

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



KIRIBATI COUNTRY SUMMARY

Updated November 2020

Kiribati 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. **Within the region, Kiribati has one of the highest recorded rates with 68 percent of women experiencing violence by an intimate partner – almost double the global average.¹**

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 Kiribati

There are three key outcomes being prioritised for Kiribati, under the programme:

1. Integrating human rights, gender equality and ending violence against women and girls in formal education (led by SPC HRSD Division)

The Pacific Community (SPC) Human Rights and Social Development (HRSD) Division is implementing its Social Citizenship Education (SCE) programme, through Pacific Partnership. SCE emphasises those social rights and obligations necessary to be part of, and enjoy equal opportunities, benefits and status in, a community.

It refers to active, informed and responsible citizens who know their human rights and responsibilities, practice gender equality, non-discrimination and inclusion, prevent violence, are concerned about the welfare of others, and are willing to contribute to the development of the country.

SPC HRSD partners with the Kiribati's Ministry of Education to progress the integration of SCE concepts into the Moral Education, Social Studies and Health Education school curricula (Years 5-8), and also the Social Science curriculum (Years 9-10).

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.

All three coordinating agencies of the Pacific Partnership programme have activities in Kiribati.

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





2020-2021 initiatives supported by SPC HRSD include:

Supporting development of learning resources and training roll-out

- Supporting the Ministry of Education in the development and production of teaching and learning resources on SCE.
- Supporting the Ministry of Education and Kiribati Teachers College (KTC) in the development and rollout of pre-service and in-service training to teachers, teacher trainers, education officials and school leaders that aim to:
 - » Relate customary rights, traditional rights, responsibilities and internationally recognised human rights, including the rights of the child, to teacher and student expectations and behaviour in the classroom;
 - » Assist schools to apply knowledge of social inclusion to address bullying, stereotypes and disruptive behaviour in order to adapt curriculum and develop learning and teaching strategies; and
 - » Assist teachers to teach in a way that promotes equitable outcomes for all students.

Supporting review and development of inclusive policies

- Supporting the Ministry of Education to review and further develop school-specific policies, and implementation plans:
 - » On social inclusion, school governance, anti-discrimination, sexual harassment, violence against women and girls, and positive discipline;
 - » To guide the roll-out of the work in the informal education sector through platforms such as school clubs, parents clubs and youth clubs.

This approach aims to ensure synergy between the changes to the curricula and teaching-learning resources, and the broader policies and programmes of the Ministry of Education.

Strengthening evidence to prevent violence against women and girls

- Collecting baseline information from 801 school leaders, teachers, students and community members from 10 schools across 6 islands. Through this exercise SPC has a better understanding of people's knowledge, attitudes and practices in relation to human rights, gender equality and ending violence against women. This information shows

SPC what to focus its training and curriculum content on. An evaluation at the end of the project will show change that can be attributed to the project.

2. 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.

Through Pacific Partnership, UN Women's violence against women and girls programme is implementing a prevention approach in Kiribati with a focus on transforming harmful social norms, attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate violence against women and girls. Evidence of best practice indicates that prevention interventions are more effective if they: address social norms and behaviour; 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. UN Women Ending Violence Against Women and Girls programme is focused on best practice and evidence-building working across individual, community and societal levels in Kiribati.

2020-2021 prevention initiatives supported by UN Women include:

Using a whole-of-population approach to prevent violence against women and girls and supporting community and institutional strengthening

- **Strengthening Peaceful Villages (SPV) programme:** From 2018 to 2023, the Ministry of Women, Youth, Sport and Social Affairs (MWYSSA) of the Government of Kiribati, in partnership with UN Women, is implementing the Strengthening Peaceful Villages (SPV) programme in South Tarawa, Kiribati. The SPV programme is using a whole-of-population level approach, which is the Government of Kiribati's biggest intervention initiative to prevent violence against women and girls in the country. It is a community-based intervention adapted to Kiribati culture and context from SASA!ⁱⁱⁱ to prevent violence against women and girls and promote safe and healthy families, homes and villages.





The programme targets 18 villages in South Tarawa, reaching half of the country's population (approximately 56,400 people) and engages a wide-range of stakeholders – including women, men and youth community members, community and cultural leaders, religious leaders, among others – to address the imbalance of power between women and men in the community which leads to violence against women and girls. The SPV programme is nurturing, building and supporting community-led activism to prevent violence against women and girls through the following strategies:

- » **Local Activism** - Led by 90 women, men and youth village activists who are engaging their villages in activities that spark self-reflection and positive change for peaceful and healthy relationships.
- » **Community Leadership** - Led by 60 women and men community leaders, who are engaging fellow leaders and their villages to speak out against violence against women and girls, provide support to women experiencing violence, and create safe homes and villages.
- » **Institutional Strengthening** - Led by 11 institutional allies within MWYSSA who are engaging their employees and leaders to strengthen how MWYSSA can prevent and respond to violence against women and girls.

