provincial members, essentially making them Governors of the provinces they represent. There are 20 provinces, the Autonomous Region of Bougainville and the National Capital District. Some functions of the government are national responsibilities while other aspects of government service delivery machinery have been decentralised.

Papua New Guinea is a culturally and linguistically diverse nation that has over 800 languages and many different ethnic and tribal groupings. 87% of land is under customary ownership.

Papua New Guinea has vast natural resources in the form of gold, copper and oil. However proceeds from the sale of such resources have not benefitted the majority of the population. Health services are under immense pressure due to the growing population and education services are inadequate.

The rural majority have limited or no access to basic services such as health and education. The rural population mainly depend on a subsistence livelihoods. With poor road conditions and lack of transport, cash crops such as cocoa on coffee are often left to rot in these rural remote areas where air transport, while expensive is the only option.

Over the years there have been various attempts and initiatives to address gender

based violence in Papua New Guinea. Broadly speaking one of the inhibiting factors confronting efforts at minimising gender based violence in PNG is that even though the key Government Planning Documents offer definitions of gender based violence recognisably in line with international definitions of legal and human rights instruments there is no universally defined and accepted criteria of gender inequality across PNG. This lack of definitional consensus emerges from the fact that there are various conflicts and disagreements having their source in diverse cultural practices and the ways in which specific communities define, respond, and react to violence. This problem is further compounded by the tyranny of geography and distance that impedes effective delivery of government services like policing, education, and health to remote communities.

The majority of Papua New Guinea's population still live in rural communities where social life is governed by cultural predispositions. In most rural settings land is communally owned and the relationship between people and land is often articulated and expressed through the notion of kastam. The idiom kastam can at best be ambiguous and difficult to define yet its general expressive mode throughout PNG is equated to mean something equivalent to culture and tradition. It is often the case that the resolution of many serious incidents of gender based violence in PNG is encouraged to be solved through kastam processes in both rural and urban areas. Where this poses a peculiar challenge to the efforts on combatting gender related violence is when there is a perceived polarisation between kastam values and juridical processes of adjudication. Complex social issues like gender inequality and violence need multi-angular approaches to tackling the malaise and it is imperative that

scenarios where one approach is perceived to be the only mode of redress are critically evaluated. What these experiences also suggest is that in order to achieve sustainable improvements in the current efforts at combating gender inequality a nuanced and sophisticated approach that is simultaneously sensitive to cultural variations and modern challenges is needed. Given this complicated nature of violence and the research into why particular individuals opt for alternative and informal dispute resolution mechanisms it seems counterproductive to seek solutions through judicial measure alone.

Since PNG gained political independence in 1975 there has been a steady and gradual increase in the flow of people between rural and urban areas. Much of this movement can be attributed to the lopsided focus of economic development in urban enclaves. The urban population consists largely of people engaged in waged work of one kind or another. Life for the majority of the rural inhabitants centres on the subsistence economy. In many of PNG's 22 Provinces income earning opportunities for rural dwellers are limited to the sale of garden produce and commodity cash crops introduced during the colonial era. This of course is with the exception of more recent and post-independence commodity crops which have been introduced such as palm oil. From the 1980s there has emerged a more complex dynamic whereby the centre-periphery relationship between the rural and urban has become notably blurred through the increase in state driven development initiatives such as mining, logging and the development of the hydrocarbon industry. With the opening up of the rural frontier for development and the concentration of bureaucratic decision making powers in the nation's capital, Port Moresby, many rural communities find themselves entangled in multiple webs of relational conflicts which until recently were unimaginable. While development in the extractive economy provide opportunities for rural communities to improve their living standards it has also created new spaces for the emergence of novel forms of friction, conflict, and inequality. In addition to shaping new arenas of inequality the economic and political configurations associated with the extractive economy has enabled the emergence of individuals, mostly male, whose economic and political power hinges on highly contested and fluid structures of authority and legitimacy. As such PNG's efforts to address

gender based violence are being pursued in a rapidly shifting social context where forces of modernisation are perceived to exist in an uneasy relationship with traditional values.

When asked about their religious orientation most Papua New Guineans unequivocally profess to be Christians. This affinity to Christian beliefs and values has its roots in the missionary encounter with locals. In some communities the mission encounter with locals spans more than a century while the experience is relatively recent in other parts of the country. For many rural communities in PNG the church continues to play a crucial collaborative role in the delivery of social services like education and health. This appears unlikely to abate anytime soon given the diminished presence of the National and Provincial authorities in many rural villages. Christianity in its various denominational incarnations has a pervasive influence on people's daily lives. This pervasiveness is made manifest via the unbridled support and respect accorded to church leaders across PNG. But the effect of Christianity on gender relations has hardly been uniform and positive. In many communities what the new found faith in Christianity did was that instead of challenging culturally entrenched patriarchal practices of domination they ended up inuring them. In contemporary PNG these practices are overt among members of particular groups of Pentecostal sects that use Biblical authority to justify the subservience of women and children to men. These sects espouse and promote faith, humility, perseverance, forgiveness, and acceptance as noble virtues of Christian duty in the face of difficult, sometimes violent relationships.

This broad caricaturing of Christianity of course does not overlook the numerous church led efforts and initiatives in combating gender related violence. Most mainstream churches (Catholic, Seventh Day Adventist, Lutherans, Anglicans, United Church) in collaboration with several of their NGO partners have indeed been at the coalface of dealing with the scourge of gender based violence. It is important to take account of the work such as that of the Catholic Church's efforts in relation to the spate of sorcery related violence. Looking at the progress made so far by churches in opening up new spaces for dialogue it seems there is considerable scope for leverage to shift the momentum of discussion and debate into the broader public consciousness.



## Contemporary Gender Inequality

Papua New Guinea as a country has tried to address Gender Inequality at different levels. For example at the international level PNG ratified CEDAW in 1995. At the National Level various key government planning documents reflect an attempt to include gender equality. These include

- PNG Vision 2050
- PNG Development Strategic Plan 2010-2030
- PNG Medium Term Development Plan 2010-2015
- National Policy for Women and Gender Equality 2011-2015.
- The Gender Equity and Social Inclusion policy (GESI)

There are three major concerns relating to gender inequality in Papua New Guinea. These concerns relate to women in leadership, women in business and addressing the very high levels of violence against women in Papua New Guinea.

At present Gender Equality is being addressed through these three key areas.

### 1. Women in Leadership

There has been an ongoing campaign to increase women's participation at the political level as well as an effort to recognise women leaders generally. The motivation to promote women in politics and leadership began during the time of former Parliamentarian Dame Carol Kidu who was a parliamentarian from 1997 to 2012. One of the initiatives that aim to increase women in leadership positions include lobbying for 22 reserve seats for women at the National Parliament. The Autonomous Region of Bougainville has three reserved seats for women. Dame Carol Kidu using her experience as a lone female parliamentarian was a vocal advocate for reserve seats. In 2008 the United Nations Development Programme worked with the Papua New Guinea government to support its Women in Leadership programme. This was a multi-faceted programme that aimed to raise awareness of female representation, sensitise male politicians, build the capacity of women's groups to advocate for political participation of women and provide technical and advisory support to the PNG government in the area of gender equality. A milestone achievement for the Women in Leadership Programme was the passing of the Equality and Participation Act in November 2011. The bill did not receive the two-thirds majority across three readings to pass it into law before the 2012 elections.

The 2012 national elections saw three women elected to parliament. A lack of resources is the main challenge for women with political aspirations. For the three women who were successful in the last elections, two were supported by a political party. One is a governor and one is a cabinet minister. What is also important to note is that the two of the three women who were successful in the 2012 elections were leaders within their own communities. The Governor of Eastern Highlands, Julie Soso is a long-time leader and community advocate (<http://www.lowyinterpreter.org/post/2012/11/28/PNGs-new-generation->

### Country snap-shot

Independent since 1975.  
Member of ACP, PIF, MSG, UN, aspiring to ASEAN

- Population: Estimated at 7.5million
- Demographics: Women 49 %, Men 52%
- Under 18 42%, 18-35 31%, 35-60 23%, Over 60 4%
- Land mass: 462,840 sq km
- EEZ: 2,446,757 sq km

### Gender snap-shot

Basic statistics...

- Estimated that 2/3 of women have experienced some form of violence
- 3 women in National Parliament
- Over 20 elected to Local Level Government

### EU snap-shot

- EU Human Rights sector funding of 277 999. 00. Provided to Volunteer Services International to strengthen and mobilise communities and provincial stakeholders to advocate for the prevention, treatment and protection for women survivors of GBV in two locations. (Madang and Mendi). Funding from March 2015-March 2017
- EU Human Rights sector provided 278000.00 to World Vision. Funding is from Nov 2014- Nov 2016

An-interview-with-Governor-Julie-Soso.aspx). Delilah Gore, member for Sohe and current Minister for Community Development, Youth and Religion was a former district treasurer ([http://asopa.typepad.com/asopa\\_people/2012/07/little-known-delilah-gore-takes-png-by-storm.html](http://asopa.typepad.com/asopa_people/2012/07/little-known-delilah-gore-takes-png-by-storm.html)). This points to the importance of leadership roles for women at the very local level as a stepping stone to higher level politics. Under the Organic Law on Provincial and Local Level Government (OLPLG) there is provision for two mandatory appointments for women to each rural local level government and one for urban local level government. At the last local level government election in 2013, more than 20 women were elected to Local Level Government with three of women being elected as Local Level Government Presidents.

The push for reserve seats has lost momentum after the 2012 elections with the three female elected parliamentarians opting not to pursue the reserve seat agenda. Arguments against reserve seats have been strengthened by the election of these three women. While they still represent a minority the argument against reserve seats is that it is progress that these three women have been successful in what is a very male dominated arena.

## **2. Women in Business**

Most families in Papua New Guinea generate an income through subsistence livelihood. The role of women in generating an income is very important in both rural and urban areas. In rural areas women are actively involved in the production and sale of commodities. In the urban area women are also involved in the sale of produce and other goods such as clothes and sundry items. Income generated from these activities sustains families and assists families to contribute to wider social obligations. Women are also pursuing other business opportunities such as catering (<http://www.emtv.com.pg/article.aspx?slug=Business-PNG-Episode-42-2014>) and fashion (<http://www.looppng.com/tags/fashion-designer-anna-amos>).

Supporting more women to participate in the formal economy is also a key focus of government. Some initiatives to support Women in Business include the launch of the first Women's Micro Bank in August 2014. This bank is the first in the Pacific Region. The bank specifically addresses the banking needs of women. National Development Bank's Women in Business section held Women in Business summit in 2012 where two new banking products specifically for women were launched. The Papua New Guinea Women's Chamber of Commerce and Industry was launched in November 2013. This organisation aims to empower women by advocating for and building the capacity of women entrepreneurs and leaders.

## **3. Violence against Women**

Violence against women is seen as the key factor that drives inequality between men and women in Papua New Guinea. Within PNG concerns have been continuously raised at the level of violence that Papua New Guinean women have been subjected to. This violence includes domestic violence, sorcery related violence and sexual violence. While there is a lack of prevalence data, smaller targeted studies, mostly by NGO's and donor partners, indicate that violence against women is a serious concern that not only affects women and children and communities and also affects business and puts an added strain to already stretched government infrastructure.

Women's organisations have played a significant role in addressing GBV in some parts of Papua New Guinea, for example the Highland Women's Human Rights Defenders network which is a network of different grass roots and community based organisations who work together to defend human rights in the seven highlands provinces. Organisation such as Kup Women for Peace work in partnership with international NGO's such as Oxfam New Zealand to bring peace to tribal fighting areas in the Highlands. In Bougainville, women have been credited for the role they played as peace makers and negotiators in the effort to end the fifteen year civil war. This role continues with Bougainvillean women's organizations such as the Bougainville Women's Federation now being supported by international organizations such as Counterpart International and USAID. Bougainville Women's Federation is a local organization that advocates for greater participation in political decision making processes and promoting gender equality.

The media has played a key role in addressing violence against women by continuing to report incidences of violence within homes and communities. For example the Post Courier newspaper recently ran a series of articles sharing the stories of women who have been accused of sorcery and as a result have been tortured and driven out of their villages and the EMTV has highlighted

the need to address family and sexual violence through its social concerns programme Olsem Wanem? (<http://www.emtv.com.pg/article.aspx?slug=Olsem-Wanem-Episode-28-2015&>).

The international community has also highlighted the grave levels of violence against women in PNG. In November 2012 Unni Karunakara, president of the international NGO Medicin Sans Frontière described the levels of sexual and domestic violence in Papua New Guinea as a 'humanitarian crisis'. Other efforts to raise awareness about GBV include the work of artist Vlad Sokhin (<http://www.vladsokhin.com/work/crying-meri/>) and journalist Jo Chandler (<http://www.lowyinterpreter.org/post/2014/08/29/Violence-against-women-in-PNG.aspx>). In recent times Papua New Guineans living abroad have taken on advocacy roles in trying to raise awareness on GBV in Papua New Guinea.

Efforts to address gender based violence are ongoing. Both international organizations and local organizations are actively involved in addressing issues relating to GBV. Most donors who have a presence in country have gender violence as a priority area for support. Currently the Papua New Guinea government through the Department of Community Development, Youth and Religion's Office of Development of Women and the Family and Sexual Violence Action Committee is working on the National Gender Based Violence Strategy 2050 and National Action Plan 2015-2017. These strategic documents will be used to enhance and strengthen the work already being undertaken within PNG. Some examples include the Provision of medical services for victims of GBV by international organizations such as Medicin Sans Frontiere and Family Health International 360 in conjunction with the National Department of Health. Family support centres are being rolled out in government run hospitals. The Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary with the support of the Australian government has set up 23 Family Sexual Violence units at police stations across PNG. The Family Protection Act was passed in 2013. There is a dedicated Family and Sexual Violence Unit at the Office of the Public Prosecutor and an NEC Directive (151/2013) to Provincial Governments to integrate family and sexual violence programmes and activities in their annual plans and budgets.



## Case-Studies from Papua New Guinea

*The two case stories are focused on local understandings, experiences and explanations of violence within families, specifically intimate partner violence and violence within the wider family unit. The first case study is based on research in Port Moresby. The research sought to seek views of young people's perception of equality and gender violence.*

*The second case study is based on research in Bougainville, a post conflict island. The case study aims to demonstrate the intricate social relations that influence the way in which people act*

### **GENDER BASED VIOLENCE IN AN URBAN SETTING: A CASE STUDY**

This case study focuses on an event that occurred in Port Moresby. It is an attempt to illustrate how violence is perceived and dealt with. The case study offers an insight into prevailing cultural and social logic from the perspective of a tertiary educated young man. Through this story, the role of institutions that are mandated to address GBV is also highlighted.

A. is a young man, from the East Sepik Province of Papua New Guinea. He has recently graduated from the University of Papua New Guinea and is employed at a Government Institution under a one year training programme. A. was raised and educated in his home province and came to Port Moresby to attend University. During his final year at University, A. began a relationship with M., a first year student from the same province as A. M. gave birth to their first child just after A. began his training programme. This case study describes and discusses an incident of violence between the young couple as narrated by A..

A. shared a story of how he beat M. after she continued to nag and scream at him for opting to spend time with their neighbours after work. The narrative is as follows:

"I returned home from work on a Monday afternoon and I was a bit tired, so I decided to sit outside with the neighbours at their table market. M. was not happy because she wanted me to talk with her about some family matters. I am not sure what she wanted to talk about because we spent the whole weekend talking. After a while she started getting angry from in the house, talking a lot and raising her voice. I felt embarrassed because it was not as if I was far away from the house or I went off

somewhere. I was just sitting outside with the boys. I wanted to chew a betelnut and relax a little before going into the house. I was embarrassed because she knows the neighbours too; they are friends to both of us and I felt so bad that she was screaming and carrying on in such a manner. I went in to the house and I hit her. I know I did the wrong thing but I was just so frustrated because she just kept going on and on and she would not listen when I tried to explain myself.

"The next day I went to work and the police came to my office, I was really worried that my boss would find out. The police took me to the police station and they interviewed the both of us. They asked me if I knew that wife beating is now a crime and I can be jailed for my actions. After talking to us and finding out the reason why I beat M., the police spoke to the both of us and asked M. to make up her mind as to whether she wanted to pursue the matter and have me charged". They kind of counselled us and spoke to us about what would happen if I was charged and if I was sent to jail. In the end M. decided that she did not want to press charges and we were allowed to go home.

A.'s narrative reveals two important points to consider. Firstly his reason for beating M. is based on an all too familiar narrative of men not being able to control their actions. A.'s justification for beating M. was not because he felt that he needed to have some form of control over M. A. clearly stated that he took the wrong action to release his frustration that the expected process of the formal justice system does not always play out in the way in which it is meant to. The fact that A. states that he and M. were counselled by the Police shows that while there has been much training

and resources put into supporting the Royal Papua New Guinea Police Constabulary (RPNGC), this case study shows that Police response can be guided by other factors. Generally, it is expected that Police will take a firm stance against violence against women (a no drop policy) as opposed to the counselling option that was taken in this case. While there is evidence to support the inaction of police in responding to GBV cases, it is suggested here that the approach taken by the police is one that deviates from a hard line approach expected from police especially in relation to family violence, not necessarily because Police condone such behaviour but this case

study suggests that police react in this way because they are also conscious of what a jail sentence could mean for a young family.

A. does not consider himself as a wife beater. He spoke of the current struggles that he and M. are facing as a young couple trying to start a life in the city. He was well aware that M. has had to sacrifice her education to care for their baby but he said there was no other way for them because they could not afford a baby sitter and the only other option would be to send the baby back to the village for his mother to care for the baby. This is something that they both did not want to happen.

## EXPERIENCES FROM NAGOVISI, BOUGAINVILLE

### F. and C.'s Story – An Example of Gender-Based Violence from Bougainville

F. is a well-natured middle-aged man. He is highly respected by his matrilineal affine, natal relatives, and the surrounding community. He is the kind of person who many of the young people in the community looked up to as a leader and role model. With a college education and a stable job as a government civil servant life for F. and his family was one of relative ease. But things started to unravel negatively when F.'s wife was diagnosed with an incurable medical illness. After her diagnosis R.'s health worsened as her family rallied in support with increasing uncertainty about the prospect of her recovery.

As R.'s condition progressively deteriorated she secretly proposed to her husband that when she dies he must not return to his natal village. He was instructed instead to remain in his wife's village and take care of the welfare of their three children. But R.'s death-bed proposal was accompanied by a further wish that F. be remarried to her younger sister. The practice of remarrying within the same affinal or familial ties after a spousal death is of course not completely unheard of despite its diminishing prevalence. The problem with this particular case was that when C. (R.'s sister) was eventually informed about R.'s desire for her to become F.'s wife after her death she protested vehemently against the suggestion. Things took a turn for the worse when C realised that her entire family including both her parents were in favour of R.'s proposal. Without any family support it became apparent to C. that her resistance was going to be frustrated every step of the way through various forms of 'coercive social sanctions'.

C. remained steadfast in her refusal following R.'s death. Even then this did nothing to dampen her family's resolve and insistence that she be married to F. C.'s difficult situation became doubly compounded and desperate when she began to be subjected to physical assaults from her parents because of her refusal. The physical beatings were said to have occurred in between a series of escapes in which C. would disappear from her village to seek refuge elsewhere. Her family's collective insistence that she be married to F. was said to have driven C. to do things which she might not have done under usual circumstances. One such action relates to the story that in the midst of this dispute C. decided to have an affair with someone else to demonstrate her refusal. Having a sexual relationship with someone other than F. was seen and understood to be a concrete demonstration of C.'s lack of attraction towards F. As much as C.'s action was understood to be a demonstration of her dislike of F., the villagers also reasoned that her sexual liaison was intended to elicit a specific form of response from F. The affair, according to the villager's commentary, was to make F. 'see' C. as a dangerous and potentially unfaithful prospective wife. C.'s affair, according to the villager's line of reasoning, was a performative act devoid of real love and affective sensibilities. Her action was viewed by her family and others as a deplorable use of her body as an object of resistance against her family's expectation.

In the end there was nothing C. could do. The pressure from her relatives was too strong to

ignore and she ended somewhat reluctantly marrying F. While this story appears a straightforward violation of one's right to safety and protection in the language of rights-based notions of gender related violence it is imperative to unpack the cultural logic that informed the response of C.'s family towards her. The first and important thing to note in this story is that isolating C.'s resistance as an individual act of defiance independent of her family relations is insufficient to understand the reason for her family's violent behaviour. From their point of view C.'s refusal was an act of reneging from her kinship obligations. Her behaviour, or rather the failure to submit to her family's wish constituted a far more serious breach by failing to maintain social solidarity and relational ties between F., his children, and her family. This line of reasoning was premised on an array of assumptions one of which was the fear that if F. married someone well outside his deceased wife's kinship ties he may focus less on the wellbeing of his children as his care and priority shifted over to his new wife. C.'s sister and her parents feared that F.'s remarriage to someone outside the family may prove to be distracting to his paternal responsibilities. Moreover, they were adamant that unless F. married C. no other spousal partner was going to do a better job of caring for the children.

As in most PNG societies where a high premium is attached on the value of social relationships the use of coercive strategies is sometimes deployed in circumstances such as C.'s case-story. The story about C.'s ill-treatment by her family raises ontological questions about the nature of social relationships and how persons in Nagovisi cosmological reckoning are understood to be extensions or embodiments of particular relations. The Nagovisi vernacular term that

### **Women's Role in Conflict Resolution.**

This is a story about land. Land related disagreements are a common feature across many rural communities in PNG. In much of rural PNG land disputes, if unresolved, can lead to nasty confrontations and sometimes violence. This story from Nagovisi, Bougainville, illustrates one such example where an ongoing disagreement between two villages over a parcel of land led to two men slashing each other with machetes. The story has an interesting twist about it in the way in which women's efforts were called upon to

denotes both the person and the relational ties between kinspersons is mono. This model of the person offers a radically different view of personhood where a person's sense of being is inconceivable independent of the social ties from which people are created and nurtured. In this model a person is not viewed as an individual monad but a mosaic of interlocking and mutually dependent system of relationships. Persons are conceived of as an amalgam of the intertwined relations within which they are embedded. Life cycle events such as death have the propensity to reconfigure the nature of the relations with a destabilising effect. C.'s family saw it as their justified obligation to re-inscribe a previous state of unity which in their view had given way to potential fragmentation of kinship ties through the death of a family member. Here we can see how an incident like death offers the moral justification to C.'s family who perceive their action not as unjustified acts of violence but as a moral commitment to restoring the social equilibrium of their relational connections.

Here too we can see how notions of freedom and choice are severely constrained and regulated within a social logic that attaches a high value on the maintenance of kinship relations. How the story unfolded and eventually got resolved also obliges us to critically reflect upon the choice and efficacy of local mitigation strategies. C. eventually got married to F. It is also interesting to note that in the end the parties concerned did not attempt to locate the source of culpability and guilt in the final resolution. To do otherwise would have been counterproductive. Because adjudicatory processes that advocate locating the source of guilt and culpability are perceived as reneging upon each other's kinship obligations and perpetuating the social tensions out of which the conflict initially arose.

play an intermediary role to straighten the conflict. For many years the residents of Manka and Kana villages had a long running argument over who were the rightful owners of a piece of land on which a Kana man planted cocoa trees. Until the planting of the cocoa trees the Manka villagers claimed that the land under dispute was rightfully theirs from ancestral times. The women from Manka were especially furious with what they thought to be a violation of Nagovisi land tenure principles. Women are the custodians of land and it is

through women that communal rights of usage and ownership are transferred.

To cut the story short, P., the owner of the cocoa plot got into an argument with J. after J. confronted him at his village and warned him not to proceed with the planting until things were sorted out at the local land mediation hearing. Things got out of hand quite rapidly when one of P.'s sons grabbed a machete amid the verbal altercation and slashed J. several times on his head. With blood still gushing from the machete wound J. rushed back to his wife's village, got his bush knife, and returned to avenge his attack. He ignored his wife's pleas to get medical help instead and returned to Kana where upon his arrival brutally attacked P. He slashed P.'s forehead during the scuffle dismembering four of his digits with a machete blow to his hand. After the confrontation P.'s sons went over to Manka and verbally abused an old woman who they said was responsible for nagging and inciting J. to confront P. in the first place. They mowed down her backyard garden with their machetes and ransacked her residential house.

