



UN WOMEN IN THE PACIFIC

DECEMBER 2014 | ISSUE 3



A quick look back at 2014



A young woman learns to use a generator in Pohnpei in the Federated States of Micronesia in this winning entrant for UN Women's photo competition. The photo won first prize in the professional category and was among 20 Pacific images displayed at the SIDS conference in Samoa. Credit: UN Women/Bill Jaynes.

It's hard to believe it's already the end of 2014; it's been a very busy year for UN Women in the Pacific. We have taken part in, supported and initiated a number of significant activities and events across the region, helping to raise the awareness of, and take steps towards achieving, gender equality and women's empowerment.

- UN Women's Markets for Change project officially launched in Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, rolling out workshops for vendors and stakeholder mechanisms to ensure the project is implemented effectively. The project is supported by the Australian Government.
- UN Women's Executive Director, Phumzile Mlambo Ngcuka visited the Pacific for the first time to attend the Third International SIDS Conference in Samoa. The visit was part of a

highly visible and active presence from UN Women at the conference.

- UN Women worked with UN and local partners to hold a series of transformational leadership and empowerment events to support women political candidates and to encourage a more inclusive interpretation of leadership.
- UN Women launched a 10-part radio drama focusing on a woman standing for election and a woman voting for the first time. The series also broadcast in Pidgin in Solomon Islands ahead of their November general election.
- We ended the year with a bang with highly visible participation in the global 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence campaign through events across the region.



HIGHLIGHTS: (L-R) UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo Ngcuka during her visit to Samoa in September. Credit: UN Women/Olivia Owen; Market vendors at the official launch of the Markets for Change project in Vanuatu. Credit: UN Women/Rachael Kong; Samoa's Electoral Commissioner Papali'i Malietau Malietoa speaks at UN Women's Empowerment Series in Solomon Islands. Credit: UN Women/Martin Child.

IN THIS ISSUE

- Pacific neighbourhoods go orange
- Pacific voices at Beijing review
- Women of FSM at conference
- Commitments to child protection
- Spotlight on human rights



Season's greetings

Welcome to the last issue of the "UN Women in the Pacific" newsletter for 2014. It's our way of keeping in touch; spreading the word about our programmes, our staff, our partners and more.

This is also my first issue as Deputy Representative and Officer in Charge at UN Women at the Fiji Multi-Country Office. It has been a whirlwind and fascinating first few months and I've enjoyed my introduction to the Pacific so far.

In this issue you'll find a roundup of our activities across the Pacific over the past four months, including our most high-profile events of 2014 – the Third International SIDS conference, the UN Women Executive Director's visit, and 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence.

I hope you have a relaxing and enjoyable holiday period and I look forward to continuing to discover more about this diverse region as well as how UN Women can work with you to support your efforts.

Enjoy and we will see you in 2015.

Nicolas Burniat
Deputy Representative
UN Women Fiji Multi-Country Office

Pacific neighbourhoods go orange



Participants in Solomon Islands 16 Days of Activism events expressed what a world without violence against women and girls would look like. Credit: UN Women.

Cities and towns across the Pacific were awash with orange over the past month as people heeded the call to “Orange your Neighbourhood” during the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence campaign.

The campaign started on November 25, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women with a range of events across the Pacific and came to a close with celebrations of International Human Rights Day on December 10.

In Solomon Islands UN Women was part of a joint effort to launch the 16 Days of Activism campaign under the theme “Hapi Famili, Hapi Kandere: Endim Vaelens insaed lo Hom” in an effort to raise awareness of the recently passed Family Protection Act. UN agencies also ran an interactive stall at the Youth Market.

More than 700 people participated in an event run by Pacific Fund grantee Eastern Highlands Family Voice in Papua New Guinea, while 20 men raced wearing traditional women’s dress and pledged an oath to fight against violence against women.

Samoa had a highly visible campaign that included the Ending Violence in Samoa Roundtable event, while both Fiji and Samoa partnered with Digicel to launch Facebook competitions, social media campaigns and national media coverage.

