

# Beijing +20:

Review of progress in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action in Pacific Island countries and territories





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## Review of progress in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action in Pacific Island countries and territories

Secretariat of the Pacific Community

Noumea, New Caledonia

<http://www.spc.int>

February 2015



**SPC**  
Secretariat  
of the Pacific  
Community



PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM SECRETARIAT

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## Foreword

It is an honour for me to introduce the review of progress in 20 years of implementing the Beijing Platform for Action in the Pacific. I commend the authors and all contributors for their efforts in getting the ‘Pacific voice’ heard in discussions measuring global progress against gender equality commitments.

Progress under the Beijing Platform for Action in our region has been uneven. Despite important advances in health, education and human rights, several daunting challenges to women’s full participation in all spheres of society remain. Among them are the exceedingly high rates of violence against women and the stiff barriers, in the form of customs, traditions and stereotypes, that constrain women’s participation in decision-making and leadership.

One area in which the exclusion of women from decision-making, the violation of their fundamental human rights and the underestimation of their knowledge and experience, is hurting our societies the most is in our efforts to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change.

The Tuvaluan Government has recently reaffirmed how addressing vulnerabilities to the ravages of climate change can only be done through active part-taking from our entire communities. If half of our population is held back by discrimination and human rights violations, our preparedness and resilience to environmental degradation are seriously jeopardised. The need for a holistic approach to climate change adaptation was at the heart of the discussions on sustainable development for small island developing states held in Samoa in September this year.

Stronger partnership and more coordinated efforts are needed from government, civil society and development partners to systematically include gender concerns in all sectors of development if we are to build a resilient Pacific community that is capable of overcoming emerging environmental, economic and social challenges.

Since ‘knowledge is power’, it is my belief that this report, by contributing to our collective understanding of where we stand on delivering on the promises made to Pacific women and girls in Beijing 20 years ago, should enable us to better strategise, prioritise and implement gender equality commitments.



A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Enele S Sopoaga'. The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned to the right of the portrait.

**Enele S Sopoaga**  
**Prime Minister, Tuvalu**



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The report was compiled by Blandine Mollard, Gender Equality Research Officer at the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), with input and contributions from SPC colleagues who provided substantial data and information, including: Karen Carter, Vital Statistic/Civil Registration Specialist; Gillian Cambers, Project Manager, Global Climate Change Alliance (GCCA); and Mark Atterton, Deputy Director, Human Rights Programme, Regional Rights Resource Team. The team was managed by Brigitte Leduc, Gender Equality Adviser, and led by Linda Petersen, Human Development Programme Manager. Statistical analysis was guided by Kim Robertson, Gender and Statistics Adviser.

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We extend our sincere gratitude to UN Women Pacific Regional Office and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat for their financial support in the production of the report, which was lead funded by SPC.



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Colin', with a long horizontal stroke underneath.

**Dr Colin Tukuitonga**  
Director-General, SPC

## List of acronyms

<b>ADB</b>	Asian Development Bank
<b>AIDS</b>	Acquired immune deficiency syndrome
<b>BPA</b>	Beijing Platform for Action
<b>CEDAW</b>	United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
<b>COP</b>	United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties
<b>CPI</b>	Consumer price index
<b>CRC</b>	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
<b>CROP</b>	Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific
<b>CSO</b>	Civil society organisation
<b>ECE</b>	Early childhood education
<b>EFA</b>	Education for All
<b>ESCAP</b>	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
<b>FSM</b>	Federated States of Micronesia
<b>FWCC</b>	Fiji Women's Crisis Centre
<b>FWRM</b>	Fiji Women's Rights Movement
<b>CCGA</b> <b>GDP</b>	Global Climate Change Alliance Gross domestic product
<b>HIES</b>	Household income and expenditure survey
<b>HIV</b>	Human immunodeficiency virus
<b>ICT</b>	Information and communications technology
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>IMF</b>	International Monetary Fund
<b>IT</b>	Information technology
<b>MDG</b>	UN Millennium Development Goal
<b>NCDs</b>	Non-communicable diseases
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organisation
<b>NSO</b>	National statistics office
<b>NWM</b>	National women's machinery
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>OHCHR</b>	Office of the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

<b>OSCE</b>	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
<b>PATH</b>	Program for Appropriate Technology in Health
<b>PICTs</b>	Pacific Island countries and territories
<b>PIFS</b>	Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
<b>PNG</b>	Papua New Guinea
<b>PPA</b>	Pacific Platform for Action
<b>PRISM</b>	Pacific Regional Information System
<b>RAMSI</b>	Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands
<b>RMI</b>	Republic of the Marshall Islands
<b>RPPA</b>	Revised Pacific Platform for Action on the Advancement of Women and Gender Equality
<b>RRRT</b>	SPC Regional Rights Resource Team
<b>SCR</b>	UN Security Council Resolution
<b>SGBV</b>	Sexual and gender-based violence
<b>SIDS</b>	Small island developing states
<b>SOPAC</b>	South Pacific Islands Applied Geoscience Commission
<b>SPC</b>	Secretariat of the Pacific Community
<b>STI</b>	Sexually transmitted infection
<b>UN ESCAP</b>	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<b>UNFCCC</b>	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children’s Fund
<b>USD</b>	United States dollar
<b>USP</b>	University of the South Pacific
<b>VAW</b>	Violence against women
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization
<b>WUTMI</b>	Women United Together Marshall Islands
<b>YWCA</b>	Young Women’s Christian Association

## Executive summary

The past 20 years have seen significant progress in gender equality being recognised as being an integral part of the economic, political, cultural and social development of Pacific Island countries and territories (PICTs). This progress is reflected in an important body of reforms and innovative policies. Since the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action, the overwhelming majority of PICTs have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and have engaged in the regular reporting of their progress towards full compliance. Across the Pacific region, initiatives have been carried out to build the capacity of public institutions and civil society in the various aspects of gender mainstreaming.

Consequently, most PICTs have adopted specific national gender equality policies, and have established national women's machineries, while six of them currently apply affirmative action measures to foster women's political participation.

Eleven countries have conducted national prevalence studies on domestic violence, which have informed the design and adoption of specific legislation to protect women from violence.

The effects of those reforms on the advancement of Pacific women are being seen in a great variety of contexts, and manifest in many ways, including women's education levels, their leadership in communities and civil society organisations, and their entrepreneurship and economic dynamism. However, recurrent manifestations of gender inequality remain in all sectors of the Pacific community, such as in high rates of gender-based violence, low proportions of women represented at all levels of decision-making, significant under-representation of women in the formal economy, inequitable access of women to health and social services, and in women rarely having their concerns reflected in strategies related to climate change, natural disasters, food security and renewable energy. In some PICTs, significant progress has been achieved in reducing rates of teenage pregnancy and maternal mortality. However, in others, women's and adolescents' limited access to contraception and to sexual and reproductive health services and information continue to hinder progress.

Expressed political will is too rarely translated into action to ensure that women are able to fully participate in decision-making – from the community to the national level – while cross-cutting work to address gender equality in policies and programmes remains generally inadequate across the region. The Pacific Forum Leaders' Gender Equality Declaration in 2012 reiterated the commitment of Pacific governments to gender equality, recommending renewed national action towards gender-responsive government programmes and policies. However, in most PICTs, attention, resources and capacity committed to gender equality have been insufficient to achieve substantive gains.

## Key findings:

- Women are highly vulnerable to hardship and poverty, especially in the context of rising food and fuel prices and reduced remittances sent by family members. Low levels of formal social protection and eroding traditional systems of solidarity aggravate women's exposure to poverty. There are concerns over the slow pace of progress in women's labour participation, access to employment and decent work, while women continue to be over-represented in informal and subsistence sectors.
- Gender parity in primary education is improving in most PICTs. However, in secondary and tertiary education, issues affecting girls' enrolment and retention rates include early marriage, pregnancy, the risk of harm when travelling to school, insecure toilet facilities at school, the ever-present risk of harassment and sexual assault, and the costs associated with education. Due to gender-segregated labour markets and the weight of traditional gender roles, education gains for women do not always lead to better employment outcomes.
- Substantial efforts have been made to better document violence against women and to increase the comparability of data collected across the region. For example, a number of recent studies investigating incidence rates for sexual and physical violence in the Pacific region followed the World Health Organization (WHO) methodology on researching violence against women.<sup>1</sup> Revealed prevalence rates ranged from 32 per cent in the Cook Islands to 68 per cent in Kiribati.<sup>2</sup> However, access to justice for survivors of violence remains inadequate, and little data is available on the prosecution rates for perpetrators.
- Access to social services for survivors of violence remains grossly insufficient. Better planning and financing is needed to prevent gender-based violence and to mitigate its impact on women and girls.
- Overall, some progress in the area of maternal health has been made across some PICTs. Access to reproductive health services remains difficult for some women, due to age, geography, cultural barriers, disability, and women's lack of empowerment in decision-making over their own bodies. Many women have yet to see their sexual and reproductive health rights recognised and respected. Non-communicable diseases are taking an increasing toll on women's health, and these contribute to dramatically increasing their workload due to their role as primary caregivers.

<sup>1</sup> WHO and Program for Appropriate Technology in Health (PATH) 2005.

<sup>2</sup> Prevalence rates for experienced sexual and/or physical intimate partner violence revealed in four of these studies were: 32 per cent in the Cook Islands, 51 per cent in the Marshall Islands, 64 per cent in Fiji and 68 per cent in Kiribati.