What makes this ethnographic case-story interesting from a gender violence perspective is that before the actual confrontation occurred the two villages had had a number of land mediation hearings over the same portion of land. The mediation meetings were inspired by F., an energetic elementary school teacher from Manka village. F. recognised how ownership of land in Nagovisi is largely constituted through historical narratives of ancestral movement and in myth and she advocated that the dispute between the conflicting parties be settled through the local land court. She was supportive of the mediation because she perceived it as the appropriate forum for both parties to test their claims for validity. F. observed that the mediation forum was the avenue to assess whether the land stories of each party can stand the test of public scrutiny given the very public nature of the mediation processes. But F. felt that her village had one very important shortcoming that may work to her village's disadvantage at the mediation. She observed that over the years the lack of young people's interest and willingness to interact with the elders had resulted in the loss of important historical knowledge of the land. In the days leading up to the first mediation F. took on the responsibility of rectifying this potential disadvantage by collecting and recording land stories from elderly clan members from adjacent villages.

While F.'s efforts can be viewed as a calculated technique and strategy to increase her village's chances for a favourable mediation outcome there are important lessons to be drawn from her initiative. F.'s act was a deliberate choice to pursue settlement through the local village court. In a society that often regards senior men, especially a mother's brother (MB) or mother's mother's brother (MMB) as important custodians and repositories of land-related knowledge despite the society's matrilineal orientation F. was unperturbed by the criticisms levelled against her for hunting for knowledge that her own matrilineal lineage was seen to lack. Land disputes in Nagovisi can be volatile especially given the contemporary pressures associated with modernisation. F.'s effort illustrates a non-confrontational model of grievance handling where she deliberately sets out to seek and place knowledge of and about ancestral land as the central object of analysis and debate. This reasoning is in line with the prevailing social logic governing human land relations amongst the Nagovisi where the relationship between land and persons is mutually constitutive and can therefore pose considerable challenges to addressing violence independent of the complex socio-cosmological relations that inform people's sense of being. What F. did by seeking knowledge about the history of her clan outside her own was indeed a retracing and reframing of past relations and evoking those relations in a novel form in the present. There is nothing entirely novel about F.'s action. People do hunt for knowledge to lend weight to their claims regarding land disputes and this can be done through a variety of ways that evoke specific kinship obligations and relationships. It is not our intention here to go into the specific details about the nature of these relationships and how they are constituted.

The wider point to be made here in relation to gender based violence is that although the story above illustrates a specific moment involving violent behaviour F.'s intervention exemplifies a nuanced and "violence-averse" approach that appeals to the use of relational mechanisms as a form of cultural resource to dispute resolution. After P. and J. were evacuated to the local clinic to get treated they were paid a visit by some of F.'s male relatives who reprimanded and publically shamed both victims for their actions. They were reminded of the effrontery of their action and the negative long-term ramifications it could have on community stability and cohesion. The collective expression of disapproval at the

incident from F.'s male relatives in many ways was an indirect endorsement of her efforts that sought an amicable resolution through the local land mediation circuit. At a micro scale F.'s action, even if very specific, is exemplary of the role women play in seeking non-adversarial approaches to settling disputes in conflict situations. Even though F.'s effort relates to violence in the context of a land

dispute numerous women have displayed similar roles and qualities in the context of post-conflict reconciliation efforts. During the Bougainville civil conflict F. lost her elder brother. He was murdered by persons known to her family. After the civil war F. and her sisters played a significant role in paving the way that eventually led to the reconciliation of the family with her brother's killers.

***'I would describe the level of violence here as a pandemic, equaling something in a war zone'***

(ABC News 19 February 2015 <[abc.net.au](http://abc.net.au)>)

## Key Defining Issues in Papua New Guinea

1. Women in Leadership programmes are driven by an understanding that having more women in leadership and decision making positions will lead to better outcomes for not only women and children but for families and communities in general. Strategies that enable women to enter politics include the proposed revised Organic Law on the Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates (OLLIPAC) which advocates that 10% of party endorsements are comprised of women candidates. While these measures show that there is commitment towards supporting women in politics, it must be highlighted that women, like men are embedded in multiple social relations that may or may not influence voter outcomes. There is an expectation that women candidates may appeal to women voters thus gaining support through the ballot box. However women voters may not vote for a woman candidate simply because she is a woman. Other relational concerns take precedence thus voters will vote along other relational and material interests.
2. Strategies that encourage women to move from the informal economy to the formal economy must also take into account that the formal and informal economy are interwoven and that some women may not see the benefit of opening a bank account and formalizing a business that operates on adequate social relations. In many rural communities access to infrastructure such as roads is a more pressing concern than accessing finance or opening a bank account.
3. Violence Against Women, initiatives are welcome but prove to be a challenge because as our case studies show culturally informed interventions that address gender based violence will play a crucial role in addressing gender inequality and violence in a holistic way. A common theme found in both Bougainville and Port Moresby is that while there are formal systems of adjudication people make a deliberate choice to address violence through customary and local processes that may seem challenging if violence and the mitigation actions are viewed solely through a human rights and gender inequality lens.
4. For too long violence against women has been viewed as a women's issue. The primary focus of ensuring access to services for women has meant that men have essentially been demonised in the process. This focus on women is changing with male advocates champions and male advocates discussing men's violence ([www.ailaconsulting.com/community](http://www.ailaconsulting.com/community)). Similarly the Digicel Foundation runs a campaign that seeks to recognise outstanding men within Papua New Guinea communities. The Man of Honor ([www.facebook.com/mohpng](http://www.facebook.com/mohpng)) campaign aims to reduce the occurrence of violence in Papua New through promoting positive behaviour. Most recently the newly introduced Domestic Violence Hotline found that half of the callers were men who were calling in to speak about abuse that they had previously experienced and also to speak about other issues relating to marital life.

## Assessing Effectiveness in Papua New Guinea

As stated elsewhere in this report there are many initiatives, projects, programmes and activities that address GBV in Papua New Guinea. These initiatives are both government and civil society led and supported by donors and development partners such as the United Nations. Even with the on-going attention to GBV, there still seems to be high levels of violence within communities.

Here we offer some suggestions as to why such initiatives may not be yielding the expected results. Firstly one of the major assumptions that inform much of this work is

that gender based violence is a symptom of deeply imbedded systems of thought that are influenced by culture. Programmes that advocate for better service delivery work within a legalistic framework that frames an understanding of men and women as individual bearers of certain inalienable rights. While the intention to protect and safeguard the individual right to safety is necessary, the way in which many PNG societies conceptualise the notion of right independent of the wider social relationship can be a barrier to well-intentioned programmes.

Evidence of this can be found in the lack of service provision by Police. Despite continuous gender sensitization training and the establishment of donor supported dedicated family and sexual violence units, there are still barriers to accessing justice. As shown in the Port Moresby case study Police take on the role of counsellor and social worker instead of law enforcer. While this may be viewed as inaction on the part of police, it also portrays an understanding of GBV that is reflective of wider concerns.

Similarly NGO service providers such as Femli Safe PNG (<http://www.femilipng.org> state) indicate that one of their biggest challenges is 'getting clients to realise their rights'. There is always a possibility that victims of violence do not go through the process of holding perpetrators accountable for their actions. This kind of action occurs for several reasons including fear of retaliation, concern for the welfare of children and the resolution of the dispute through out of court mediation. However programmes that advocate for gender justice do not necessarily support the work of 'non formal' systems as compensation and out of court settlements do not conform to the idea of justice and the adequate delivery of justice for women. Yet the ethnographic case study from Bougainville clearly shows that women themselves are choosing to solve disputes outside of the court system as out of court settlement takes into consideration the wider social concerns of those affected by a dispute and not just the individual and perpetrator.

## Options for Action in Papua New Guinea

There are several successful projects that could be investigate or explored further. These the include Family Health International's Komuniti Luksave Lo ol Meri Project (<http://www.fhi360.org/projects/komuniti-lukautim-meri-project-klom-addressing-violence-against-women-and-girls-papua-new-guinea>). This is a project that uses community systems to address GBV in two provinces in Papua New Guinea. FHI has also used other innovative methods such as photo voice to document the lives of women in the provinces that they work in (<http://www.fhi360.org/resource/powerful-voices>).

The work of the Human Rights Defenders Network is an important home grown initiative to address sorcery related violence. Local groups such as the Seeds Theatre group and the Tribal Foundation are also carrying out activities to address violence. The Tribal Foundation will be releasing a documentary about violence in PNG titled 'Senisim Pasin'. The Centre for Social and Creative Media at the University of Goroka would be an ideal institution to partner with for film making and documentaries of GBV related issues. The centre successfully produced the Pawa Meri series of video's in 2013 and is fast gaining a reputation as an important institution in PNG.

Intiatives such as the Digicel Foundation's Man of Honor campaign is a new and important initiative that seeks to involve men in a positive way. This is something that could be further explored and supported.

Furthermore research into GBV and mediation could be supported as an alternative form of dispute resolution. The World Bank and the National Research Institute has embarked on some research as part of a recent Urban Safety study in the cities of Port Moresby and Lae.





## Samoa

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Samoa is an ethnically and linguistically homogenous country comprising two main adjacent islands in the central Pacific Ocean; it has a population of approximately 190,000 (Samoa Bureau of Statistics, 2011:6) and a diaspora of equal size in New Zealand, Australia and the USA. Remittances underpin the economy and the majority of the population have livelihoods based on mixed subsistence agriculture, fisheries and small scale trading.

Samoa is predominantly Christian and is politically stable; it gained political independence from New Zealand in 1962 with a Westminster-style democratic constitution. Until the late 1970s, political leadership was mainly based on traditional rank and village consensus, but the emergence of political factions that cut across traditional political boundaries eventually led to the formation of political parties. Until 1990 only *matai* (chiefs) could vote and stand for parliament. Now all citizens age 21 and older may vote, but only *matai* may stand for election to parliament.

Until the 1970s nearly all Samoans lived in villages governed by traditional chiefly councils and under the spiritual guidance of village pastors. Today, 69% of households are in villages on customary land, 25% are on freehold land mainly in urban areas and the remainder live on government or church-owned land (Samoa Bureau of Statistics, 2011:87). Today social change is pervasive and challenges customary norms, the outcome of mass emigration, monetisation of the economy, dependence on remittances, and growth of government and private enterprises. Samoa now has a growing multi-ethnic middle class.

When Samoa became independent in 1962, village women's committees were supervised by public health nurses. The committees had considerable authority in the villages because they were responsible for disease prevention, looked after village water supplies and organised monthly clinics for maternal and child health. In the 1970s women's committees also organised small development projects in livestock, horticulture and handicrafts.

Government established a Women's advisory committee in 1979. As health services were modernised and centralised, the Ministry of Agriculture became the main agency working with village women's committees and in the 1980s the government agency responsible for village administration took over responsibility for liaison with women's committees. From that time until 1990, women's issues were coordinated by a Women's Desk in the Prime Minister's Department.

In that year the Ministry of Women Affairs was established which later became the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development in which the women's division has the smallest budget and is also tasked with responsibility for youth and the disabled. Over the past 50 years there have also been several urban-based NGOs focused on women's issues.

Since colonial times, villages have appointed a village representative from the village council of chiefs (*fono*). In 2002 the government provided for village women's committee representatives, to be appointed by each village. Currently the village women's representative is paid half of that paid to the representative of the village council of chiefs, almost all of whom are male.



## Contemporary Gender Inequality

- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) ratified in 1992. Samoa is current with reporting.

- National Policy for Women of Samoa 2010 – 2015; currently being revised.

- 47.5% of women have secondary education compared to 44.1% of men, and 11.5% of women have tertiary qualifications compared to 10.5% of men (Samoa Bureau of Statistics, 2011: 67).

- Overall, 72.6% of men are economically active (mainly in farming and elementary occupations) compared to 27.4% of women (mainly in handicrafts, clerical and service occupations) (Samoa Bureau of Statistics, 2011:73).

- The gender gap is narrower among managers (63.7% are males and 36.3% are females), and in professional and technical occupations (54.8% are male and 45.2% are female) (Samoa Bureau of Statistics, 2011: 80).

- Women comprise almost half of all working business proprietors.

Samoa has two main gender inequality issues: low political representation at village and national level, and violence against women and girls.

### Political representation

- Samoa is among the countries that are ranked the lowest in the world for women's representation in parliament, at 131 out of 143 countries (the total number of rankings is less than the 190 countries ranked as some countries tie for some ranks) (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2015).

- Any person holding a registered *matai* title may stand for parliament.

### Country snap-shot

- Population 187,820 (2011)
  - Male 52%
  - Female 48%
- Median Age 20.7 years
- Landmass 2935 km<sup>2</sup>
- EEZ 120,000 km<sup>2</sup>

### Gender snap-shot

- Secondary education: 47.5% of women 44.1% of men.
- Higher education 11.5% of women 10.5% of men.
- Economically active: 72.6% of men are 27.4% of women.
- Professional and technical occupations; men 54.8%, women, 45.2%.
- Member of Parliament (2015) 46 men, 3 women

- In the 53 years since Independence in 1962, a total of 14 women *matai* have held seats in parliament, most for a single term.

- The nation has 192 villages whose people comprise the majority of the voting population in all but two of Samoa's 41 parliamentary constituencies. A recent survey found only 5.5% of 13,423 village-based *matai* are female and few community-based organisations, including village school committees, have women leaders (CSS-NUS ADRAS Report, 2015);

- Nineteen villages, including those with large populations and high traditional importance, do not recognise *matai* titles held by women.

- In parliamentary constituencies where villages do not recognise women *matai*, or where villages discourage women *matai* from participating in the village councils, women have little if any chance of being elected to parliament.

## EU snap-shot

- EU assistance since 1975, approximately €130m.
- Political dialogue: environment, climate change, human rights and gender issues.
- Sector focus Water and sanitation (with sector budget support)
- Civil Society Support Programme (€3m) in collaboration with Australia
- Media for Democracy and Human Rights programme (€193,334) of the European Instrument for Democracy & Human Rights.
- Renewable Energy Programme on-going with the ADB and New Zealand, €4.6m.
- Global Climate Change Alliance (for urban drainage), €6m.

## Positive measures

- In 2013, the government legislated special measures providing for a 10% quota of seats in Parliament to be occupied by women. This will increase women's participation from the current proportion of 6.1% to a minimum of 10% in the next general elections in 2016. The measure does not address the customary barriers to women's equal participation in local government.
- An Australian-funded regional programme, Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development for women's advancement and empowerment, has committed up to \$320 million over 10 years in the 14 Pacific Island states. It is currently providing Samoa funds to promote women's candidacy in the 2016 parliamentary elections, and the services of a short term gender policy advisor.

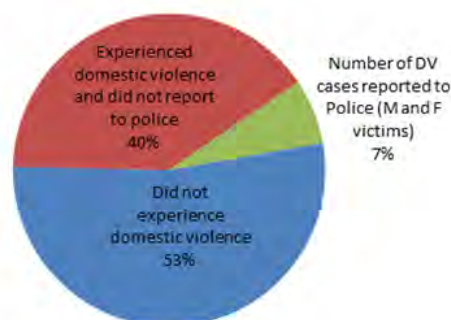
## Violence against women

- Violence against women is endemic in Samoa. WHO (2005:16) reported for Samoa that 46% of ever partnered women experience physical and sexual violence; 35% of women whose first sex was before 15 reported it was forced sex (WHO, 2005: 24); 62% experienced physical violence from someone other than a partner, which was the highest level of physical violence by someone other than a partner in all ten countries (15 sites) surveyed by WHO/UNFPA.
- UNICEF (2014:198) reported that 58% of female adolescents stated there were acceptable reasons for wife beating compared to 50% of male adolescents.

## Positive actions include

- The Samoa Family Safety Act 2013 defines domestic violence and includes a no drop policy provision (duty to prosecute) for complaints filed with the Domestic Violence Unit.
- Marital rape was criminalized under the Crimes Act of 2013.
- A National Human Rights Commission was established in December of 2013 under the Office of the Ombudsman, with the first Samoa Human Rights Report published in 2015.
- The UNDP Transformational Leadership Development Programme began in 2013 has supported projects focused on reducing violence against women as well as empowerment of women.
- A free 'helpline' service has been established by the NGO Samoa Victim Support Group.
- Ending Violence in Samoa Roundtable, a discussion forum hosted by UN Women, has been well attended by members of the community and broadcast on national television.

Estimated Reporting of Domestic Violence in women aged 15-49  
(2011 Census Data, SFHSS prevalence Rates and 2013 Data from  
Ministry of Police)



- UN Women facilitates the Pacific Regional ERAW Facility Fund which provides grants to Pacific Island Governments and Civil Society Organizations working to “End Violence against Women.”
- In its donor partnerships, the government of Samoa has designated UNDP as the lead agency. A number of programmes for Ending Violence against Women (ERAW) have been initiated, such as the Transformational Leadership programme, which targeted influential members of the community as advocates for ERAW, and the preparation of training materials for community conversations on family violence.
- In July 2015, UN Women launched in Samoa the toolkit “How to design projects to end violence against women and girls.”
- In September 2015, UN Women held a second workshop in Samoa on “Ways to Preach Against Violence.”

## Case-Studies from Samoa

*A variety of approaches have been used in the following case studies including interviews, focus group discussions, a questionnaire survey, and the use of film to generate community dialogue on issues. Feedback from the films provides additional insights into underlying attitudes and beliefs that may hamper efforts to address gender inequality and its expression in violence against women and girls.*

### **Married women have no rights when they live in the village of their husband.**

G, a mother of 14 children, lived in her husband's village for thirty years. As a wife of the high chief of the village, she was president of the village women's committee, the church women's committee, and the women's committee that looked after the district hospital. When her husband died, his chiefly title passed to his half-brother, who had lived all his life outside the village where the title belonged. The houses that G had lived in, the main house having been built by her husband were located on the traditional house place appurtenant to her husband's chiefly title.

G and her younger children had to pack up their things and vacate the houses, which passed into the possession of her husband's half-brother as the new title holder. They moved to town. One of her older sons built a house on land beside the road which was not appurtenant to the title as a residence place. However G decided not to live there as she no longer had any position or rights in the village and her situation would be anomalous. She moved to live in town, in a house belonging to her eldest son and his wife.

W lived with her husband and family in a village located on land owned by the Methodist Church. The village was established for the descendants of indentured Solomon Islands labourers who had been brought to Samoa as plantation workers in the past. It is organised in the traditional Samoan manner with a council of chiefs and elders. Like other people in the village, W and her husband pay land rent to the church as well as other church donations. She is well educated and formerly managed the branch of a local commercial bank. Her husband J is a *matai* and was the secretary of the village church.

The village has its own primary school, constructed in 2009 on government land near the village. In 2013 W became secretary of the school committee and operated a school canteen with her husband. She managed the school funds, which included an aid grant to construct a school hall. When she felt matters were not properly managed at the school she reported problems to the Ministry of Education, which were investigated. The village pastor and president of the school committee resented her influential position and had systematically tried to undermine her. In a school committee meeting, the village pastor insulted her publicly.

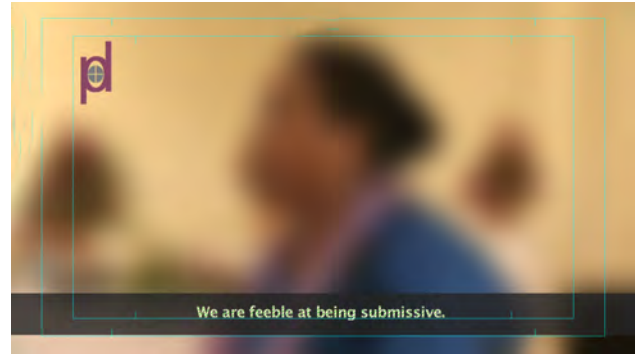
*"Shut your mouth, you are a woman who has married into the village, you don't have land, and you don't have black blood [Solomon islander ancestry], you are only here through your husband..."*

With the support of the village council, the pastor ordered her to leave the village, her home and family. Accompanied voluntarily by her husband, she sought refuge with relatives in a neighbouring village.

W reported her eviction and the use of insulting words to the police and the matter went to the magistrate's court, which found no case against the village pastor who knelt before the court and apologized (such a gesture by so high ranking a person would be very persuasive). The *matai* present indicated that the matter had been settled by traditional means but this did not involve W. The Pastor was discharged without conviction and within a short period of time W was evicted from her home where she had lived for several decades with a formal letter from the Methodist Church.



J and W are building a new future as they have been evicted from the home where they lived for many decades (Photo: Percival).



A rural woman responds with the mantra “women are to blame” at a symposium exploring violence against women and girls in Samoa. [Photo: Galumalemana Steven Percival]

### Impact on W:

*“I was hurt and I had to take two weeks unpaid leave from work because I wasn’t up for it, I felt so little in front of everyone on that day. I didn’t want to stay at my husband’s family anymore and I hid myself at home because people were mocking me.”*

W is still forbidden to return to her home but has taken the matter to the Supreme Court. She has left the Methodist church and joined a new evangelical church.

### **Family and Intimate partner violence is accepted as a norm by most young people**

A survey and focus group discussions were conducted to seek the views of young people, foundation students and undergraduates at university between the ages of 18-25, on violence in relationships. There were only five male participants and 16 females in the focus groups, despite efforts to encourage male participation. The survey found that the majority of respondents, both young men and young women, considered family violence as the norm.

The majority of the participants, male and female, said family violence involved both verbal and physical abuse, including beating and cutting of girls hair. One girl said if a man is refused sex by his wife, that is a form of physical abuse. Some said the Bible approved beating children if they misbehaved. Another mentioned that violence can be the cause of suicide. One eighteen year old male said:

*“I see different kinds of violence: parents towards their children, men towards women, and I know that culture is part of this habit of*

*violence. This notion that men are the heads of families, giving no room for women to share their thoughts. But the sacred spaces we have in our culture are threatened if a women or wife shares her views to the head of the family.”*

They attributed violence to socialisation and discipline norms, poor communication; inability to deal with smaller issues which lead to bigger issues and violence; lack of education; jealousy, relationship issues, refusing sex, poor relationships (lack of commitment, love, and trustworthiness), money problems, alcohol, and intrusion by other family members. Some mentioned the right of men to enforce obedience by their wives. Samoan culture was frequently mentioned and “Western Attitudes” were blamed by some:

The small group of boys expressed more insights than the girls, probably because boys with more conventional views declined to take part in the focus groups. Several referred to male violence as an increasing problem, commenting that:

*“It seems Samoa is new to this concept of human rights and do not understand it therefore children imitate the western attitude where children answer back to their parents.*

*“In the Samoan culture, the father is always the head of the family and the mother is the helper”*

*“There is no relation to gender equality because of the mind-set of men that they are superior over women.”*

Both female and male respondents considered that there was more physical abuse of female partners by males and more emotional abuse of males by their female partners.

One said:

*"I do not think that violence occurs between a girlfriend and a boyfriend situation, but once they are married and living together that is where all the violence occurs."*

Most recognised a cultural value of respect between brother and sister. The young men all agreed that there were no acceptable reasons for a brother to hit his sister.

*Culture plays a part in violent behaviour towards sisters. Girls are seen to have a responsibility of staying home whereas boys are free to roam the village. Girls have no freedom to do as the boys do.*

*[If] a brother finds the sister with a boyfriend in public places. ... another reason is if the brother sees the sister's [clothing] as inappropriate.*

Girls thought that violence between brothers and sister occurred when a brother struck his sister to protect the family's honour, or when he exerted his control as the future male head of a household. One female respondent said incest can occur, with the brother threatening the sister to be quiet.

### **There is a wide gap between policy and practice regarding violence against women**

The Samoa police have had considerable training on domestic violence with New Zealand and Australian support. The Domestic Violence Unit was established in 2007 at police headquarters, and a large, politically powerful NGO provides a service suggested by its name: Samoa Victim Support (SVSG). However police do not practice their own policies for zero toleration of violence against women, nor do employees of the NGO.

This was evident from the case of a young woman whom we will call Vai who was being beaten repeatedly by her intimate partner, a police officer. She was living with him in a boarding house. The beating came to the attention of his uncle, a *matai* and the proprietor of the boarding house. His son worked for the aforementioned NGO. The



Gender relations in Samoa are clearly defined by roles and responsibilities (Photo: Galumalemana Steven Percival)

police officer was warned by his uncle that his behaviour would not be tolerated by the Police Commissioner, nor would it be tolerated in the uncle's guest house. Vai was advised to go and seek assistance from SVSG. Vai did not take this advice and moved out with the police officer. Despite the family's connection with SVSG and with the police, no complaint was filed by Vai, nor did her abuser's relatives report his behaviour to the Ministry of Police Professional Standards Unit.

