

Mid-term Evaluation Pacific Partnership to End Violence Against Women and Girls Programme 2018-2022

Summary Report













ACNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Pacific Partnership to End Violence Against Women and Girls (Pacific Partnership) 2018–2020 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. 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.

The Independent External Midterm Evaluation of the Programme is commissioned by the Pacific Partnership and undertaken by hera in cooperation with Aid Works.

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- The overall governance of the evaluation by the Evaluation Reference Group, which included representatives of the three Pacific Partnership Programme partners, the three principal programme donors (the European Union, and the Governments of Australia and New Zealand), and the Women and Children Crisis Centre (WCCC) Tonga representing civil society implementing partners.

Above all, the team expresses its sincere gratitude to all representatives of government institutions, associations, civil society organisations, and community groups that provided information by supplying documents and dedicating their time to answering questions in interviews and surveys.

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The brand imagery being used for Pacific Partnership is inspired by empowering female-specific tattoo motifs used in the Pacific: www.theveiqiaproject.com

Midterm Evaluation
Pacific Partnership to
End Violence Against
Women and Girls Programme

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings, lessons, conclusions and recommendations of the Independent External Midterm Evaluation of the Pacific Partnership to End Violence Against Women and Girls Programme 2018–2022 (the programme) implemented between November 2020 and April 2021 by hera and Aid Works under the governance of an Evaluation Reference Group that included representatives of donors, partners and implementing civil society organizations (CSOs).

The programme is implemented in nine Pacific Island Countries (PICs) with a total budget of US\$ 30.2 million provided by the European Union (EU), the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) under four funding agreements, each of them earmarked for activities in specific countries. It was launched in November 2018 and is expected to end in August 2022. The programme is a first-ever opportunity for three key partners in the Pacific, two regional intergovernmental entities and a United Nations programme, to work jointly under a common framework. It intends to apply international best practice informed by lessons learned in the Pacific to achieve progress towards gender equality and ending violence against women and girls (VAWG) by challenging negative social norms and practices; enhancing the awareness and practice of respectful relationships and gender equality among women, men, girls and boys; and increasing access to essential services for survivors of violence. Each partner is responsible for one intervention area as defined by the three programme outcomes:

- **Outcome 1**(Secretariat of the Pacific Community SPC): Enhance Pacific Youth's formal in-school and informal education on gender equality and prevention of VAWG;
- **Outcome 2** (UN Women): Promote gender-equitable social norms at individual and community level to prevent VAWG and ensure survivors have access to quality response services; and
- **Outcome 3** (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat PIFS): Empower national and regional CSOs to advocate, monitor and report on regional and on government commitments to enhance gender equality and end VAWG.

PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

The purpose of the evaluation, as resolved by the Programme Steering Committee (PSC) in October 2019, is to guide potential redesigns, adjustments and other programmatic decisions for the rest of the Programme period.

OBJECTIVES, SCOPE AND AUDIENCE

The objectives of the evaluation, as defined in the evaluation's terms of reference, are to:

- Document and evaluate the Programme's relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, and impact;
- Reflect on the progress of the Programme and the validity of its theory of change given the current context and revise it if needed;
- Identify 'what works' and needs to be continued, what needs to stop, and what new adaptations are required;



- Provide learnings, findings, conclusions, and recommendations to inform implementation for the remainder of the Programme, as well as to guide the future direction and investment into the Pacific Partnership; and
- Facilitate learning between Pacific Partnership partners, donors and organisations working to end VAWG in the Pacific.

As agreed with the Evaluation Management Group (EMG), the evaluation focused primarily on assessing the relevance, coherence, efficiency and potential sustainability of the programme. It covered all nine countries included in the programme with a specific focus on Fiji, Kiribati, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.

The primary users of the evaluation include the executives and the management and programme teams of the three programme partners, the PSC and other donors and development partners in the Pacific working in the thematic areas of promoting gender equality and ending VAWG. The evaluation also aims to inform the work of national stakeholders in the countries where the programme is implemented, including government institutions and non-state actors (NSAs).

METHODOLOGY

The evaluation approach was participatory and based on an appreciative inquiry method that aimed to explore the views of stakeholders about the relevance and coherence of planned and implemented strategies and how these aligned with their aspirations. To supplement the stories of change and strengths-based ideas expressed by stakeholders in interviews, an online survey was conducted, and internal and public programme documentation was reviewed.

Girls and women are the ultimate rights holders addressed by the programme. Their right to protection and freedom from bodily and mental harm is the central and main benchmark against which all programme activities should be evaluated. Primary data collection at the level of ultimate rights holders was, however, not within the scope of the evaluation.

With the assistance of the evaluation manager, the evaluation team identified 278 stakeholders representing the ultimate duty bearers of the programme, including the programme partners, donors, and PIC governments and legislative bodies, and the intermediate duty bearers including CSOs, faith-based organizations (FBOs), and private sector entities, as well as public institutions such as schools, law courts, and health facilities. The evaluation team categorised them into five groups and drew a sample of 90 (32 per cent) for key informant interviews (KIIs) or focus group discussions (FGDs), of whom 79 (88 per cent) were reached. Sampling was purposive with an overall coverage of 74 per cent among staff of partner and donor organizations, and 25 per cent coverage among staff of implementing government institutions and NSAs. All 200 government and NSA stakeholders were invited to participate in an online survey that achieved a response rate of 47 per cent.