- There has been progress in fostering women's political participation. Six PICTs report that they have introduced reserved seats for women candidates in elected bodies, either at the national or local level.<sup>3</sup> Such advances are promising and are likely to have important effects on the uptake of women's concerns. Nevertheless, gender norms and political and socio-economic factors continue to limit women's political representation at all levels. At the time of writing, only 86 parliamentarians in the Pacific region were women. However, the Pacific French territories stand out as leaders in terms of women's political participation: Women now comprise 56 per cent of French Polynesia's parliament, 42 per cent of New Caledonia's parliament, and 20 per cent of Wallis and Futuna's parliament.
- Most PICTs have specific, overarching national gender policies, but the human and financial resources dedicated to their implementation are usually insufficient. There is a need to translate commitments made through gender policies into national development and sectoral strategies, where gender issues are usually either not mentioned, or are featured in a separate section rather than mainstreamed throughout all development goals and strategies. The few examples of gender being at least partly mainstreamed in the sectoral work of government tend to be in the areas of health and education.
- National women's machineries<sup>4</sup> are well established across the region and are proving critical in promoting gender-responsive public policies. However, they remain highly marginalised within government; they are typically insufficiently funded and short-staffed, which limits their capacity to influence national and sectoral policies, and their coordination and monitoring mandates are not always clear.
- The availability of sex-disaggregated data and statistics is increasing in the region. The capacity to use this information to inform policies across government needs to be strengthened. There is also a need to expand the scope of data generated to increase the level of understanding of issues such as pay disparity, gender roles in food security and in the information economics sector, the value of unpaid care support, and the cost of domestic violence.
- There is more awareness about the role of women in natural resources management and climate change adaptation. However, some traditional practices continue to limit women's participation in land use management, and it is still rare that their concerns are reflected in environmental and climate change strategies.

<sup>3</sup> Samoa, Papua New Guinea's province of Bougainville, and Vanuatu.

<sup>4</sup> The Beijing Platform for Action defines 'National Women's Machinery': 'A national machinery for the advancement of women is the central policy coordinating unit inside the government. Its main task is to support government-wide mainstreaming of a gender-equality perspective in all policy areas.' (Paragraph 201).

- Most PICTs now mandate the same legal age of marriage for both men and women. Progress has been made to reduce the incidence of teenage pregnancy, and efforts are being intensified to address some of the profound effects on girls' educational opportunities and future prospects in all areas of their lives.
- Notwithstanding the progress that has been made in the last 20 years, the Beijing Platform for Action remains a critical instrument and an important reference point for accelerating progress towards achieving gender equality. Commitment to implementing all aspects of the Beijing Platform for Action need to feature highly on the political agendas of PICTs, development partners and civil society. This report endorses calls for gender equality to be reflected in the post-2015 international development framework, both as a standalone, sustainable development goal, and as a cross-cutting, enabling condition for the realisation of all other development goals.

# Introduction

Almost 20 years ago, thousands of delegates from all parts of the world gathered in Beijing on the occasion of the Fourth World Conference for Women, to examine the status of women, share experiences and design global strategies to balance power and decision-making between men and women in all aspects of life. This discussion led to the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPA) – a comprehensive and transformative framework establishing the principle of shared power and responsibility between women and men at home, in the workplace and in the wider national and international communities as the basis of development, social justice and peace.

The BPA identified 12 ‘Critical Areas of Concern’, on which governments, civil society, United Nations (UN) agencies and other stakeholders needed to progress in order to eliminate all barriers to the ‘full participation of women and girls in public and private spheres through their equal share of economic, social, cultural and political decision-making’. In each Critical Area, main issues were assessed, and strategic objectives were proposed with concrete actions to achieve those objectives.

In 1994, in preparation for the Fourth World Conference for Women, held in Beijing, China in 1995, delegates from 22 Pacific Island countries and territories met in Noumea and endorsed a set of principles and a plan of action to advance gender equality in the region – The Pacific Platform for Action on the Advancement of Women and Gender Equality (PPA). The review of the PPA, which expires in 2015, and the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action, come at an opportune time to push for further gains on gender equality. In the Pacific, the adoption of the 2012 Forum Leaders’ Gender Equality Declaration was an important sign of growing political will at the highest levels. Under the declaration, leaders identified six priority areas and established a yearly reporting mechanism for progress in those priority areas. The priority areas were aligned with the Beijing Platform for Action and the Revised Pacific Platform for Action on the Advancement of Women and Gender Equality (SPC 2005), and included gender-responsive public policies and programmes, and principles on women’s participation in decision-making, women’s economic empowerment, ending violence against women, and improving health and education for women and girls.

However, despite those high-level international and regional commitments to gender equality, progress on this issue has been slow in a number of areas, especially in terms of the capacity of countries to incorporate gender perspectives into sectoral public policies. This lack of action has important consequences for women’s lives, including their exposure to violence and poverty, and their ability to exercise decision-making in both private and public spheres.



## Purpose of this report

This report is a compilation of the national review reports on Beijing +20 produced by 16 Pacific Island countries and territories (PICTs). It seeks to reflect on areas of progress and challenges in fulfilling commitments to achieving gender equality in the Pacific islands region, and to prompt dialogue between governments, civil society actors, development partners and Pacific Island women and men about strategic actions to accelerate progress in achieving gender equality.

The report presents some of the most significant advances in and barriers to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in all key 12 Critical Areas of Concern. These thematic areas are: poverty; education; health; violence; armed conflict; the economy; power and decision-making; human rights; institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women and gender equality; the environment; the media; and the girl child.

## Methodology

This report draws from national responses to regional surveys and national reviews sent by PICTs to the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN ESCAP) and UN Women.<sup>5</sup>

Cook Islands, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Caledonia, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu submitted their national reviews and responded to the regional survey, Fiji and Papua New Guinea submitted their national reviews only, while the Federated States of Micronesia, French Polynesia, Kiribati, Tuvalu and Wallis and Futuna submitted their responses to the regional survey only.

Other sources of information were used to complement national reports, including national and regional reports relating to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), national censuses, reports and analyses from the United Nations system, outcomes documents from regional conferences on gender equality issues, and data from the Pacific Regional Information System (PRISM).

The report benefited from the inputs and comments of a wide range of individuals and institutions, at the regional and international level. The complete list is found in the acknowledgements section.

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<sup>5</sup> All national reviews are available on the UN Women web page dedicated to the Beijing +20 Review: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw59-2015/preparations>

Recommendations made in the report come from the 11th and 12th Triennial Conferences of Pacific Women<sup>6</sup> and the 4th Pacific Women's Ministerial Meeting.<sup>7</sup> These conferences shared a common principal objective: to review the implementation of the Pacific Platform for Action on the advancement of women and gender equality adopted in 1994 and revised in 2004 and which mirrored the Beijing Platform for Action.

Limitations of this report include a limited historical perspective and incomplete information on the contribution of civil society organisations to the progress identified in the report.

## Land area and population of Pacific Island countries and territories

The Pacific Islands region is diverse in terms of geography, resources, population, social and customary systems, and colonial contact experience, with differing experiences of transition to new social, political and economic systems.

Table 1: Land and population of Pacific Island countries and territories, 2013

Region/country or territory	Land area (km <sup>2</sup> )	Estimated number of people at mid-year (2013)	Population density (people/km <sup>2</sup> )	Annual growth rate (%) (2013)	Urban population at last census (%)
<b>MELANESIA</b>	<b>540,030</b>	<b>9,392,000</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>2.1</b>	
Fiji	18,333	859,200	47	0.5	51
New Caledonia	18,576	259,000	14	1.3	67
Papua New Guinea	462,840	7,398,500	16	2.3	13
Solomon Islands	28,000	610,800	22	2.5	20
Vanuatu	12,281	264,700	22	2.5	24
<b>MICRONESIA</b>	<b>3,156</b>	<b>524,900</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>1.6</b>	
Federated States of Micronesia	701	103,000	147	0.0	22
Guam	541	174,900	323	2.6	94
Kiribati	811	108,800	134	2.1	54
Marshall Islands	181	54,200	299	0.8	74

6 The 11th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women was held between 16 and 20 August 2010, in Noumea, New Caledonia; the 12th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women was held between 20 and 24 October 2013, in Rarotonga, Cook Islands.

7 The 4th Pacific Women's Ministerial Meeting was between 20 and 22 July 2011, in Nadi, Fiji.

Region/country or territory	Land area (km <sup>2</sup> )	Estimated number of people at mid-year (2013)	Population density (people/km <sup>2</sup> )	Annual growth rate (%) (2013)	Urban population at last census (%)
Nauru	21	10,500	499	1.7	100
Northern Mariana Islands	457	55,700	122	1.3	90
Palau	444	17,800	40	0.5	77
<b>POLYNESIA</b>	<b>8,126</b>	<b>649,600</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>0.2</b>	
American Samoa	199	56,500	284	0.6	50
Cook Islands	237	15,200	64	0.5	74
French Polynesia	3,521	261,400	74	0.2	51
Niue	259	1,500	6	-2.4	-
Samoa	2,934	187,400	64	0.0	20
Tokelau	12	1,200	98	-0.9	-
Tonga	749	103,300	138	0.1	23
Tuvalu	26	10,900	420	1.6	47
Wallis and Futuna	142	12,200	86	-2.0	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>551,312</b>	<b>10,566,500</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>2.0</b>	

Source: Pacific Islands Populations 2013. Statistics for Development Division, SPC.

Note: All estimates refer to de facto population, except the Cook Islands, where estimates refer to resident population only.

The median age in the region is 21.3 years,<sup>8</sup> which indicates that half the population of all PICTs is aged below that median. However, this regional average masks important variations at the national level. For example, Palau's median age is 36.2 years.

The age-dependency ratio is the ratio of dependents (younger than 15 or older than 59) to the working-age population, that is those aged 15-59. This ratio helps measure the pressure on the working population to generate sufficient economic benefits to support the entire population. There are, on average, 75 dependents to 100 working people<sup>9</sup> in PICTs (compared to 63 in 100 in Australia<sup>10</sup>). Such high age-dependency ratios are often observed in countries affected by low population growth, high out-migration rates and ageing populations.