The challenge now is to maintain and build on the momentum and visibility gained through the campaign, turning it into meaningful action towards eliminating violence against women.

Check out photos of events on the next pages.

Ambassador visits Lautoka Market

UN Women’s Fiji launch of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence campaign also included an address from Australia’s Ambassador for Women and Girls, Natasha Stott Despoja.

Deputy Representative Nicolas Burniat says it was great to be able to show the Ambassador some of the work being done on the ground in large part thanks to the Australian Government’s support for UN Women’s Markets for Change and Pacific Fund projects.

November 25 is also White Ribbon Day in Australia when men take a leadership role in changing male behaviour, something that UN Women’s HeForShe campaign also calls for.

At the Lautoka event the Ambassador emphasised the importance of engaging with men and boys in efforts to end violence against women and girls.

“We need men to take responsibility and to acknowledge that we must have healthy and happy, equal and respectful relationships



Australia’s Ambassador for Women and Girls Natasha Stott Despoja (centre) with UN Resident Coordinator Osnat Lubrani and market vendors at Lautoka Market, Fiji. Credit: UN Women/Sereana Narayan.

between women and men, boys and girls.”

The Ambassador has been in the role since December 2013 and is also the founding Chairperson of the Foundation to Prevent Violence against Women and their Children.

The event was part of a four-day visit to Fiji.

story from the field

Seeing changes firsthand in Vanuatu

UN Women’s new Deputy Representative, Nicolas Burniat, travelled to Vanuatu in December to take part in the 16 Days of Activism Campaign and to launch the “Getting Started” workshops as part of the Markets for Change Project. Vanuatu is a Melanesian country with a population of 262,000 spread across more than 80 islands.

“While I have visited several markets in Fiji, this was my first trip to Vanuatu and it underscored for me how different markets can be, in structure and in form, not only between countries but within them as well.

The first markets I visited were ring road markets, which are very small and at first glance may not seem to be thriving economic hubs, but I learned that they have become major stopping and gathering points. The women vendors running them are highly organised and largely integrated into the local community structures.



Vendors at the Epau Ring Road Market in Vanuatu. Credit: UN Women/Olivia Owen.

The markets are often open every day of the week thanks to a kind of mini co-op system where the vendors take it in turns to attend to the stall and sell on behalf of the other producers. This also allows the market vendors to pursue several economic activities at the same time.

On the other hand, the Marobe Market was initially designed for people from outer islands to sell livestock. The vendors, or a few representatives from the larger group, would stay until they had sold everything. Sometimes this could take up to two or three weeks so having appropriate accommodation facilities was particularly important.

For me, the trip was a timely reminder that while our Markets for Change project runs across three countries, the approach needs to be highly tailored to take these differences into account.”

SNAPSHOT: 16 Days of Activism in the Pacific



1| The launch of the 16 Days of Activism campaign in Solomon Islands. Credit: UN Women/Patrick Reoka. 2| Eastern Highlands Family Voice event in Papua New Guinea. Credit: EHFV. 3| Dr Jiko Luveni, Fiji's first female speaker of Parliament, UN Resident Coordinator Osnat Lubrani and Fiji's Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation Rosy Akbar at a presentation to parliament. Credit: UN Women/Sereana Narayan. 4| 20 men participated in a race wearing orange meri blouses as part of a Safe Cities event at Gerehu Market in Papua New Guinea. Credit: UN Women. 5| A participant at the Youth Market in Solomon Islands, a collaboration between UN agencies and SPC's Youth@Work. Credit: UN Women. 6| UN Women's Deputy Representative from the Fiji Multi-Country Office, Nicolas Burniat, and Australia's Ambassador for Women and Children, Natasha Stott Despoja, take a tour of the Lautoka Market in Fiji on Orange Day. Credit: UN Women/Sereana Narayan. 7| Candidate for Tongatapu No.3, Orange Team and male advocates joined UN Women in Tonga at the Awareness March for White Ribbon Day. Credit: UN Women/Kepreen Ve'eutu.