All qualitative data, including narrative responses to the online survey, transcripts of interviews, and group discussions and documents collected during the evaluation process were analysed using the NVivo content analysis software.

Human rights and gender equality approaches were integrated throughout the evaluation process in line with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) norms on human rights and gender equality. The evaluation team ensured that information provided by individual stakeholders remained confidential and could not be traced back. A formal ethical approval was not required



as no primary data were collected from persons at risk or affected by violence. A gender responsiveness analysis was performed using available documentation for 13 projects or activities supported by the programme.

The COVD-19 pandemic, as well as two tropical cyclones, created some constraints with data collection that were overcome by the extensive use of remote communication and conferencing technology.

CONCLUSIONS

Relevance: The Pacific Partnership addresses VAWG as a global priority issue that has particularly high prevalence in the Pacific region. It is distinguished from other programmes of this nature by a comprehensive approach that combines addressing systemic gender-based discrimination as a root cause of VAWG with strengthening institutions and organizations that work to ensure the rights of survivors of violence for protection, care, and justice. This approach is reflected clearly in the Programme's Theory of Change. Evidence of the effectiveness of this integrated approach is being generated, for instance, in the South Tawara research study conducted in Kiribati, although the programme could provide opportunities to generate additional evidence.

In its efforts to prevent VAWG, the Pacific Partnership works, among others, with institutions not traditionally associated with EVAWG programmes, such as schools, churches, and sports organizations. Preliminary evidence suggests that this approach is effective in gradually changing social norms. Girls and women are gaining power and recognition in these social institutions, which can be expected to eventually lowering their acceptance of the physical, emotional, and economic abuse they are subjected to and that is widely considered as normal or culturally appropriate by both men and women.

Programme coherence: The Pacific Partnership has been successful in strengthening the partnership between government and civil society to address VAWG. However, there is inherent tension in this relationship. Since CSOs are able to assimilate lessons and adapt processes quickly, some express frustration with government processes they perceive as slow and bureaucratic. A better understanding of each other's capacities and constraints is a potential achievement of the Pacific Partnership Programme that will contribute to better protection and care for survivors of violence.

In its regional activities, the Pacific Partnership brings implementers together to develop common technical platforms and evidence-based programmes. PIFS, as a regional political body with representation and access to governments at the highest level, has a key role in this effort to strengthen the cohesion of initiatives to empower women and end VAWG. SPC occupies a similar role in the education sector while UN Women is striving to pursue this goal in collaboration with regional civil society networks, such as the Pacific Women's Network Against VAW, PCC and Oceania Rugby.

While the regional profile and scope of the Pacific Partnership holds much promise for generating efficiency gains and for reducing fragmentation, the Programme does not sufficiently translate these into gains in country programmes because the synergies of its outcome pillars are not consistently translated at country level. This is further driven by the geographic and thematic earmarking of donor contributions to the Pacific Partnership which has increased with the additional contributions received since the Programme's inception.



External coherence: There are many internationally and nationally funded initiatives in the PICs that address issues of gender inequality, including VAWG. With a relatively small population spread over many islands, state and non-state implementers of programmes are incurring large transaction costs to report to different funders, manage multiple grant accounts, and respond to multiple evaluations. While the Pacific Partnership is not necessarily solving this problem, it is helping to mitigate it by combining it with international efforts to achieve common goals.

Inclusion: It is becoming more accepted among implementing partners of the Pacific Partnership Programme that gender is not a binary concept and that persons with different gender identities are particularly exposed to gender-based violence (GBV). Stakeholders, however, suggested that more could be done. It is also being increasingly recognised that girls and women who are disabled experience frequent violations of their rights, are often exposed to violence, and have special needs for protection. Stakeholders also mentioned challenges in reaching elderly women and women living in rural areas or remote islands, although the efforts made by the programme were recognised.

Much has been done by SPC and by UN Women in involving men and boys in activities promoting gender equality to end VAWG. The Social Citizen Education Programme under Outcome 1 and the Warwick Principles adopted by the Regional Pacific Women's Network Against Violence Against Women under Outcome 2 attest to this work. However, in interviews, several stakeholders mentioned challenges in reaching men and boys, including at times a lack of clarity on whether men are seen as perpetrators of violence or approached as potential allies in efforts to end it.

Structural efficiency: The governance and management structures and processes of the Pacific Partnership Programme were designed for a programme initially funded under an agreement negotiated jointly by three partners: the EU, DFAT and UN Women. Since then, the Pacific Partnership has grown to include three additional funding envelopes and MFAT as an additional funding partner. The governance structure was adapted, but management structures and processes remain unchanged. Performance monitoring, management, and reporting is fragmented among the grants, and there are weaknesses in the performance monitoring frameworks.

