

# Pacific Partnership to End Violence Against Women and Girls (Pacific Partnership)



## FIJI COUNTRY SUMMARY

Updated June 2022

Fiji is a focus country of the Pacific Partnership to End Violence Against Women and Girls (Pacific Partnership) programme.

Violence against women and girls is recognised worldwide as a social, political, and public health problem as well as a fundamental violation of human rights. **In Fiji, 64 percent of women (almost two in three) aged 18-49 years who have ever been in an intimate relationship have experienced physical and/or sexual violence** by a husband or intimate partner in their lifetime – **almost double the global average<sup>1</sup>**.

The Pacific Partnership programme brings together governments, civil society organisations, communities, and other partners to promote gender equality, prevent violence against women and girls (VAWG), and increase access to quality response services for survivors.

### Pacific Partnership Priorities in Fiji

There are three key outcomes prioritised for Fiji under the programme:

#### 1. Transforming harmful social norms to prevent violence against women and girls (led by UN Women)

Increasing evidence demonstrates that violence against women and girls is preventable, and preventable within years, not lifetimes, through appropriate and comprehensive prevention work. Stopping violence before it starts is vital as response services alone cannot address a complex social problem of this size and scope. This is best achieved by addressing the root causes of violence, using a whole-of-population level approach.

Evidence indicates that prevention interventions are more effective if they: address social norms, attitudes and behaviour that perpetuate violence against women and girls; challenge dominant notions of masculinity linked to violent and controlling behaviours; involve all community members; and include long-term, systematic engagement across all levels of society in multiple settings. Through Pacific Partnership, the UN Women is focusing on areas identified as powerful channels of influence in Fiji – such as faith and sports- and working alongside all its partners to support transformative change.

### ABOUT PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP

The Pacific Partnership is funded primarily by the European Union, and the Governments of Australia and New Zealand, and UN Women, and is led by the Pacific Community (SPC), UN Women and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat.

In Fiji, two of the three coordinating agencies have Pacific Partnership activities: UN Women and PIFS.

In addition to Fiji, other countries and territories in the Pacific region benefiting from the five-year programme include, but are not limited to Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.





## 2022-2023 prevention initiatives supported by UN Women include:

### Using a whole-of-government and community approach to prevent violence against women and girls

- Fiji National Action Plan to Prevent VAWG:** Supporting the Government of Fiji's Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation (MWCPA) to develop a National Action Plan (NAP) to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls (2022-2027), making Fiji the first Pacific Island Country, and one of the only two countries globally along with Australia, to have a whole-of-government and whole-of-community, evidence-based, measurable, inclusive plan with an emphasis on stopping violence before it starts. It focuses on preventing the most prevalent forms of violence against women and girls in Fiji- domestic violence/intimate partner violence and sexual violence against women and girls. The process of developing the Fiji NAP engages 13 key sectors including the priority settings of education, youth and sports; faith-based institutions and groups; and traditional institutions and entities (such as the Ministry of I-Taukei Affairs). It is important to note that the process of developing the Fiji NAP through a national dialogue is a primary prevention intervention in and of itself and thus is as important as the drafting of the actual Fiji NAP policy. The Fiji NAP will set out short, medium, and long-term measures to prevent violence against women and girls by challenging its underlying root causes, and influence social norms, promote community leadership, and set a much stronger culture of equal and respectful relationships between women and men. The Fiji NAP is anticipated to be released in the third-quarter of 2022.

### Using a whole-of-community, nation and region approach to prevention through faith and sports

- Community (faith):** Partnering with the **House of Sarah (HOS)** to adapt *SASA! Faith* for implementation as an innovative, Fiji-specific faith-based community programme to prevent violence against women and girls across three Anglican communities at Saint Mark's in Newtown (Nasinu), Saint Michael & All Angels in Matata (Lami) and Wailoku (Suva). HOS's *Preventing Violence in Fiji's Faith Settings (PVFFS)* project uses faith-based approaches and religious teachings to engage with church leaders and community members to encourage gender equality and prevent violence against women and girls, which is often accepted as a social norm in Fijian society. The Women's

Fund Fiji co-funded the programme in 2018 and 2019. Raising Voices, the organisation that developed the *SASA! Programme*, provides technical support to House of Sarah and UN Women in adapting the programme to Fiji's context. UN Women's partnership also supports the 'Sarah Carers' - House of Sarah's response programme that utilises a human rights and survivor-centred approach to providing community level support and referral mechanism for survivors in faith communities and faith settings.