SNAPSHOT: 16 Days of Activism in the Pacific



1| Entrants in Honiara's Youth Market dance competition to creatively spread the message of ending violence against women and girls in Solomon Islands. Credit: UN Women.

2| A Digicel Fiji employee with her entry into UN Women and Digicel Fiji's 16 Days of Activism Facebook campaign. Photo supplied.

3| Young boys supporting the elimination of violence against women at Honiara's Youth Market in Solomon Islands. Credit: UN Women.

4| 16 Days of Activism march in Vanuatu. Credit: UN Women/Betty Toa.

5| A participant in the Safe Cities event at Gerehu Market in Papua New Guinea. Credit: UN Women.

6| Female political candidate 'Ana Bing Fonua joins Orange Campaigner, Siaosi Sovaleni at the Awareness March for White Ribbon Day in Tonga. Credit: UN Women/Kepreen Ve'etutu.

7| Dancers from the VOU company perform at UN Women's launch event for 16 Days of Activism at Lautoka Market in Fiji. Credit: UN Women/Sereana Narayan.

For more photos visit UN Women Pacific's Flickr albums: <http://bit.do/VyrJ>

Pacific voices raised at Beijing review



Lopeti Senituli, CEO of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Tonga, represented Tonga in negotiations over the wording of the official declaration ahead of the ministerial meeting. Photo credit: UN Women/Pornvit Visitoran

Representatives of governments and civil society organisations from across the Asia-Pacific region gathered in Bangkok in November to review progress and gaps in their implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action ahead of next year's 20th anniversary.

The conference ran from November 17-20 during which time the government delegations first negotiated and then adopted the official ministerial statement that will be presented at the global commemorations at the 59th Commission on the Status of Women in March next year.

In the lead-up to the conference proper, UN Women organised training around Beijing +20 for Pacific youth representatives, as well as a media training for Asia and Pacific journalists and bloggers. UN Women also attended the

civil society sessions where organisations negotiated their own statement to present to the government delegations.

The majority of Pacific countries were represented during the proceedings, presenting a particularly vocal and united front in pushing for the use of stronger language, including the phrases "sexual orientation and gender identity" and "sexual and reproductive health and rights", as well as the impacts of climate change.

UN Women, along with other UN and regional agencies, supported several government delegations in attending the conference, some of which included civil society representatives who were also active during the plenary sessions.

Ministerial Declaration: <http://bit.do/VCyj>
CSO statement: <http://bit.do/VCys>

Women of FSM gather for conference

Women from all over the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) came together in October for the Third National Women's Conference in Pohnpei under the theme "Maintaining our Culture to Inspire Change".

Running from October 20-24, the conference celebrated the progress of FSM women as contributing members of individual communities and as active participants in Micronesian society. It also highlighted their role as strong guardians of culture and their responsibility to embrace the challenges of today in order to secure a better tomorrow.

Presentations covered a wide variety of topics including the economy, family and child protection and safety, access to education and health, political leadership, domestic violence, gender and climate change and food security.

UN Women's technical adviser for the Advancing Gender Justice in the Pacific programme attended the conference and gave a presentation on what UN Women is doing in other countries as well as what could be



Representatives of Pohnpei at the Third Women's Conference in the Federated States of Micronesia. Credit: UN Women/Tonni Brodber.

relevant for FSM. She says it was a fantastic opportunity to see behind the statistics.

"While FSM has no women in their national parliament, there are women in the senate and at a local level who are working every day with civil society and the private sector to promote equitable and effective governance."

Pacific staff come together for retreat

UN Women staff from across the Pacific gathered in Fiji for the organisation's retreat in October.

It was an opportunity to look back at what worked in 2014, what didn't and how we can improve as an organisation both internally and externally, as well as for a knowledge exchange between staff based in different countries.



It was also a chance for staff to strategise about how to link their work with key global processes such as the Beijing +20 review and the negotiations for the post-2015 development agenda, as well as how to ensure UN Women is fit for purpose in order to deliver for women and girls of the Pacific within this evolving context.