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

- **Impact evaluation to build evidence on 'what works' to prevent violence against women and girls in Kiribati:** Despite having some of the highest rates of violence against women globally, there has been little research and evaluation in the Pacific on the effectiveness of interventions aimed at stopping violence against women and girls before it starts. To measure the impact of the SPV programme in reducing population levels of violence, and identify what works to prevent violence against women and girls in low-resource, high-prevalence settings such as Kiribati, the MWYSSA and UN Women, commissioned the Equality Institute to carry out an independent impact evaluation of the SPV programme. **For the first time ever, prevalence data is now available on men's use of violence, alongside women's experience of violence in Kiribati.** This data and its key findings are from the '[South](#)

[Tarawa Healthy Living Study: An Impact Evaluation of the Strengthening Peaceful Villages \(SPV\) Violence Prevention Intervention in Kiribati'](#) which collected data related to community attitudes and behaviours on violence against women and girls in South Tarawa. **Key findings show that 3 out of 5 (57%) of ever-partnered men in South Tarawa reported perpetration of any physical and/or sexual abuse against a wife or female partner within the past year, and that 2 out of 3 (38%) of women had experienced physical and/or sexual violence from an intimate male partner** (for example, a husband, male partner). The high levels of violence found by baseline study signal the importance of community-based primary prevention programmes, such as the SPV programme, to reduce the prevalence of intimate partner violence in South Tarawa. In Kiribati the study was conducted in close partnership with MWYSSA, the Kiribati National Statistics Office (NSO) in the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, and the Kiribati Women and Children's Support Centre (KWCSC). All findings from the study was validated by I-Kiribati research partners and stakeholders. The KWCSC developed the study's safety and support plan and contributed to the training of the enumerators, further strengthening the study's ethical and safety mechanisms. **MWYSSA through SPV stakeholders will continue to evaluate the impact of violence against women and girls and collect data at two other points during the lifetime of the SPV programme - at the midpoint of the programme in 2021 and at the end of the programme in 2023.** Through this three-stage study design, the impact evaluation will be able to assess the effectiveness of the SPV programme at reducing population-level rates of current intimate partner violence in South Tarawa as well as contribute to the emerging evidence around what works to end violence against women and girls and build the practice knowledge regarding violence prevention interventions in the Pacific region.

- **Community of Practice to promote knowledge sharing and coordination:** Linking Kiribati partners to a Pacific regional Community of Practice to strengthen coordination and build a collaborative and supportive communities of practice across the region, in partnership with other key agencies and networks working in this space. This supports and encourages knowledge sharing of social norms and primary prevention programming, including 'what works' to end violence against women and girls in Kiribati and the Pacific.





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 Kiribati 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 Kiribati and the Pacific region.

3. 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. Under this area of work, UN Women provides technical support and funding to improve the overall governance and coordination of essential services (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)ⁱⁱⁱ; 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.

2020-2021 initiatives supported by UN Women include:

Supporting women's crisis centres and NGOs

- Supporting the **Kiribati Women and Children Support Centre (KWSCC)**:
 - » With **technical assistance including service delivery and organisational development**. This includes ongoing support for KWSCC – both in-person and remotely- for counselling, debriefing, case management, training and technical advice.
 - » To establish a new site on Christmas Island which will improve access to services for women living on the island itself as well as neighbouring outer islands of Tabuaeran and Teraina.
- » To continue their **Orange Door Initiative**, established as part of the Centre's COVID-19 response plan to ensure women and girls have access to emergency safe shelter.
- Providing training support to **Our Lady of the Sacred Heart**, including safe shelter practices; counselling, supervision and case management; and working with staff to strengthen skills and knowledge to provide trauma-informed training workshops as part of their women's economic empowerment programmes.

Supporting national coordination mechanisms and law and policy review

- Providing ongoing technical and funding support to MWYSSA to rollout the National Multi-Sectoral Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and coordinated referral pathways for gender-based violence survivors across the outer islands of Kiribati. These SOPs was developed by the SafeNet network of government and non-government organisations working with survivors of gender-based violence in Kiribati.
- Continuing support to MWYSSA to coordinate SafeNet including the ongoing funding of and support to the SafeNet coordinator position within the Ministry; the roll out of SafeNet across the outer islands of Kiribati; the coordination of regular SafeNet meetings and activities (to ensure good governance and to conduct case management review meetings); establishing a gender-based violence administration database and information management system; roll-out of the National Counselling Framework involving the development of the Kiribati National Domestic Violence Counselling Registry and Code of Ethics and Practice Standards for Domestic Violence, and the ongoing training of frontline workers on the SOPs.
- Supporting MWYSSA with policy and legislation review of the Te Rau n te Mwenga Act, also known as the Family Protection Act, and the Eliminating Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Policy that defines domestic violence and requirements for a national counselling framework.
- Providing technical support to the Government of Kiribati and SafeNet members, in particular the Kiribati Police Service (KPS), to rollout the Kiribati Police Service- Domestic Violence Response Policy including KPS' new Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for referral and coordination of sexual and gender-based violence services. The KPS SOPs were operationalised in late 2019 and aligns with





international standards and guidelines for essential services, Te Rau n te Mwenga Act, and survivor-centred.