- National and regional (faith):** Supporting **faith leaders' advocacy initiatives** to prevent violence against women and girls with the House of Sarah, the Pacific Conference of Churches and key Fiji interfaith leaders, through the national *One Voice Campaign*. One Voice is a national multi-media campaign aired during the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence Campaign, where Christian, Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh leaders publicly speak-out against violence against women and girls, in videos and documentaries that are aired at cinemas, on television, and circulated on social media. This initiative has now expanded beyond Fiji to Samoa and Tonga.
- Regional (faith):** Partnering with the Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC) on the *'Just and Safe Pacific Communities of Women and Men'* programme. This strategic programme aims to contribute to the attainment of safe, inclusive and violence free faith communities in the Pacific, by preventing and responding to violence against women and girls, using strategic, collaborative, and innovative approaches with religious leaders and faith communities across 18 Pacific Islands. The programme is advancing a faith-based approach tailored to Pacific faith culture and context to address violence against women and girls at regional and national levels through PCC's 31 Member Christian Churches and 9 councils of Churches across the region. This includes a regional mapping of faith-based responses to violence against women and children, gender equality and child protection; development of a Gender Status Card to assist member churches with assessing and monitoring their commitments and actions to gender equality and EVAWG (due to be released in June 2022); development and implementation of a Safe Church Policy (Zero Tolerance of Violence Against Women and Children in Church Communities) and Code of Conduct; and the expansion of influential advocacy campaigns in the region, such as Break the Silence Sunday for 16 Days of Activism.



- **Community (rugby):** Partnering with Oceania Rugby to design and implement the Get into Rugby PLUS programme in Fiji and Samoa in primary and secondary schools respectively to address violence against women and girls through sport as a tool to promote positive gender equitable norms, attitudes, and behaviours. Building on World Rugby's Get Into Rugby development programme, it uses a safe playing environment and a **life skills component delivered by rugby coaches to support young people aged 10-14 years in 13 schools** in a process of critical thinking and reflection around issues of gender, power relationships and healthy, respectful relationships all built around the rugby values of integrity, solidarity, respect, discipline and passion. Get into Rugby PLUS is a Sport for Development programme jointly developed and implemented by Oceania Rugby, UN Women, Fiji Rugby Union and ChildFund Rugby, and Lakapi Samoa.
- **National and regional (rugby):** Oceania Rugby and UN Women continue to **advance highly visible social norms campaigning through national sporting events**, with campaign messaging that is gender transformative, promoting equality, zero tolerance of violence, and women's safe and equal participation in sports. During one of the most important regional sport events- the Oceania Sevens Tournament in November 2019, 83 percent of spectators surveyed had seen or heard the campaign messages on the importance of equal participation of women and men in rugby; and 80 percent had seen or heard the term 'Equal Playing Field', which was the key gender-equality related message used in all the media promotions, as well as the hashtag used in social media promotions. Eighty percent believed that rugby is for all genders, while 89 percent said they would support a woman to play rugby. Spectator surveys like these are key to gauge how advocacy and behaviour change messages are tracking with target audiences and if adjustments needed to be made. Also, part of the Oceania 7s Communications and Advocacy campaign were gender equality related media releases, social media posts (which included interviews and video footage of women players), signage, associated events and advocacy moments, development by Oceania Rugby, with support from UN Women. Advocacy and communications efforts gained momentum during/ after the visibility and success of the Fijiana Women's Rugby Team at the Olympics in Japan. The performance of the Fijiana team is a watershed moment for women in rugby – and more broadly women in sport – in the Pacific

region. Efforts focused on a highly visible Women in Rugby month in September 2021 that included feature stories on players and women leaders, panel discussions, social media presence and more. These efforts contributed to the high positive visibility of women in rugby at the tournament and promoted gender equality.