The five-day retreat included sessions focused on team-building, results-based programming and reporting, communications, resource mobilisation, issues raised in UN Women's first global staff survey, as well as a full-day gender learning workshop.



Deputy representative Nicolas Burniat says it was great to have an opportunity to discuss the challenges and opportunities facing UN Women staff in different Pacific countries face to face and to explore ways to scale up our work in the region.

"Gender equality is now being recognised as one of the most important development issues for the Pacific, together with climate change. We therefore need to be as effective as possible across the board to maximise the impact we make with our limited resources."

M4C stakeholders around the table



Participants at the Stakeholders Roundtable event for UN Women's Markets for Change project in Nadi. Credit: UN Women/Ellie van Baaren

Municipal councils across the region met at the Markets for Change stakeholders roundtable event in November and found that although their markets and towns are quite different, they share a lot of the same challenges and some have discovered different ways of dealing with them.

Held in Nadi, the two-day meeting was designed to allow for in-depth discussions between the M4C team, UNDP and 32 stakeholders from Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu about their plans for 2015 and any gaps and opportunities that need attention.

For Vanuatu's Director of Local Authorities, Cheroi Alanavibori, it was a reminder of how important markets are in Pacific communities.

"Markets are a common place where people come together, congregate, meet and greet; in Vanuatu they are always in the centre of

the town. There is therefore a lot of activity happening there, making markets a hub for development and for information."

Moses Kaukui, Treasurer of Honiara City Council says that when it comes to the physical infrastructure and operating systems, another of M4C's four focus areas, hearing from the other markets struck a chord.

"We are not alone. You talk about security issues; we have issues with security too. You talk about problems with infrastructure; we have infrastructure problems too. I take this as a motivating factor [challenge] for me instead of being a negative factor. We will have to move on together and carefully plan."

The Markets for Change project is supported by the Australian Government, as well as UN Women's National Committees in Australia and New Zealand.

Commitments to child protection

In November UN Women supported a workshop on child protection in emergencies held in Palau by UNICEF.

Delegates from government ministries, national disaster management offices, Red Cross National Societies and women's and children's rights organisations from Palau, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia and Tonga attended the four-day workshop.

Among other things, the workshop covered child protection, gender and gender-based violence in emergencies, monitoring and evaluation, and communication and consultation with vulnerable groups.

The workshop's outcome was the endorsement a set of minimum commitments on child protection in emergencies.

Pip Ross, UN Women's protection gender adviser at the Fiji Multi-Country Office, attended the workshop and says it was great to be able to collaborate with UNICEF.



Participants at UNICEF's workshop on Child Protection in Emergencies held in Palau. Credit: UN Women/Pip Ross.

"Disasters have different impacts on girls and boys, and girls and boys also have different skills, coping mechanisms and strategies for resilience – these commitments will help national authorities direct humanitarian assistance towards these specific needs, and to support girls and boys to survive, recover and rebuild their lives after disasters".

facebook

Top stories

A Time to Stand radio series

Total Post Reach: 33,056

Post Clicks: 332

Likes: 1641

Comments: 12

Shares: 48



Int'l Rural Women's Day

Total Post Reach: 21,752

Post Clicks: 301

Likes: 926

Comments: 3

Shares: 17



16 Days Lautoka launch

Total Post Reach: 4,918

Post Clicks: 910

Likes: 209

Comments: 15

Shares: 24



TED: VAW is a men's issue

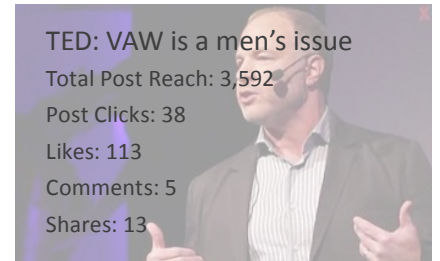
Total Post Reach: 3,592

Post Clicks: 38

Likes: 113

Comments: 5

Shares: 13



Pacific youth in Bangkok

Total Post Reach: 3,104

Post Clicks: 177

Likes: 261

Comments: 12

Shares: 22



12,538

The number of likes on the UN Women Pacific Facebook page as at December 16, 2014.

comings and goings

Introducing ...

