

## **The Pacific Girl Journey**

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‘At first I wasn’t so confident to stand in front of everyone. After a year with the program... then I began to gain my confidence.’

Josephine Stanley is part of Equal Playing Field’s (EPF) School Action Group (SAG) in Papua New Guinea, supported by the Pacific Girl program.

‘EPF has helped us gain confidence by making programs that allows us to stand in front of our own school peers, and discuss ideas,’ she said.

Josephine was a panelist during the Girls Agency: The Pacific Girl Journey virtual panel discussion, led “by girls for girls” on 2 June.

To ensure a safe space for open and honest dialogue, the girls chose a closed panel discussion led by adolescent girls and young women involved in the six Pacific Girl initiatives across Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea, and Chuuk State, Federated States of Micronesia.

Lavina Gera, also from EPF, said: ‘I learned to speak up for what I believe in and what I believe was right, so from there I got my confidence.’

Shruti Singh, who joined the Fiji Women’s Rights Movement (FWRM) GIRLS Club when she was 10 years old, shared how she has grown since joining the program.

‘I am currently 14 and I’ve graduated to the second program and in that four years’ time I have felt that I have grown more confident and also developed a lot of social skills,’ she said.

FWRM has several initiatives for girls including the GIRLS Club and the GIRLS Arise program, supported by the Pacific Girl program.

Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA) Solomon Islands’ Larisha Temangutaua also shared her journey from participant to mentor in the Girls Rise Up! project.

‘As a participant, you get to understand the girls better and when you move on to mentor level, you will get to relate to them and understand their voices better.’

Another mentor from Tonga’s Talitha Project My Body! My Rights! program, ‘Ana Malia Falemaka, said her journey has empowered her with so much knowledge.

‘I am now doing law in university mainly because of the work that I have been engaging in with the My Body! My Rights! program under the Pacific Girl program,’ she said.

Eluda Iamtiu, a community facilitator with CARE in Vanuatu said the program has really made a positive impact on her life and helped her with issues within her own community.

‘At the beginning of the project, I had very low self-confidence and I could not stand and talk in front of people,’ she said.

'I just wanted to say that being part of the project has really impacted my life and I have learned a lot of powerful information that I have used within my own household.'

The adolescent girls involved in Pacific Girl initiatives have learned important life skills, including the girls supported by Jayrene Engichy, Coordinator for the Young Women Empowerment Program (YWEP), under the Chuuk Women's Council based in the Federated States of Micronesia.

Jayrene, a former participant in the program, wanted to help other girls in her community, so she became an instructor.

'I wanted to teach... where I can get to understand something really well and then put it down to a level where the younger girls can understand,' she said.

'They tell me they understood better because of me, so I like helping them out like that and it makes me happy.'

The Pacific Girl convenings were held over three sessions. The first two sessions were held on 19 and 22 May where girls from the Pacific Girl programs came together to share and exchange program learning and ideas, culminating in a regional discussion bringing together all six Pacific Girl partners on 2 June.

The convenings brought together more than 60 adolescent girls and young women to reflect on the successes and challenges of the program, and to share ideas to inform the future of the Pacific Girl program.

For more information about the:

Girls Agency: The Pacific Girl Journey virtual discussions

Pacific Girl program