### **Women are to blame for violence and infidelity**

A workshop was held in a rural village to discuss a film that explored attitudes to family violence. After watching the film the audience of Samoan men and women, many of them community leaders, talked in groups then presented their views to all present. These responses were recorded. A small number of elite urban women were present and one of them spoke against family violence, however the following comments by a rural woman are representative of the views expressed by the majority.

*“Violence takes different forms. Different. But the incidence of violence against us mothers is because of us. We can be blamed for everything. Physical violence is due to us. Psychological violence - us. We are weak at sharing our concerns with our husbands. We are feeble at being submissive. Poor at speaking in a consultative way. It is that behaviour that leads to our abuse. We blame fathers... we blame fathers, but for many acts of violence, we are the reason. We do not live enough of a life of service to the Lord. We do not study the Holy Bible enough. That is why we are treated with cruelty. A father will not sit then suddenly beat his wife. The beating is because something has happened. Worldly trappings are why we are abused. These fundamental rights just discussed are often at odds with each other.*

*Concerning the fundamental rights pertaining to children, we should try to eradicate this concept that is coming: the rights of children.*

*This is why the devil is growing strong in our offspring and children.*

*It is not us parents who should be blamed. No. If the "Titi-Tata" (discipline) by father and mother is weak it is then that the child's willpower grows strong. We should therefore strive to eliminate the rights of children. We should also lash. I also beat my children. It is lashing to instruct. But we must not be angry with another then really lash the child... No. There are differing degrees of lashing. I say yes to lashing my children. Lash with what is truthful and righteous. But do not neglect to do what must be done.*

*Concerning the rights of mothers over the fathers, woefully weak are fathers when beating up the mothers. What is evident is that if the father instructs the mother concerning the rights that are appropriate for their family it just gives courage to the old lady to be angry. But what is needed is to share, to talk. All the problems that occur in the family are caused by the mother.”*



Samoans are a church-going people and often quote the Bible to support their worldview.  
[Photo: Galumalemana Steven Percival]



## Key Defining Issues in Samoa

Gender inequality and gender based violence has seven main cultural contexts.

### 1. A married women's status is defined by that of her husband

In village life there is a clearly defined role for a married woman. She serves her husband's family and she can only become a leader in the village women's committee and the church women's group if her husband's title is one of local importance. Married women are expected to join their husband's church if she had belonged to a different church before they were married.

### 2. Women are largely excluded from Samoa's political system although women are approximately equal in terms of education and employment.

A candidate for parliament must be a *matai* endorsed by the village to which the title belongs. Until 1990, only *matai* could vote in elections. In Samoan politics, despite universal suffrage, village *matai* play a central role in choosing and electing members of Parliament. Women comprise only 5.5% of all village-based *matai*. Many elite women living in towns have *matai* titles, but these are usually conferred on an honorary basis, and the holder is seldom expected to be active in village politics. A recent survey in Samoa conducted by the National University of Samoa (2015) found nineteen villages that do not recognise female *matai*. Moreover, villages that do recognise titles held by women tend to discourage women *matai* from sitting in the village council.

### 3. Cultural values are used to exclude females from male space

The exclusion of women *matai* from meetings of village councils of *matai* is often justified by the Samoan customary concept of '*o le va tapuia*' – the sacred space – which in this modern usage extends the ancient covenant of respect between sisters and brothers (*feagaiga*) to all men and women. Men like to jest with one another in meetings, in ways they claim are not befitting for women to hear. The discrimination is insidious, veiled by inappropriate cultural constructs, and serves to justify the exclusion of *matai* who are women. It reinforces perceptions that decision-making is a male prerogative, not only in the home and in village councils, but also in village school committees and, by extension, in national parliament.

### 4. Most churches in Samoa uphold gender inequality.

The church plays a major role in the lives of nearly Samoans, particularly among those living in villages. Mainstream churches do not ordain women and few women become deacons in their church. Churches tend to follow the principles and structures established by missionaries in the 19th century. Their teachings emphasise that in a Christian family a man's role is to lead while a woman's role is to be a helper, and that male authority should always prevail in the family, the village and the church.

### 5. The concept of human/women's rights is culturally problematic

Village life is hierarchical (ranked by the status of the *matai*), and separate gender roles and status are emphasized. The notion that individuals, especially women and children, have 'rights' is regarded as threatening to social order, contributing to the weakening of Samoan culture; 'rights' are perceived as leading to disrespect of authority, and selfish individualism.

### 6. Notions of masculinity excuse the behaviour of men and hold women responsible for it.

Samoan culture draws its strongest contrast between the behaviour of men and women in terms of sexuality, particularly male sexuality. Male adolescents and younger men are generally conceptualised as predatory sexual beings, lacking self-control, from whom women must be on guard and protected, particularly unmarried women who wanted to keep their socially valued reputations for virginity. Because men are believed to have natural and uncontrollable sexual appetites women are to blame if their husband is unfaithful; that he must satisfy his sexual urges is normal and if he does so outside marriage it is because the wife has failed her duty to satisfy

him. In cases of male adultery the woman with whom he is having the affair is always held responsible. Mothers are expected to keep their unmarried daughters under close supervision because it is assumed that without it, youths and older men will attempt seduction, and that their daughters will behave seductively.

### **7. Violence is a culturally accepted method of maintaining household hierarchies of status and power**

Samoan households are hierarchical. Physical punishment is believed to teach in-married wives, youths and children to conform to desired standards of behaviour in keeping with their status in the family. Teaching children in the family is not seen as a dialogue between the parents and child but as a process in which the parent gives advice or instructions, and the child listens and obeys. Children may be beaten for disobedience or “talking back” by older children, parents or relatives.

## Key actors

- Ministry of Women, Social and Community Development [www.mwcsd.gov.ws/](http://www.mwcsd.gov.ws/)
- Samoa Law and Justice Sector <http://www.samoaljs.ws/>
- UNDP Multi Country Office (Samoa, Cook Islands, Niue and Tokelau) <http://www.ws.undp.org/>
- UN Women, Samoa Field Office <http://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/countries/samoa>

## Key programmes

Women in Leadership Advocacy Pacific Leadership Programme  
UN Women's Pacific regional programmes:

- Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE)
- Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG)
- Advancing Gender Justice in the Pacific (AGJP)
- Increasing Community Resilience through Empowerment of Women to Address Climate Change and Natural Hazards (IREACH)

Australian Aid regional programme: Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development

## Assessing Effectiveness in Samoa

Samoa's development blueprint; the Strategy for the Development of Samoa 2010-2016 has little to say about gender however it aims for increased reporting of crime with gender disaggregation, a reduction in crime levels, strengthening community policing and a promotion of customary based justice and the formal justice system as some of its key indicators. The Government of Samoa has generally created a policy environment for gender equality in terms of educational enrolments, government employment, and the provisions of the law enforcement and justice system. Despite this government policy, women are poorly represented in Government appointed Boards and Commissions of Inquiry.

Most of Samoa's development partners advocate gender equality in their dialogues with the government but tend not to understand the cultural context of gender discrimination in Samoa. Generic approaches to GAD and EAW are unlikely to be successful because they have the most impact and involvement among urban women. Gender discrimination occurs mainly in the traditional sphere of village life where nearly 80% of Samoa's women live. The rights of women *matai* to participate in village councils and the issue of violence against women are politically sensitive. Traditional norms have served Samoa well since Independence and have contributed significantly to social stability. Accordingly, rather than invoking Article 15 of the Constitution of Samoa that provides for the equality of all citizens, the government prefers to invoke Article 100: A *matai* title shall be held in accordance with Samoan custom and uses and with the law relating to Samoan custom and usage.

The exclusion or marginalisation of women's voice in the governing of Samoa's villages is increasingly

counterproductive in relation to some of Samoa's growing social and health issues. These include high rates of teenage pregnancy and prevalence of sexually transmitted infections, prevalence of family violence and gender-based violence, inadequate vaccination coverage in infants and children, poor management of village and district schools, problematic use of alcohol and drugs, pockets of rural poverty and disadvantage, and prevalence of non-communicable diseases. Women who are as well educated, if not better educated, than men need to take leadership in addressing these issues. Women need more voice in setting local priorities.

Currently there is a Bill before parliament that proposes to amend the Village Fono Act 1990, the legislative provisions governing the powers of village councils. The amendment will, inter alia, extend the powers of the village council to define village council by-laws and policy and establish procedures to be followed in making village council decisions. The proposed provisions of the Bill will give legal recognition to the authority of the village council to protect Samoan customs and traditions, and to safeguard village traditions, norms and protocols. Unless government intervenes, these may include formalising customary norms that exclude women from participating in local leadership and decision making.

## Useful links

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1f21uDL5LAK>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jjxf7QWnjX0>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Fgwxcg8rmA>

<http://samoanstudies.ws/research/adras-project-summary/>

<http://www.spc.int/rrrt/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1f21uDL5LAK>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jjxf7QWnjX0>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Fgwxcg8rmA>

<http://www.samoobserver.ws/other/women/8044-bite-them-hard-church-chairman-urges-women>

<http://samoanstudies.ws/research/adras-project-summary/>

<http://www.spc.int/rrrt/>

Political Representation and Women's Empowerment in Samoa

<http://samoanstudies.ws/research/adras-project-summary/>

Regional Right Resources Team

<http://www.spc.int/rrrt/>

Samoa Family Health and Safety Study

<http://countryoffice.unfpa.org/pacific/drive/SamoaFamilyHealthandSafetyStudy.pdf>

Samoa Demographic Health Survey 2009

<http://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR240/FR240.pdf>

Samoa Demographic Health Survey 2014

<http://www.sbs.gov.ws/index.php/new-document-library?view=download&fileId=1648>

UNICEF – Hidden in Plain Sight

<http://files.unicef.org/publications/files/>

[Hidden in plain sight statistical analysis EN 3 Sept 2014.pdf](http://files.unicef.org/publications/files/Hidden_in_plain_sight_statistical_analysis_EN_3_Sept_2014.pdf)

Summary Report - WHO Multi-country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women

[http://www.who.int/gender/violence/who\\_multicountry\\_study/summary\\_report/summary\\_report\\_English2.pdf](http://www.who.int/gender/violence/who_multicountry_study/summary_report/summary_report_English2.pdf)

## Options for Action in Samoa

Development discourses focused on human rights have so far made little headway in Samoan communities nor have they influenced general public opinion. They are perceived by many Samoans as promoting selfish individualism and undermining culturally and divinely sanctioned hierarchies of authority, as well as social and community cohesion.

There is an opportunity for a development partner to assist the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development to educate village leaders and women's committees on Samoa's constitutional provisions for gender equality and what is meant by the concept of 'human rights'. Development interventions are needed that are not only respectful of Samoan customs, traditions and Christianity, but that also assist people within these ideological frameworks to adjust to the challenges of modernity, the increasing influence of social media, and globalisation. The Regional Rights Resources Team (RRRT) located in the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) works with 14 Pacific Island states and seven territories. At the regional level it would be a good partner to work with Pacific Island countries, particularly if it had an anthropologist on the team, to develop programmes to meet these and similar needs in relation to the status of rural women and violence against them.

The use of film in community dialogue is currently demonstrating efficacy in generating interest and conversations on an otherwise sensitive subject that, until recently, has been regarded as a private concern. A charitable trust in Samoa, the Tiapapata Art Centre Inc, has produced a series of films exploring gender inequality issues in Samoa, mainly through the lenses of culture and faith. Reactions to these films have been recorded and are later shown along with the documentary films to different audiences. The response from a rural community is shown to an urban group. It is this recycling use of new and old footage that is capturing interest and causing heated debate. There is an opportunity to take this approach to the next level in Samoa that will build on the dialogue and interest to help communities frame a raft of strategies and methodologies to address gender inequality and reduce violence against women and girls.



## Solomon Islands

### Tammy Tabe

Solomon Islands lies east of Papua New Guinea and northwest of Vanuatu. The islands were first discovered by the European explorer Alvaro de Mendana and his crew in 1568. It later became a British Protectorate and gained its independence in 1987. Solomon Islands is comprised of 9 main provinces with more than 1,000 volcanic and atoll islands that cover a total landmass of 28,000 km<sup>2</sup>. More than 300 islands are inhabited with a population of 515,870 (Solomon Islands National Statistics Office 2009; SPC 2013 mid year estimate 610,800). About 95 percent of the country's population is Melanesian, with the rest comprising of Polynesians, Micronesians, Chinese and Europeans. Solomon Islands is one of the culturally diverse countries in the Pacific. It has more than 80 languages but the two spoken commonly by people are English and Pidgin.

Most of the islands are of volcanic origins and are characterized by high mountains and deeply incised valleys. The high rainfall and humidity supports a wide range of plants, animals and variation in soil types and vegetation on many of the islands. The country's revenue is derived mainly from its natural and fisheries resources, and from foreign aid. About 80 percent of the population lives in rural villages while the remaining 20 percent dwell in urban areas, the majority of these in and around the capital Honiara.

Agriculture and fisheries resources provide the main sources of subsistence and income for most of the people in Solomon Islands, except for those who are employed and/or rely on remittances. However, imported food products have become the main source of subsistence for people living in urban areas which are often substituted by fresh food products from the local markets. Most of the economic, social and political activities are based in Honiara,

the capital of Solomon Islands but some of these services are decentralised into the provincial headquarters of the 9 provinces so that they can also be accessed by rural communities. Solomon Islands is known to be a Christian nation with Roman Catholic, Church of Melanesia (Anglican), South Seas Evangelical Church (SSEC), United Church and the Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) as the five main denominations in the country. There are also small breakaway churches from the main denominations and an increase of Pentecostal churches across the country.

Solomon Islands is largely characterized by both patrilineal and matrilineal societies, however, women's rights to land and properties are often contested or ignored when they come into conflict with foreign logging and mining companies. About 90 percent of the land is held under customary ownership and cannot be alienated. In most of the societies, chiefs and elders govern the communities and people as leaders. Men have always been traditionally known to hold higher status in households and communities as leaders, heads of households, public speakers and decision makers, while women hold lower status and are not allowed to participate in decision making, public speaking or take up leadership roles.

Men and women have been ascribed different roles and are expected to observe them at all times as part of their daily lives in the family and community. The failure to perform these gender roles often results in violence particularly among women. The use of violence is used as an acceptable and justifiable way of disciplining women and even children when they fail to perform their ascribed gender roles, disobey, or commit infidelity. Children who have observed violence as a form of punishment and discipline while

growing tend to also use it as they become older or when they get married. The use of violence is influenced by the unequal power relations between men and women where men are more controlling and have power over women. Bride price also contributes to violence especially when women are treated as property and men can do as they please with them.

Gender based violence particularly domestic violence is a major issue in Solomon Islands but has always been treated as a private matter by families and as not requiring outside intervention. In events where violence gets out of hand or becomes a serious matter, family members or villagers can intervene, including the police or leaders of the community; however, such matters are preferably dealt with culturally by those involved to avoid bringing shame to the family and ruining the victim's reputation. Due to the absence of laws that specifically criminalized domestic violence and support services to assist victims of violence, women have tended to remain silent when they experience violence. The traditional perception that women are of lower status and are expected to be obedient and submissive to men have been relied on to make violence an acceptable form of disciplining when they transgress their gender roles. At times the biblical principle of women's role to submit to their husband is used to justify the act of violence.

Since the civil unrest crisis in 1998 to 2003, sexual violence has escalated dramatically and it continues to occur more frequently

today even though the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI) in 2003 to present brought an end to civil unrest. There are many cases of sexual violence being reported daily by the Solomon Islands Newspaper of young girls, children and women being raped and sometimes killed; and this has raised great concerns in the country about such violence against women. The completion of the Solomon Islands Family Health and Support Survey (SIFHSS) in 2007 revealed critical results of physical and sexual violence among women in the country where Solomon Islands is ranked the third highest among other Pacific Islands for GBV. The study played a significant role by putting pressure on the government to address the issue and also influenced the implementation of the National Policy on Eliminating of Violence against Women (EVAW).

Joint efforts by governmental sectors, NGOs, faith based organizations and international organizations based in the country have also taken up the initiative and play an active role in addressing the issue of violence against women. The implementation of the Family Protection Act is also tailored to address gender based violence by criminalizing domestic violence and bringing perpetrators to justice. However, violence is still prevalent in Solomon Islands and there are remote areas that the SIFHSS did not cover and many women do not have access to information or support services offered for victims of violence, thus there is still a great need to reach out to these areas as well.



## Contemporary Gender Inequality

Since the 1990s, Solomon Islands has tried to address the issue of violence against women. In 1993, the Ministry of Women was established followed by the development of the National Plan for Women in 1998 to address violence against women. However, these movements were suspended during the Solomon Islands crisis that took place from 1998 to 2003. During this period, there was evidence of increased violence against women and girls, particularly sexual violence. Subsequent to the Peace agreements in 2003, there was little that was done to address the issue. The government of Solomon Islands with assistance from external and internal organizations has committed itself to addressing the issue of gender-based violence (GBV) and violence against women (VAW) in the country both at international and national levels.

### Country snap-shot

Independent since 1978.  
 Member of ACP, PIF, MSG, UN, Commonwealth  
 Population: 515, 870 (Solomon Islands National Statistics Office 2009)

- Women: 49 %
- Men: 51 %
- Landmass : 27, 556 sq. km
- EEZ: 1,553, 444 sq.km

### Gender snap-shot

- Political representation: Only 3 have been elected
- Gender violence: 64 % of women who have had an intimate partner have at least once experience physical or sexual violence
- Women and Economy: 60.4 %

### EU snap-shot

- National Council of Women
- Funded 2 major projects in Solomon Islands: Water and Sanitation, and Rural Development which also involve women participation

At the International level, Solomon Islands participated in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995 and ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 2002. On the national level, Solomon Islands with the involvement of many governmental sectors and NGOs have taken a number of measures to address violence against women.

- In 2007, the first Solomon Islands Family Health and Support Survey (SIFHSS) was conducted by the Ministry of Women, Youth and Children Affairs (MWYCA) and the National Statistics Office (NSO) with assistance from UNFPA and SPC.
- In 2008, Solomon Islands commemorated the White Ribbon Day which brought together stakeholders to raise awareness and encourage individuals to take action to end violence against women.
- In 2010 as an outcome of the SIFHSS study, a National Policy on Eliminating Violence against Women (EVAW) (2010 – 2013) was implemented.
- A 10 year National Action Plan was also developed to guide the implementation of the national policy
- In 2010, the National Policy on Gender Equality and Women's Development (GEWD) was also implemented with the National Policy on EVAW to address the issue of GBV (2010 – 2012)
- 2014 Family Protection Act (No 15 of 2014) was passed

At present, gender inequality is apparent in economic, social and political divisions and attempts are being made by the UN agencies, NGOs and governmental sectors through various projects and programmes to empower women, recognize women's rights and address violence against women.

### Women in Leadership

- only 3 women have been elected to Parliament with one current active member of Parliament
- more women are being trained and encouraged to participate and take up national and local leadership, however, many of them require proper training on public speaking and lobbying since most have been marginalized culturally as inadequate and unskilled for leadership roles
- The National Council of Women (NCW) has supported potential female candidates by training them for electoral positions



- Rise Up, a project facilitated by the Youth, Women and Children Association (YWCA) to empower young women to become confident in public speaking and participate in economic and political activities

### **Women in economy**

- About 60.4 percent of the female population in Solomon Islands are employed but the majority of these - three quarters, are engaged in subsistence work compared to 72.2 percent of employed men
- women are often excluded from participating in the formal economy due to reliance on subsistence agriculture and traditional beliefs about women's roles
- women in the labor force are often underpaid due to their lack of skills and lower levels of education
- women make up less than 30 percent of the public services and hold just 6 percent of the senior public service positions
- women are mostly responsible for the production of subsistence foods and make up the majority of market vendors while men are more involved in the production, sale and marketing in more financially lucrative cash crops
- Solomon Islands Women in Business Association provides training for women to engage in individual and group financed business activities and projects

### **Women and Land Ownership**

- Access to land and land title is an issue for women in Solomon Islands
- About 73 percent of land titles are held by men with only 2 percent by women, and it can be difficult for women to acquire any security of tenure.
- 5 out of the 9 provinces are traditionally governed by matrilineal property and land inheritance; however women's traditional rights have become increasingly ignored and marginalized as they experience conflicts over demands of large scale logging and mining industries

### **Violence against women**

The Solomon Islands government has been active in implementing the national policies to address violence against women in the country. UN agencies, NGOs and governmental organizations have also contributed significantly in addressing the issue. The following initiatives have been taken:

- The Solomon Islands Family Health and Support Survey which became a basis for policy making and awareness programmes
- The National Policy on Elimination of Violence against Women and National Policy on Gender Equality and Women's Development to address violence against women and provide more opportunities for them
- The Family Violence Unit at the Royal Solomon Islands Police force (RSIPF) established to deal with domestic violence cases and see them through to the court
- The Public Solicitor's Office oversees the legal processing of violence cases and punishment of perpetrators
- Christian Care Centre (CCC) provides a safe place for victims and survivors of violence
- Family Support Centre provides counselling to victims and referrals to other assistance
- Ministry of Women, Youth, and Children Affairs (MWYCA) coordinates activities and projects to address GBV and VAW in Solomon Islands
- Establishment of a SAFENET that provides immediate and accessible support services to victims
- UN agencies (UNFPA, UNDP, UNICEF, UN Women), Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and Oxfam Australia support the implementation and monitoring of CEDAW and other strategic plans to address GBV in the country including financial assistance
- Parliament passed the Family Protection Act in 2014

# Understanding Gender Based Violence and gender Inequality in Solomon Islands and ways to address the issue

*This study provides an overview of gender-based violence (GBV) and gender inequality in Solomon Islands and how these issues are currently being addressed by the government, NGOs, faith based organizations and international organizations. The Study was conducted in Honiara, Solomon Islands where the majority of organizations and sectors engaged in addressing violence against women are based. The study focuses specifically on several key stakeholders that are actively engaged in advocating and addressing violence against*

This study is an anthropological analysis of how gender based violence and gender inequality are being addressed in Solomon Islands by governmental sectors, NGOs, faith-based organizations, UN agencies and other international organizations. The study also attempts to analyze how gender based violence or domestic violence in particular is conceptualized by people based on cultural

***‘I Promise never to commit, condone, or remain silent about domestic violence’***

(A Campaign poster by the MWYFCA)

norms. The study was carried out over a period of two weeks mainly in Honiara where most of the organizations and governmental sectors actively involved in activities, programmes and projects aimed at addressing the issue of violence against women are located. Formal interviews were conducted with leaders of these organizations to try understanding their roles in addressing the issue and views on violence against women and gender inequality in Solomon Islands and the challenges that they face in addressing the issue on a national and local level. The study also involved a literature review of published materials on domestic violence and gender inequality in Solomon Islands.

Many key stakeholders were reluctant to share specific cases with me given that most of the information is confidential. While the study focuses on the role of key stakeholders and the various programmes and projects carried out, it also explores how people perceived

domestic violence in the context of their cultures and what has been normalized as part of their livelihoods.

Violence against women has been a subject of continuous denial by societies in Solomon Islands. Instead, it has been traditional and socially perceived by both men and women as a legitimate and justifiable method of disciplining women if they transgress their gender roles, disobey and/or commit infidelity. There are multiple causes of violence against women in Solomon Islands but it is believed to be primarily caused by gender inequality. Most of the men interviewed acknowledged that two factors that trigger violence is the acceptance of violence as a form of disciplining and gender inequality. About 73 percent of the men and 73 percent of women also agreed that violence is a justifiable form of punishment and discipline for women who transgress their social and cultural gender roles especially when the acts harm the family's reputation.<sup>54</sup>

For many years men and women have observed differentiated gender roles and it is culturally known that women are inferior to men and should be submissive, while men are considered powerful and have authority over women. Gender roles are socially constructed roles ascribed to men and women which impact on all aspects of their daily life. Gender ascribed roles determine what men and women should display in any situation and these roles exist as norms that require the compliance of men and women at all times in the household, in private or public areas (Boudet 2013). The unequal power relations also informs the different levels of influence

<sup>54</sup> Violence against Women in Solomon Islands 2015



Women of Waves of Change advocating for women's rights and raising awareness on violence against women through theatre drama. The group was funded by EU as a three year project.

that men and women have in decision making processes within households and communities; but men have always dominated decision makings and leadership roles in these forums.