Over the past three months UN Women has welcomed several new staff members to the Pacific. Here's your chance to meet them as well.

**Atenasi Ata Wasuka**

Project Coordinator – Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, Ending Violence against Women, Solomon Islands

Atenasi joins the EVAW team from AusAID and has a strong working experience in a variety of areas including project and budget management, reporting and information sharing. She has a Bachelor in Science degree.

Geraldine Ryan

Gender Justice Adviser, Advancing Gender Justice in the Pacific, Samoa

Geraldine brings extensive experience ranging from commercial and civil litigation to employment law. She is a New Zealand volunteer and has a Masters in Law from Auckland University.

Katarina Tofinga

Country Programme Coordinator Kiribati

Katarina joins UN Women from the private sector where she was operating a consultancy service business. She also served as the Board Director of the Kiribati Chamber of Commerce and Industry and has a Masters in Public Administration from the University of Canberra.

Kepreen Veetutu

Project Coordinator, Ending Violence against Women Tonga

Kepreen comes to UN Women from the Talitha Project where she worked as a technical adviser. She has also worked in various capacities with organisations such as the World Bank Project, Tonga Business Enterprise Centre and has a Masters in Tourism from Monash University in Melbourne.

Mouna Peters

National Project Coordinator – Western Division, Fiji, Markets for Change, Lautoka

Mouna joined the M4C team in September from South Pacific Tourism Organisation where she worked as a tourism research officer. She has a Bachelor of Arts and has previously worked in various capacities with the Fiji Ministry of Tourism.

Pranit Pravinesh Sami

Programme Support Associate, Monitoring and Evaluation, Fiji Multi-Country Office

Pranit joins the MCO after five years as a HIV and AIDS Programme Assistant with UNICEF. He brings with him wide-ranging experience after working with UNDP, Greenpeace and the University of the South Pacific. He has a Post Graduate Diploma in Development and Governance Studies.

Sereana Narayan

Communications Associate, Fiji Multi-Country Office

Sereana comes to UN Women from SPC where she was an information assistant. She has experience in journalism, editing, marketing and online content. Sereana has a Bachelor of Arts from the University of the South Pacific.

Shabina Khan

Project Coordinator – Fiji and Samoa, Ending Violence against Women Fiji Multi-Country Office

Shabina joins the EVAW team from Fiji Women's Rights Movement where she worked as a human rights training officer. She has a Post Graduate Diploma in International Affairs from the University of The South Pacific.

Latest round of Pacific Fund grantees announced

Eleven projects designed to promote ending violence against women and girls in five Pacific countries have been announced as the latest recipients of UN Women's Pacific Regional Ending Violence against Women Facility Fund (Pacific Fund).

The civil society organisations and government departments will receive grants from a pool of almost US\$700,000, as well as capacity building and technical support over the next two to three years as a result of the latest call for applications.

The Pacific Fund is a key component of UN Women's Ending Violence against Women and Girls programme and was established in 2009 to support innovative projects working to prevent violence and provide services to survivors.



Participants at an event hosted by Pacific Fund grantee Eastern Highlands Family Voice in Papua New Guinea. Credit: EHFV.

The new grantees are:

FIJI

House of Sarah
Medical Services Pacific
Department for Women
Fiji Girl Guides Association

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Buka General Hospital Support Centre

SOLOMON ISLANDS

Vois Blong Oi Meri

TONGA

Ma'a Fafine Moe Famili
Ministry of Internal Affairs
Tonga Women and Children Crisis Centre
Tonga National Centre for Women and Children

VANUATU

Vanuatu Council of Churches

The Pacific Fund is principally funded by the Australian Government.

Read more about the Pacific Fund at:
<http://bit.do/VCyY>

UN Women ED visits the Pacific



L-R: Deputy Representative UN Women Fiji Multi-Country office Nicolas Burniat, then-Acting Representative Fiji Multi-Country Office Rawwida Baksh, Lina Chang President Samoa Victim Support Group, UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Fia'ailotoa Pepe Christian Fruean, Chief Executive Officer Digicel Samoa, Chief Sergeant Patrina Dikin, UN Women Regional Director Asia and the Pacific Roberta Clarke. Credit: UN Women/Olivia Owen.