<sup>8</sup> Pacific Islands Populations 2013. Statistics for Development Division, SPC.

<sup>9</sup> Pacific Islands Populations 2013. Statistics for Development Division, SPC.

<sup>10</sup> Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 3101.0 – Australian Demographic Statistics, Table 59. Estimated resident population by single year of age, Australia. Accessed on 3 February 2015 at: <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/3101.0Jun%202014?OpenDocument>

# Critical area A: Women and poverty

## 1. Gendered dimensions of poverty and hardship in the Pacific

### a. Poverty definitions used in the Pacific region

None of the reporting PICTs were able to indicate the percentage of women living in extreme poverty (earning less than USD 1.25 per day), but other sources, such as the Regional Millennium Development Goals Tracking Report, indicate that extreme poverty is uncommon in Pacific countries (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2014).

Many reporting PICTs explained that, until recently, discussing poverty often triggered resistance within communities, as it implied that traditional values of intra-community solidarity were eroding. Recent studies have revealed that traditional safety nets that once protected the most vulnerable members of society are proving insufficient due to the increased monetisation of economies (AusAID 2012, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat [PIFS] 2014, PIFS and SPC 2012, World Bank 2014). Further, increasing rates of urbanisation are shown to be linked to the prevalence of poverty.

Many reporting PICTs emphasised that the concept of poverty, as measured by the level of cash income or by expenditure estimates, was considered ill-suited to the Pacific context, where most economies comprise high levels of subsistence production and consumption of self-produced food. Other concepts are therefore more commonly used to measure poverty, such as poverty of opportunities, or hardship. Samoa, for example, referred to the concept of hardship as defined in human development terms: ‘...an inadequate level of sustainable human development, manifested by a lack of access to basic services such as health care, clean water and education, few opportunities to fully take part in a community’s socio-economic life and a lack of access to productive resources and income.’<sup>11</sup>

Hardship (as a measure of poverty) is also made visible when individuals are unable to meet their customary obligations to the extended family, village community and the church (SPC 2010b). The use of the basic poverty line is irrelevant to measures of poverty based on this hardship concept.

### b. Feminisation of poverty

Of the five reporting countries and territories that provided data on poverty, only two offered data that was disaggregated by sex. Although data is often patchy or outdated, there is some evidence of a feminisation of poverty in most reporting PICTs. PICT reports indicate that a gender perspective to poverty analysis, prevention and

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11 This definition was agreed after a series of participatory assessments of hardship conducted by the Asian Development Bank in 10 Pacific Island countries and territories from 2001 to 2005.

eradication is not yet prevalent in the region; only one country reported on the percentage of women living below the national poverty line. Samoa reported that such gender-sensitive poverty data had been collected during its November 2013 Household Expenditure Survey, but the survey's results were not available at the time of writing.

Only Vanuatu reported having adopted action plans to implement macro-economic policies to address the needs of women and girls. Fiji indicated that women were at a higher risk of poverty due to strong labour-market discrimination, and increasing rates of separation and divorce in cases where no maintenance payments were obtained from former spouses. Fiji's report indicated that women made up the majority of beneficiaries under the Social Welfare Department Family Assistance Scheme.

Countries often use the percentage of households headed by women as a proxy indicator of the feminisation of poverty. For example, Palau reported that female-headed households represented 27 per cent of households, and that 31 per cent of these lived below the basic poverty line.

Figure 1, below, highlights that female-headed households are more likely than male-headed ones to possess no source of income, which makes them extremely vulnerable to external shocks, whether health-related (illness, injury), of an economic nature (rising prices), or environmental (floods, droughts, cyclones) (World Bank 2014). Having no source of income places those households at greater risk of being unable to cover non-food living costs, such as education and healthcare.

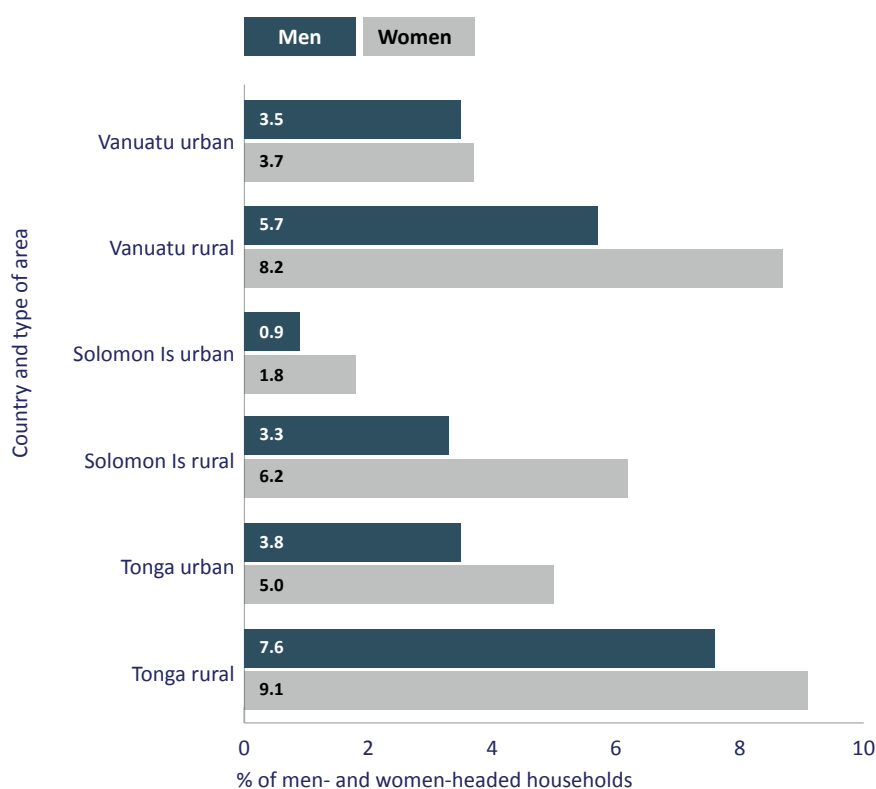


Figure 1: Proportion of households with no source of income, by sex of the household head (latest census)

The co-occurrence of poverty and female-headed households does not always hold, as unequal power dynamics within households may mean that women and children face greater poverty within traditional families than in female-headed households. In Samoa the analysis of the Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2008 shows that 37 per cent of all women live in households in the lowest three quintiles, compared to 17 per cent of female-headed households falling within those same quintiles.

In order to obtain accurate accounts of poverty and hardship, attempts have been made in recent years to move away from measures that view the household as a unit in the analysis of poverty, and to develop innovative methodologies to grasp the multidimensional effects of poverty at the individual level. For example, participatory research conducted in six countries, including Fiji, consulted with women and men living in poverty about what constitutes deprivation and how it may be experienced differently by men and women. The consultations led to the design of an individual, scalar measure of deprivation, which fully captures certain dimensions that are usually absent from traditional measures of poverty – including freedom from violence, decision-making in the family and time use<sup>12</sup> – the inclusion of which is critical in fully understanding the status of women. The ‘Individual Deprivation Measure’ (IDM) is captured on a scale of deprivation; traditional measures of poverty represent deprivation as either above or below the poverty line, which is simplistic. While the scalar measure needs refining (to account for its failure to capture the impact of domestic violence and of being deprived of access to contraception), it is nonetheless a more sophisticated tool than traditional measures, and offers useful perspectives for capturing the gendered dimensions of poverty and hardship (Wisor S. et al. 2014).

Another example of more innovative methodologies that grasp the multidimensional effects of poverty is in the qualitative studies on gender and hardship in the French Pacific territories. These studies highlighted the ways in which hardship was experienced differently by men and women within the same poor household. In particular, male respondents mostly defined hardship in monetary terms, whereas women also included lack of safety, exposure to addictions and intra-family violence in their understanding of hardship. The studies revealed that men’s and women’s coping strategies often differed along gender lines. These differences reinforced a traditional sexual division of tasks, with women often turning to subsistence farming, crafts and the informal care sector, while men would increase their involvement in fishing and manual work, such as carpentry and automobile repair (Union des Femmes Francophones d’Océanie [UFFO] 2012a, 2012b, 2012c).

<sup>12</sup> These elements were in addition to the dimensions of deprivation that were ranked the highest by respondents: food, water, shelter, health and education. The IDM counts 15 weighted dimensions.

<sup>13</sup> Solomon Islands Census Report 2009.



### c. Women's role in poverty prevention

Women in the Pacific are over-represented in informal, unregulated, low-wage and low-skilled jobs, often in sectors that are most vulnerable to global economic shocks. As such, women are particularly affected by high food prices, inflation and environmental degradation. Despite their high exposure to hardship, women nonetheless make a substantial contribution to livelihoods and poverty prevention within their families and communities. In the Solomon Islands, for example, rural women's subsistence farming is considered a safety net that has prevented the majority of Solomon Islanders from experiencing extreme poverty. This is shown in the fact that households in rural areas are the least affected by poverty in the country, followed by households in provincial-urban centres. Honiara, on the other hand, displays a much higher incidence of poverty, since, despite the greater availability of employment than in rural areas,<sup>13</sup> many households cannot cover the basic costs of a reasonable minimum standard of living in the urban, cash-based environment.

A 2012 research report from the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID), based on six Pacific Island countries, estimated that subsistence agriculture and informal activities provide a living for 65-85 per cent of the female population. Women traders, despite the highly informal setting in which they operate, as well as their lack of access to basic business services, often cover the living costs of entire families (AusAID 2012).



