



ADVANCING GENDER JUSTICE IN THE PACIFIC



Gender equality is at the heart of human rights and increasing women's political participation and their inclusive access to justice, are both vital mechanisms for women to realise their human rights.

All but two of the Pacific Island countries and territories have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), however, many experience difficulties with implementing those commitments and with timely human rights reporting.

Increasing women's participation in leadership and decision-making is not only critical for achieving gender equality, it is also essential for general economic and social development. Studies have found that longer exposure to women's political representation increases women's overall labour force participation, the share of public employment opportunities allocated to women and women's increased access to public goods such as roads and health services.

The Pacific region has the world's lowest levels of representation of women in parliaments (6%)¹ and local government². It is also home to four of the countries in

the world without any women in their lower or single house of parliament: Federated States of Micronesia, Tonga, Tokelau and Vanuatu¹.

This absence of women in decision-making and leadership is largely a result of negative gender stereotypes, encouraged by socio-cultural norms, and processes such as inherently biased justice structures and systems. Fortunately, the opportunity to reverse these inequalities through gender-responsive justice lies within these very same structures.

Gender-responsive justice gives both women and men equal access to the justice system, as well as legislation that reflects international standards regarding human rights and women's rights, however, in many countries women face poor services and hostile attitudes from the very people whose duty it is to fulfil women's rights – including the infrastructure of justice itself.

For example, only 17% of women in Solomon Islands can easily access legal aid³, and women's groups across the region report bias in the implementation of the law, affecting women's capacity to be free of violence and provide for their children.

ADVANCING GENDER JUSTICE IN THE PACIFIC AT A GLANCE

Timeframe: 2013-2017

Countries: 14 Pacific Island countries and territories

Funding sources: European Union, Australian Government

Focus areas:

- Increased women's political participation.
- Harmonised human rights treaties reporting.
- Gender-responsive access to justice.
- Women's engagement in peace and security.
- Gender-responsive planning and budgeting.

0%

The amount of women in national government in the Federated States of Micronesia, Vanuatu Tonga and Tokelau.¹

"IN MY HEART I WANT TO MAKE CHANGE. I HAVE ALWAYS DREAMED OF BEING IN A POSITION TO REALLY HELP PEOPLE AND NOW I HAVE THAT OPPORTUNITY."

*Pascalynne Cakau,
Transformational Leadership
Training participant, Port Vila
Municipal Council, Vanuatu.⁴*

184

The number of cases of violence against women that made it to the courts in Solomon Islands in the 10 years to 2008.⁵

"I BELIEVE THAT POLITICS IS EVERYONE'S BUSINESS AND SO I WANT TO LEARN HOW THE PROCESS WORKS SO I CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE."

*Marie Kalkoa,
Transformational Leadership
Training participant, Port Vila
Municipal Council, Vanuatu.⁴*

ADVANCING GENDER JUSTICE IN THE PACIFIC PROGRAMME

UN Women's Advancing Gender Justice in the Pacific (AGJP) programme has been designed using nationally-identified priorities that acknowledge and highlight the complexity involved in changing social norms, values and cultural practices around human rights, access to justice and women's political participation.

The programme builds on UN Women's global and regional comparative advantage and is closely monitored to highlight consistent measurable results and effective, strategic collaboration using CEDAW to guide programme implementation.

In order to enhance the gender-responsiveness of justice and political governance systems in 14 Pacific countries and territories, the AGJP programme supports government and civil society partners in implementing:



Increased women's political participation:

UN Women works with UN and regional partners to address country-specific barriers to women's full political participation. This involves strengthening the pipeline of women candidates and supporting government and civil society partners in the creation of enabling environments for women's political participation.

Harmonised human rights treaties reporting: UN Women works in collaboration with UN and regional partners to support governments in developing platforms and strengthening capacities to undertake multi-sectoral and harmonised human rights reporting and implementation processes.

Gender-responsive access to justice: In collaboration with government and civil society partners, UN Women has begun analysing domestic law to assess how well it complies with international CEDAW standards and domestic practice both from a legal standpoint and in practice, and what relevant socio-cultural and legislative steps can be taken to ensure that it does.

Women's engagement in peace and security: UN Women's work on peace and security issues supports projects that focus on increasing women's participation in decision-making, promoting the use of gender perspectives in policy development.

Gender-responsive planning and budgeting: UN Women provides practical support to Pacific governments that have indicated interest in designing and implementing gender-responsive budgeting strategies.

KEY RESULTS TO DATE

- UN Women developed a radio series, “A Time to Stand”, promoting women’s political participation in the Pacific. The 10-part drama series aired in Pidgin on Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation radio stations, reaching an estimated 430,000 people, many in remote rural areas. The English version was released online and a comic book of the series has been produced and distributed across the region.
- In Solomon Islands, UN Women worked closely with government and civil society partners to complete legal mapping projects in order to identify barriers for women when it comes to accessing legal services and to provide recommendations that inform the implementation of initiatives aimed at creating more gender-responsive legal systems.
- UN Women organised preparatory and mock sessions for the CEDAW state delegations from the Solomon Islands and Tuvalu in 2014 and 2015 respectively. The delegation credited these sessions as deciding factors in the success of their constructive dialogues with the CEDAW Committee in Geneva.
- The Office of the Electoral Commission in Samoa, in partnership with UN Women, successfully updated and gender-mainstreamed resource tools for candidates. The resulting candidate’s handbook has become a better practice standard in the region and is being implemented in other Pacific countries and territories.
- UN Women supported the establishment of the Family Court in Samoa, and helped build the capacity of approximately 50 judges, lawyers and family health service providers through a Family Law Forum.
- After a 2013 Municipal Act amendment in Vanuatu reserved 30-34% of seats at a municipal level for women, five women were successful in January 2014’s Port Vila municipal elections. All five women participated in UN Women-run Transformational Leadership workshops in 2013.

