

Pacific Stakeholders Advance Gender Research in the Region

Fiji Papua New Guinea Regional

SHARE

July 1, 2016



Pacific researchers and stakeholders at the Pacific Gender Research Workshop held in Suva in June. Photo: Shazia Usman, Pacific Women Support Unit.

June was an exciting month for gender research in the region, as around 50 dynamic Pacific researchers and stakeholders converged at The University of the South Pacific's (USP) Laucala Campus to advance the gender research capacity-building agenda among Pacific Island Countries.

With support from Pacific Women, the three-day workshop held from 21-23 June, was a collaboration between USP, UN Women, the Fiji Women's Right Movement (FWRM), the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), the Pacific Community (SPC) and the Australian Government, through Pacific Women. The opening symposium featured a presentation of the key findings of the Pacific Gender Research Scoping Study, which was conducted by a group of Pacific based researchers led by Dr Yvonne Underhill-Sem, Associate Professor, University of Auckland.

Dr Underhill-Sem emphasised that research plays a valuable role in providing new concepts, ideas and insights into apparently intractable issues which includes gender inequality. She said that building on-going research capacity on gender equality in the Pacific is therefore critical.

“Research-informed policy making is a dynamic but imprecise process in the Pacific. This project created a bibliography of over 400 citations, an annotated bibliography of 135 pieces of research and a literature review of eight areas of concern.”

In his welcoming address, USP Vice-Chancellor and President, Professor Rajesh Chandra said the importance of having enough Pacific Islanders specialising in gender research cannot be emphasised strongly enough.

“The [2012 Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration](#) outlines key commitments that value and recognise the contributions of both genders to the region’s well-being and sustainable development. The implementation of the Declaration also requires trained gender researchers – those with knowledge of the complex local context, together with the skills to undertake competent research required for policy making and assessment. I sincerely hope that this will be the start of more partnerships among our institutions specifically for strengthening gender research among Pacific Island students and scholars,” Professor Chandra stated.

Some of the participants reflected on their participation at the Workshop:

Ms. Jasmine Mohammed, Acting Head of the School of Education, Fiji National University’s Lautoka Education Campus: “[Both] personally and professionally as an academic, it [the Workshop] has been very empowering and inspirational because it has connected me with academics that are very well established; are senior faculty members doing research; and have published extensively in reputable publication outlets. I think in Fiji we need more gender specialist academics – it’s very important for doing our own research and bridging the gap in local gender research. The workshop has also opened up opportunities for future research collaborations”. You can read a longer version of this interview where Ms Mohammed shares about undertaking research on the underrepresentation of women in educational leadership in Fiji, [here](#).

Dr Jackie Kauli, Arts Based Development Practitioner and Researcher, University of Goroka and Queensland University of Technology: “It has also

been great for us to come and present some of our work at this kind of forum and part of the partnership the Centre for Social and Creative Media has with Queensland University of Technology is also to see how we can expand some of the work we're doing in the wider Pacific and the use of arts based research approaches. This has provided a forum for us to talk about that and to exchange and get feedback from other people, which has been great."

Dr Verena Thomas, Research Fellow at Queensland University of Technology: "I learnt so much about what the practitioners and implementing partners are doing and their excitement about using different kinds of new media for research. Seeing the passion for doing new and different things in their own projects was the golden moment for me. It's interesting also to see and meet Pacific Island women that have been there at the forefront working for women's causes and rights and to appreciate the foundational work they have done as a Pacific women's movement for women's rights. We want to see how we can work with that and continue bringing to the forefront voices of women."

The workshop consisted of presentations and working sessions and identified concrete actions to take forward the agreed findings and recommendations of the scoping study. Imperative to this is the use of findings to strengthen gender-responsive policy making, development planning and programming. A copy of the Pacific Gender Research Scoping Study, workshop presentations and the full list of studies cited in the bibliography can be accessed [here](#).