## 2. Successful policies and legislative changes

Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu reported significant progress in improving women's access to financial services, including credit and savings, especially for women in rural areas. The Central Bank of Solomon Islands, for instance, has opened savings clubs for women in rural Solomon Islands. One is Jorio Java Dovele Women's Association, formed in 2012. By June 2013 the association had saved SBD 200,000, making it a leader among the savings clubs in Solomon Islands.

The government of Papua New Guinea launched the country's first National Strategy on Financial Inclusion and Financial Literacy 2014-2015, with a commitment to enable one million more Papua New Guineans to open a bank account by the end of 2015. Half of these accounts will be opened by women.

As women make up the majority of workers in the informal sector, such as small vendors, they face specific obstacles to obtaining credit. For example, in Papua New Guinea, in order to secure a loan, women in the informal economy require a salaried husband as guarantor, and are required to produce many more documents endorsed by a person in authority. Thus, women find it harder to obtain access to resources than men. In 2012 the Personal Property Security Act was passed to create the legal authority for an asset registry, allowing the use of assets such as jewellery and machinery to be used as collateral.

The Vanuatu Women Development Scheme (VANWODS) has been operational in Port Vila since 1996, and has extended its operations to Santo and other provinces. VANWODS's advocacy is credited for the removal of licence fees for businesses earning less than VUV 4 million per year: most of these small businesses are owned by women. Although many PICTs have highlighted that women's improved access to credit has enabled many women to start small-scale businesses, some PICTs have expressed concern about a lack of research about the impact of micro-credit on women's economic empowerment more broadly.

In Fiji improving women's access to income-generating activities has been prioritised under the Women's Plan of Action 2010-2019, with 73 women's groups having so far received seed money and financial management training in sectors such as poultry, beekeeping, virgin coconut oil production, sewing, handicrafts, catering and farming. An analysis of the assistance offered to women's livelihood projects by the Department of Women shows that, between 2011 and 2013, 42 projects were assisted, while in the first four months of 2014, 32 projects were supported.



### **3. Obstacles to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action**

#### **a. High regional, economic and social inequalities**

Rapid urbanisation, large-scale internal and international migration, and the increasing monetisation of economies, erode traditional and informal social protection systems. Low levels of formal social protection in the Pacific region increases people's reliance on families and clan solidarity. Remittances from abroad remain an important source of income for most Pacific households.

There is little evidence that reporting countries are addressing the ways in which women and girls are affected by poverty. The relative lack of awareness, data and analysis about the feminisation of poverty, and about the roles that men and women play in poverty prevention and alleviation, reinforce the low priority accorded the issue in national agendas.

#### **b. Low economic growth and reliance on imports**

The alleviation of poverty in Pacific countries is made difficult by some of the inherent characteristics of small island developing states (SIDS), including low economic growth, high costs and other constraints on trade activities, and dependence on imports. Such circumstances make PICTs vulnerable to economic, financial and climate crises. A report by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community on inequalities in the Pacific Islands region highlighted how the effects of international food and fuel crises and economic downturns particularly affected the poor and other vulnerable groups: children, women, rural people, urban poor and groups with special needs, such as the elderly and people living with disabilities (PIFS and SPC 2012).

## 4. Recommendations

The 11th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women acknowledged ‘the need for social protection and legal empowerment, particularly for the most impoverished women and families’ (SPC, Paragraph 22a; Outcomes and recommendations from the 11th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women, Noumea 2010).

The 12th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women called for governments ‘to consider social protection measures for vulnerable women, including but not limited to women with disabilities, older women, women living with HIV/AIDS/STIs, young women, girls, female-headed households, widows, divorced women, migrant workers and caregivers.’<sup>14</sup>

The conference called on governments, the private sector and financial institutions to invest in and support women and young women, including those with disabilities, women living in rural and remote areas, and those working in the informal sector, by:

- a. giving them access to productive resources;
- b. establishing business incubators;
- c. promoting financial literacy programmes and access to financial services (noting potential negative risks associated with credit programmes); and
- d. guaranteeing safe and sanitary conditions.<sup>15</sup>

Recognising the critical role of women in food security, the conference also called on Pacific islands countries and territories ‘to secure food sovereignty based on the recognition of smallholder farmers, particularly women, as key economic actors whose sovereign right to use and own land should be protected through legally binding safeguards, including against land grabbing.’<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> SPC 2013. Outcomes and recommendations from the 12th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women, Rarotonga.

<sup>15</sup> SPC 2013. Outcomes and recommendations from the 12th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women, Rarotonga.

<sup>16</sup> SPC 2013. Outcomes and recommendations from the 12th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women, Rarotonga.

# Critical area B: Education and training of women

Most PICTs are close to achieving universal primary education (PIFS 2014).<sup>17</sup> Efforts to provide free and compulsory education have proven to be effective tools in improving access. Despite these important gains, at the secondary and tertiary levels concerns remain relating to unequal access to education and training for boys and girls. Several PICTs reported that adolescent pregnancies constituted a significant obstacle to girls' education and professional training.

## 1. Progress in providing access to education in the Pacific

### a. Literacy among men and women

The table below presents data provided by reporting countries and territories. In most cases the methodology used self-declared literacy ability.

Table 2: Literacy rates by age and sex

Countries/territories	Female	Male	Year
French Polynesia	96%	94%	2012
New Caledonia	100%	100%	2013
Nauru	61%	75%	2013
Papua New Guinea	15-24 74%	15-24 67%	2008-2012
Palau*	Women 80% Girls 85%	Men 70% Boys 75%	2014
Samoa	15-24 98%	15-24 95%	2013
Solomon Islands	Women and girls over 15 79%		2009
Tonga	100%	100%	2012
Tuvalu	100%		2012
Vanuatu	Women 84% Girls 41%	Men 86% Boys 37%	2009 2012

Source : National reviews or regional surveys, Beijing +20 Review.

\* In the absence of national data, the percentages provided are based upon the expert opinion of the Chief of Curriculum Development, Ministry of Education (Government of Palau 2014).

17 According to the 2014 MDG report for the Pacific, Papua New Guinea and Kiribati are off-track, while the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu are showing mixed results.

The Pacific Islands Literacy and Numeracy Assessment (PILNA) 2012 was used to assess literacy and numeracy skills across 14 Pacific Island countries. Only three in 10 Pacific Island pupils, of the 27,000 tested, demonstrated the literacy skills expected at their level of schooling, while five in 10 pupils had failed to reach the expected standard of numeracy. Girls were found to be performing significantly better than boys in both literacy and numeracy. Three in 10 girls demonstrated the expected literacy skills, compared to two in 10 boys. For numeracy, five in 10 girls are demonstrating the expected numeracy skills, compared to four in 10 boys (SPC 2012).

In Papua New Guinea a recent study assessing functional literacy in five provinces reported much lower rates of literacy. In four of the provinces surveyed the observed literacy rate was less than 15 per cent, while it was 25 per cent in the other province. In all five provinces surveyed, the proportion of men classified as literate was around four to five per cent higher than for women.

Nauru's report emphasised an alarming lack of basic literacy and numeracy among young people, who ultimately must compete for a limited number of public and private sector jobs.

## **b. Boys' and girls' school enrolment**

In Fiji the Ministry of Education has developed its 'Education for All' action plan for the period 2000 to 2015. The MDG Report 2010 indicated that boys' enrolment in primary school remained fairly stable, at 94.9 per cent in 2000 and 95.3 per cent in 2008, while girls' enrolment increased from 94.6 per cent to 96.3 per cent in the same period. In secondary schools the enrolment rates of girls have consistently exceeded those of boys by around 10 percentage points.<sup>18</sup> Government policies require that all state scholarships be equally shared between boys and girls.

In Papua New Guinea education was made free and compulsory in December 2012, which has resulted in higher enrolments for both girls and boys. However, a lack of planning has resulted in insufficient teachers, classrooms and resources to accommodate the increased number of students. The implementation of the commodity component of the government's tuition fee-free education policy for 2014 has recently begun, with the distribution of student education kits to all schools.

Solomon Islands exhibits equal access to education from the early childhood education level to junior secondary level. However, there are lacks in terms of poor continuation and completion rates, teacher motivation and standards, and class attendance rates by both students and teachers, and a lack of financial support for basic education.

The issue of poor primary school completion rates requires particular attention in PICTs. Fiji and other PICTs highlighted that the transition from primary to junior secondary was linked to high rates of student drop-out.

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<sup>18</sup> The male enrolment ratio increased from 67.7 per cent in 2000 to 74.1 per cent in 2008. The female enrolment ratio increased from 74.4 per cent to 84.4 per cent during the same period.

Table 3 captures information on the primary school completion rates in a number of Pacific countries, for boys and girls, as well as gender gaps in accessing primary, secondary and tertiary education.

Table 3: Gross enrolment rates and gender parity indexes in primary and secondary education

Country	Year	Primary gross enrolment rate - male	Primary gross enrolment rate - female	GPI- Primary	Year	Secondary gross Enrolment rate - male	Secondary gross Enrolment rate - female	GPI- Secondary
Cooks	2014	103	103	100	2014	99 JS 64 SS	100 JS 78 SS	101 JS 122 SS
FSM	2010	96	98.1	102	2010	72.5	79.9	110
Fiji	2013	109	110	101	2013			111
Kiribati	2011	89	90	101	2011	79 JS 38 SS	93 JS 52 SS	118 JS 137 SS
RMI	2010	95.0	93.9	99	2010	57.1	63.5	111
Nauru	2013	106.6	100.4	94	2013	77.0	81.2	106
Niue	2010	100	100	100	2013	113.4	97.5	86.0
Palau	2011	120.2	117.5	98	2011	67.9	73.4	108
PNG	2009	89.86	80.82	90	2013	23.08	16.49	71
Samoa	2012	102	105	103	2012	67	76	113
Tuvalu	2011	101	101	100	2011	41	63	154
Vanuatu	2011	120.4	116.7	97	2011	39.1	42.8	110

Source: National Minimum Development Indicators database, SPC; Cook Islands: Cook Islands 2014 Statistics Report from <http://www.education.gov.ck/attachments/article/46/2014%20Education%20Statistics%20Report.pdf>; FSM 2010 Census Summary; RMI Ministry of Education; Nauru and Palau derived from Ministry of Education Annual Statistics Reports and SDD population estimates.