The traditional practice of bride price in Solomon Islands is also responsible for much of the violence committed against women. The fact that women have been acquired with a bride price makes them vulnerable to violence and to being treated as property. Men have the perception that since women have been 'bought', they become their property and are eligible to do as they please with them. Although, bride price is a traditional practice, it gives men more power over women. The social and cultural perception of male masculinity also influences violence and the right of men to control their wives as they wish, while women feel that being bought with a bride price makes them the property of the men and prevents them from leaving the men even if they experience violence.<sup>55</sup>

The differentiated roles of men and women and unequal power relations between them have always been accepted culturally and instilled as part of the daily livelihoods that support the social structure of the community. Even violence against women has long been conceptualized as a cultural practice and normalized as a legitimate form of discipline. It was never regarded as a crime until very recently when such acts of violence were criminalized. Domestic violence is seen as a private matter and many families prefer to resolve their domestic issues culturally or to seek external traditional counselling with

serious matters, however, outside intervention is usually avoided.

Based on the interviews, many stakeholders expressed the view that the misuse of culture is also responsible for increased violence against women because men have the mentality that since they are superior and have power over women, they can perform violence against women as a way of controlling and disciplining them. Women on the other hand feel that if they fail to uphold their gender roles in their households and social and cultural obligations in the community; they deserve to be punished and accept violence as a form of discipline. Since violence is observed as part of an everyday life, it has characterized the livelihoods of women and even children in Solomon Islands.

Joint efforts of the Ministry of Women, Youth, Family and Children Affairs (MWYFCA) and the National Statistics Office (NSO) with assistance from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) led to the initial study of violence against women and children in Solomon Islands. The World Health Organisation (WHO) methodology for the country study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence was used. The Solomon Islands Family Health and Support Survey (SIFHSS) was conducted in 2007. It involved the recruitment of 70 women across Solomon Islands who underwent three weeks of training to equip them for the survey and to cover 2,290 randomly sampled households across the country. The study was aimed to determine;

- the prevalence of violence against women by intimate partners
- evaluate links between violence against women and their health
- identify the risks and protection factors, and strategies in which women could cope with the issue and the state of support services provided, and
- assess the links between violence against women and child abuse.

The study showed that 64 percent of women in Solomon Islands aged between 15 and 49 who have had an intimate partner have at least experienced physical or sexual violence. The

<sup>55</sup> [http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/vaw\\_legislation\\_2009/Expert%20Paper%20EGMGPLHP%20\\_Imrana%20Jalal\\_.pdf](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/vaw_legislation_2009/Expert%20Paper%20EGMGPLHP%20_Imrana%20Jalal_.pdf)

*THE famous Mere's Market has been officially opened, Wednesday at the National Art Gallery.*

*Mere Market, organised for women by Solomon Islands Women in Business (SIWIBA) is part of the organisation's activities aimed at empowering women.*

*SIWIBA aims to promote economic empowerment for women in the Solomon Islands and is always looking for opportunities to form new partnerships with business houses, government and NGO's. Mere Market is an opportunity for members to market their business as well as sell their goods and services. Managing Director Dalcy Tekulu said that the Mere Market program is scheduled to take three days starting yesterday.*

*"We have a lot of talented women in the country but ways to expose their wealth of skills and knowledge is the problem, therefore this program is being organised for such skillfull women to come out with their products and sell them here," Mrs Tekulu said. She added that the 'market' has been hosted on several occasion already and it has proven to be very effective for women.*



*"There is no place for women to display and sell their skilled products, but the opportunity given to women to showcase their products through the Mere Market program should send a clear message, that it is a business movement, that needs proper shelter. "A lot of skilled women in the country have been engaging in various small business activities but were not given a place to showcase and sell."*

*A visit by this paper yesterday saw that there were many different kinds of products displayed at the venue. The market has since been proved popular and is attracting public interest.*

*"Our aim is to encourage women who have skill and talents to materialize them for money," she added.*

*By LESLEY SANGA*

*<http://www.solomonstarnews.com/features/women/7590-mere-market-opens>*

study also indicated that 18 percent of the women have experienced non-partner violence and 37 percent have been sexually abused before the age of 15. Victims of violence have been reported to have poorer health conditions and are four times more likely than others who have attempted to commit suicide to try and kill themselves. Overall, the study showed that physical and sexual partner violence accounted for 64 percent which is the third highest in the Pacific, followed by emotional partner violence which accounted for 56 percent. Sexual violence accounted for 55 percent and 46 percent of women experienced physical partner violence.<sup>56</sup>

Findings from the study were disseminated and used to develop responsive policies on violence against women in the country. The study also pushed for immediate action to be taken by the government, NGOs and relevant bodies to address the issue which led to the implementation of national policies and an action plan. In 2010, the Solomon Islands government developed a National Policy on Eliminating Violence against Women (EVAW) with a 10 year national action plan to guide the implementation of the Policy. In the same year, the government also implemented a national policy on Gender Equity and Women's Development (GEWD) to recognize women's rights and empower women to participate in economic, social and political activities. The results of violence from the study also gained significance as a basis of awareness programmes and to publicise facts about the prevalence of violence against women in Solomon Islands.

***'...what everyone is worried about is the awareness in the community about the Family Protection Act... Will the communities know about the act and will they know how to use it?... The more you know about something the more you are going to use it.'***

*(Statement by Peter Boshier, Chief Judge of New Zealand Family Court Justice)*

<sup>56</sup> National Policy on Eliminating Violence against Women 2010

In 2014, the government, with the assistance of the Regional Rights Resources Team, passed the Family Protection Act as an effort to address the issue of gender based violence, particularly domestic violence in Solomon Islands. The Act prohibits conduct or threats committed by a person against another person and this includes physical, sexual, psychological, and economic abuse. The Act underlines the types of relationships in which domestic violence can occur. While it criminalizes acts relating to domestic violence, the Act also provides civil support to protect victims and ensure their safety. The Act enforces a penalty of SBD 30,000 or a 3 year imprisonment, or both for perpetrators who are found guilty.<sup>57</sup>

The Act has received divided support from the general public. While many people are pleased that the Act addresses the escalating cases of domestic violence such as rapes and killing of women; others are less supportive and still prefer and maintain cultural ways of resolving minor domestic violence rather than having outside interventions. Some men, think (wrongly) the Act only focuses on women and their interests while recognizing their rights and empowering them, a cultural contradiction of women's role as submissive to men. Many men fear that the empowerment of women and recognition of their rights will allow women to override them. A majority of the non-supportive men are from rural areas where they lack access to information and awareness programmes on violence against women, and still closely observe cultural values and gender roles.

In addition, most of the people in rural communities lack the training to understand the conventions and concepts such as domestic violence, gender, and the empowerment of women presented under the policies and the Family Protection Act. Given the lack of understanding, some people, especially men tend to misinterpret and ignore these initiatives. For instance, people conceptualize gender as a term that only concerns women whereas it involves both men and women; and the idea of empowering women is viewed by men as encouraging women to overpower men. As a result of these misinterpretations some of the men and elders are not very supportive of the new law. However, increased awareness in rural communities and training programmes may help people to understand clearly the terms presented under the Act and its use.

Despite the continuous efforts of governmental sectors, NGOs, faith based organizations and international bodies in addressing violence against women in Solomon Islands; there is still a lack of support services from the government for victims of violence. NGOs and faith based organizations have taken up the initiative to develop support programmes to provide a safe place for victims and provide assistance and counselling. The family Support Centre plays a significant role in raising awareness, providing counselling services, and conducting referrals under the SAFENET framework, which includes the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force, Ministry of Medical and Social Welfare, Public Solicitor's Office, Christian Care Centre and Family Support Centre. However, its support activities are limited to Honiara only and reliant on external funding to sustain its programmes.

The Christian Care Centre is the only safe house in the entire Solomon Islands that accommodates and provides counselling for victims and survivors of violence. The Centre was established by the Church of Melanesia and administered by the Sisters of the Church in affiliation with World Vision. However, the safe place is not adequate for all the women who have been victimized. Its location in Honiara is not accessible by women in the provinces. The safe house can accommodate 40 women including their children.

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<sup>57</sup> <http://www.parliament.gov.sb/index.php?q=node/819>

## Key actors

- Ministry of Women, Youth, Family and Children Affairs (MWYFCA) : <http://www.mwycfa.gov.sb/>
- Family Support Centre (FSC)
- Christian Care Centre (CCC)
- The Domestic Violence and Community Policing Unit
- Vois Blo Mere
- Solomon Islands Women in Business Association (SIWIBA)
- Youth, Women and Children Association (YWCA)
- Oxfam Solomon Islands
- National Council of Women
- Solomon Islands Parenthood and Planning Association
- Ministry of Health and Medical Services

## Key programmes

- National Policy on Eliminating Violence against Women (EVAW)
- National Policy on Gender Equity and Women's Development (GEWD)
- Family Protection Act
- Evidence Act
- Mere's Market

## Useful links

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZJ\\_IMg2A1HY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZJ_IMg2A1HY)  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cO3q86\\_K6oM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cO3q86_K6oM)  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_rINI04Ykzw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_rINI04Ykzw)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Qhg8j0vEd0>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8QqljBnwi3U>

## Key Defining Issues in Solomon Islands

There is an increase in efforts by governmental sectors, NGOs, and international organizations based in the country to address gender based violence and gender inequality in Solomon Islands. The National Policies and Family Protection Act have been implemented to address the issue at the national, provincial and local levels. While the new law and national policy are acknowledged and supported by people to curb increasing incidences of violence against women, the use of cultural intervention also plays a significant role in resolving matters of domestic violence that are minor cases. People still prefer and value cultural traditions of reconciliation, particularly in rural communities where support services are absent. However, there are issues associated with both approaches in addressing and resolving violence against women.

1. The national government still needs to play an active role in the implementation and enforcement of the Family Protection Act to ensure that it is understood properly by citizens of the country especially by people in rural areas
2. It is important that materials used to raise awareness among people in urban and rural areas are translated into a common language that can be easily understood by people to avoid misinterpretation and misunderstanding of different concepts used and the implications of the Act
3. There is a need to improve and expand support services to the provinces
4. The lack of funding for NGOs is a major issue and drawback to sustaining their activities in raising awareness and advocating for the elimination of violence against women
5. There needs to be more awareness programmes in rural communities and these should be conducted in a way that acknowledges and reflects on the Family Protection Act so as to positively to gain support from people particularly men
6. Increased participation of men as male advocates is important in order to reach out to other men and support women's rights and the empowerment of women
7. Solomon Island youth need to be engaged in development activities to curb the high rate of unemployment and social issues in urban areas, particularly in Honiara
8. Key stakeholders need to work in collaboration with church leaders and chiefs as gatekeepers to the congregation and community so that they can also advocate for gender equality and the elimination of violence against women and also to provide counselling where necessary

9. More training is required for Family Violence Coordinators based in the provinces to deal with domestic violence cases and in data recording to ensure that cases are accounted for even if they are withdrawn
10. Solomon Islands is a vast country and violence is still prevalent in most of the remote places which have no access to urban centre or information on violence against women
11. Gender mainstreaming is still yet to be fully implemented across governmental sectors

## Assessing Effectiveness in Solomon Islands

There are many governmental sectors, NGOs, faith based organizations and international bodies that have been actively involved in addressing the issue of GBV and gender inequality in Solomon Islands. The ones that I interviewed during the fieldwork are as follows:

### **Ministry of Women, Youth, Family and Children Affairs (MWYFCA)**

- Government sector that addresses concerns of women, youth and children in Solomon Islands
- Facilitates the implementation of the National Policy on EVAW and GEWD
- coordinates awareness programmes in Honiara and the provinces and other relevant activities on gender based violence and gender equality with other key stakeholders

### **Family Support Centre (FSC)**

- an NGO that supports the elimination of violence against women
- provides counselling and referral services to the victims
- facilitates awareness programmes and advocates for women's rights and empowerment
- Supports the implementation of the Family Protection Act
- Part of the SAFENET

### **Christian Care Centre (CCC)**

- A faith-based organization established by the Church of Melanesia and administered by the Sisters of the Church
- Provides shelter and safe house for victims of violence
- Provides counselling and basic training skills to victims
- Part of the SAFENET

### **Domestic Violence and Community Policing Unit**

- Coordinates country domestic violence cases and provides trainings to Family Violence Coordinators in the Provinces
- strengthen relationships between police and people to encourage reporting of violence cases and generate trust with the police
- establish a Police Communication centre to assist victims with on call services
- provide a safe place for victims and referral to CCC
- Part of the SAFENET

- Engages and empowers youth in communities through activities such as brass band, dance and singing competition
- Provides parenting advices in accordance to the Family Protection Act

### **Vois Blo Mere**

- NGO that empowers and links women in Solomon Islands through sharing of information through the Mere radio programme on Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation, newsletters, projects and by coordinating collective integrated systems of information sharing among rural, provincial and national women's organisations in the Solomon Islands.

### **Solomon Islands Women in Business Association**

- NGO that facilitates the Mere market that provides women with opportunities to sell their items such as cooked foods, handicrafts and souvenirs, clothing, and plants, and is carried out monthly.
- Provides training programmes to women who want to enter to business

### **Youth, Women and Children Association (YWCA)**

- Facilitates the Rise Up Programme that focuses on young women in Solomon Islands
- The programme provides training to develop leadership and enhance the collective power of women and young girls in the country to achieve justice, peace, health, human dignity, and freedom
- The programme is on its second phase and awaiting its 3rd phase. The outcome of the second phase of the programme is the production of a manual booklet that outlines role plays of GBV, gender inequality and other issues that concerns women in Solomon Islands. The booklet is presented in both English and Pidgin which make it easier for the readers in the communities to understand.

### **National Council of Women**

- the NGO focuses on gender equality and women in development policy, and economic empowerment
- aims to empower women in leadership through the National Policy implemented under the MWYFCA
- to identify women who are potential decision makers and leaders
- facilitates trainings in wards, provincial and national levels
- to assist women in preparation for electoral positions

### **Solomon Islands Parenthood and Planning Association**

- NGO that focuses mainly on the sexual and reproductive health of women
- disseminates information and raises awareness on reproductive health and GBV in rural communities
- The NGO has mobile clinics in Western province, Choiseul and Honiara that provide assistance to victims and also distributes condoms and advice to people on sexual transmitted diseases and reproductive health.
- Deals with GBV victims and cases and make referrals to the SAFENET

### **SAFENET**

- This is comprised of the Domestic Violence and Community Policing Unit (RSIPF), Ministry of Medical and Social Welfare, CCC, FSC and the Public Solicitor's Office



## Useful links

- Stages of Change: Operated as a 3 year project funded by EU. It includes women from all provinces that raise awareness through stage drama
- Vois Blo Mere: connects women through information sharing
- Mere Market: provide a venue for women to sell items, network and promote creative and business skills
- Solomon Islands Fashion Week: encourage women to participate in clothing designing and sewing
- Family Support Centre: provide counselling and awareness programmes
- Christian Care Centre: provide safe house and counselling for victims
- National Council of Women: train potential women leaders for political positions in Parliament
- Women's Rights Action Movement: Advocate for women's rights

## Options for Action in Solomon Islands

Since gender inequality is identified as being responsible for violence against women in Solomon Islands, it is important that the monitoring and evaluation of the GEWD and EVAW policies should include specific assessment of gender inequality. It also requires continuous support from national and international organisations which is vital to ensure the successful monitoring and addressing of the issue of GBV.

- The Family Protection Act implemented by the National Legislature to address violence against women needs to be translated into a language that is accessible by people given the diversity of languages. This includes awareness programmes and materials to develop understanding among those who lack English or Pidgin speaking skills
- Improve means of communication and awareness in rural and remote communities in Solomon Islands through mediums such as the National radio programme which is accessible by those living in the provinces.
- Need to improve counselling and support services in Honiara and the provinces
- Target schools and youths with awareness programmes to help them understand the detrimental effects of violence against women so that they grow up knowing it and also advocate for the elimination of GBV
- Strengthen the SAFENET
- Support NGOs in their role in empowering women and addressing violence against women through financial assistance
- Map out on-going projects with external donors to avoid duplications
- Involve men as male advocates in awareness programmes and campaigns on violence against women
- Facilitate projects that will engage men in training and development activities to support women in leadership and economic undertakings

# Tuvalu



## Tammy Tabe

Tuvalu is one of the smallest groups of islands located midway between Hawaii and Australia. It is comprised of 9 islands and is among the low lying groups of islands in the Pacific with land no more than 5 meters above sea-level. The outer islands can be reached only by boats. Tuvalu has a population of 11,000 people living on a land area of 26 square kilometres. Half of this population resides on Funafuti, the capital of Tuvalu. The population of Funafuti consists of 5 inter-island communities and each of the islands has their own traditional meeting house where meetings and island activities are conducted. People identify mostly with the island which they come from.

Funafuti is the centre of the country's economic, political and social activities. The country faces challenges of remoteness, lack of scale economies, weak institutional capacity, and significantly sea-level rise and other climate change effects which threaten the low lying atolls, food security, economy and the welfare of the people. Tuvalu is almost entirely dependent on foreign aid. The country's revenue is derived from fishing licensing, remittances from seafarers, surpluses from the country's trust fund and the rent of its internet extension, dot.tv. Income earnings are sufficiently high and remittances have also significantly raised the standard of living of people. A large proportion of the country's revenue is spent on food imports and on infrastructures.

The lack of land and good soil on Tuvalu limits the ability of people to grow a variety of food crops. Most of the food trees grown on the islands include breadfruit, bananas, pawpaw, and coconut. On the island of Funafuti, vegetables are usually obtained from a small Taiwanese farm. The farm grows cabbage, lettuce and beans in boxes of good soil and sells them to the public on Fridays every week. Subsistence comprised mainly of

fisheries resources and imported food products. Livestock is limited to pigs and chickens which are raised by individual families.

Tuvalu is a patrilineal society and men have always been traditionally observed as bosses, leaders, decision-makers and those who can speak openly in public. Women are traditionally stigmatized with domestic responsibilities and are not permitted to occupy any local leadership roles or speak in public gatherings. These roles have been culturally observed and accepted by both men and women as their allocated roles in the family and community. However, it is evident that there is high gender inequality given the patrilineal nature of the country.

Like many other Pacific Islands, gender based violence (GBV), particularly domestic violence is an issue that is not publicized but it does occur in a lot of families in Tuvalu. People have the general perception that there is no violence in their country mainly because domestic violence is normalized in all families and is treated as a highly private matter. It is a taboo subject to talk about openly because Tuvalu is a small place and people are very cautious about their individual and family reputations. Since domestic violence is a private matter, it is usually resolved by the couples themselves or families using cultural interventions but any form of outside intervention is strongly considered as interference in the family affairs. It is common for women to experience physical violence if they fail to perform their social obligations but these incidences are kept quietly within the family and not publicly exposed. Violence is used as form of discipline both on women and children and is culturally normalized by people and is acceptable.



## Contemporary Gender Inequality

The government of Tuvalu is taking a leading role in working collectively with governmental sectors to address gender based violence (GBV) in the country both at the international and national levels.

On the international level, Tuvalu has made commitments with the:

- Beijing Platform for Action, 1995
- Revised Pacific Platform for Action for the Advancement of Women and Gender Equality, 2004
- Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005–2015.
- In 2005, Tuvalu ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).
- The country has also made commitments to address GBV in the country through the incorporation of Millennium Development Goals in its actions plans.
- At the national level, the government of Tuvalu has completed the following,
  - In 2007, conducted the first Tuvalu Demographic Health Survey (TDHS)
  - 2014 Development of a National Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy
  - 2014-2016 Implementation of a Strategic Action Plan
  - 2014 passed a Family Protection and Domestic Violence Act
- At present the government of Tuvalu is trying to promote Gender Equality through the following:
  - Mainstreaming of Gender in all governmental sectors to generate and provide opportunities for women in these sectors
  - Change the Falekaupule Act 1997 to allow more participation of women in the administrative activities of the local council

### Country snap-shot

Independent since 1978.  
 Member of ACP, PIF, PNA, UN.  
 Population: 10, 782 (ADB Annual Report 2015)  
 Demographics:  
 • Women: 50.7 %,  
 • Men: 49.3 %  
 Landmass: 26 square kilometres  
 EEZ: 719, 174 square kilometres

### Gender snap-shot

Gender violence: 46.6 % of women have experienced some of violence by husbands and partners (UN Women 2012)  
 Political representation: 7%  
 Participation in economy:  
 Female labour force - 78%  
 Women - 36% in non-agricultural sector

### EU snap-shot

- There are currently no EU projects on gender based violence in Tuvalu

Despite the implementation of National policies and strategies, the patriarchal nature of Tuvaluan society is still a major drawback to the progress of gender equality in the country. While commitments have been made to mainstream gender at the governmental level, it has not been supported by any allocation of resources or reflected in the work conducted by the government and its sectors; and women are still not equally included in the local government or decision making processes, but this is slowly changing with proposed amendments to the Falekaupule Act.

### Women in Parliament

There are limited opportunities and cultural barriers to equal participation of women in parliament. From 1986 to 1993, only one woman was a parliamentarian, but there were none from 1993 to 2011, with only one elected again in 2013. While the electoral laws provide equal opportunities for men and women, the 2012 Tuvalu CEDAW Report highlights cultural barriers as drawbacks when women stand for elections.

Such cultural barriers include the traditional and stereotypical perceptions of women's roles as domestic wives incapable of public

speaking and occupation of leadership roles rather than seeing them based on their merits as candidates. The absence of political parties in the government also limits the number of seats that could have been available to the women. The government of Tuvalu is working to ensure that equal opportunities and adequate seats are made available for women in parliament and in leadership roles.

### **Violence against women**

In Tuvalu, violence against women has long been observed in the community but it remains unreported by those affected because it is considered a private matter and is not talked about openly. The 2007 Tuvalu Demographic and Health Survey (TDHS) showed that 84.6 percent of women have been subjected to some form of physical violence with their husbands or partners being the main perpetrators. Alcohol was identified as one of the causes of violence and about 72 percent of women had experienced physical, emotional or sexual violence when their husbands were excessively drunk compared to 27 percent of those whose partners did not drink. The survey indicated that half of the cases of violence were reported by women aged between 25 and 29 years of age. It also emphasized that violence against women was not influenced by the place of residence, employment and education status, and marital status.

Findings from the survey also revealed that women in Tuvalu have always been subjected to remaining silent concerning their violent experiences because they have been brought up to accept, tolerate and rationalize violence as a form of discipline and as a normal act in the family or between spouses.

### **Women and Employment**

Women have always been perceived and confined to domestic responsibilities at home. Based on the TDHS only 57 percent of women are employed while 90 percent of the labour force consists of men. About 49 percent of the women were reported to be unemployed compared to 15 percent of men in the year preceding the survey. The majority of women work for cash only in non-agricultural sectors and over 60 percent of the employed women earn less income than their husbands or partners.

### **Women in Decision Making**

In 2013, there were 41 senior positions within the public service of Tuvalu. This includes permanent secretaries, senior assistant secretaries, assistant secretaries and directors. Men dominate the senior positions within the Government. Since 2009, women have occupied 9 senior positions, 2 were permanent secretaries, 1 was senior assistant secretary, 3 were assistant secretaries and 3 were directors.

### **Women in Local Government**

At the local government level in Tuvalu, decisions are made by the Falekaupule (island decision-making entity), with the Government Department of Rural Development and the Kaupule (the executive arm of the Falekaupule) as primary advisors. Women are not allowed to be part of the decision making or even to be present during decision-making meetings. The understanding is that the male as the head of the household represents women therefore dismissing the need for the presence and participation of women.

The absence of women's voices at the local government level have resulted in the lack of understanding and interest about issues of women's development in island communities and many women are unaware of what development issues are being decided on at the local level. A woman matai may participate in the decision-making process but are not eligible to cast a vote. Although the Falekaupule Act 1997 paves the way for the inclusion of women in the traditional decision-making process, it does not replace the existing traditional structures for decision-making on each island, which still exclude women. The Government has drafted laws to amend the Falekaupule Act to allow women's involvement in debates for budgets of the Falekaupule.

## Gender Based Violence in Tuvalu

*This Study is an anthropological analysis of how gender based violence is conceptualized in Tuvalu as a traditional practice and how new laws implemented to address the issue are perceived. The Study was carried out over a period of two and half weeks on Funafuti, the capital of Tuvalu. The Study mainly comprised of interviews with key stakeholders and actors who are primarily involved in the implementation of action plans and facilitate awareness programmes in communities to*

This study is an anthropological analysis of how gender based violence is culturally conceptualized in Tuvalu in relation to the introduced Laws on discrimination and violence against women and children, and gender inequality. The study was carried out over a period of two and half weeks on Funafuti, the capital of Tuvalu where the majority of the population resides. It involved interviews with key stakeholders who have been involved in the implementation of national policies and action plans and also those who are engaged in the facilitation of various GBV projects and awareness programmes to address violence against women and children in the country. The study also involved a review of published materials

on implemented policies and action plans, and Acts in Tuvalu.