Implementation efficiency: The efficiency of programme implementation by the three partners is not uniform. Implementation of Outcome 3 is particularly slow, which should not be surprising as implementation under this outcome started very late, and the development and adoption of regional initiatives by an intergovernmental institution are complex, requiring diplomacy and often lengthy negotiations. While PIFS adds considerable value to the Pacific Partnership as a convener, advocate, and voice at high political levels, it did not have a structure in place for project and CSO grant management. This affects its budget execution rates without necessarily reducing its value in the Partnership.

Communication and visibility: In the first two years of implementation, the Programme generated many quality communication outputs ranging from highly visible publications to website postings and social media content. The visibility of the programme is, however, limited by the absence of a unique brand. Communication outputs use different constellations of logos. Communication products published on the websites of implementing partners can often only be identified as outputs of the Programme by reading the acknowledgements.

RECOMMENDATIONS

FOR THE CURRENT PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME

- 1. The programme partners for Outcome 1 and Outcome 2 should:
 - a) Within the current programme, increase their activities and investments in intervention research and rigorous monitoring and evaluation of effective programmes and policies for the prevention of VAWG, for instance, like the current South Tawara study that was linked to the Strengthening Peaceful Villages programme.
 - b) Within the current programme, further analyse and document the added value of comprehensive programming for the prevention and response to VAWG, and of the successful strengthening of the partnership between state and non-state actors, for instance, in the support of SAFENET in the Solomon Islands.

Although new findings on the relative effectiveness of prevention activities or combinations of activities will not likely be generated in time to influence the current programme, the information will help guide future programming and provide a valuable contribution to global knowledge about the prevention of VAWG.

- 2. Programme partners should increase efforts to translate a key strength of the programme, comprehensiveness (which has been illustrated by combining the three programme outcomes into a single Theory of Change) into programming at the country level by ensuring that all three outcomes are actively supported and pursued in as many countries as possible.
- 3. Programme donors that are considering investing additional funds in the Pacific Partnership (or in a future programme) should, to the greatest degree possible, avoid geographic or thematic earmarking and instead invest in the common Theory of Change. Programme partners that are negotiating additional financing agreements with donors should insist that new funds support the overall Theory of Change with as little earmarking as possible.
- 4. The programme partners should strengthen their efforts to advance inclusion. While the evaluation acknowledges that much has been done by SPC and UN Women to reach disabled women, women in remote or rural areas, elderly women, people with different gender identification and people with different sexual orientation, the survey and interview responses of implementing partners indicate there is still room to make the programme more inclusive. Additional attention should also be given to including men and boys in the programme to overcome the constraints mentioned by some implementing partners.
- 5. The programme partners, in consultation with donors, should fully integrate the additional financing agreements signed after 2018 in the common programme framework, including the Theory of Change, the M&E Framework and the Performance Management Framework (PMF).
- 6. The programme partners should review and revise the process and format of performance monitoring. They should:
 - a) Use the PMF as a living performance management instrument that is updated and accessible in real time, reviewed at least twice a year by the PSC, and annexed in full to the annual reports rather than disaggregated and embedded in sections of the report.
 - b) Simplify the PMF by developing single, rather than country-specific, indicators that can still be disaggregated by country when setting targets and reporting results.



- c) Integrate the outcomes and outputs of the additional financing agreements signed after 2018 and of any future agreements in the common PMF by further disaggregating targets and results, ideally using existing indicators. The addition of new indicators should be avoided unless new agreements add new elements to the common Theory of Change.
- d) Review and revise indicators and targets on the basis of measurability and informative value. Indicators that already have a nearly 100 per cent achievement rate at baseline need to be revised as there is no room to measure progress. This could be solved by setting targets that include the expanded coverage (e.g. more than 95 per cent of teachers with positive attitudes in XX schools). Indicators with very low values of baseline data have a similar issue as small and insignificant increases in numbers may result in reports of large percentage increases (e.g. an increase of one to three referrals from social services is recorded as an increase of 200 percentage points). When percentage point increases are selected as targets, the numbers that have been used to calculate them should always be presented in the PMF.
- 7. The programme partners should jointly review the implementation and budget execution rates under each outcome and develop feasible solutions to mitigate the differences in implementation rates. This involves identifying implementation bottlenecks for the achievement of specific outputs, adjusting budget allocations within and across outcomes to ensure that the most promising activities are pursued, and ensuring that the outcomes and outputs are distributed among the three partners according to their capacity for implementation.

FOR FUTURE INITIATIVES ON EVAWG IN THE PACIFIC

- 8. The programme partners and the principal programme donors should build on the achievements of the Pacific Partnership to ensure that future initiatives on ending violence against women and girls (EVAWG) in the Pacific continue to invest in and deliver this type of cohesive approach that unites regional organizations and institutions, PIC governments and NSAs in the continuing work and expansion of the Pacific Partnership.
- 9. The programme partners and donors should, in consultation with other programmes supporting the goal of ending violence against women and girls in the Pacific, consider expanding the scope of activities by including partners with the capacity to promote equality and rights in sectors not fully covered by the current programme, such as in health and economic sectors.
- 10. In the future, the Pacific Partnership should develop a strongly branded media footprint with a common logo to be used for all communication outputs, as well as a common website where all partner activities and results can be accessed.

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