Note: JS = Junior Secondary; SS = Senior Secondary.



Several countries reported that difficulties in meeting the costs associated with education – such as uniforms, lunch, stationery and transport – were common across their communities. Fiji and Samoa have made efforts to subsidise transportation and reduce school fees. Samoa initiated a school fee grant scheme for primary schools in 2010, and extended it to secondary schools in 2014.

Solomon Islands reported that access to secondary education by girls was problematic, with a decrease in girls' enrolments at the senior education level compared to the junior levels. This gap is attributed to gender norms, including the prioritisation of boys' education: rather than sending their daughters to school, some disadvantaged families will send girls to work as child minders for relatives in urban centres. Girls are often expected to work and remit their earnings to their parents.

Another factor strongly accounting for girls' lower enrolment in secondary education is the lack of suitable infrastructure, such as separate dormitories and toilet facilities, and adequate transportation, especially in rural secondary schools.

Despite these obstacles, in most of the countries for which this information was measured, important progress has been achieved in girls' access to secondary education. As illustrated by the gender parity index in the Table 3, above, in 10 Pacific countries the number of girls in secondary education exceeds the number of boys. The drop-out rates of boys was reported to be an area of increasing concern in several countries.

**Promising practice:** To address gender segregation in the training and subsequent employment of women, New Caledonia has developed media campaigns to encourage women to consider entering traditionally male jobs in sectors that are in demand in the country, such as mining. The main objective of these campaigns was to promote better employment opportunities for women.

## 2. Successful policies and legislative changes

In Samoa the recently launched 2013-2018 Samoa Education Sector Plan defines the short-, medium- and long-term strategic directions of the education sector. The plan is designed to help tackle challenges around the quality of provision of education, learning outcomes, the scarcity of skilled workers and the lack of relevance of some courses to the Samoan economy and the country's overall national development.

Fiji's Ministry of Education now has in place an online database that gathers sex-disaggregated data on enrolment, absenteeism and drop-out rates. The database, which went online in 2013, is the first of its kind in the Pacific region. It will contribute to improving the reporting of the performance of girls and boys in the education sector.

Tuvalu has also adopted an accelerated approach to improving the quality of education, to address key concerns in meeting MDG 2, including issues related to a lack of gender perspectives in service delivery. The Tuvalu Education Strategic Plan 2011–2015 includes developing and implementing professional standards for teaching staff, developing and implementing outcomes-based curricula, and implementing a standardised assessment for monitoring literacy and numeracy.

Tonga's Ministry of Education has recently conducted a gender audit of curricula with the aim of eliminating gender stereotypes (PIFS 2013).

## 3. Obstacles to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action

### a. Lack of gender sensitivity in education policies

Papua New Guinea (PNG) is the only reporting country or territory to have adopted a specific policy to achieve gender equity in the education sector, and it has adopted a strategic plan to support the implementation of the policy. However, PNG's report acknowledges major challenges in implementing the plan, including perceptions that gender issues are a low priority, and limited institutional commitment, leadership, capacity and resources to address gender issues. Specific sub-sector strategies have not yet been fully developed, and remain under-resourced at both the national and provincial levels.

Solomon Islands reported progress in the attention paid to gender issues in education since the establishment of gender focal points across government sectors, and the adoption of a national gender policy. The report indicates that the gender focal point for the education ministry effectively monitors the gender sensitivity of policy design and implementation.

A lack of gender sensitivity at the policy level is exacerbated by a general lack of teacher training in PICTs. Access to high-quality schooling was mentioned as a challenge by several reporting countries and territories, including



Samoa, where teachers who hold no teaching qualifications account for 23 per cent of all primary teachers. There are also shortages of skilled mathematics, science and agriculture secondary school teachers.

Although several PICTs mentioned the high drop-out rate of girls due to pregnancy, very few reported having initiatives to support these girls' continuing education.<sup>19</sup> Among those that did, Fiji introduced the Matua programme at Nabua Secondary School in Suva in 2004. This programme allows school leavers and adults who have dropped out of school to return to continue their secondary school curriculum education. Although the programme does not specifically target adolescent girls, women now represent 75 per cent of programme graduates who are now enrolled in university. Palau and the Cook Islands also have public school policies allowing pregnant students to remain in school. School counsellors work with parents and school health officials to monitor pregnant student while they are enrolled in school. In addition, adult high school programmes provide out-of-school youth aged 18 and over with an opportunity to obtain an education.

## **b. Disconnect between education and employment outcomes**

Several PICTs reported concerns that women's improved access to education had not been translated into better employment opportunities. Girls' access to training is limited by current traditional school curricula and career pathway options, which demarcate, through selection methods and study options, the traditional subjects of home economics for girls and technical trades for boys. While scholarships have been allocated in order to open opportunities for women and girls in vocational, trade and technical areas at post-secondary and tertiary level, these opportunities are undermined by schools' gender-stereotyped curricula and learning pathways.

New Caledonia explained in its report that women and girls tended to overwhelmingly opt for studies leading to social work, health and education roles, which tend to yield fewer employment prospects, lower salaries and more precarious tenure than male dominated employment sectors such as mining, the marine industry and construction. In order to address gender-based career choices, the government has engaged in a review of the content of the school curriculum to reveal gender stereotyping. Similarly, Fiji reported the need for its education system respond to the country's need for skills in climate change adaptation and mitigation, and to the growing demand for green technology jobs in the medium and longer term.

Access to higher education in the Pacific region is also limited by other factors, including inflexible and outdated entry points prescribed by institutions, a lack of recognition of experience and skills gained in the informal sector, scholarship opportunities that limit the participation of women and girls to those who have passed certain formal examinations and high-level literacy tests, and a lack of curriculum resources, instructors and targeted, structured programmes.

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<sup>19</sup> Samoa also reported that it has launched a support programme for teenage mothers, but it is unclear whether it includes continued education. See Critical area L, The girl child, for more detail.



There is also a shortage of impact data regarding women's and girls' educational achievement at post-secondary and tertiary education, and the number of Pacific women that are gaining scholarships and studying in professional and tertiary programmes.

## 4. Recommendations

The 12th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women called for PICTs to:<sup>20</sup>

- adopt measures that ensure that girls have equal access to primary, secondary and tertiary education, especially in rural and remote areas, and areas of great hardship. (Paragraph 35)
- adopt measures that promote respect for the safety of women and girls in the school environment, including measures to prevent as well as to respond to sexual and gender-based violence. (Paragraph 36 )
- put in place inclusive policies to accommodate pregnant young women and mothers to complete their education. (Paragraph 38)
- review school curricula and all teaching materials in order to eliminate gender stereotypes and all forms of discrimination. (Paragraph 42)
- disseminate data regarding Pacific women's access to education and to support initiatives that address all barriers – civil, political, social, cultural, economic and physical – faced by women, young women, and girls, including those with disabilities, to access all levels of education. (Paragraph 40)

The conference 'encouraged training and education institutions to expand choices for women and girls in accessing technical and vocational education and training (TVET), and higher education.' (Paragraph 37)

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<sup>20</sup> SPC 2013. Outcomes and recommendations from the 12th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women, Rarotonga.

## Critical area C: Women and health

Pacific countries' reports against the MDGs show that considerable progress has been achieved in relation to key aspects of women's health in the past 20 years, especially in maternal health. Improvements in nutrition, sanitation and water have greatly contributed to healthier populations. PICTs, like many middle-income countries, are in a state of health transition, in which poor health due to infectious diseases is tending to diminish, and the rate of health issues linked to non-communicable and chronic diseases increases is rising (WHO 2009). In the Pacific the majority of deaths are now attributed to non-communicable ailments, such as diabetes, cancer and heart diseases. The toll on women and girls, in terms of their own health, as well as in an increased care burden, is increasingly acknowledged.

Despite this evolution, sexual and reproductive health issues remain substantial challenges in most PICTs due to persistent gender inequalities in accessing education, and in income, social protection, healthcare and decision-making. In particular, young women, women with disabilities and older women have specific reproductive health needs that are often neglected within health programmes. In addition, high rates of violence against women also negatively affect women's ability to safeguard their health.

### 1. Main health challenges affecting women and girls

Despite the gains made in maternal health, women face a number of challenges regarding their sexual and reproductive health. For example, the conditions under which women engage in sex may affect their health; low rates of contraceptive use, coupled with unmet needs regarding family planning, leads to high fertility rates, including high levels of adolescent pregnancies. Women are more vulnerable than men to contracting the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Women with disabilities are, overall, experiencing higher rates of violence than other women, including sexual violence, as well as overall poorer health outcomes (PIFS 2013 and 2014; United Nations Population Fund [UNFPA] 2013).

## a. Sexual and reproductive health

### i. Reproductive health

Pacific fertility rates remain high: seven PICTs have rates of 4.0 or more births per woman. Despite progress in the availability of family planning services, some of the factors contributing to high fertility rates include: a lack of sexual and reproductive health and rights information; limited access to contraception; isolation; and women's limited decision-making power in respect of the spacing of births.