The lack of a data and information on domestic violence and gender inequality in Tuvalu is a drawback to the study of GBV and gender inequality on the island of Funafuti because these concepts are newly introduced issues in the country and most people are unfamiliar with them. The completion of the first Tuvalu Family Health and Support Survey is an important document for the country that provides the basis for implementing a national policy and action plan to address GBV and also to allow key stakeholders to use the results of the Survey as evidence of the high rate of violence against women in their awareness programmes.

## The Cultural Conceptualization of Gender Based Violence in relation to the introduced laws on discrimination and violence against Women in Tuvalu.

Gender Based Violence is a newly introduced concept in the country and many people are not aware of it or its meaning, and of particular concern is domestic violence. Tuvaluans have never viewed domestic violence as an act of violence or a crime; instead its practice has been normalized and perceived culturally as a form of discipline by the people. It was after the dissemination of findings from the Tuvalu Family Health and Support Study and increased awareness programmes on violence against women that more people became aware of domestic violence as a crime.

While some people agree to the significance and relevance of the newly introduced laws on violence against women to punish perpetrators and provide equal opportunities for both men and women, others assume that the new law does not really address the issue of domestic violence in families but rather break families apart. In this study, I try to underline some of the conflicting issues that people of Tuvalu have in relation to ways of addressing gender based violence, in particular violence against women in the context of cultural and lawful interventions; while taking into account that domestic violence does not only involve women but also men and children.

The people of Tuvalu have always perceived themselves as friendly and pleasant people, however, it is apparent that domestic violence does occur in homes, but is kept within the family as a private matter. Due to the smallness of the islands, it is also shameful for people publicly to expose violence in their homes, particularly on Funafuti where half of the population resides and houses are closely located to each other. People have the general perception that women only get beaten up when they fail to perform their responsibilities or comply with the social obligations they are expected to. In some cases, the community also supports the beating up of a woman especially in situations where she defied her duties as a wife or young girl or commit acts that are culturally and socially unacceptable that would shame the family.

However, because people understand that domestic violence between spouses is a private matter and outside intervention is not acceptable, the general perception is that the issue is between both partners and therefore should also be resolved accordingly by both of them. People also have their own problems so interfering with other people's issues is considered inappropriate. The beating of women and even children is considered culturally as a form of discipline that is applied when a woman fails to comply with social obligations or fails to perform her domestic duties as a wife; or when children disobey their parents.

***‘Domestic violence is not perceived as violence but a family matter and a form of discipline’.***

Sometimes the husband is pressured by the family and community to discipline his wife when she disrespects or commits unacceptable acts that would shame the family to avoid gossip that would ruin his reputation. In some cases, women also feel that they deserve to be punished or beaten up for disrespecting their husbands or committing acts that shamed the family because they grew up in a society in which it is accepted that men are dominant and superior than women.

However, families try to maintain good relations and reputation and acts of violence are only committed in situations where it is necessary and resolve violence through reconciliation and other cultural means.

The introduction of laws to address violence against women is new to the people in Tuvalu because there had not been any laws that define domestic violence as a crime, although there are laws on assault and rape. People are also not used to having legal actions taken against them whenever domestic violence occurs in their homes because it is a private matter which requires

***‘People do not want to talk openly about domestic violence because when they do, they do not usually get any help because of the lack of support services.’***

cultural intervention and counselling. Outside intervention by police or neighbours is only necessary when the violence gets out of control.

The Family Protection and Domestic Violence Act implemented by the government of Tuvalu in 2014 was developed as a mechanism to protect not only women but children and the entire family. However, there is a divided reaction to the Act among the people. While many people acknowledge that the new Act is relevant and important for the protection

of the whole family from violence, others consider that the Act is only for the protection of women and to empower women to override men.

The Act is implemented not only to protect women, who are mostly victims of domestic violence, but also to punish perpetrators. Now that domestic violence is criminalised women have been encouraged to speak out and report incidences of violence at home and more women have been reporting their cases to the police so that legal actions are taken against the perpetrators.

Prior to the new Act it used to be very common that a few days after a woman reported her case; she would return to the police and request that the case should be dropped because she had reconciled with her husband. Under the Act, men are subject to 24 hours imprisonment once they commit violence against women but most of the reported cases have to go through the court. If the perpetrator is found guilty of committing violence, he could be imprisoned for 5 years or the court can enforce restraining orders on the perpetrator. There are both advantages and drawbacks to the enforcement of the Act. The advantages of the Act are:

- More women are reporting violence cases.
- Perpetrators are to be punished for violence against women.
- Reduce incidences of domestic violence

However, there are also issues associated with the implementation of the Act.

- The police team often feels reluctant to arrest the perpetrator because they know him and also because they feel that culturally it is an issue between the couple and it should be resolved by them instead of having police intervention.
- Many women are reluctant to report cases of violence because they fear the imprisonment of their husbands.
- Many women consider that if they report their cases and their husbands end up in prison, there would be no one to support their family, and thus she and her children would also be affected.
- For some of the key stakeholders, imprisonment of perpetrators does not address the issue of domestic violence because it does not take into account the root cause of the problem.
- Sometimes domestic violence occurs as a result of both men and women but often the women are the victims because they are weak.
- Imprisonment of perpetrators as a result of domestic violence without cultural reconciliation or counselling actually breaks up a family where children grow up without their father.

While the enforcement of the Act allows women to report more domestic violence cases, Tuvalu lacks facilities and a safe house to support and protect the victims. This also affects the number of cases reported because women see that reporting does not make any difference because of the lack of support services.

The implementation of the ‘No drop’ Policy that restricts women from withdrawing domestic violence cases has both advantages and disadvantages to the enforcement of the Act and in addressing the issue of domestic violence in the country. While the ‘No drop’ policy restricts withdrawing of cases and means that all the cases are recorded, it also inhibits women from

reporting violent incidences to the police for fear that they could not withdraw the cases later if they reconcile with their husbands.

Some of the actors involved in advocating the prevention of gender based violence underlined that the implementation of the 'No drop' Policy is too soon for people in Tuvalu especially when they are yet to become more open about domestic violence. Although the implementation of the new Act on violence against women is beneficial for the country in the long run and at both international and national levels, many people in Tuvalu still prefer to resolve violence the customary way where it allows the victim and the perpetrator to reconcile the issue between them, unless the violence is severe and it needs police intervention.

One of the key stakeholders emphasized that the new introduced law to address gender based violence does not fit the cultural context of Tuvalu so people are having difficulty complying with it. The new law should be implemented based on the cultural nature of Tuvalu and also take into consideration how people resolve issues of domestic violence. At present, increased awareness is necessarily important to educate and make people become aware of GBV issues. The availability of support services and counselling is also relevant to provide assistance to the victims. At the moment, there are no counselling services or safe houses that provides shelter and safety for victims.

Instead some key stakeholders highlighted that there is a lack of support services and it is inappropriate for victims to report cases without receiving any assistance. In cases like these, victims are sent to live with other relatives temporarily so that they do not have to return to their homes.

However, this also puts pressure on the extended family in terms of the victim's safety and creates additional expenses for the relatives. Staying with extended families also does not always guarantee their safety from perpetrators and the extended family does not often have the authority to withhold the victim and her children if the husband wants her back at home. If the victim does not want to stay with the extended family or relatives, then she would have to return home where she would be exposed to violence again.

The lack of counselling services also affects the victims in terms of resolving their issues and getting the proper help they need. Due to the lack of support services, cultural intervention is regarded as an appropriate approach in addressing domestic violence in homes because it provides a means of reconciliation and it keeps families together, and also reduces expenses and stress for extended families and relatives.

The Domestic Violence Unit under the Department of Police underlines that working with local communities to address issues of gender based violence, particularly domestic violence is challenging for them. Even as police officers, they still uphold their traditional values of solving domestic issues and considered that locking up someone up would not solve the problem.

The implementation and enforcement of laws on domestic violence is costly therefore it would be rational to encourage the use of traditional and local ways of addressing domestic issues for people to use because these practices have been observed for decades and have also resolved many relationship issues. They are also not costly and maintain respect among the people and within communities.



## Key Defining Issues in Tuvalu

There are several key issues involved in addressing issues of gender inequality and gender based violence both at the international and national levels in Tuvalu. While the implementation and enforcement of policies, action plans and the Family Protection and Domestic Violence Act assist in addressing the issue of gender based violence on a national level, the study also shows that cultural intervention is considered significant in addressing domestic violence cases at the local level. Most of the people in Tuvalu prefer the cultural approach and local processes of resolving violence because it supports reconciliation and keeps families together, unless the perpetrators commit serious crimes that require police intervention and imprisonment.

- The government lacks the technical capacity to support the implementation of the policies and the Act, and the mainstreaming of gender in all governmental ministries.
- Key stakeholders lack funds to support and sustain awareness programmes and activities
- Absence of support services such as safe houses are a drawback to reported cases and victims, and also to addressing the issue of violence against women.
- Some people do not support the Family Protection and Domestic Violence Act because for them it is seen as only concerning women and aimed to empower them to override men
- New laws of addressing violence against women do not support the cultural values of Tuvaluans in dealing with domestic violence
- Women are under-represented in both national and local governments due to cultural traditions
- Women are expected to safeguard the family reputation by complying with their social obligations and cultural and domestic roles
- Empowering women and recognizing their rights is culturally problematic for men
- Violence is normalized and culturally accepted as a form of discipline
- Most of the gender based violence programmes and activities are focused on Funafuti only without including outer islands because of logistical expenses and lack of funds
- Community policing can be very challenging among the police because they also uphold cultural values and ways of resolving violence among families, spouses and partners and therefore do not often intervene when they know the perpetrators or families because at the end of the day, they are also part of the community and they also observe its cultural values.

## Assessing Effectiveness in Tuvalu

### **Tuvalu Demographic and Health Survey (TDHS)**

- Study on violence against women and children
- Findings revealed the status of violence against women in the country
- Important document used as a basis to develop a National Policy and Strategic Plan to address discrimination and gender based violence
- Influenced the implementation of the Family Protection and domestic Violence Act

### **National Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy**

The Policy aims to provide a guiding framework to fulfil the government's commitments to gender equality and empowerment of women in Tuvalu. The Policy comprises of 5 outcomes that are targeted as part of the Strategic Plan (2014-2019). These include:

- Increase capacity in all governmental sectors to address key issues of concern in achieving gender equality and women's empowerment within each sector
- Reflect Government's commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment in legislation and in sector policies
- Create an enabling environment for the full participation of women in economic development
- Take measures to ensure women's and men's equal access and full participation in decision-making as a means of enhancing leadership and governance at all levels;
- Eliminate all forms of violence against women.

The Policy outlines a five year period plan and focus areas which the government should work on while it provides a basis for multi-sectoral engagement and partnerships to attain gender equality and empower women in the country.

The Policy's main goal is to achieve the recognition of women and girls in Tuvalu as partners and beneficiaries equal to men and boys in all aspects of development and decision making, and to uphold the rights of women. It also aims to develop a stronger environment to facilitate gender mainstreaming across all sectors, however, this has not been fully implemented due to the lack of technical capacity.

### **Strategic Action Plan 2014-2019**

- Mandated for 5 years
- Outlines outputs and key actions that should be taken in order to achieve the objectives of the National Policy on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women in Tuvalu

### **Tuvalu's National Strategic Framework, Te Kakeega II 2005–2015**

- To promote gender equality and to expand the role of women in development
- The government has identified the need to integrate the role of women and address the issue of gender and development as part of Te Kakeega II Strategic Framework to provide women with economic and entrepreneurial opportunities.
- The National Strategic Framework Te Kakeega II is supported by the National Policy in compliance with the regional and international mechanisms for addressing gender inequality. These include CEDAW, the MDGs, Beijing Platform for Action 1995, and the revised Pacific Platform for Action for the Advancement of Women and Gender Equality 2004, the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005–2015, and the Pacific Leaders Declaration on Gender Equality. A lack of technical capacity and resources has been the drawback in the implementation of these mechanisms under the Strategic Framework.

## Key actors

List the key government and non-government and church actors here - provide names and websites

- Department of Gender at the Office of the Prime Minister
- Tuvalu National Council of Women (TNCW)
- Domestic Violence Unit (Police)
- Home Affairs
- Ekalesia Kelisiano o Tuvalu (EKT)

## Key programmes

- National Strategic Plan
- Family Protection and Domestic Violence Act
- Tuvalu National Strategic Framework, Te Kakeega II 2005–2015

## Useful links

<http://www.unicef.org/pacificislands/evaw.pdf>  
<file:///eir.uib.no/Home1/tta004/Downloads/Tuvalu.pdf>  
<http://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/countries/fiji/co/tuvalu>  
[http://www.pilonsec.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=132&Itemid=113](http://www.pilonsec.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=132&Itemid=113)

## The Department of Gender (Office of the Prime Minister)

- works collectively with key stakeholders such as the; Domestic Violence Unit in the Police Department, the Ministry of Health, National Council of Women, Educational Sector, and Community and church leaders
- main role is to implement the Family Protection and Domestic Violence Act and to address gender inequality and gender based violence collaboratively
- coordinates awareness programmes and provide counselling to victims if they share their problems

## Family Protection and Domestic Violence Act

- The Act aims to provide the greater protection from violence within domestic relationships and to provide for related matters
- It defines different components that comprise violence and abuse and procedures and applications of orders and legal action against perpetrators and victims
- Ensure the protection of not only women but the entire family from violence

## Domestic Violence Unit in the Ministry of Police

- Administers community policing and runs awareness raising programmes twice a month in 4 different district communities on Funafuti
- works with community leaders, students and youths during awareness programmes to address gender based violence at community level

## Tuvalu National Council of Women (TNCW)

- Established in 1977 as an umbrella body of women councils in Tuvalu which covers both Funafuti and the outer islands
- Each outer island has a council of women that works with local women in collaboration with the TNCW
- Its main role is to empower women by providing opportunities in the development and economic sectors

- Encourage the participation of women in economic activities such as food stalls, sewing, gardening, making and selling of handicrafts
- Provide projects on food stalls, sewing, gardening which also involve the outer islands
- Works with the Department of Gender to implement CEDAW and address violence against women in Tuvalu through awareness programmes in collaboration with church and community leaders
- Works with women to address the effects of climate change on coastal protection, food security, domestic violence, small businesses while also trying to involve men in these activities
- Encourages women to participate in decision making as a way of altering their mentality of being wives who are bound to stay at home and carry out domestic chores
- Tries to encourage men to support women in leadership roles

## Ekalesia Kelisiano o Tuvalu (EKT)

- The biggest religious group in Tuvalu
- Collaborates with the Department of Gender and Home Affairs to address issues of gender based violence by raising awareness among the congregations and providing counselling services

### Useful links

- Domestic Violence Unit (Ministry of Police)
- Department of Gender
- Tuvalu National Council of Women
- Tuvalu Association of NGOs (TANGO) – have not done anything on gender based violence but could be useful in implementation and awareness programmes
- Ekalesia Kelisiano o Tuvalu (EKT) – biggest church group in Tuvalu – can be influential in awareness programmes and counselling

## Options for Action in Tuvalu

- The Family Protection and Domestic Violence Act needs to be explained properly to the people, both on the national and local level so that its implementation and enforcement is supported by the people
  - Increase awareness programmes on gender equality, discrimination and violence against women
  - Identify the most suitable vernacular words that define or describe discrimination, women's rights, gender based violence to allow people to understand better the issues at hand since most of these terms are new and most of the people do not understand them
  - Develop Action Plans that promote and support the involvement of men in awareness programmes to reach out to other men, such as male advocacy
  - Provide legislation that allows cultural intervention and reconciliation in resolving domestic violence issues
  - Establish support services such as counselling and safe houses for victims
  - Use of media, animations, and pamphlets to illustrate gender based violence, gender inequality, both in the vernacular language and English which can also be accessed by people in the outer islands
  - Dissemination of information on Gender based violence
  - Provide funding to conduct and sustain awareness programmes and projects



## Vanuatu

Dr. Sue Farran & Angelina Penner

Vanuatu is an archipelago of around eighty islands not all of which are inhabited with over 103 different local languages as well as three official languages: English, French and Bislama. The languages of education are English and French although recently primary schooling in the local vernacular has been introduced. Vanuatu belongs to the Melanesian group of Pacific islands, which includes New Caledonia, Solomon island, Papua New Guinea and Fiji.

Although the vast majority of its inhabitants are indigenous Melanesians there are also people of European descent, Chinese, Vietnamese and Asian descent. The people of Vanuatu were introduced in the early days of contact in the nineteenth century to Christianity through the proselytizing of missionaries of Protestant and Catholic faith. Today there are also Seventh Day Adventists, Baha'i and other minority faiths. There is also a noticeable shift towards Christian fundamentalism. The role and influence of the church is considerable. The national motto is 'Long God yumi stanap' (In God we stand/trust) and the national constitution adopted on Independence in 1980 includes in the words of the Preamble 'Hereby proclaim the establishment of the united and free Republic of Vanuatu founded on traditional Melanesian values, faith in God, and Christian principles'.

These two aspects, 'traditional Melanesian values' and 'Christian principles' have become interwoven in the discourse of politics, social organisation, and every day life. Melanesian values are demonstrated in adherence to custom (kastom) and customary laws. These customs can range from ways of preparing food, building houses, navigating, to justifications for the treatment of women, children and incomers. These customs are largely unwritten – although there are some recorded in writing, and as a form of regulating

society are administered largely by chiefs who are predominantly male.

Christianity, custom and chiefs are three key planks to Vanuatu society. Unlike some Pacific societies in Vanuatu there is no homogeneity of custom. Rather these vary from place to place – even within the same island. From the perspective of gender equality custom determines the role of individuals within society, the expectation others have of them, their obligations and their prospects. Although there are formal national laws, the majority of people – especially in rural areas and in places distant from the capital Port Vila, live their lives according to custom, that is their lives are regulated by custom administered by chiefs and representatives of the church. In urban areas custom is also observed but there may be alternative approaches and chiefs are not always so well regarded, although there are urban chiefs appointed to govern the people from their island or locality who have moved to the town. The role of chief is a complex one in Vanuatu. It is not always a hereditary role and in some parts of the country depends on a candidate taking grade ceremonies – such as pig killing, in order to move up the ranks of eligibility. Chiefs can be deposed if found wanting in their personal attributes. Disputes over entitlement to chiefly titles are common. Women may be granted chiefly titles although these are usually honorific.

The importance of chiefs in the social fabric of Vanuatu society is recognised by island council of chiefs and also the national council of chiefs the Malvatumauri which meets in Port Vila. This is established under the Constitution and under legislation. It is meant to be an advisory body advising the government of the day on any proposed legislation that concern custom, notably most recently land. There are currently proposals to amend the legislation determining the power of the Malvatumauri

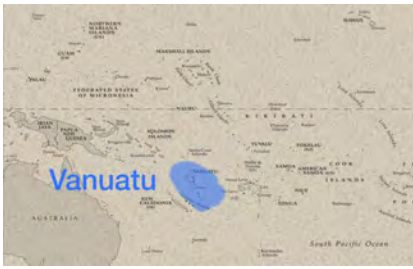
and certainly in matters relating to land it may have an enlarged role.

As with Christianity, calls to custom and tradition can be used to support a very conservative fundamentalism and this is not always positive for gender equality. For example, chiefs, drawing on biblical teachings have declared prohibitions on women wearing shorts and may impose local curfews on women. Chiefs are also often involved in dispute resolution at the local level and here too conservative Christian views may be used to exonerate violence against women, compel women to return to abusive partners, or justify various prohibitions on freedom of expression and movement of women. At the same time chiefs may act positively as mediators seeking to resolve disputes and restore harmony in communities where people live in close proximity to each other, with little privacy, and mutual interdependency.

The urban population of Vanuatu represents around 26% of the total population (2013 indexmundi). This percentage live in or around the two main metropolitan centres, Port Vila the Capital, on the island of Efate, and Luganville, on the island of Espiritu Santo. The rest of the population live in rural areas, many of which are poorly served by any infrastructure. For example water may be collected in rainwater tanks or have to be fetched from streams, washing clothes is done by hand, food is cooked on wood or charcoal fires. There may be a health centre within reach by foot, a store or two, and some form of local police presence. Although houses built from natural materials in traditional styles are become less common they still exist. Increasingly however homes are built of concrete blocks and tin roofs where people can afford to do so. In rural areas families live on land held under customary land tenure which means land rights are determined by lineage and kinship. In Vanuatu one finds both matrilineal and patrilineal forms of inheritance determining land rights, as well as

modifications of these. In patrilineal societies women move to the land of their husband's family on marriage. In matrilineal societies the opposite applies but both depend on factors such as land availability, personal preference of the couple and proximity to amenities such as schools, employment and so on. In these rural areas subsistence agriculture is still important and many people rely on gardening, marine harvesting and forest foraging to supply many of their basic needs. For women much of their time is taken up with domestic tasks. The church is a focus of social and religious life. However almost everyone needs to participate in the monetary economy in some way, in order to acquire clothes, medicines, pay for schooling and buy small luxuries in local stores. In order to acquire money there is a lot of movement of people to and from urban areas and overseas or between islands and this has an impact on social relations as people from different custom areas inter-marry, move into new areas or develop multi-level kinship, employment and friendship links.

Those living in urban areas retain their links with their home villages and often children are sent back to 'the island' for school holidays, and young children may be raised by relatives in the island until old enough to go to school in town, especially if both parents are working. It is also not unusual for young people to be sent to stay with relatives in town in order to attend school especially secondary school and often those in town will provide accommodation to a number of members of the extended family. Those living in town tend either to be renting property, or, if sufficiently affluent, have acquired leases on sub-divisions in the municipal areas or in the peri-urban area. They in turn may sub-let property on their own leased land. Increasing urbanisation challenges traditional social structures and has the potential for conflict between different sets of values in contemporary society.



## Contemporary Gender Inequality

Vanuatu ratified CEDAW in 1995 and incorporated it into national law through the Ratification Act No. 3 of 1995.

At the National Level the first three post-independence fifteen year Government Development Plans all included actions aimed at improving the position of women (Tor and Toka 2004: 58)

### Country snap-shot

Independent since 1980  
Member of ACP, MSG, UN, PIF, SPC

- 83 islands (68 inhabited)
- six provinces: Torba, Sanma, Penama, Malampa, Shefa and Tafea

Population: 281,059 (Vanuatu Statistic Office live figure 5/10/15)

- Demographics: Women: 48.9 %, Men 51.07%
- Under 15: 36.9 %, 15-24: 20.4%; 25-59: 36.7%; Over 60: 6.0%
- Urban population: 57,195 people (24.4% of the total population)

Port Vila: 44,039

Luganville: 13,156

- Land mass 11,880 Sq Km
- EEZ in KM square:668,220

### EU snap-shot

The Delegation of the EU to Vanuatu and Solomon Islands is located in Honiara, Solomon Islands.