- **Regional (football):** On International Women's Day in 2022, UN Women, through the Pacific Partnership, and Oceania Football Confederation (OFC) announced an exciting new partnership, affirming their joint commitment to gender equality through a multiyear partnership, focusing on making football safer and more accessible for women and girls, while promoting gender equality, women's empowerment and preventing violence in the Pacific.

### Strengthening evidence to prevent violence against women and girls in the Pacific

- **Rugby:** Completed research in partnership with Oceania Rugby and the University of the South Pacific to **understand the connections between gender inequality, violence against women and girls and sports** participation in rugby and netball across two countries: **Fiji and Samoa**. This research contributes to the body of knowledge around how to make the field of sports, safe, fair, and accessible to women and girls across Pacific Island nations. It also aims to influence policy and practice of the sport sector to improve safe and equal access to sports; inform programme design to change social norms; and influence and convene organisations nationally and regionally to guide advocacy, social marketing, and communication campaigns on preventing violence against women and girls and promoting gender equality. The research is an internal document that will inform future programming.

### Capacity strengthening and technical support

- The **UN Women Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Technical Hub** provides wraparound technical support to national and regional partners in Fiji to ensure the highest quality programming; increased understanding of evidence-based approaches to prevention informed by Pacific and global evidence and practice; and the development of a sustainable cadre of experts on violence against women and girls prevention and response in Fiji and the Pacific region.





## 2. Improving access to quality, essential services for survivors of gender-based violence (led by UN Women)

The programme advances international best practice, adapted to the Pacific context, to strengthen quality and access to essential services for survivors of gender-based violence. In this area of work, UN Women provides technical support and funding to improve the overall governance and coordination of essential services (such as health, police and justice, social services) and technical and financial support to improve social services. This involves work with local front-line service providers to strengthen access to, and quality of social services for survivors, including but not limited to: strengthening disability inclusive services; adapting services to meet the needs of women and girls with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and expression and sex characteristics (SOGISEC); improving gender-based violence counselling and shelter responses; and supporting innovative models to increase access for women and girls in remote and hard to reach locations.

### 2022-2023 initiatives supported by UN Women include:

#### Supporting national coordination mechanisms and development of minimum standards

- Supporting Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation (MWCPA) in its **national coordination leadership role on ending violence against women and girls services** through:
  - » **Technical advisory support to the National Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Task Force** to support overall coordination and governance of actions nationally.
  - » **Progressing the National Services Delivery Protocol for Responding to Cases of Gender-Based Violence (SDP)** – this includes the decentralisation and localisation of referral pathways at the district level, as well as ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the SDP roll-out and targeted training for police, justice and health services.
  - » Technical advisory support to **develop an administrative data system** to accompany the SDP, allowing for safe and ethical data collection from frontline service providers.
  - » **Coordination and programming support to the National Gender-Based Violence Sub Cluster** to further strengthen national preparedness and response mechanisms that bend and flex in times of crisis, to respond to **gender-based violence in emergencies**.

UN Women provides technical and secretariat support to the Fiji Gender-Based Violence Working Group, that sits within the GBV sub-cluster.

- Partnering with the MWCPA to develop **Minimum Shelter Standards for Survivors of Gender-Based Violence** inclusive of COVID-19 adapted guidelines to ensure ethical and safety standards and procedures are in place.

#### Partnering with women's crisis centres and NGOs

- Partnering closely with the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre to strengthen best practices for gender-based violence response through the **development of counselling courses and broader strategic areas of engagement on ending violence against women and girls**.
- Partnering with Fiji Women's Rights Movement to support community-based organisations who work with women in communities have clearer understanding of **justice sector pathways and services regarding family law and gender-based violence**.
- Supporting national SOGISEC organisations to an **improved access to services for the SOGISEC community**.