Table 4: Key reproductive health indicators

Country	Contraceptive prevalence rate	Year	Unmet need for family planning <sup>21</sup>	Year	Total fertility rate	Year
Cooks	31	2012	n/a	n/a	2.6	2010-2012
FSM	49.5	2011	44	2002	3.5	2010
Fiji	44.3	2012	20	2000	2.6	2003
Kiribati	22	2009	28	2009	3.9	2010
RMI	42.4	2007	2	2010	4.1	2011
Nauru	36	2007	24	2007	4.3	2011
Niue	23	2001	n/a	n/a	2.2	2006-11
Palau	22	2010	n/a	n/a	1.7	2010
PNG	32	2006	27.4	2006	4.4	2001-06
Samoa	29	2009	46	2009	4.7	2011
Solomon Islands	35	2007	11	2007	4.1	2007-09
Tonga	34.1	2012	25.2	2012	3.9	2011
Tuvalu	22	2010	24	2007	4.1	2012
Vanuatu	48	2013	25	2013	4.3	2013

Source: UNFPA Population and Development Profiles: Pacific Sub-Region, April 2014; National Minimum Development Indicator (NMDI) database, SPC.

<sup>21</sup> As a percentage of women married or in a consensual union.

## ii. Maternal health

According to the Pacific MDG report for 2014, around half of the countries in the region are on track to meet the MDG targets on maternal health (PIFS 2014). Compared to the 1990s, reported skilled birth attendant rates increased in all countries, except in Federated States of Micronesia, Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu.<sup>22</sup>

Table 5: Selected maternal health indicators

Country	Antenatal coverage	Year	Birth attendance by skilled personnel	Year	Maternal mortality ratio per 100,000 births	Year
Cookis	100	2008	100	2008	0	2006-10
FSM	34	2009	90	2008	127.7	2005-09
Fiji	95	2010	99	2012	59.5	2012
Kiribati	88	2009	80	2009	215	2004
RMI	92	2011	98	2011	104	2007-11
Nauru	95	2007	97	2007		
Niue	100	2000-08	100	2011	0	2007-11
Palau	90	2010	100	2010	0	2010
PNG	62	2010	40	2010	711	2009
Samoa	93	2009	97	2009	46	2002-06
Solomon Islands	80	2007	86	2007	162	2009
Tokelau	100	2011	100	2011	0	2008-2012
Tonga	98	2010	98	2012	37	2010
Tuvalu	97	2007	98	2007	0	2010
Vanuatu	98	2007	74	2007	86	2007

Source: UNFPA Population and Development Profiles: Pacific Island Countries, April 2014; NMDI database, SPC.

<sup>22</sup> National Minimum Development Indicator database, SPC.

### iii. Sexually transmitted infections

There is a high unmet need for family planning, and contraception use is low, both of which put women and adolescent girls at risk of contracting STIs. The prevalence of STIs, especially chlamydia, is a concern in several Pacific Island countries. Small populations and close-knit communities, especially in rural areas, are a real challenge to confidentiality, and these factors are often associated with low levels of sexual health awareness among young people. In addition, national reports show a strong association between intimate partner violence and women's ability to negotiate the use of contraceptives.

Table 6: STI (chlamydia) prevalence among pregnant women receiving antenatal care

Country	Cases	Year
Cook Islands	20	2006
Fed. States of Micronesia	26	2008
Fiji	29	2004
Kiribati	11	2008
Marshall Islands	25	2006
Nauru	5	2010
Palau	17	2006
Samoa	36	2009-10
Solomon Islands	11	2008
Tonga	13	2008
Tuvalu	17	2007
Vanuatu	25	2008

Source: NMDI database, SPC.

### b. Non-communicable diseases

While morbidity linked to non-communicable diseases (NCDs) is often perceived to be primarily linked to men, given their greater rates of smoking, women are affected by other risk factors to the same degree, or even to a greater extent than men. In all measured Pacific countries except one, obesity rates are higher among women than among men.

Palau has included data disaggregated by sex on the main risk factors associated with non-communicable diseases. Data from 2005 reveal that women are subject to hypertension to a greater extent than men (28 per cent versus 22 per cent) as well as to higher level of cholesterol. Women are also more likely to experience ‘low’ levels of physical activity (42 per cent) compared to men (28 per cent). A significantly greater proportion of men than women are regular consumers of alcohol (50 per cent of men currently consume alcohol at least once a week, compared to 23 per cent of women), and use tobacco less. However, more women consume betel nut with tobacco than men (66 per cent of women; 60 per cent of men).<sup>23</sup> Palau reports that non-communicable diseases have reduced women’s productivity and their ability to be effective caregivers to their families and communities.

The impacts of NCDs on the working population are increasingly felt. For example, in Tonga, almost half of all deaths (48 per cent) occur below the age of 64, particularly amongst men, as a result of cardiovascular diseases (World Bank 2012). A recent report on mortality trends points to several countries reaching a plateau in their population’s life expectancies. Given declines in infant and childhood mortality rates, it is clear that these plateaus result from the impact of premature adult mortality from non-communicable disease (SPC 2014).

Data from the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, captured in Figures 2 and 3, below, show that, over the past two decades in all countries, women’s deaths to NCDs have increased at a faster rate than men’s. In all countries except Papua New Guinea, women’s deaths due to NCDs are now considered proportionally higher than men’s. NCDs account for 72 per cent of adult women’s deaths in the Marshall Islands and Fiji, and 70 per cent of those deaths in Tonga.

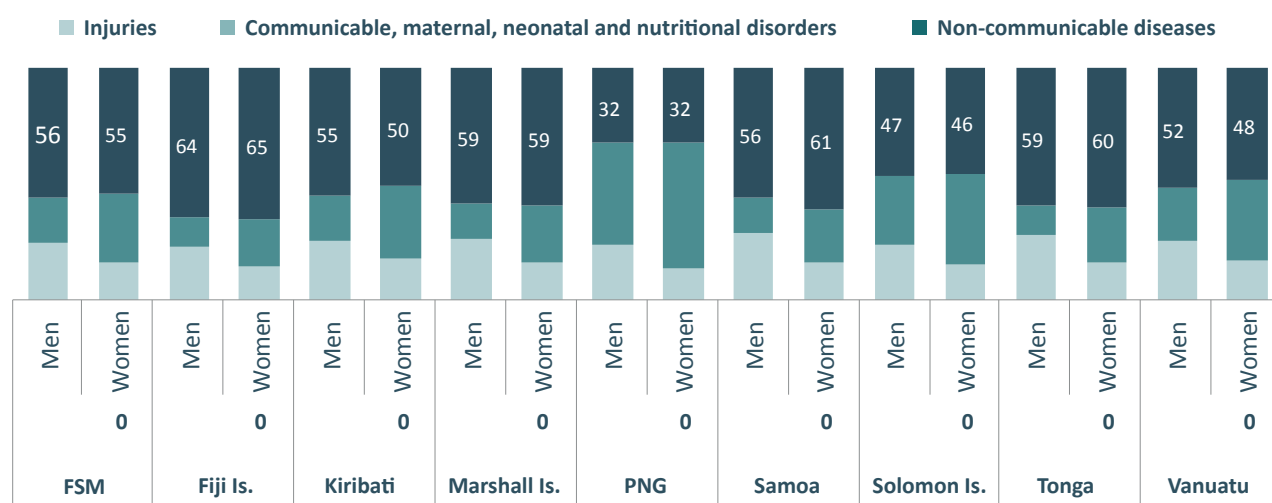


Figure 2: Estimated proportion of deaths due to NCDs (aged 15-49 years), selected countries, 1995

Source: Institute of Health Metrics and Evaluation. Accessed on 10 Oct. 2014: <http://vizhub.healthdata.org/gbd-compare/>

<sup>23</sup> Palau 2011-13 STEPS, quoted in the Palau Beijing +20 Narrative report. At the time of writing, the Palau 2011-13 STEPS data is undergoing final verification.

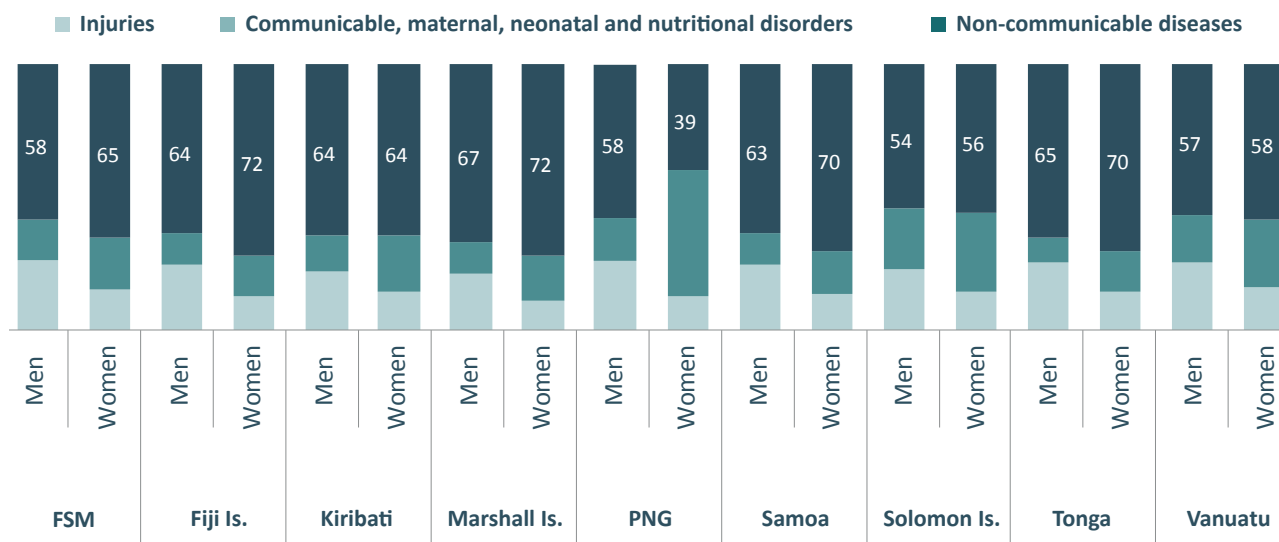


Figure 3: Estimated proportion of deaths due to NCDs (aged 15-49 years), selected countries, 2010

Source: Institute of Health Metrics and Evaluation. Accessed on 10 Oct. 2014: <http://vizhub.healthdata.org/gbd-compare/>

## 2. Successful legislative and policy changes

Several PICTs, including the Cook Islands, French Polynesia, New Caledonia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Wallis and Futuna, reported having policies in place to guarantee access of women and girls to universal quality health services, including national strategies to translate such policies into local realities.