- EDF in 2014 Euro 31.3 million for rural development (pipso.org)
- 2015 EU releases funds for cyclone relief (1 million euro)
- 2014-2020 National Indicative Programme (ec.europa.eu) EDF in 2014 Euro 31.3 million for rural development (pipso.org)

- 1994 First national report on women in Vanuatu leading to the first National Action Plan for Women

- 2002 Department of Women's Affairs 'Violence against women in Vanuatu: a policy paper'

- 2004 Department of Women's Affairs Report 'Gender, Kastom and domestic violence' (R. Tor and A. Toka)

- 2006 Government of the Republic of Vanuatu 'Priorities & Action Agenda 2006 – 2015'<sup>58</sup>

- 2008 Family Protection Act

- 2009 Vanuatu first cycle Universal Periodic Report (A/HRC/12/14 see paras14-16)

- 2012-2016 Priority Action Agenda: 30 per cent women in Parliament, and Mainstreaming of gender perspective into all Government policy processes

- 2013 Ministry of Justice establishes the Gender and Protection Cluster bringing together 16 government, NGO and church stakeholders<sup>59</sup>

- 2014 Vanuatu second cycle Universal Periodic Review Report (A/HRC/26/9)

- 2015-2019 National Gender Equality Policy<sup>60</sup> proposes to address Gender Equality through four strategic areas:

1. Reducing Domestic and Gender Based Violence
2. Enhancing Women's Economic Empowerment
3. Promoting Women's Leadership and Equal Political Participation
4. Building a Foundation for Gender Mainstreaming

- 2015 Humanitarian Action Plan published by the Gender and Protection Cluster. Its stated aims are: to address the safety, well-being and dignity of affected populations; to strengthen the protective environment for the affected population with a focus on the most vulnerable (including women (HAP 2015: 40).<sup>61</sup>

<sup>58</sup> [http://www.nab.vu/sites/all/files/documents/14/11/2013%20-%2009%3A53/paa\\_2012\\_update.pdf](http://www.nab.vu/sites/all/files/documents/14/11/2013%20-%2009%3A53/paa_2012_update.pdf)

<sup>59</sup> [https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/system/files/documents/files/lessons\\_learned\\_report\\_-\\_05.05.15.pdf](https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/system/files/documents/files/lessons_learned_report_-_05.05.15.pdf)

<sup>60</sup> <http://dwa.gov.vu/images/policies/NationalGenderEqualityPolicy.July2015.pdf>

<sup>61</sup> available online: <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/vanuatu/protection>

## Gender snap-shot

Gender, Kastom and Domestic Violence 2004 [http://www.vanuatu.usp.ac.fj/sol\\_adobe\\_documents/usp%20only/vanuatu/Tor.pdf](http://www.vanuatu.usp.ac.fj/sol_adobe_documents/usp%20only/vanuatu/Tor.pdf)

- National Survey on Women's Lives and Family Relationships, 2012. [http://countryoffice.unfpa.org/filemanager/files/pacific/pacific\\_vaw/day1/vanuatu\\_womens\\_crisis\\_research\\_report\\_part\\_i.pdf](http://countryoffice.unfpa.org/filemanager/files/pacific/pacific_vaw/day1/vanuatu_womens_crisis_research_report_part_i.pdf)
- Republic of Vanuatu Elimination and Prevention of Violence Against Women and Girls' 57th Commission on the Status of Women March 2013 <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw57/generaldiscussion/memberstates/Vanuatu.pdf>

### 1. Domestic and Gender Based Violence

In 1992 the Vanuatu Women's Centre was set up to assist victims of domestic violence. In 2011 the Vanuatu Women's Centre published the National Survey on Women's Lives and Family Relationship,<sup>62</sup> one of the key findings of which was:

Vanuatu has alarmingly high rates of violence against women by husbands/partners. Among women who have ever been married, lived with a man, or had an intimate sexual relationship with a partner, 3 in 5 (60%) experienced physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime; more than 2 in 3 (68%) experienced emotional violence; more than 1 in 4 (28%) was subjected to several forms of control by their husband or partner, more than 2 in 3 (69%) experienced at least one form of coercive control, and most of these were living with physical and sexual violence. Most women who are subjected to violence by husbands/partners experience multiple forms of violence." (National Survey on Women's Lives and Family Relationships 2011: 16)

The Vanuatu Women's Centre based in Port Vila, has three sub-centres and has established over 40 local committees and trained hundreds of men and women as advocates of women's Human Rights, including chiefs and church leaders. It receives funding from Australia and New Zealand

Within the police force there are Family Protection Units in four provinces, to deal with and investigate reports of DV although the efficacy of these and the rate of response seems to vary.<sup>63</sup>

Police are being trained under the Pacific Prevention of

Domestic Violence Programme set up in 2012 – a cooperation programme between Pacific island police forces and those in New Zealand, and, since 2013 the Australian Federal Police.<sup>64</sup> The aim is to create 'A safer Pacific Free from domestic violence'. All police recruits are now trained in investigating domestic violence.

Recourse to the Police is not the only option for many ni-Vanuatu women and men to contact in cases of Domestic Violence or GBV. Often cases of GBV are often dealt with within the family, or with the help of chiefs and pastors (see case illustration below).

DV is being addressed by:

- Provision of help and counselling by the Vanuatu Women Center
- Access to the courts via the family Protection Act and the Rules of Civil Procedure
- Family Protection Unit at the Vanuatu Police Force
- Protection room in the hospital (Port Vila)
- Awareness campaigns by diverse international and national agents
- Wan Smolbag Youth Center, which provides also a Health Center, and the Wan Smolbag Company which produces 'edutainment' featuring issues pertaining to domestic violence, gender equality, etc.<sup>65</sup> (see Witness – Wan Smol Bag – 29 Jan 07 Part 1 and Part 2 Al Jazeera on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1LDYpcAqJ2A>)

<sup>62</sup> available online: [http://www.spc.int/nmdi/nmdi\\_documents/VanuatuWomensCentreSurveyWomensLives2011.pdf](http://www.spc.int/nmdi/nmdi_documents/VanuatuWomensCentreSurveyWomensLives2011.pdf)

<sup>63</sup> Letter to the Editor Vanuatu Daily Post July 9 2014 'The work of Vanuatu Women's Centre (VWC) over child abuse and rape cases (Domestic violence)

<sup>64</sup> See PPDVP <[ppdvp.org.nz](http://ppdvp.org.nz)>

<sup>65</sup> OACMAS (Pacific Media Assistance Scheme) Vanuatu State of Media and Communication Report 2013 [http://www.pacmas.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/11.-PACMAS\\_Vanuatu-country-Report\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.pacmas.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/11.-PACMAS_Vanuatu-country-Report_FINAL.pdf)



## 2. Enhancing Women's Economic Empowerment

“Enhancing women's economic empowerment requires the provision of and improvements in physical infrastructure (e.g. roads, transport, market facilities, telecommunication) as well as training services and supportive environments that enable women to participate, make decisions and own productive resources. Legislative changes are also needed to remove discriminatory barriers against women and to ensure equal and fair working conditions for both women and men.” (National Gender Equality Policy 2015: 14)

Some of the initiatives include:

- The Department of Women's Affairs (DWA) which promotes women in business by providing regular workshops on that topic.
- Currently, the DWA is evaluating the necessity of a “Women in Business Center” in Port Vila.
- The Vanuatu Women's Development Scheme (VANWODS) established in 1997 as a Microfinance Institution offers in its own words: “accessible financial and business development services to economically marginalised individuals and communities in Vanuatu”.<sup>66</sup>(See below)
- Some small local business associations have formed, for example, Silae Vanua Market Vendors Association in Port Vila, which launched in July 2015. It is the first association for the local market vendors (mostly women) in Port Vila. There are also other women's markets; the ‘Twenty vatu’ market at Ohlen, in Port Vila, which opened its new market house in August 2015;<sup>67</sup> the long established Mama Market in Port Vila and the Hebrida craft market also in the capital.<sup>68</sup>
- New temporary markets are also opening up to service cruise ships which call into a number of islands in Vanuatu. These offer women the chance to sell their handicrafts but also provoke some concerns (see below)



## 3. Promoting Women's Leadership and Equal Political Participation

In ongoing campaigns, the Department of Women's Affairs, as well as other groups, have been promoting the participation of women in politics. The Gender Profile of Political Parties and Elections states: “there is also a structural barrier to women's participation in leadership which is compounded by the negative cultural attitude towards women's leadership roles” (Llo-Noka and Dalesa-Saraken 2010: 11) and the National Gender Equality Policy (2015) states:

The promotion of women's leadership and equal political participation requires attitudinal and structural changes in existing political and decision making systems. First and foremost, voter education at the community level is critical for mobilising acceptance and support from both men and women towards women's involvement in politics and decision making” (2015:14).

- In August 2015 the Coalition Fund for Gender Equality in Vanuatu Politics (CFGEVP) was launched by a group of female candidates who ran for the elections in 2012 to provide a support group to provide other women who are interested in entering the political field in Vanuatu. They also appeal for a fair inclusion of women in decision making bodies, so that in the next general elections in 2016 about half of the seats in parliament are held by women. Currently there are no women in Parliament

<sup>66</sup> <http://www.microfinance-pasifika.org/vanwods.html>

<sup>67</sup> Anita Roberts 'Sheltering the "twenty vatu" vendors' Vanuatu Daily Post 25 August 2015 <dailypost.vu>

<sup>68</sup> For local comment see Transparency International 'Serem tingting blong Yu – Mama Long Market on YouTube, 3 July 2015 [www.youtube.com/watch?v=49sBX9LsMWU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=49sBX9LsMWU)

- Changes are occurring with municipal elections however, with reserved seats for women in Port Vila and Luganville as a result of amendments to the Municipalities Act. The aim is to reach 30% in all levels of government.
- The Vanuatu Christian Council (VCC), the umbrella organization of the churches in Vanuatu also promotes women in leadership.

## Case Studies from Vanuatu

### Talking about domestic violence

#### A's Story

A is in her mid-twenties. The eldest of her three children lives with A's parents in another island of Vanuatu. A is working as housekeeper for several employers (private persons). She lives with her husband, and his parents and his sister in a village, close to Port Vila.

When I ask her how she is doing she would smile at me and say everything was "I stret" (alright). One day however, we sat down for a tea and she seemed lost in thoughts. I asked her, what she was thinking about. And she opened up. She is frustrated, because she would like to live in another place, away from her parents in-law, but her husband would not approve of that idea. "He is not doing anything", she sighs.

A is working five full days a week and she earns about 6000 Vt per week. With this income, she has to support herself, her husband and the two children, that live in their house. Her husband is a seasonal worker, who picks fruit in New Zealand for six months, the other half of the year he stays at home. Sometimes he would drive a bus or pick up one-day jobs, but he gives those up quickly. A complains, that he spends the money he makes occasionally for alcohol and kava, instead of investing it into their children's school fees. I ask, if she gives him money, or if she is in control of her own income. She nods: "I am in control. He is not getting my money." Her

husband is supported by his sister, however, who is also employed. "She is giving money to him, when he asks", she says. The living situation with her in-laws is obviously tense. "His parents buy food and treat him like a little boy." A is frustrated, that her husband is treated like a child by his parents. Her living situation causes a lot of arguments. In addition to that, her husband is jealous. A is

not allowed to talk or meet others outside her workspace.

I ask carefully, if her husband beats her. She looks at me without an expression of surprise or any other emotion. Instead, she just says in a neutral voice: "Yes, often." And she adds: "This is the reason, why I went to my sister at the weekend. We had an argument." I ask what she is doing, after they argue: "I am staying a friend's place, but the next day, I go back to him. What else should I do? ... My brother would kill him, if he knew. The police would put him to prison, but that does not help me."

I ask if she knew about the Vanuatu Women's Centre. She says, she heard about another woman, who went to the VWS. But the process was long, and eventually, the woman was not helped. So A does not want to go the VWS.

I ask if she has seen the chief or a church about the arguments and the physical violence towards her.

She shakes her head. No. "Once", she says, "I ran away from him." She went to her parents to the outer Island to seek shelter from her husband after a fight, when he beat her again. Her husband came a few weeks after and convinced her to come back: "He told me, he would change. But when I came back, nothing has changed." She tells me, that, now she cannot run away anymore. I ask, why that is.

She explains: "They [the husband's family] have paid for me and the three children. 150 000 Vatu!" As part of the traditional marriage ("bride price").

Her voice is excited when she names the figure, indicating that 150 000 Vatu (around 1000 Euro) is a lot of money. In the course of the conversation, she often stresses: "he bought me". And he uses this as an argument

against her in fights. Also her family uses the money as a reason why she has to go back to her husband: "They will say, I have to go back to him, because he paid for me. And they would have to pay him back all that money."

I ask, what she would like to do most about her current situation. She says: "I want to take my kids and go to my family in the island." She is trying to save money to pay the money back to her husband's family.

***“Once I ran away from him ...  
He told me he would change. But  
when I came back, nothing  
changed ... I cannot run away  
anymore ... they ... have paid for  
me and the three children***

#### **B's story**

B is around 40 years old. She is non Ni-Vanuatu expat, but has lived in Vanuatu for many years. She was married to a man from an outer island. In arguments, he would beat her. "Sometimes even in front of my daughter", she says. One day, after a strong fight, she went to the Vanuatu Women's Centre in Port Vila. "They saw my bruises and scratches and helped me to get a restraining order the same day." A short time after the restraining order was lifted, B and her husband had a reconciliation ceremony. A chief from the island of her husband got involved in the case. In a meeting with B and her husband, the chief ordered according to his kastom, that her husband had to give her a chicken and mats (she did not remember any more, such as how many mats he had to give her). This way, the domestic harmony should be restored.

One day, B and her husband had another fight. He threatened her and she ran away. When she sought help at the VWS, they told her, they could not do anything for her, as they need "proof" that her husband has beaten her. She told the workers, that he had beaten her before and that she is scared he will use physical violence again, but they sent her away without any further action.

Eventually, she decided to divorce her husband. This decision was supported by the chief, who was previously involved and

therefore, according to B this was not a big problem.

I asked B if she thinks that the divorce was supported, because she is an expat. She shook her head. She thinks the chief would have reacted the same way with a Ni-Vanuatu woman.

#### **C and D's story**

C and D are sisters. They come from an outer Island. C is in her early twenties, D is a little bit older. D has a new born baby with her partner J, who is from a different island from her. They are not married (either in kastom, church or state).

They stay in a big, steadily growing suburb of Port Vila. The house, built of corrugated iron and wood contains four rooms of varying size (between approximately 6 to 12m<sup>2</sup>). Three couples live there with their children (in total six children aged between 3 months and 5-6 years). J shares a room with his uncle. D shares a room with C and the new born baby. In total there are 8 adults and 6 children living together.

Whenever I visit the family, I would mostly see the women cooking, cleaning and caring for their children, whereas the men are out, working.

C does not have children or a husband yet. She came to Port Vila a few months ago to find work. She works as a cook in one of the Resorts in Port Vila. She is a social, young woman. In one of our conversations we talked about partnerships.

I asked her what a good partner in her opinion is. She shrugs her shoulders: "Mi no save." (I don't know.) So I asked her about whether she thinks that J is a good partner for D. C answers: "Gud smol nomo." (Only a little bit good.) Then, she tells me about her younger sister E. E is 19 years old and has a five year old child. Her partner, and the father of the child is from the island of Tanna. In everyday talk and conversations, Tanna is stereotypically associated with violence in general and violent men in particular. C tells me, that E's partner is "nogud". I asked, if he treats her badly and C answers in a unimpressed manner: 'He is a man from Tanna. He is very violent. It is in their kastom. E should have known what to expect.'

*The above stories indicate the role of the extended family, the intervention of the Vanuatu Women's Centre, the significance of 'Bride Price', and an implicit acceptance of domestic violence in certain circumstances. There is also reference to the role of chiefs and custom (kastom). This is elaborated on in the next narrative*

### **Resolving domestic problems without the courts**

In the capital of Port Vila, chiefs have still a lot of responsibilities. It is said that 80% of legal issues are dealt with by chiefs. Even in the capital, although the access to police and courts is easy, chiefs are still the main body to resolve disputes. According to the CEO of the Malvatumauri, land disputes and family issues are generally handled by chiefs. Severe cases of (domestic) violence, however, will be most often referred to police (CEO Malvatumauri, Interview August 2015). In case of a dispute, the arguing parties often consult the chiefs from their respective islands. Sometimes, however, a chief from another island can be asked for advice, if he is known and popular for his decision making.

The main principle of these informal forums is restoring harmony between the parties. Therefore, it is often defined as restorative justice. As opposed to the punitive justice system: the focus is not so much on identifying the perpetrator and punishing him or her, but rather on establishing "peace" between all parties.

The following case study, describes a 'kastom' dispute meeting which was observed in early September 2015 in Port Vila.

In this case, a man (M) and a woman (W) separated. M. is addicted to alcohol and had hit W. many times before. The two had a lot of arguments, involving physical violence. They were not married, but had a child together. Also, the man's mother and the woman's father would call each other "angkel", a kinship term that indicates a relationship of high respect towards each other, as well as strong obligations. The separation of the M. and W. was not just an issue between the two of them. Because of the kinship ties between the families, it was important for the family members to show respect to each other ("soim respek") and to express that although

M. and W. separated, the families are still holding together.

The separation ceremony took place in a chief's (D) nakamal<sup>69</sup>, which is also a popular kava bar in Port Vila.

The location added a further complication. D was the brother of W. In kastom, normally the brother of the woman involved in a dispute case is not allowed to be present in the dispute. In this case, however, the families decided to have the separation in D's nakamal, as he is a high ranking chief.

Lastly, this was an inter-island relationship: M.'s father is from Malekula, his mother from Ambae, like W. and D.'s family.

The family members of W and M arrived in the early afternoon at the nakamal. In total, there were about 25 people present.

M's family brought mats and placed them in a space in the centre of the nakamal. Other mats were not unfolded but placed separately on the mats. Envelopes, containing some money, were placed on each folded mat. While this happened all the attendees stopped talking.

A confused silence followed as it was not clear who is supposed to lead the meeting. Usually, it would be the high ranking chief. But this was W's brother, who was by kastom not allowed to be in the same space. Eventually, one male relative of M. ('moderator') opened the meeting. He asked the man next to him to say a prayer.

Then, he asked the mother of W. to speak first.<sup>70</sup>

The old lady stood up and talked with trembling voice. She explained in detail, how she perceived the relationship between her daughter and M. One of the first points she pointed out, is that the two were not married (either in kastom, nor church), but had a child. She felt sorry for the child, that "walks in between two houses" now. She also talked about various situations, when the daughter came to her after a fight with M.

Her speech was about 20 minutes long. She referred sometimes to her daughter directly, sometimes she explained her own feelings, and eventually, she addressed the two

<sup>69</sup> Traditionally, a meeting space for chiefs and men, but nowadays often a public meeting space and/ or kava bar.

<sup>70</sup> The whole meeting was held in Bislama.

families. She appealed: "Although those two get separated today, our families have to stay one."

During her whole speech, as well as during the following ones, people looked on the ground or away, but not at the person who spoke.

After the mother was finished talking, the "moderator" stood up again. He summarized what she said and used a metaphor: "You two are like a pilot who does not know where to go anymore. You are done."

Then, a female relative of M. stood up. She was very apologetic: "We (mifela) are very sorry for what happened. Our boy (boe) took a woman and now puts her back. It is the first time that this happens in our family." Then she addressed M's alcohol problem: "He has a problem. He must stop drinking. With the help of God he might be able to do so."

Like W's mother, she described what she had done to solve the problems between M. and W. "I tried to manage you two. But I have not seen a good future for you. The fact that you delayed the marriage for so long, is already a sign." She also described a significant moment in the past. "One day you got a Protection Order after he hit you." Finally, she stated: "If you separate today, maybe W. finds a man that treats her well. We make something today, which we did not expect, but it is for the better for both of them."

After she is finished, a male relative of M. stands up (Speaker 1) He, too, refers to the alcohol problem of M.: "Every time he drinks, he disgraces us". "We all talked to him, but he does not listen to us." "It is a separation between the two of them, but not between our families. Our road, our two families must be cleared by tonight."

Then, the "moderator" talked again. "The decision is made. You two are finished today. You do not talk again. The child stays with his mother."

Another male relative of M. stood up (Speaker 2). He stated: "Thank you for making it possible to come today and to say sorry for our boy. This is our kastom. We came with respect. We respect you. We brought you a small sign to straighten the relations. Everybody makes mistakes sometimes. Now you two make a kastom to show respect and restore peace again. I ask you two to come and make the sign of showing respect."

Both M. and W. stood up and come to the man who just spoke. M. takes a mat from the man and gives it to W. She takes it and they both shake hands. The whole procedure was done without saying a single word or looking into each other's eyes.

W. walked back to her seat. But M. kept standing on the mats in the centre and talked publicly (for the first time in this event). His speech included the following:

- "What happens today, has never happened in my family before. I disgraced my family."
- "In kastom of Ambae, the brother of the woman is not allowed to be in the same nakamal. But we came here today and used D's nakamal to meet. If we do kastom, we should do it right. I want to say sorry to D." He puts a 1000 vatu bill on the ground. D. came from a corner outside the nakamal area to the center. M. and D. both touched the bill quickly and without exchanging a word.
- "One mat goes to my angel (the mother of W.), another one and the laplap go to the mama of A." He refers to W.
- "One mat goes to the grandmother of my child (the mother of W.)." (It is interesting to see that W's mother gets two mats for two different roles she is holding. She is referred to as "angel", although her husband would be the categorical angel of M. However, seeing that her husband is dead, the widow takes over the same relationship towards M. as her husband had. The second time, she is referred to as "grandmother (bumbu) of my child", which indicates another important and respected relationship.
- The last two mats went to the two "angel" (mother's brothers) of the child of M and W, which is D. and his brother.

One of the male relatives of M stood up again (speaker 1) and stated "D. is not only a brother, but he is also a chief of Ambae." "We came here today to put the talk back together, to put our families back together". "One of the mats is for the chief, because he has to tell in our areas what happened today. He can tell that the our road is straight and that we are one."

"Thank you everyone today. Please respect the decision."

Finally D. stood up and came inside the nakamal. "It is a complicated situation, it is a complicated family structure. [...] But even though it might seem like a defeat, today is a

victory defeat.” The separation between the two, will not separate our family.” Then he spoke about kastom: “Not many people make kastom ceremonies anymore. They do not know kastom anymore.”

*The above indicates the complexity of family relations and the importance of recognising that individuals are part of a community, family and kin group and do not exist in isolation. The whole process illustrates the need for respect on both sides so that there are no winners or losers. This is an important consideration and can be distinguished from the probable outcome of a court process. These families needed to stay related – not least because there was a child involved who would have inheritance rights (see below). Unlike A’s story (above) there was no marriage here which might have complicated matters especially if bride-price had been paid. Both M and W appear to have been at fault here, M addicted to alcohol and W to kava – both activities are indicative of changing behaviour and access to money – not always for the good. Some women however struggle to make ends meet or cover the basic necessities they need*

## Empowering women economically

**VANUATU DAILY POST**  
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**100th Anniversary of Independence**

**An independence story**  
 Raising five children 20 vatu at a time

**Cultural Council revokes release of valuable traditional stones**  
**Supreme Court hands down judgment in Tassiriki public land Judicial Review**  
**Korman looks back, points to the future**  
**Vanuatu i save kompit bageken long Oceania Rugby Championship**

Daily Post and all the staff would like to wish everyone Happy 35th Anniversary of Independence

**Women are increasing their role in the economy**  
 Many low-income women are well served by these VSOs...  
 The number of women vendors increased with every year...  
 Many low-income women are well served by these VSOs...  
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 Many low-income women are well served by these VSOs...  
 The number of women vendors increased with every year...

[http://dailypost.vu/news/an-independence-story/article\\_a9ec41be-43d5-5eb1-95c5-c778decf9598.html](http://dailypost.vu/news/an-independence-story/article_a9ec41be-43d5-5eb1-95c5-c778decf9598.html)

The above story appeared on independence day. It was about a woman who had raised five children by herself through selling food at 20 vatu from a roadside stall with the assistance of a VANWOODS loan. Her husband had left her. Eventually she was not only supporting her own family but also her grandchildren.

One interviewee indicated that ‘This type of business is often used by unmarried mothers to make smol vatu’ and by widows trying to make rent payments to stay in their homes’. Another spoke highly of VANWOODS and their small loan scheme: ‘this used to be mostly for women but men are also getting loans from them. The scheme works so that borrowers pay back weekly and also pay into a savings account so that when they need money they can draw on these savings. Women pay back through cooking, sewing, anything. There are certain conditions to borrowing and there has to be a certain number of them in a group to raise a loan’. She joined a group a few years ago and enjoyed meeting with other women on a regular basis to discuss ideas etc.

Entrepreneurship is not always viewed so positively. A male informant discussing land tenure expressed the view that ‘today women are too busy (partly because the cruise ships call in and tourism means that women are busy making things for sale to the cruise tourists) and the children are away at school so knowledge is not being transmitted inter-generationally as before and there is a danger that a lot of the knowledge affecting land is being lost’. Some initiatives have been taken to record custom rules, but the danger here is that the record will soon become out of date because custom changes. (Echoing a concern expressed in the separation ceremony but voiced here in connection with land)

## Women and land

*Land is a basic resource needed for survival and security. As has been indicated much land is governed by customary rules and women do not always benefit from these. The following are summaries of conversations.*

‘The right of women to a voice and to land vary across the country. In Aneityum land is owned by the family and passes patrilineally but can go matrilineally for one generation. The chief allocates land according to the

tasks or roles assigned to the heads of families - gardening to provide food for chief, or managing marine resources for example. The chief determine which parcels of land will be allocated. Women garden alongside men and have a voice in decision making, if not directly, at least indirectly' (Male informant).