### 3. Monitoring and reporting government commitments to gender equality and ending violence against women and girls (led by PIFS)

#### 2022-23 initiatives targeting non-state actors supported by PIFS include:

Fijian non-state actors (NSAs), including civil society organisations and women's groups, also benefit from Pacific Partnership through **strategic engagement, capacity development for monitoring the implementation of national commitments on gender equality, and projects support through small grants**. The PIFS' NSA component of the Pacific Partnership programme works in close concert with agencies on the following key areas (with overall approaches supported by UN Women):

- The Fiji Women's Rights Movement and femLINKpacific were awarded grants as part of the support to NSAs to progress their policy engagement.

- CSO partners such as the Pacific Islands Association of Non-Governmental Organisations, the Pacific Disability Forum, and the Pacific Conference of Churches participated in PIFS last NSA Executive Meeting.
- 2022/2023 Consultations for the revitalized Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration
- Encouraging CSO partners to participate in upcoming PIFS consultative mechanisms including the Annual Regional CSO Forum; the Forum Economic Ministers' Meeting (FEMM); and the CROP Heads and NSA Executive meetings.
- Monitoring of Fiji National General Elections
- 2022 Gender Economic and Financial Workshop
- 2023 Young People's Mock Forums – sub-regions and regional

#### BACKGROUND

In Fiji, the national prevalence study shows about two-thirds of women who have ever been in an intimate relationship have experienced physical and/or sexual violence. When emotional violence is included, the rate rises to 74 percent. From the age of 15 years, 31 percent of women and girls were subject to physical or sexual assault by non-partners. iii

The study also demonstrates that harmful 'social norms' – beliefs and actions accepted as normal in a society - justify and enable men's power over women and allow violence to go virtually unchecked by community leaders, including faith leaders.

These social norms are based within deeply held beliefs that there are "justifiable reasons" for husbands to use physical violence to "discipline and control" their wives, for example. The traditional silence around violence against women and girls makes it difficult for women and girls to share concerns and seek support about the violence they experience, and for all community members to break this cycle. For example, shame and stigma often associated with domestic and sexual violence means that survivors often experience a sense of isolation and fear of retaliation. For those women and girls who do seek to escape abusive situations, or who seek post-sexual assault care, they often find quality essential services are limited or unavailable, with urban women having the most access, though at varied levels of care.

There is strong political will to address violence against women and girls in Fiji, with the Prime Minister; the Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation; and other Fijian leaders frequently condemning violence at the national and global stage. At the ministerial level, the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation (MWCPA) is responsible for addressing gender inequality, the empowerment of women and the disadvantaged. It also has responsibility for the care and protection of children and addressing the needs of women and children within all spheres of Fijian society.







With its Women's Action Plan (2010-2019), the MWCPA has committed to align its work and focus areas on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Beijing Platform for Action (1995) and several other regional and international action plans. In 2014, the Fijian Government launched the Fiji National Gender Policy, furthering its commitment to advance social and economic empowerment of women, including the elimination of violence against women and girls.

In January 2020, the MWCPA, in a joint press-conference with three key ministries, announced its plan to develop a National Action Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls – a first for the Pacific, and only the second country in the world along with Australia – likely to be released in the third quarter of 2022. The MWCPA is also responsible for monitoring government initiatives, including drafting of new policies and procedures that will benefit survivors of gender-based violence and coordinates all efforts to end violence against women and girls through the MWCPA Ending Violence Against Women Task Force.

*Somebody's Life, Everybody's Business: A survey exploring the prevalence, incidence and attitudes to intimate partner violence in Fiji. Conducted by the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre (FWCC), 2013*

<sup>1</sup>Somebody's Life, Everybody's Business: A survey exploring the prevalence, incidence and attitudes to intimate partner violence in Fiji. Conducted by the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre (FWCC), 2013

<sup>2</sup>SASA!: An activist approach for preventing violence against women. Kampala, Uganda: Raising Voices

<sup>3</sup>SOGISEC is a term that has evolved from the more commonly known acronym LGBTQI+ which is for people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex. UN Women is now using this term to ensure we are using terms most preferred by the communities themselves.

**For more information about Pacific Partnership, email: [comms.pac@unwomen.org](mailto:comms.pac@unwomen.org)**

*Imagery inspired by empowering female-specific tattoo motifs used in the Pacific region.*