However, not all of these PICTs reported implementing comprehensive strategies to provide sexual and reproductive healthcare services.

Most reporting PICTs mentioned that the majority of health services addressing women's and girls' health needs were provided at no or minimal financial cost, including primary health care, antenatal and postnatal care, disability care, food security and nutrition, and sexual and reproductive health. Such coverage has made significant contributions to women's health gains in the region.



Throughout the region, PICTs have or are developing reproductive health policies, or are integrating reproductive health and violence prevention into their health strategies. Kiribati, Fiji and Solomon Islands have developed medical guidelines on the health sector's response to violence affecting women and girls. Kiribati's national health strategy includes a strand related to gender-based violence. However, in most PICTs, health systems need to be strengthened to provide adequate services and referral support to survivors of sexual violence.

Papua New Guinea launched a health gender policy in 2014, with the aim of integrating a gender perspective into the health sector, including legislation, policies and programmes at all levels within the health system. The policy also seeks to increase gender equity in health information, and in access to and the use of services, in order to improve the health status of the population equitably.

### 3. Challenges to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action

#### a. Sustainable health financing

Most PICTs reported a dependence on development assistance, not only for important, large-scale health initiatives, but also for the routine operation of health facilities. This lack of sustainable financing explains, in part, the limited technical capacity of health institutions to collect and analyse data and effectively monitor health outcomes. For example, Vanuatu explained that in the absence of an effective universal birth and death registration system, estimates and rates for births and deaths are derived from its census or other specialised surveys.

Another consequence of limited domestic financing is a lack of capacity to allocate sufficient skilled personnel, facilities and equipment to cater to the health needs of the population, especially in rural or remote areas in outer islands.

This domestic financing issue does not affect all PICTs equally. For example, Samoa explained how a programme supported by UNFPA since 2005 is now sustained by the national budget, and how changes in health surveillance methods have allowed for a more timely and detailed picture of STI rates in the country.

Pacific countries are faced with what the World Bank has described as a 'double burden': which involves the pressure placed on the health system by high incidences of communicable diseases and maternal health issues, and by the rising costs of dealing with NCDs as populations age (World Bank 2012). Pacific countries' health sectors tend to be heavily reliant on public funds and development assistance. So with little private contribution being channelled to the health sector (either through private institutions or patients' self-funding), Pacific countries need to find other ways to finance their increasing health expenditures.



## b. Availability and quality of health services

Several reporting PICTs mentioned that health facilities were concentrated in the main cities and main islands, thus highlighting unequal access to health services. For example, Solomon Islands reported that, due to the widely dispersed population and the costs of transport, reducing maternal mortality would require additional means and services, such as a helicopter-based medical-evacuation service, which was beyond the Ministry of Health's budgetary reach.

Similarly, although free antenatal care was available in most PICTs, access to those services remains difficult. Papua New Guinea and Samoa reported that most women attended just one or two antenatal visits before giving birth, rather than the four recommended visits.

Access to health services is also hindered by cultural, social and religious aspects. For example, a 2008 survey conducted among young people in Port Vila, Vanuatu, highlighted that, while 65 per cent of them showed knowledge of family planning, only 38 per cent reported using contraceptives.

To address cultural and geographical barriers, PICTs such as Fiji have developed networks of trained community health workers. Although these are not formal health professionals, they act as information sharers, and as intermediaries between the community and health professionals, which improves referral of patients, the timely uptake of health services by the public, and general health surveillance. New Caledonia is considering implementing such a system, and as a preliminary step, has commissioned a study on cultural aspects of health to identify issues that prevent people from accessing health care. The Republic of the Marshall Islands has organised mobile teams, which include experts in health, water and sanitation, and agriculture, and officers from the division of women. These teams visit outer islands, bringing a comprehensive, integrated package of health and social services.

## c. Emigration of skilled professionals

Pacific Island countries and territories are affected by the mobility of health professionals, and several PICTs have reported losing trained health professionals to other countries.

It has also been reported that trained medical personnel are particularly likely to emigrate in search for better working conditions and career prospects (Connell 2010).

**Promising practice:** To address workforce shortages in the health sector, Samoa's Human Resources for Health Policy and Action Plan increased the number of places in training courses, and made special efforts to attract secondary school leavers. As a result of this outreach the ratio of health professionals in the population has risen, notably in the nursing profession.

## 4. Recommendations

The 11th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women recommended:<sup>24</sup>

- That national and regional providers of formal training of health care professionals integrate a comprehensive gender-sensitivity curriculum. (Paragraph 21c)
- That Pacific islands countries and territories, with support from development partners, increase funding towards health infrastructure and technology in order to deliver quality, sustainable, gender responsive health services, including in rural areas and outer islands. (Paragraph 21d)

The 12th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women called for:<sup>25</sup>

- Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) to be guaranteed, ensuring that women, young women, and girls, including those with disabilities, receive comprehensive and confidential SRHR services that respect their human rights throughout their life cycle. (Paragraph 32)
- Legislative reform to eliminate discriminatory laws and harmful practices that criminalise or impede access to abortion, emergency contraception and HIV/AIDS services, and instead create survivor-centered approaches for people with a history of sexual abuse. (Paragraph 33)

The conference:

- Supported better access to family planning, including for women with disabilities, as a means of improving women's health, empowerment and social advancement, and reducing the risk of maternal death and STI and HIV transmission. The conference also requested the Pacific Health Ministers Meeting to include an agenda item at their next meeting on ways to address the major problem of unmet need for contraceptives in the Pacific. (Paragraph 51)
- Highlighted the need to strengthen national screening programmes for breast and cervical cancers, and immunisation against the human papillomavirus (HPV) to prevent cervical cancer, as well as treatment for STIs, including chlamydia, and requested that governments prioritise support in these areas. (Paragraph 54)
- Requested PICT governments to explore innovative strategies and new technologies to increase access to good quality, comprehensive, and inclusive health systems, including social protection, to improve health outcomes, including reducing NCD-related deaths and disability in women, especially in rural and remote areas. (Paragraph 58)

<sup>24</sup> SPC 2010. Outcomes and recommendations from the 11th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women, Noumea.

<sup>25</sup> SPC 2013. Outcomes and recommendations from the 12th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women, Rarotonga.

## Critical area D: Violence against women

Violence against women and girls is one of the most pervasive manifestations of gender inequality in the Pacific. It reflects both the lower socio-economic status of women in society and the unequal power dynamics at play within families. In PICTs, the most widespread form of violence against women relates to intimate partner violence and/or domestic violence. Physical and sexual violence against women and girls perpetrated by men unrelated to them is commonly observed.

### 1. Availability of data

Efforts have been made in recent years by governments, civil society and development partners to document and research the circumstances and scope of such violence in the Pacific Islands region. However, very few PICTs reported conducting regular national surveys to measure the prevalence of violence against women and to monitor its evolution.

Table 7, below, presents data on the prevalence of violence against women across the reporting PICTs. The data should be used with caution, especially in cross-country comparisons, as scope, samples and methodologies vary between PICTs.

Table 7: Prevalence of violence against women and girls

PICT	Prevalence rate of violence against women and girls	Year, source of information and methodology
<b>Cook Islands</b>	32% of ever-partnered women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by their partner in their lifetime.	2013, Cook Islands, Cook Islands Family Health Safety Survey (FHSS) Report 2014 Te Ata o te Ngakau
<b>Fiji</b>	64% of ever-partnered women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by their partner in their lifetime, and 24% currently experience it.	2013, Fiji Women's Crisis Centre (WHO methodology <sup>26</sup> )
<b>Kiribati</b>	68% of women aged 15-49 have experienced physical and/or sexual abuse.	2008, Family Health and Safety Study, WHO methodology)
<b>Marshall Islands</b>	51% of women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by their partner in their lifetime.	2012, RMI Family Health and Safety Study <sup>27</sup> (WHO methodology)
<b>New Caledonia</b>	19% of women have experienced cases of physical violence, and 7% reported cases of sexual violence by their partner in the last 12 months.	2003, INSERM survey (sample of 1012 women aged 18-54), following the French ENVEF methodology

26 WHO and PATH 2005.

27 In prep.

PICT	Prevalence rate of violence against women and girls	Year, source of information and methodology
Papua New Guinea	65.3% of women reported being a survivor of physical and sexual violence. 80% of ever-partnered men reported having perpetrated physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence in their lifetime.	2010, PNG Contemporary PNG Studies: DWU Research Journal 2013, Bougainville Family Health and Safety Study
Samoa	46% of ever-partnered women have experienced one or more kinds of partner abuse. 65% of women reported being abused by someone other than a partner.	2006, Samoa: Family Health and Support Study (WHO methodology)
Solomon Islands	64% of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15-49 have experienced physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner.	2009, Solomon Islands Family Health and Support Study
Tonga	40% of ever-partnered women reported experiencing physical and/or sexual violence by a partner at least once in her life.	2012, National Study on Domestic Violence against Women in Tonga
Tuvalu	45% of ever-married women aged 15-49 have experienced physical or sexual violence.	2007, DHS Report
Vanuatu	60% of women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime	2011, National Survey on Women's Lives and Family Relationships

Note: Nauru conducted Family Health and Safety Studies in 2014. Findings for similar studies will shortly be released by UNFPA for the Cook Islands, FSM and Palau.