'In Ifira it used to be the case that daughters were given a parcel of custom land on marriage which they could live on or use for gardens. With land pressure this is less and less common. Women may attend meetings of the Nakamal but do not speak. Each of 33 families is represented by their head (male) at meetings of the Ifira trust and in the nakamal.

Attendance at trust meetings is high. Less so in nakamal meetings. There are lots of land disputes. There is a youth representative (male) and young people do express their concerns to elders who speak for them but there is quite a difference between Ifira women in the village and those in the town. Those in the village tend to accept things and not complain whereas those in town tend to be more outspoken. There is also a confusing situation around Naflak (totem) (this determines clan membership) which passes through women although the representative of the Naflak is the chief (male). Where a woman does not have a Naflak then the children will be adopted into a Naflak, eg of brothers in law (eg where wife is from elsewhere). Can marry within same Naflak provided not too closely related. All women get vouchers from Ifira trust at end of year, including daughters but if they marry someone not from Ifira their children will not get vouchers'. (Female informant)

*Tracing land rights through kinship and lineage is very complicated especially when a woman marries a man from a different island or area.*

'Also children of inter island marriages may be unclear about their island/custom land identity. Eg may speak mother's language but identify with father's island. Often urban born children have not visited the island of one or both parents. If custom ceremonies have not been observed then land for women may not be reserved, or they may have no right to speak in nakamal.' (Female informant)

Although almost 93% of land is held under custom, women also occupy land held under lease and under informal arrangements – especially in settlements.

'Where land is leased even if taken out in woman's name there is likely to be pressure on woman to put in husband's name or joint names. There is uncertainty who is lessor or how registration works. Also confusion about succession to leases. This is often assumed to be governed by custom so for example if custom is matrilineal (North Pentecost) fear will be that the lease will pass through mother's line which is why the husband wants to be the one named on the lease.' (Female informant)

*This confusion about custom applying to non-customary land seems quite common and as custom rarely favours widows it can have negative consequences.*

'Even if a woman can continue to pay the rent after the death of husband there is the custom (of Central Pentecost) of brother/uncle of deceased husband coming to claim either the land (as would happen with custom land) and/or the wife). Chiefs may have to intervene to point out this is not custom land, but rented land. Widows are vulnerable to eviction, further arranged marriages or having to go back to her parents land. In some places a daughter always retains a land right in her father or mother's land but not everywhere. It also depends on whether she has children to help her financially and in other ways.' (Female informant)

And

'For women in town on leased land most leases are taken out by men, (this was confirmed in several interviews) so that when things go wrong, women have no security of tenure and may lose their home. If they still have a piece of land recognised as theirs to use in their father's place it is not so bad, but even in matrilineal systems women have little or no voice in the management and/or allocation of land. The reason given by some men as to why they do not register leases as co-owners with their wives is that they do not want the land to go to their wives to inherit the land. There seems to be some confusion between customary rules relating to the passing of land and succession to leases. For example in Blacksands (a peri-urban settlement) male relatives of a deceased thought they could come and take land occupied by the widow under an informal contractual licence, on the grounds that they could do this in custom.' (Male informant)

'there are no women's groups representing women in Blacksands compared to Freshwater where there are representatives for women and youth. Not clear why this hasn't worked in Blacksands. Some women did stand for and were elected in municipal elections in Port Vila but have shown little interest in coming out to Blacksands to talk to women there.' (Female informant)

*The above indicate that many of these issues are interrelated: the role of custom; the intervention of chiefs; the location of the individual within the wider family group; the threats to the physical and domestic security of women in their own homes; the movement of people and the creating of cross-custom relationships; the impact of modernity – evidenced in access to alcohol, seasonal employment, new ways of occupying land, engagement in the market economy and fear of loss of knowledge regarding custom. Putting more women into town councils or parliament might not necessarily help:*



## Key Defining Issues in Vanuatu

1. There are plenty of awareness raising events and gender related information put in the public domain. However, much of this is only accessible in Port Vila, or to those who are literate. Moreover many of the messages do not translate well as comprehensible concepts (eg domestic violence, women's empowerment, gender equality – neither gender or violence are found in the Bislama Dictionary).
2. Although the government appears to be advocating gender equality in various ways and has a number of public policies unless there is ownership and advocacy of this within government departments gender equality is unlikely to advance. Eg in the Lands Department no one was prepared to champion the Gender Equity Strategy document prepared for the Vanuatu Land Programme and the Lands Registry does not even try to persuade spouses to both be registered as joint owners of leases on the grounds that men oppose this. There are still a number of gender discriminatory laws on the statute books and the government has made minimal moves to address this formal gender inequality.
3. Most publicised gender equality activity is driven by NGOs and international organisations. More needs to be understood about small-scale local initiatives in villages and churches, for example the experiences and views of women pastors, the role of women in village committees. One of the key findings of some of the field work was that internal politics and jealousy between women can be an obstacle to advancing a shared agenda.
4. Gender equality is widely perceived as being 'women's business' and this perception is supported by locating gender issues in the Department of Women's Affairs. There is still a long way to go in making gender equality everyone's business. Too few men are involved in advancing gender equality at government level and in senior posts.
5. There are existing networks which reach out into rural areas. The Vanuatu Women's Centre, VNCW, the various Island Chiefs Councils – which in turn link with the centralised Malvatumauri, the Vanuatu council of churches and the field workers of the Vanuatu Cultural Centre, agricultural field officers and health services. Radio reaches many but not all parts of the country and mobile telephony is becoming more widely accessible. Organisations such as Wan Smolbag travel extensively to the provinces to perform.
6. Custom (Kastom), chiefs and the church are key players in the regulation of everyday life. All three can be used as a positive force for change but also may also act to reinforce and support gender inequality.
7. Women themselves appear to accept the status quo especially as regards domestic violence. Those advocating change, for example women in politics, are not always representative of a wider sector of society or in touch with the lived experience of many women.



[Most ]Women do not know their rights in kastom ... or in the Constitution or international Conventions such as the CEDAW Constitution or international

## Assessing Effectiveness in Vanuatu

- There is a degree of saturation in terms of gender discourse and awareness raising which may become counter-productive

*'One female informant told me that the term gender is so omnipresent, that it evokes a fatigue in her: "I see these women and I think 'here we go again'(rolls her eyes)!"*

- At the same time observations made in by Tor and Toka (2004:62) still hold true

*[Most ]Women do not know their rights in kastom and are equally not aware of their rights in the Constitution and International Conventions such as the CEDAW*

- Women do not know where to find the information, especially in rural areas or on the outer islands. "The distribution of information is a big challenge"

- Women acquire knowledge from their own networks, other women, market traders, the radio. Most have heard of the Vanuatu Women's Centre but it is seen as being something in Port Vila. Many had heard the radio soap produced by Wan Smolbag which covers a range of social issues and seen Love Patrol on the television or Youtube, and the work of the NGO Further Arts (furtherarts.org).

- There are initiatives to involve youth – through the Vanuatu Youth Council, Vanuatu Youth Against Corruption and Wan Smolbag Youth Centre, and school children through education materials, including cartoon strips and poster competitions

- There has been work with chiefs but less evidence of work with churches "Chiefs and churches will always have their position in Ni-Vanuatu lifestyle" ... "You have to start by bringing them on your side and they will inform their communities."

- Unless there is local ownership and investment international programmes are not always sustainable or sufficiently customized for the local context. "You need to go to every village and you need to meet the people one on one [...] You have to ask them, what they think and what they want."

- Face-to face communication seems to be still the most effective way to reach people in Vanuatu. Communication is an important part in Vanuatu; it creates understanding and consent. Opening spaces for dialogue seems to be crucial to develop projects that are relevant and effective for ni-Vanuatu people.

## Options for Action in Vanuatu

- Communication – which reaches widest audience through most accessible means working with radio, theatre, mobile telephony and local actors working with local communities

- Capitalising on existing events and venues such as local music and art festivals,<sup>71</sup> for performance and collaboration, approach churches and schools for performance space and involvement

### Key actors

- Department of Women's Affairs
- Vanuatu Women's Centre (VWS)
- Vanuatu National Council of Women
- Vanuatu National Council of Chiefs
- Vanuatu National Youth Council
- Vanuatu Christian Council
- The Police
- The Central Hospital
- UN Woman
- Wan Smolbag
- Transparency International
- The national media

### Key programmes

List key country programmes here - either government or other actions to implement national strategy or conventions etc

- National Gender Equality Policy

<http://dwa.gov.vu/images/policies/NationalGenderEqualityPolicyJuly2015.pdf>

- Priorities and Action Agenda 2006 – 2015

[http://www.nab.vu/sites/all/files/documents/14/11/2013%20-%2009%3A53/paa\\_2012\\_update.pdf](http://www.nab.vu/sites/all/files/documents/14/11/2013%20-%2009%3A53/paa_2012_update.pdf)

<sup>71</sup> Fest Napuan Music Festival, Port Sandwich Art and Culture Festival, Melanesian Arts Festival, and mini arts festivals across the islands.

- Understanding what women do and what they need through dialogue and exchange at local level in rural villages and urban settlements, to provide practical sustainable solutions
- Celebrate the achievements of men and women working together through positive publicity
- Reframe the message from negative to positive, and make it gender neutral by focussing holistically on benefits to family, community, country.

### 3. Recommendations arising from the research:

# Implementing GAP 2016-2020 in the Pacific

In line with the EU GAP 2016-2020, future EU actions in the Pacific towards gender equality should (continue to) encompass the three dimensions: political messages, mainstreaming of gender in bilateral programmes and projects, and targeted actions. It should also encompass the thematic pillars: ensuring girls' and women's physical and psychological integrity, promoting the economic and social rights of girls and women, and strengthening girls' and women's voice and participation.

In this section, we make general recommendations for messages and actions until 2020 within the framework of the currently running EDF 11. Some suggestions are also shared beyond 2020. In the next section, we make a more detailed case for a specific EU niche.

## Effective political messages

The GAP 2016-2020 Framework states that all EU actors will continue to use the full range of the EU's means of implementation to promote gender equality, starting with political dialogue.

Political dialogue is an important but complex and delicate tool; in the field of development cooperation as much as in any other field. It can be loosely defined as an interactive process of communication and exchange of viewpoints. Policy and political dialogue specifically on gender equality and women's empowerment at the country level is an exchange of ideas specifically on how to improve development outcomes for both women and men.

As previously outlined, the key moment for regional dialogue in the Pacific is the [Pacific Islands Forum Meeting](#) organised every year. In addition, there are [bilateral policy dialogues](#) with some Pacific countries organised once every 1-2 years (once a year with Fiji, PNG and Timor Leste; once every two years with Solomon Islands and Vanuatu). There are now thoughts within EEAS to extend this practice in the Pacific, first of all to Samoa and Tonga, and maybe also (more sporadically) with the Marshall Islands, Micronesia and Palau. This is recommended, as without political dialogue it will be very difficult for the EU to share a clear perspective on gender inequities and how to tackle these.

For enhanced effectiveness towards gender equality of these dialogues, we emphasize that dialogues should help bring about a shared understanding of the problem of gender inequality including a shared sense of urgency, and more local ownership. To achieve this, investment is needed to better understand underlying power dynamics and their influence on the dialogue partner's perspectives and actions. In addition, as is the key premise of this report, awareness of the socio-economic and cultural environment is important, as is knowledge of past policy processes, strategies and efforts geared towards improving gender equality and women's rights, including regional and global commitments made and relevant sex-disaggregated data (also see [Box 1](#)). An effort will have to be made to discuss gender inequality in Pacific terms, and with adequate recognition of Pacific realities and the steps that the Pacific Island Countries are already taking in their national strategies and through other means.

### **Box 1** : Elements and Entry Points for Effective Dialogue at the Country Level according to the OECD-DAC

“An in-depth country analysis of opportunities and constraints for policy and political dialogue on gender equality and women's empowerment can be enhanced by:

- Planning, preparation and sound research in order to identify and address in-country power and leadership dynamics, whether visible, invisible or informal. Reviewing existing research material and country studies could be a good starting point.

- The human qualities of sensitivity, empathy, patience, listening, mutual respect and humility, based on a recognition that no country in the world has achieved full gender equality.
- Devoting adequate financial resources and time to collect sex-disaggregated data and undertake analysis to inform the dialogue and any results or accountability mechanisms.<sup>72</sup>

In the country analyses in the previous chapter, such analysis of the cultural and policy context for gender (institutions, political actors, discourses and networks of people working for or resisting change) has been undertaken. While more in-depth field research is needed to better grasp local political dynamics, on the basis of these analyses certain directions and suggestions for political messages can be provided, and in Table 5 examples of such messages are given, together with the identifications of local actors and agencies.

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<sup>72</sup> OECD (DAC Network on Gender Equality), 2013, “Policy and Political Dialogue on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment at the Country Level”, p. 3

**Table 5: Suggestions for political messages to the Pacific region and individual partner countries**

Geographic Scope	Messages	Key Civil Society Actors to Consult
General/Region-wide	<p>“The prevalence of violence against women in the Pacific is among the highest in the world”</p> <p>“Progress has been made in the Pacific towards gender responsive policies and programmes, gender parity on education, and ending violence against women. But the Pacific still has a long road to travel before Pacific Island women have all their human rights protected, benefit equality from the development outcomes, and can fulfil their aspirations”</p> <p>“We need to create a better shared understanding of Pacific gender concepts and relations”</p> <p>“We believe that working in Pacific terms and in a participatory way at grassroots level is a key to progress”</p> <p>“We have observed Pacific countries’ hesitations about human rights and women’s rights. We need to understand your hesitations better, and try to come to a shared understanding of terms and tools to advance people’s dignity and quality of life”</p> <p>“Human rights can reshape communities and societies critically, in accordance with the equal respect owed to every person”</p> <p>“Justifications for discrimination against women commonly used by people and based on culture need to be better understood and discussed. We also need to acknowledge that culture can and does change. It is important to take advantage of potential windows of opportunity to improve the situation of women and girls”</p> <p>“We recognise there are serious limitations in present development and gender policy paradigms, which do not sufficiently address the social and normative complexities that background and sometimes justify violence against women in the Pacific. Let’s discuss these”</p> <p>“We need a stronger and more diverse base of skilled researchers and practitioners to catalyse actions combatting violence against women”</p>	<p>Women’s Crisis Centre, UN Women, Tetoamatoak, Regional Rights Resources Team (RRRT)</p>
Federated States of Micronesia	<p>“It appears some customary laws and practices in the Micronesian island region are not in harmony with key UN conventions on human rights, the rights of the child, and the rights of women. Let’s discuss these laws and practices and how these are intended”</p> <p>Religious organizations (Protestant and Catholic Churches/Denominations) are the largest and strongest independently functioning social organizations in Micronesia. Let’s explore their role and ways to work with them on gender equality”</p>	<p>Dr. Vita Skilling, Kiki Stinnett (President Chuuk Women’s Council, Emeliana Musrasrik (Migrant Resource Center Micronesia),</p>

Fiji	<p>“The recently extended opening hour of clubs and related substance abuse are enhancing violence against women. We encourage reconsideration of closing times”</p> <p>“We need to have a better understanding of the prevalence of gender based violence both in iTaukei and in Indo-Fijian communities”</p>	Fiji Women’s Crisis Centre; Empower Pacific, Fiji Women’s Rights Movement
Kiribati	<p>“Gender based violence should not be seen as a form of disciplining women and girls when they fail to adhere to their social roles at home. Overall, violence should not be an accepted form of discipline. Let’s discuss effective ways to discipline and see how we can share them with communities”</p> <p>“Given the influential position of churches, let’s discuss ways to engage the Church”</p>	Women’s Crisis Centre, Tetoamatoak
Marshall Islands	<p>“We need to have a better picture of the influence of fisherman on reproductive health in the Marshall Islands”</p>	Women United Together Marshall Islands (WUTMI)
Palau	<p>“It appears that in the Palauan culture, women are viewed as the stronger gender with regards to self-control, and therefore seen as responsible for male drives and capable of absorbing violence. We need to discuss these notions. No women can be held responsible for the violence perpetrated against her”</p> <p>“We understand that you feel the CEDAW is not aligned with your culture. Let us explore the relationship between Palauan kinship systems and notions of personhood, and see how a right-based approach to gender equality might fit with Palauan culture”</p>	Rebecca Koshiba, female chiefs of Babelthaob and Koror, Micronesian Legal Services Corporation
Papua New Guinea	<p>“We welcome the various government planning documents that emphasize gender equity, including the PNG Vision 2050, PNG Development Strategic Plan 2010-2030, and the PNG Medium Term Development Plan 2010-2015”</p> <p>“There is preference for customary and local processes to address violence over formal systems of adjudication, and we need to understand this preference better”</p> <p>“Women are often not the only victims in situations of violence. The involved men have often gone through hard times too, as evidenced by the many callers of the newly introduced Domestic Violence Hotline. It is time that our debate focuses attention on the difficulties of women and men and seeks to support them in a positive way.”</p>	Highland Women’s Human Rights Defenders Network, KUP Women for Peace, Bougainville Women’s Federation,
Samoa	<p>“Samoa is among the countries that are ranked the lowest in the world for women’s representation in parliament, at 131 out of 143 countries”</p> <p>“We need to discuss the meaning of human rights, and how human rights might relate to Samoan customs, traditions and Christianity, and find ways to assist communities to discuss these issues”</p>	Samoa Law and Justice Sector



Solomon Islands	<p>“We welcome the adoption of the National Policy on Gender Equality and Women’s Development and the National Policy on Eliminating of Violence against Women, and recognise the joint effort by governmental sectors, NGOs, and faith based organisations”</p> <p>“We welcome the passing of the Family Protection Act, but observe that there is divided support from the general public. Information-sharing and awareness raising of the rationale of the Act is required for it to become an effective tool. We call on the Government to make sure the Family Protection Act is understood properly by citizens”</p>	<p>Family Support Centre, Christian Care Centre, the Domestic Violence and Community Policing Unit, Vois Blo Mere, Solomon Islands Women in Business Association, Youth, Women and Children Association, National Council of Women, Solomon Islands Parenthood and Planning Association</p>
Tuvalu	<p>“We applaud the launch of the National Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Policy (2014-2019). We stand ready to help with technical assistance for the implementation of this policy.”</p> <p>“Let’s work to strengthen the implementation and enforcement of the Family Protection and Domestic Violence Act, by explaining it to the people on the national and local level.”</p>	<p>Tuvalu National Council of Women, Tuvalu Association of NGOs (TANGO), Ekalesia Kelisiano o Tuvalu (EKT)</p>
Vanuatu	<p>“We welcome the statement in your National Gender Equality Policy (2015) that the promotion of women’s leadership and equal political participation requires attitudinal and structural changes in existing political and decision making systems. Attitudinal change towards women’s involvement in politics and decision-making is crucial and we need to identify effective ways to do so”</p> <p>“Achieving more gender equity in land ownership is crucial for gender equity overall”</p> <p>“Lets discuss ways to involve chiefs and the church”</p> <p>“Action on gender inequity should not be limited to Port Vila only. Spaces for dialogue need to be opened all across Vanuatu”</p>	<p>Vanuatu Women’s Centre, Vanuatu National Council of Women</p>

In addition, we recommend attention for gender in political dialogue to be further strengthened through other EEAS’ tools, particularly Human Rights Country Strategy Papers and Human Rights Dialogue.

Since the adoption of the Strategic Framework for Human Rights and Democracy and the first Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy for the years 2012-2014, Delegations have drafted around 150 human rights country strategies, with the EU conducting dedicated human rights talks with over 40 countries. The strategies set out the priorities for EU action in the domain of human rights in each third country, and are intended to lead to closer cooperation with civil society and Member States on human rights issues. They form the basis of human rights dialogues, which aim to improve cooperation on human rights bilaterally and within multilateral fora, provide assistance to partner countries, and to better understand local conditions.

So far no human rights dialogues have been held with Pacific Island Countries. Given the interrelation between human rights and gender issues, and the Pacific misgivings about human rights that affect gender discourse and vice versa, dedicated human rights dialogues could provide another welcome moment for exchange and discussion on human rights and gender in the Pacific.

# Mainstreaming of gender and targeted gender actions under the bilateral and regional programmes

## Bilateral programmes

As previously stated, a concern about the GAP 2016-2020 is that the EU will not review financial commitments under the current EU Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020 until 2017. That means that at least until then, there will not be new specific funds available for gender actions, and that gender actions will largely have to take place mainstreamed or in the “margin” of the already defined and committed focal areas. Only when the Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020 Mid Term Review takes place in 2017, new allocations may be made available.

In line with new programming guidelines for EDF 11, most EDF 11 MIPS for Pacific countries rely on the Pacific Countries’ own National Development Strategies/Plans. As such, the EU’s development objectives in a partner country have been designed to align with the priorities identified by the partner country. This means that analysis and guidance on gender approaches has also largely come from the partner countries themselves.

When looking at the National Development Strategies for the Pacific one finds significant variation in the level of depth and nuance of gender analysis and commitments. Altogether, these Pacific National Development Strategies provided little direction for donors including the European Union, and where they do include commitments to gender, these were not always included in the MIPS for 2014-2020. With little attention for gender in these policy documents, there has been relatively little incentive for the EU to focus attention on gender. As a consequence, few funds have initially been set aside specifically for gender for 2014-2020; and where such funds existed, they are small compared to the overall size of EU donor assistance.

Given the overall weak commitment to gender in the MIPS, and the fact that priorities for 2014-2020 including financial allocations have already been set towards other goals that may or may not have a plausible link with gender equality, there may be little opportunity to integrate gender equality objectives deeply into current programmes, at least until the mid-term review in late 2017. With no new money forthcoming, it is likely that the scale of specific initiatives in the three thematic areas will be limited.

That said, there are opportunities to mainstream gender more effectively into the focal programmes. As outlined in the Plan, the identification of specific objectives from the GAP’s Annex and indicators is to be completed by second semester of 2016, and wherever possible in coordination among all EU actors.<sup>73</sup> As such, during the months following its official launch early 2016, Pacific Delegations will have to identify the ways in which gender can most meaningfully be integrated in these on-going bilateral programmes (in addition to working on gender equality through political dialogue and targeted actions).

On the basis of the previous chapters, in [Table 6](#) an overview is provided of some possible meaningful links between the gender inequality situation in the Pacific countries, the GAP 2016-2020 objectives, and the 2014-2020 focal sectors. For further mainstreaming and identification and formulation of such initiatives, a deeper understanding of the details of the bilateral programmes is required and thus more extensive liaising with the EU delegations.

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<sup>73</sup> EU, 2015, Joint Staff Working Document – Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment: Transforming the Lives of Girls and Women through EU External Relations 2016-2020, p. 16 and p. 19

**Table 6: Gender Mainstreaming in the Pacific Bilateral Programmes**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Focal Sectors</b>	<b>Gender Dimensions to Consider</b>
Cook Islands	1. Water and Sanitation – 1.4 million EUR	- Access to safe flush toilets for women and girls at schools and public places
Federated States of Micronesia	1. Renewable Energy & Energy Efficiency – 12 million EUR	- Involving women in solar installation - Access to renewable energy for women (reducing need of fuel stoves)
Fiji	1. Sustainable Rural Livelihoods – 20 million EUR 2. Public Administration Reform and Governance – 7.5 million EUR	- Land ownership and tenure of women - Women political participation
Kiribati	1. Supporting the Inclusive and Sustainable Socio-Economic Development of Kiritimati Island – 20.5 million EUR	- Involving women in solar installation - Access to renewable energy for women (reducing need of fuel stoves)
Marshall Islands	1. Renewable Energy & Energy Efficiency – 8 million EUR	- Involving women in solar installation - Access to renewable energy for women (reducing need of fuel stoves)
Palau	1. Energy Efficiency – 1 million EUR	- Involving women in solar installation - Access to renewable energy for women (reducing need of fuel stoves)
Papua New Guinea	1. Rural Entrepreneurship, Investment and Trade – 85 million EUR 2. Water, Sanitation and Hygiene – 60 million EUR 3. Education – 30 million EUR	- Land ownership and tenure of women - Access to safe flush toilets for women and girls at schools and public places - School curricula on family health and gender
Samoa	1. Water and Sanitation – 17.2 million EUR	- Access to safe flush toilets for women and girls at schools and public places

Solomon Islands	1. Water and Sanitation - 2. Rural Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Access to safe flush toilets for women and girls at schools and public places</li> <li>- Land ownership and tenure of women</li> </ul>
Tonga	1. Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Involving women in solar installation</li> <li>- Access to renewable energy for women (reducing need of fuel stoves)</li> </ul>
Tuvalu	1. General Environment Protection – 6 million EUR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Involving women in solar installation</li> <li>- Access to renewable energy for women (reducing need of fuel stoves)</li> </ul>
Vanuatu	1. Rural Development – 25 million EUR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Land ownership and tenure of women</li> <li>- Awareness of land rights amongst women</li> </ul>

# Summary of Research Findings & Options for Action by Country

## Fiji

All women are vulnerable to domestic violence but the research identified three groups in particular: disabled women and girls; wives of prisoners; Indo-Fijian women.