- Linking, where possible, Kiribati partners within regional processes on gender-based counselling, including convenings to discuss technical implementation of the Te Rau n te Mwenga Act requirements on counselling such as standards, accreditation and training procedures. This will be achieved by developing standardised and inclusive training for counsellors working with survivors and perpetrators of violence.

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

2020-21 initiatives targeting non-state actors supported by PIFS include:

Kiribati 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 the overall approaches supported by UN Women. In 2020, the NSA programme supported the **active engagement of women’s CSOs** like the Aia Maea Ainen Kiribati (AMAK) and Kiribati Women and Children’s Centre (KWCSC) to engage in PIFS consultative mechanisms including the Annual Regional CSO Forum, 2020 Virtual Forum Economic Ministers’ Meeting (FEMM), CROP Heads and NSA Executive Meetings. NSAs also participated in other activities including the Regional Non-State Actor Capacity Building Workshop, the development and validation of a **Policy Monitoring Toolkit on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls, strategic planning toward a Leaders and Mentors Initiative for ‘Gender Equality Agents for Change’** and providing technical input toward training modules for NSAs and governments on gender responsive budgeting.

BACKGROUND

In Kiribati, the national prevalence study shows that 68 percent^{iv} of women in the country experience violence by an intimate partner – almost double the global average. At the national level, 47 percent^v of women aged 15–49 who had ever been in a relationship reported experiencing emotional abuse by a partner at least once, but the percentage rises to 90^{vi}, when women in the same age range reported experiencing at least one form of controlling behaviour by an intimate partner.

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.

In 2019, the ‘[South Tarawa Healthy Living Study: An Impact Evaluation of the Strengthening Peaceful Villages \(SPV\) Violence Prevention Intervention in Kiribati](#)’ collected data related to community attitudes and behaviours on violence against women and girls in South Tarawa. While the Study only collected data on South Tarawa, and not the whole of Kiribati, the findings of this baseline are consistent with the results of the 2009 prevalence study.

Key findings show that 3 out of 5 (57 percent) of ever-partnered men in South Tarawa reported perpetration of any physical and/or sexual abuse against a wife or female partner within the past year, and that 2 out of 3 (38 percent) of women had experienced physical and/or sexual violence from an intimate male partner (for example, a husband, male partner). The high levels of violence found by baseline study signal the importance of community-based primary prevention programmes, such as the SPV programme, to reduce the prevalence of intimate partner violence in South Tarawa.

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, often they 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 Kiribati, with the President of the country strongly condemning violence at the national stage. The Ministry of Women, Youth, Sport and Social Affairs (MWYSSA) is responsible for addressing gender equality, 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 Kiribati society.

With its Eliminating Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Kiribati Policy; National Action Plan 2011-2021; and a five-year Shared Implementation Plan developed as part the ten-year National Action Plan, MWYSSA 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. The Te Rau N Te Mwenga (2014) or the Family Protection Act (FPA) provides for the protection of survivors of domestic violence, prevention and elimination of violence within domestic relationships. There is also a Kiribati Development Plan and the Kiribati twenty-year vision 2016-2036, which includes gender equality and ending violence against women and girls as areas that needs addressing.

ⁱFindings from the Family Health and Safety Studies (FHSS), conducted by UNFPA and the Pacific Community (SPC) across 11 Pacific countries are online including for Kiribati: <https://pacific.unfpa.org/en/publications/kiribati-family-health-and-safety-study>

ⁱⁱSASA!: An activist approach for preventing violence against women. Kampala, Uganda: Raising Voices.

ⁱⁱⁱSOGISEC 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.

^{iv}Findings from the Family Health and Safety Studies (FHSS), conducted by UNFPA and the Pacific Community (SPC) across 11 Pacific countries are online including for Kiribati: <https://pacific.unfpa.org/en/publications/kiribati-family-health-and-safety-study>

^vIbid.

^{vi}Ibid.

^{vii}Key findings are from the 'South Tarawa Healthy Living Study: An Impact Evaluation of the Strengthening Peaceful Villages (SPV) Violence Prevention Intervention in Kiribati', undertaken by The Equality Institute, and commissioned by the Government of Kiribati through the Ministry of Women, Youth, Sport and Social Affairs (MWYSSA) and the UN Women Fiji Multi-Country Office (MCO) through the Pacific Partnership to End Violence Against Women and Girls (Pacific Partnership) programme, funded primarily by the European Union with targeted support from the governments of Australia and New Zealand, and cost-sharing with UN Women.

For more information about Pacific Partnership, email: comms.pac@unwomen.org

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