6%

The percentage of women in national parliaments in the Pacific region.¹

“I KNEW I HAD IT IN ME, BUT THIS WAS THE PUSH I NEEDED TO REMAIN ENGAGED. ONE DAY I HOPE I WILL BE ABLE TO CONTEST THE NATIONAL ELECTIONS.”

Rita Norman, Pacific Young Women’s Leadership Alliance member, Vanuatu.⁴

17%

of women in Solomon Islands live in an area where legal aid is not easily accessible.³

CASE STUDY: SOLOMON ISLANDS NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS

Freda Tuki Sariucumua (pictured) attended two Transformational Leadership trainings in Honiara facilitated by UN Women as part of its Strongim Mere project. In November 2014, she successfully contested the National General Election in the Temotu Vatud constituency, becoming only the second woman to be successful in a general election in the Solomon Islands. Freda now holds the Rural Development portfolio.

“[The training] really helped me a lot. It helped me to understand what is expected of me as a politician. It helps me develop my political career daily, step by step. If I did not attend these trainings, I would not understand my role as an MP and discussion in parliament and cabinet.”

Two other training participants successfully contested provincial elections: Joyclyn Ipei won a seat in the Temotu Provincial Government and Rhoda Sikilabu maintained her seat in the Ysabel Provincial Government.



INCREASING POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN SAMOA (IPPWS) PROGRAMME

UN Women and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) launched the Increasing Political Participation of Women in Samoa (IPPWS) Joint Programme, in partnership with the Government of Samoa and with funding from the Australian Government.

Samoa's March 2016 election is the first since a constitutional amendment in 2013 that reserved 10% of seats in parliament for women. Samoa is the first country in the Pacific, outside of French Polynesia, to put in place measures to ensure women's representation at the national level. The programme's aim is to help Samoa not only achieve, but surpass the 10% minimum.

The IPPWS programme focuses on awareness-raising, capacity building for women participating in the parliamentary process, and providing information and training to political parties ahead of the election. It also includes post-election mentoring support for all members of parliament on subjects such as gender-responsive budgeting and gender-sensitive legislation.

Workshops and capacity building activities targeting media, potential candidates and political parties – including a practice parliament – are being held through the programme, while local partner organisations are leading an extensive community outreach and advocacy strategy.



STRONGIM MERE PROJECT

Increasing women's participation in leadership and decision-making relies on a shift in the public's perceptions of what a leader looks like, as well as in building the skills and confidence of women candidates and enlisting male champions who can speak publicly about the importance of women in parliament.

UN Women's Strongim Mere project in Solomon Islands targets all of these areas. Supported by the European Union and implemented in partnership with local non-governmental organisation Vois Blong Mere, the project covers a number of different activities targeting a wide variety of audiences, from young people to media, prospective candidates to political parties.



The Empowerment Series promotes the development of informal networks among women interested in political participation; a series of Transformational Leadership workshops helped build the skills of potential candidates and a pipeline of younger women leaders.

The radio drama series "A Time to Stand" was also developed as part of this project. The 10-part series followed the parallel stories of a first-time woman candidate and a first-time woman voter, reflecting the challenges women in Solomon Islands experience in both situations.

For more information please contact:

UN Women

Level 3, Kadavu House

Victoria Parade, Suva, Fiji

asiapacific.unwomen.org

www.facebook.com/unwomenpacific

www.twitter.com/unwomenpacific

FOOTNOTES

¹ <http://www.pacwip.org/women-mps/national-women-mps/>

² Women's Representation in Local Government in the Asia Pacific- Status Report, UNDP, 2010.

³ Preliminary research on gender-responsive legal aid in Solomon Islands, 2013-14, UN Women.

⁴ <http://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/publications/2014/4/fiji-annual-report-2013>

⁵ <http://www.unicef.org/pacificislands/evaw.pdf>

CAPTIONS

Page 1: Young Pacific women at a transformational leadership training, Thailand, 2014. Credit: UN Women/Martin Child.

Page 2: UN Women stall at the official launch of International Women's Day 2014, Solomon Islands. Credit: UN Women/Marni Gilbert.

Page 3: Hon. Freda Tuki Sariucumua. Credit: UN Women/Martin Child.

Page 4: Above: Participants in a community training of trainers in Samoa, 2015. Credit: UN Women/Ellie van Baaren. Above right: Empowerment Series student participants, Solomon Islands, 2014. Credit: UN Women/Martin Child.

Updated 7 January 2016