UN Women staff attending the Third International Small Island Developing States Conference in Samoa in September also hosted a special guest – UN Women's Executive Director, Phumzile Mlambo Ngcuka.

It was Ms Mlambo Ngcuka's first visit to the Pacific in this capacity and the conference provided the perfect opportunity for her to meet with representatives from across the Pacific and other SIDS regions, learn more about UN Women's work in the Pacific and help ensure UN Women and gender issues had a high profile at the event.

At the conference Ms Mlambo Ngcuka participated in the Chief Executive Board event with other heads of UN agencies, took part in

a high-level panel at UN Women's side event about Beijing +20 and attended several of the plenary sessions.

UN Women as an organisation was very active in and around the conference (see article right) and Ms Mlambo Ngcuka was able to attend and/or participate in a number of these activities including: the Markets for Change and Safe Cities cocktail evening; a lunch with civil society representatives from SIDS regions; a site visit to Samoa Victim Support Group, which is a Pacific Fund grantee; and a tour of the UN Women Pacific photo exhibition at the conference venue.

You can check out photos from Ms Mlambo Ngcuka's visit on Flickr: <http://bit.do/VCzj>

IN REVIEW: SIDS Conference 2014

The Third International Small Island Developing States Conference was held in Apia, Samoa in September and attracted delegations from across the globe in order to ensure that their unique and particular vulnerabilities are considered within the global sustainable development agenda.

As part of a wider effort to ensure gender issues were highly visible and actively covered, UN Women was particularly active both in the lead up to and during the conference proper. The delegation included the organisation's Executive Director (see article left), as well as Roberta Clarke, the Regional Director for the Asia-Pacific region and staff from the Fiji MCO, the Papua New Guinea office and the Samoa field presence.



Camillo Gonsalves Minister of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade, Consumer Affairs and Information Technology, St Vincent and the Grenadines taking part in UN Women's Beijing +20 side event. Credit: UN Women/Olivia Owen.

Under the overarching theme of partnerships, the Markets for Change and Safe Cities projects were a particular focus for UN Women, working as they do with a wide variety of stakeholders. The cocktail evening on September 1 was well attended and gave the spotlight to stories from those best placed to tell them – the women themselves.

More than 250 people turned up for UN Women's official side event on looking beyond Beijing +20 on September 2. One of the prominent themes that emerged from the high-level panel and the questions that followed was that while there has been considerable progress when it comes to gender equality in SIDS regions, implementation has been decidedly "mixed". The panel included the Prime Minister of Tuvalu, the Director-General of SPC, the Minister of Foreign Affairs from St Vincent and the Grenadines and UN Women's Executive Director.

Scroll down for more photos.

Read the SAMOA Pathway
<http://bit.do/VCJn>



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: The ED with (L-R) Tahere Si'isi'ialafia, Tarusila Bradburgh and Noelene Nabulivou. Credit: UN Women/Ellie van Baaren; the ED speaks with Chief Sergeant Patrina Dikin from Papua New Guinea during the site visit to Samoa Victim Support Group. Credit: UN Women/Olivia Owen; the ED alongside one of the photographs from UN Women's Pacific photo exhibition. Credit: UN Women/Ellie van Baaren; the ED at the CSO lunch with Regional Director for Asia-Pacific, Roberta Clarke. Credit: UN Women/Ellie van Baaren; the ED at UN Women's SIDS side event on Beijing +20. Credit: UN Women/Olivia Owen.