The EU could help through

- Skills training for independent living for disabled women
- Working with government to encourage private and public sector employment of disabled women
- Working with minority religions to provide safe houses for abused Indo-Fijians
- Provide a suicide helpline

Alcohol and kava a use is clearly a contributing factor to domestic violence so there is scope to work with government and health agencies to examine licensing laws, opening hours of nightclubs, raise public awareness of the negative consequences of alcohol and kava abuse

The practice of *bulubulu* (the traditional inter-family apology ceremony) is deeply embedded in cultural practices and serves a useful purpose to try and restore harmony in close-knit groups but judges need to be educated as to its application in the court room and consideration could be given to law reform of the Criminal procedure code which allows it to be considered in mitigation.

Opportunities for engaging young boys and male youth in life skills and occupations need to be expanded including traditional skills and encouraging achievements for positive citizenship

There is evidence of conflicting understandings of and underpinning values in respect of shelters for victims of domestic violence

The EU could help by facilitating community discussions across the country about gender-relations working with for example the ministry of Education and its Family Life and Education Curriculum and scoping the opportunities for localised 'safe houses' in areas removed from the main urban centres

Violence free communities offer a positive model but more needs to be understood about the dynamics of these, what makes them successful and whether they offer a model which could be used elsewhere.

The EU could help by instigating a review of these.

Land boundary disputes trigger violence and cause social tension especially where land is becoming overcrowded. The EU could help by working with the iTaukei Land Trust to facilitate boundary delineation.

## Kiribati

Advances are being made in raising awareness about domestic violence but clearly there is a long way to go. This might be supported by the EU by

- Developing the male advocacy programme
- Taking awareness about gender inequality into schools working with Ministry of Education and Ministry of Youth and Social Affairs

There are challenges to developing open and frank discussion about domestic violence and other aspects of gender inequality. The EU could help to address this attitude through supporting the use of theatre to open up discussion about violence in the home

There are issues of shame attaching to victims so some form of anonymous counselling could be considered, for example through Supporting a domestic violence helpline

Given the density of population in the capital there is clearly a need for more provision of safe houses for victims of domestic violence, here and elsewhere in Kiribati. The EU could help by supporting the Women's Crisis a Centre but also offering technical assistance to consider models of self-sustaining safe houses.

The new legislation is in its infancy but clearly understanding it and using it it going to require an extensive and sustained training programme

The EU working with NGOs in the field could provide training to men and women to develop outreach programmes

### **Micronesia**

The Federated States of Micronesia country study, which also covered the Republic of Palau and the Marshall Islands, concluded that there are local views of the person that do not subscribe to the principle of equality, individuality and autonomy of persons, hindering alignment with key UN conventions.

Alongside restorative justice programmes as a supplement to current justice system, the way forward here is to identify, analyse and use indigenous value systems as levers to effect change for the common good.

The EU could support educational programming and participatory action research on cultural views about the construction of male and female gender and sexuality: firstly, develop research-based programmes to counter sexual and labour exploitation (sex workers, slave labour on fishing vessels, and domestic minors); secondly, develop programmes for male and female victims of violence, in and outside population centres; and thirdly, development of traditional and modern boat building through the re-introduction of canoe culture with traditional and contemporary sailing vessels and training in vessel maintenance and usage (such as sailing vessels for local substance activities including sponge farming, pearl farming and marine resource management). Additional support can be gained through SPC and other agencies.

As Christian religion is a key identity marker and there are church or religious groups in every village or on every island, consideration should be given to cooperation with religious organisations - hitherto often excluded from research, policy and development in the area of gender inequality.

Churches often have the organisational base to undertake training of local community stakeholders on trauma counselling. Similarly, the youth is quite neglected and bored and government leaders have not developed programming for youth which is well organised.

The EU could assist here by including support for programming involving fine arts like music, theatre, and sports activities.

### **Papua New Guinea**

There are a number of initiatives taking place in PNG but it is a big country to cover with widely dispersed people. Increasingly mobile telephony and radio is reaching more of the population and these technologies need to be utilised to raise gender awareness across the country. Projects that go out into the community such as the Family Health International and the Human Rights Defender's Network offer useful models.

The EU could enlarge this outreach programme by considering what other networks connect with people beyond the capital.

Clearly there are parallel and overlapping systems of dispute resolution occurring in the context of domestic violence and it is important that the positive aspects of out-of court and informal settlement/mediation be captured and used positively as part of an integrated and holistic approach to gendered violence. The EU could assist in this by setting up roundtables to explore structures for collaboration. Consideration might be given to drafting practice guidelines for police and others to encompass a broader and more inclusive approach to addressing these issues, for example by suggesting mediation, counselling, alternative dispute resolution as a pre-formal stage.

The new domestic violence helpline is proving very popular with men and women but the EU could help by designing programmes to train counsellors in alternative ways of managing anger, jealousy and other triggers of violence, which could work with the helpline as a support service.

### **Samoa**

Despite the 2015 nation report on Human Rights in Samoa, human rights are often cited as the cause of problems in the country and as contrary to the Samoan way of doing things. As a strongly religious country the church can be an advocate and opponent of gender equality.

Despite the secular nature of EU intervention it would be worthwhile exploring opportunities to support church based initiatives which work with NGOs to address gender violence and to support women.

There is considerable misunderstanding about human rights and women's rights in the

country and the EU could act to address this through a wider and inclusive programme of dialogue involving the Ministry of Women, Community and social development, Matai, women's church groups and representatives of village councils (Fono).

Arguments supporting masculinity, male sexuality and the attribution of fault to female victims are pervasive in Samoa, and as in PNG, support for strong male champions of gender equality as well as a helpline for all victims of domestic violence, coupled with regular publicity in local media might be a way to harness this positively. Working with private sponsors the EU could pilot these projects.

The self-victimisation of some women and realisation that not all Samoan women speak with one voice needs to be appreciated and one way is to encourage the exchange of views channeled through the instrumentation of theatre and film which prompts and then takes on board in a reflective manner the reaction and participation of diverse audiences. There is scope for the EU to support the development of pilot projects along these lines which could be more widely distributed and used across the region.

### **Solomon Islands**

There is a growing body of engagement with gender violence and inequality in Solomon Islands, but as elsewhere people are geographically scattered and even in the capital Honiara there are resource constraints undermining broader gender equality education and in particular awareness and understanding about the recent Family Protection Act.

The EU could help through training lawyers and NGOs about the new legislation and in particular facilitating communication in appropriate languages and registers to the different sectors of society.

The EU could also facilitate inter-agency approaches to violence in the home bringing together the formal and non-formal sector.

Civil disturbance has left many women marginalised from economic development. The EU together with partners such as they Asian Development Bank and others could look at micro-finance for women, especially in the urban and peri urban areas.

Solomon Islands has a rapidly growing population and young people make up a sizeable proportion of that. There are initiatives

directed at engaging youth in gender equality dialogue and the EU could build on this and encourage it through secondary schools working with the Commonwealth youth programme and Organisations such as scouting and youth branches of church groups.

There is scope for active theatre and radio outreach in the Solomons which the EU could support, helping to bring together and share expertise in these fields across the region

### **Tuvalu**

Like Kiribati violence in the home is seen as being a private matter and new legislation has been received in mixed ways. It is important that the new law is made comprehensible through translation and that its purpose is properly understood to encompass men, women and children. The EU could help with support for translation and supporting material to explain concepts which are unfamiliar to people in Tuvalu.

Concerns regarding shame and dishonour brought on the family by the victim reporting violence could be addressed by a helpline (as recently launched in PNG) and the EU could assist by supporting training of switchboard responders.

The acceptance and perpetuation of violence as a form of discipline is unlikely to change unless schools and the correctional services change their approaches.

Working with the Ministry for Education, the courts and the correctional services the EU could facilitate discussion around alternative forms of discipline/punishment

The country report draws attention to the acceptance of women as inferior to men. This male superiority could be harnessed to celebrate those men who work actively for gender equality, or who champion women's rights. The PNG model of Man of Honor is something the EU might consider supporting in partnership with private enterprise and local media.

### **Vanuatu**

There are a number of active agencies engaged in promoting gender equality and trying to address domestic violence. Much of the effort is located in the capital and even there does not always reach those in the peri-urban areas. At a local level however there are

examples in village councils and settlement organisations of efforts to work towards gender equality.

Access to micro finance has been shown to be important and the EU could support this through developing self-sustaining skills for life which women and young adults could use together with micro-finance to build more secure futures.

There is legislation in place to address domestic violence but to many this is seen as only relevant to women. There is scope for the EU to support the training of male advocacy of gender equality with an emphasis on the inclusive nature of the law.

Mobile telephony is wide spread in the country and radio is a popular medium that has been used to good effect to address social issues. The EU could work with private sponsors to capitalise on these forms of communication to engage discussion (chat shows are popular) and to educate.

There has been considerable work undertaken by the theatre group Wan Smolbag to engage youth and this deserves continuing support, but lack of opportunities and hope continues to be a very real problem especially for young men. The EU could consider the traditional boat building Model in FSM and working with organisations such as the National Cultural Centre, the Ministry of Sport and Wan Smol Bag support the fostering of brighter futures for today's youth.

Security of land tenure for women remains problematic. The EU could support a number of initiatives, for example a land helpline, advocacy for putting informal leases which are common in settlements on a more formal basis, and working with the banking sector designing practice guidelines for mortgage lending which address gender inequalities.

### **EU funding envelopes and key threads**

Funds from the envelope 'Measures in favour of civil society', as well as thematic funds under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), the Civil Society Organisations and Local Authorities Programme (CSO-LA) and the Instrument for

Stability and Peace (IcSP), can be used for smaller, country-specific actions on gender. Some of the funds called "measures in favour of civil society" can also be used to address gender dimensions.

For the design of such programmes, or when evaluating gender-focused submissions for Calls for Proposals under the EIDHR or CSO-LA programme, we may take cue from the options for action made in the country analyses. Some of these specific ideas for one country would also be highly relevant in other Pacific countries.

### **Key Threads for Targeted Action**

One key thread in all suggestions is the need for space for dialogue on local values and social structures on the one hand and concepts of human rights, women's rights and gender equality on the other. Different ways to facilitate such dialogue are mentioned, particularly film, theatre and local women facilitators. Recurring thereby is also the need to find ways to engage the Church and religious organisations in such discussions, and partner with the Church and religious organisations to hold dialogue on (gender) values and champion women's rights and empowerment.<sup>74</sup>

Secondly, there is a need for such dialogues and participatory action research more widely to yield insight in how (already established) local ways and practices to work on gender equality are experienced, and which efforts are worth supporting and/or expanding. An example is kastom-based mediation. While community-based mediation may be an accessible and culturally sensitive way to deal with GBV, power differentials between the parties involved and cultural norms may lead to women not getting the justice they are entitled to, and this balance needs to be better investigated. Local organisations and researchers could be funded to carry out such research, mentored and trained by a research institution.<sup>75</sup>

Thirdly, various targeted advocacy efforts are mentioned, which vary from country to country but often include land and migration issues.

<sup>74</sup> An interesting examples from Africa is "Through the Voice of Faith" project in Uganda, run by Trocaire and Raising Voices, see <http://raisingvoices.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/downloads/resources/ThroughtheVoiceofFaithFINALFeb2013.pdf>

<sup>75</sup> An interesting model is the Strengthening Research and Action on Gender-Based Violence in Africa project, carried out by the international center for research on Women. See <http://www.svri.org/StrengtheningResearch.pdf>



# Summary of Research Findings & Options for Action by Region

Despite a number of initiatives by national, regional and international agencies to achieve greater gender equality there are still huge gender inequalities. This may be for a number of reasons:

**1** There is very little research about local understandings of gender, the gendering of issues such as domestic violence, women as leaders, women as entrepreneurs or in business, in Pacific societies. This deficit is evident in the assumed binary divide between men/women/ male/female, when these categories may be more fluid and complex in Pacific societies. There is also a related failure to understand the social construction and consequences of gendered roles. There are also issues about understanding equality in the context of highly structured, largely patrilineal social organisation in which the equilibrium between various parts while not static may be vulnerable to disruption.

**2** Although there are devolved gender equality projects operating at single country levels, invariably the island countries of the Pacific are either grouped collectively under Asia-Pacific, or Pacific – which may include Australia and New Zealand, or Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific (ACP), or within the larger groupings of small island developing states (SIDS) or Least Developed Countries (LDCs). One problem with this is that often only one or two countries from the Pacific are considered in any depth. This has two disadvantages: i) it implies a hegemony across and among Pacific island countries, ii) it obscures the fact that in many Pacific island countries accurate data on the relative positions of men and women is absent.

**3** The relationship of custom, especially customary attitudes and practices, as regulatory mechanisms, including the interaction between formal and informal systems need to be understood and addressed by those seeking to apply or change the law and social values. Advocates and guardians of custom need to be encouraged to consider which customs are beneficial to and which are harmful to women and the girl child, and working with government to consider what steps can be taken to mitigate against possible harms and inequities. Hybridities between introduced

measures – such a police no-drop policies, under which police are committed to investigating and prosecuting any reported case of domestic violence - and customary measures, such as mediation, as illustrated in one of the Papua New Guinea case-studies need to be explored and considered more thoroughly.

**4** The role of the church should not be overlooked both as an agency and as a force that is closely integrated into social, and political organisation. In many Pacific island countries religious teaching is so closely intertwined with claims of custom as to be indistinguishable. Biblical texts are frequently cited as justification for the physical punishment of women and children and churches as a physical and spiritual presence in villages need to be brought outside in any initiatives to address gender equality. In this respect more needs to be done through the hierarchy of different denominations.

**5** There is insufficient engagement with understandings and presentations of sexuality, especially masculinity. The country studies include a number examples of the recurrent theme that men cannot be held accountable for their sexual impulses and/or that young girls or women are to blame when men go astray or are violent. At the same time it is evident that women can be violent, to each other as well as to children and less often, to men. A number of the case studies reflect issues of power and submission, as well as the concern that gender equality amounts to the emasculation of male influence.

**6** The link between human rights and gender equality is problematic in much of the region to the extent that human rights are seen as a cause of social disruption: assertions of the individuality of human rights for example, is often seen as pitting individuals against the common good.

**7** There is a failure to tease out and draw on those aspects of Pacific life which could act as building blocks to the advancement of human rights: respect, the mutuality of obligations, the value of social harmony and cooperation in shared endeavours, the importance of Christian tenets of self-conduct and the kindness and generosity of people. While

human rights continue to be viewed as 'other' they are unlikely to take root because although Pacific island constitutions have their own bills of rights there is widespread lack of awareness, education or understanding of these.

At a regional level, the participatory research methods used by this pilot project have demonstrated the efficacy of approaches that take the participation of local actors as their starting point. Future actions can take a lead here: the keys to working more closely with Pacific communities are:

1. A strong participatory approach
2. Engaging the Pacific through its own forms of sociality and on its own conceptual terms by recognising that particular Pacific peoples and communities are best placed to bring their own understandings of indigenous and global knowledges into dialogue
3. Making the most of any existing relational resources, and building upon any organisational foundations already laid by communities themselves

The research points to several possibilities and options for action:

1. The Regional Rights Resources team based with the SPC does valuable work in raising human rights awareness across the region. It does so however primarily from a legal perspective focussing on international rights instruments such as CEDAW. This could be improved by A) developing in country constitutional rights awareness for dissemination in Schools B) working with rights advocates drawn from outside law such as social scientists. The EU could support this by supporting the secondment of non lawyers to RRT.

2. There is still considerable formal gender inequality in the national laws of the region. The Forum, working with Ministries of Justice and departments of women or their equivalents could take the lead in mandating that these should be addressed. The EU could assist with the training of legal draftspersons

3. Opportunities for developing gender equality education across the region are there, and are being used in some countries. The Forum has a role to play through the Ministers of Education to develop guidelines for good practice so that children across the region can not only learn about gender equality but also play a part in shaping policy for gender equality. Programmes in schools would also give girls the opportunity to develop confidence to speak and express views in societies where this is often difficult.

4. A number of country studies point to the positive role of theatre and radio in providing a platform for discussion gender violence and issues of gender equality as well as suggestions for alternative ways of resolving disputes and domestic tensions. The EU already supports a number of these groups and it is recommended that they continue to do so and also explore ways in which collaborative production and dissemination can be advanced across the region.

5. Regional events such as the Pacific Games, Fiji Fashion Week, and the Pacific Arts Festival offer real opportunities for youth in the Pacific to flourish and grow in confidence. Working with the Commonwealth Secretariat and private enterprise the EU could explore the possibility of other events in the region which are underpinned by and showcase gender equality.

6. Digital media is a growing means of communication in the region. The Australian funded PACMAS initiative has demonstrated that linkages between participatory action research and community-responsive documentary film-making can be combined in development actions to support community reflection, dialogue and change in the field of gender inequality. The EU could build on its existing support for the visual and performing arts in development, and draw upon its ongoing support for Intra-ACP initiatives in this area, by combining action research (to better understand Pacific conceptualisation of gender issues), participatory co-production (to explore specific issues and relations through an artistic format), and community dialogue (to support discussion over issues and means to change).



## Appendix 2: ECOPAS

ECOPAS (European Consortium for Pacific Studies)<sup>76</sup> is an EU Framework-7 funded<sup>77</sup> multidisciplinary project designed to provide coordination and support to research and policy communities on issues connected to climate change and related processes in the Pacific Islands region, in order to define better options for sustainable development. ECOPAS is hosted by four European university centres of excellence on Pacific research, in Norway, France, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands (Bergen, Marseille, St. Andrews, Nijmegen), and by two major Pacific institutions (the University of the South Pacific – Fiji, and the National Research Institute – Papua New Guinea), and is coordinated by Professor Edvard Hviding. Key experts for the present research project have been drawn from ECOPAS' extensive network of social sciences and humanities experts with competence on the Pacific region - [www.pacific-studies.net](http://www.pacific-studies.net).

Since the ESfO 2010 conference of the European Society for Oceanists (St Andrews, July 2010)<sup>78</sup> European SSH researchers with expertise on the Pacific region have been working together with the EU to provide an enriched knowledge and evidence base for developing appropriate external actions and development programming for the Pacific context. Gender issues have featured strongly in ECOPAS' work:

- ECOPAS and EEAS co-organised the 'Pacific Connections' High Level Panel at the EU Development Days event (Warsaw, December 2011), which was opened by EC Commissioner Piebalgs and closed by EU Ambassador to the Pacific Abdul Aziz.<sup>79</sup>
- The 'Re-thinking Gender in the Pacific' workshop was held at EEAS' request (St Andrews, April 2013) and fed into the 'Pacific Connections policy roundtable' on gender issues (Brussels, May 2013) attended by DEVCO Gender division.<sup>80</sup>
- ECOPAS was commissioned by the EP DEVE Committee to conduct a study on 'EU Development Strategy in the Pacific' and presented the report based on desktop research and fieldwork across the region to the EP in April 2014.<sup>81</sup>

Since December 2012, ECOPAS has interacted with every Brussels-based EU and EC unit with a Pacific remit, visited each of the EU's Delegations in the Pacific, and held a series of significant events, including Problem-based Workshops and Pacific Connections Policy Roundtables in Brussels, and major international conferences in Europe and the Pacific.<sup>82</sup> In 2013, ECOPAS held a workshop in St Andrews and a policy roundtable in Brussels to unpick the thinking behind current gender policy in the Pacific, and to draw this into dialogue with research evidence of real-life practices and challenges, with the objective of delineating the shape and possibilities for an alternative research-policy agenda.

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<sup>76</sup> <http://www.ecopas.info>

<sup>77</sup> 'Climate Change Uncertainties: Policymaking for the Pacific Front' (FP7-SSH-2012-2, Grant Agreement 320298)

<sup>78</sup> <http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/esfo2010/>

<sup>79</sup> <http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/anthropology/centres/cps/news/connections.html>

<sup>80</sup> <http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/pacificstudies/news/gender.html>

<sup>81</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/research/social-sciences/pdf/deve-eu\\_pacific\\_study\\_en\\_2014-06-30.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/research/social-sciences/pdf/deve-eu_pacific_study_en_2014-06-30.pdf)

<sup>82</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en/news/anthropology-meets-climate-science-pacific>

## Appendix 3: Research Team

The research design involved an inter-disciplinary team approach, coordinating a number of key experts either resident in, or with long experience in, specific field sites across the region. The Principal Investigator is: Dr Tony Crook, Director, Centre for Pacific Studies, University of St Andrews<sup>83</sup>. The Co-Investigators are:

- Ms Ramona Boodoosingh, Centre for Samoan Studies, National University of Samoa
- Professor Annelin Eriksen, Bergen Pacific Studies Research Group, University of Bergen
- Professor Sue Farran, Law School, University of Northumbria (& University of the South Pacific)
- Dr Fiona Hukula, National Research Institute of Papua New Guinea
- Dr Simon Kenema, Centre for Pacific Studies, University of St Andrews
- Dr Lynda Newland, Centre for Pacific Studies, University of St Andrews (& University of the South Pacific)
- Ms Angelina Penner, Bergen Pacific Studies Research Group, University of Bergen
- Mr Galumalemana Steven Percival, Centre for Samoan Studies, National University of Samoa
- Associate Professor, Manuel Rauchholtz, Social Anthropology, University of Heidelberg
- Ms Emilie Roëll, Development Consultant
- Associate Professor Penelope Schoeffel, Centre for Samoan Studies, National University of Samoa
- Ms Tammy Tabe, Bergen Pacific Studies Research Group, University of Bergen

Members of the research team conducted a policy and legal review, and a series of ethnographic case-studies across ten PICs and conducted a second study in four PICs:

### Policy and Legal Review (Farran & Roëll)

Melanesia (Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu):

- Gender Based Violence in Fiji (Newland)
- Effective State and non-State GBV Support in Fiji (Boodoosingh)
- Gender Inequality and Gender Based Violence in Urban PNG (Hukula)
- Voices and the Authority of Women in Post-Conflict Bougainville, PNG (Kenema)
- Conceptualising Gender Issues in the Solomon Islands (Tabe)
- Indigenous Approaches to Resolving Gender Based Violence in Vanuatu (Eriksen & Penner)
- Women and Land in Vanuatu (Farran)

Micronesia (FSM, Kiribati, Marshall Islands and Palau):

- Sexual and Labour Exploitation in Micronesia (Rauchholz)
- Conceptualising Gender Inequality and Gender based Violence through Traditional Values and Religious Perceptions in Kiribati (Tabe)

Polynesia (Samoa and Tuvalu):

- Women's Exclusion from Political Decision-Making in Samoa (Schoeffel & Percival)
- Effective State and non-State GBV Support in Samoa (Boodoosingh)
- Conceptualising Gender Inequality and Gender based Violence through Traditional Values and Religious Perceptions in Tuvalu (Tabe)

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<sup>83</sup> Dr Tony Crook has been PI on numerous research projects, with funding from the Economic and Social Research Council, EU Framework 7 programme, The Leverhulme Trust, The Royal Anthropological Institute, The Royal Society of Edinburgh and the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research. Dr Crook first visited Papua New Guinea in 1989, and has conducted over three years' of village- and mining township-based field research, and has recent experience of seven PICs as part of the ECOPAS study commissioned by the EP DEVE Committee. Dr Crook's book, *Anthropological Knowledge, Secrecy and Bolivip*, Papua New Guinea: Exchanging Skin (OUP 2007), won the British Academy's Postdoctoral Fellowship Monograph Competition. Dr Crook has long experience with the Case-Study methodology to be deployed in the proposed research, having developed a means of training and working with community researchers in the 'Case-Studies from the Ok Tedi Area' project, and having developed this further as the basis of an innovative undergraduate teaching and research project which now sustains the *Ethnographic Encounters* online journal. Dr Crook leads the ECOPAS WP3 'Knowledge Exchange: Research Policy Interfaces for the Pacific Context', and has designed and co-organised the series of workshops and policy roundtables focused on gender violence and gender inequality in the Pacific. Alongside his own research work on gender in rural and urban settings, Dr Crook has supervised research on gender based violence in PNG.

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