SNAPSHOT: Third International SIDS Conference, Samoa



1 UN Women's Country Programme Coordinator for Samoa, Mele Maualaivao (far right) with guests at UN Women's Markets for Change event during the SIDS conference. Credit: UN Women/Olivia Owen. **2** Then-Acting Representative for UN Women's Fiji Multi-Country Office Rawwida Baksh with UN Women Regional Director for Asia Pacific Roberta Clarke. Credit: UN Women/Olivia Owen. **3** Cultural performers at the civil society closing ceremony. Credit: UN Women/Olivia Owen. **4** Participants in the SIDS Youth Forum. Credit: UN Women/Olivia Owen. **5** UN Women Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction Policy Advisor Cecilia Aipira addresses youth participants at the Youth Tent. Credit: UN Women/Olivia Owen. **6** Regional Director for Asia Pacific Roberta Clarke is interviewed by Outreach magazine in front of the UN Women Pacific exhibition at the SIDS venue. Credit: UN Women/Olivia Owen. **7** UN Women's Executive Director speaking at the Markets for Change/Safe Cities cocktail evening. Credit: UN Women/Olivia Owen.

For more photos visit UN Women Pacific's Flickr albums: <http://bit.do/Vyrj>



Shining a spotlight on women's rights



Civil society and government representatives who took part in the mock-CEDAW session in Honiara, Solomon Islands. Credit: UN Women/Martin Child.

Women's rights in Solomon Islands were under the microscope in October at the 59th session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in Geneva.

Government and civil society representatives went to Geneva for the constructive dialogue – Solomon Islands' first – but before they left they took part in a mock session run by UN Women with support from the European Union.

The session was facilitated by the CEDAW committee's vice-chairperson Pramila Patten from Mauritius, who was therefore perfectly placed to offer technical advice to all participants.

Audrey Micah Manu, UN Women's programme coordinator for its Advancing Gender Justice in the Pacific, says the CEDAW reports and committee recommendations are essential in holding states accountable for their commitments.

"Signing a treaty is just the first step, the real progress comes from making changes that have a real effect on women's lives. Ending discrimination against women is a key step in achieving gender equality and it is great to see Solomon Islands taking ownership of its commitments to CEDAW and its mandate for gender equality.

Knowledge exchange in Melbourne

Representatives from 14 different NGOs and government departments from six Pacific countries travelled to Melbourne in October for a knowledge and learning exchange around their work towards ending violence against women and girls.

The workshop was part of the capacity building component of UN Women's Pacific Regional Ending Violence against Women Facility Fund (Pacific Fund).

The participants and UN Women's Ending Violence against Women team spent the week hearing from practitioners from Victoria, and many spent a day at one of a number of agencies across the city that work on different aspects of violence against women.

Four participants also attended a conference on violence prevention in Bendigo, where UN Women's Regional Project manager for the Pacific Fund, Tupou Vere, also presented on violence against women in the Pacific.



Participants in UN Women's Pacific Fund Knowledge and Learning Exchange in Melbourne. Credit: UN Women/Ellie van Baaren.

Several participants then stayed on for a three-day intensive site visit with Barwon Centre Against Sexual Assault in Geelong.

As a principal funder of the Pacific Fund, Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade also actively participated in the workshop.

Promoting women in parliament via radio drama

People in the Pacific were introduced to Meri and her family in November with the launch of a 10-part radio drama called "A Time to Stand" that follows her journey as she decides to stand for parliament for the first time.

Created by UN Women, the European Union and Vois Blong Mere, and produced by Pasifika Communications, the series launched online in mid-November but had also been broadcasting across Solomon Islands in Pidgin from November 3 ahead of their general election.



Meri is a fictional character, as is her "Pacific Island home" but her story was created to reflect the challenges women considering standing for election across the Pacific region face – both in making that initial decision to stand and in getting enough votes to win.

While women have the right to vote and stand for election in all Pacific countries, they must often overcome negative gender stereotypes and socio-cultural norms.

UN Women Deputy Representative Nicolas Burniat says the radio drama is intended to encourage reflection on what a leader looks like and the roles that women can and should play in politics.

"Radio is a powerful medium in the Pacific and we hope that this innovative series will help start discussions about women and leadership in every house, village and community across the region."

The radio series is part of the EU-supported Strongim Mere project, which falls under UN Women's Advancing Gender Justice programme.

Take a listen to A Time to Stand <http://bit.do/VCPM>