In order to provide a clearer picture of prevalence rates, Figure 4, below, highlights the findings of studies that used the World Health Organization methodology. It displays the percentage of women that have experienced physical and/or sexual violence from their intimate partner in the past 12 months as well as in their lifetime.

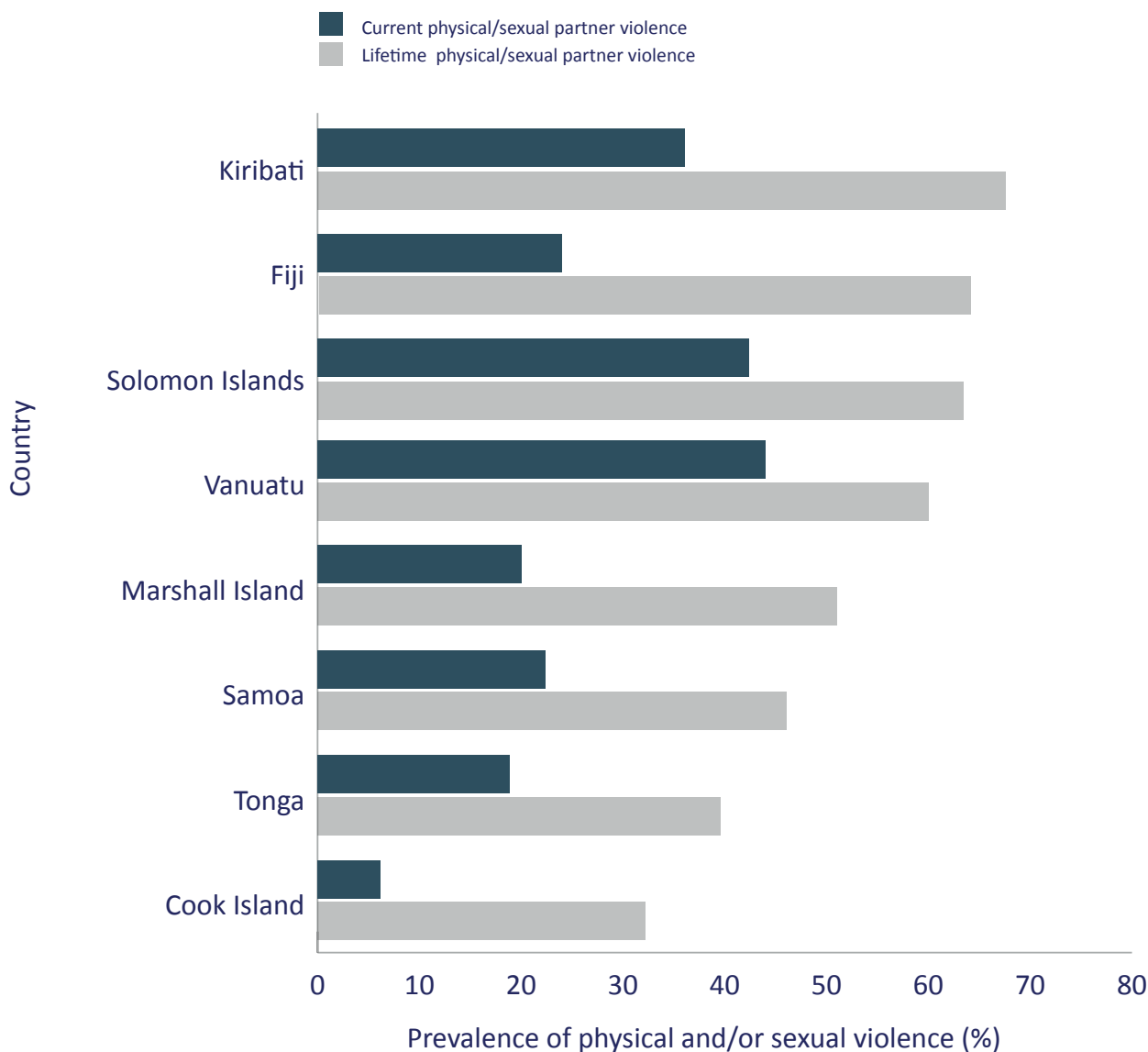


Figure 4: Prevalence of lifetime and current physical and/or sexual partner violence across studies using WHO methodology<sup>28</sup>

Source: UNFPA 2013, based on: Cook Islands, Cook Islands Family Health Safety Survey (FHSS) Report 2014 Te Ata o te Ngakau; Kiribati: <http://countryoffice.unfpa.org/pacific/?publications=7461>; Fiji: <http://webmediafast.com/itaukeitrustfund/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/1.pdf>; Samoa: <http://www.who.int/gender/violence/whomulticountrystudy/en/>; Solomon Is: <http://countryoffice.unfpa.org/pacific/?publications=7460>; Tonga: <http://countryoffice.unfpa.org/pacific/?publications=7496>; Vanuatu: <http://countryoffice.unfpa.org/pacific/?publications=7495>; Marshall Is.: UNFPA. Family health and safety study. (In prep.).

28 WHO and PATH 2005.

## 2. Successful policies and legislative changes

Such alarming rates of violence against women and girls have been acknowledged as a critical obstacle to development.<sup>29</sup> This growing awareness is reflected in the development of legislation and policies in various PICTs over the last decade. The last two decades have seen the progressive elimination of some biases in civil, criminal and family law that were discriminatory to women survivors of violence, such as a requirement that a survivor prove she had physically resisted a perpetrator; requiring reports to be tendered of a survivor's consensual sexual history; and requirements for corroboration of survivors' testimonies (Jalal 2008, SPC 2010b). Most clauses of this nature have been successfully challenged and eliminated as a consequence of the ratification by most PICTs of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (Jalal 2008).

In recent years several PICTs have adopted specific, multi-sectoral legislation and policies for the elimination of violence against women, particularly domestic violence. In general, these texts have broadened the definition of rape to include marital rape and sexual assault (Fiji's Domestic Violence Decree 2009, Samoa's Crimes Act 2013). In many cases countries have increased the severity of charges for acts of domestic violence and have introduced restraining orders and rehabilitation measures for perpetrators of violence. Those legislative advances have taken various forms across PICTs. Table 8, below, summarises the legislative advances reported by countries.

Table 8: Pacific Island countries' legislation against domestic violence

Country	Name and content of the legislation
<b>Fiji</b>	The Domestic Violence Decree of 2009 provides greater protection from domestic violence; clarifies the role of police; introduces restraining orders and other measures to ensure the safety of victims and measures to promote the rehabilitation of perpetrators of domestic violence. The law recognises marital rape as a crime, widens the definition of rape and removes the rules of corroborative evidence and victims' sexual history.
<b>Kiribati</b>	The Family Peace Act for Domestic Violence (Te Rau N Te Mweenga Act ) of April 2014 aims to ensure the safety and protection of all people, including children, who experience or witness violence in domestic relationships. It defines domestic violence as an offence; introduces protection orders and police safety orders; introduces preventive measures, such as education and public awareness programmes, to reduce, prevent and eliminate violence; establishes a council to monitor the implementation of the act; and makes provision for funding support for victims of violence, such as shelters, training, prevention and public awareness programmes.
<b>Marshall Islands</b>	The Domestic Violence Prevention and Protection Act of 2011 adopts a broad definition of domestic violence. It organises access to protection orders for domestic violence as a deterrence measure. It also establishes a committee to oversee the monitoring and implementation of the Act.
<b>Palau</b>	The Family Protection Act was enacted in 2012. It seeks to deter and protect victims of acts of family maltreatment, including violence, abuse and neglect. The Act also seeks to expand and strengthen the ability of police officers to assist victims.

<sup>29</sup> For example, in 2002 the Reserve Bank of Fiji calculated that violence against women costs Fiji's economy seven per cent of its gross domestic product annually.

Country	Name and content of the legislation
Samoa	The Divorce and Matrimonial Causes Act of 2012 repeals archaic means of obtaining divorces and introduces restraining orders for victims of domestic violence, irrespective of marital status. The Crimes Act 2013 broadens the definition of rape. The Family Safety Act 2013 outlines the procedure to apply for protection orders in the case of domestic violence. It mandates police to provide immediate assistance to victims irrespective of sex, race or other status.
Solomon Islands	The Family Protection Act of 2014 prohibits violence, or threats of such violence, committed by a person against another person. This includes physical, sexual, psychological and economic abuse. It criminalises behaviour relating to domestic violence and provides civil remedies to protect victims and to ensure their safety. The penalty for committing domestic violence is SBD 30,000 or a three-year term of imprisonment or both.
Tonga	The Family Protection Bill was enacted in November 2013 and came into force in July 2014. The Act defines and prohibits all forms of domestic violence. The penalty for domestic violence is either imprisonment or fines. Through the legislation, survivors can access protection orders from the courts and the police. The Act encourages a holistic approach in responding to domestic violence by providing specific roles and responsibilities for the courts, police, health services and civil society.
Vanuatu	The Family Protection Act 2008 sets out domestic violence mechanisms. The Act creates a specific domestic violence offence, with a penalty of imprisonment not exceeding five years or a fine not exceeding VUV 100,000 or both. The Act obliges police to intervene if violence is suspected. It also declares that the payment of bride price may not be used as a defence for domestic violence. The Act provides for protection orders that can be made on the basis that acts of domestic violence have been or may be committed.
FSM	The Kosrae State Family Protection Act was passed on 27 February 2014 and was signed into law on 14 March 2014. It specifically addresses and criminalises domestic violence. The Act classifies some types of domestic violence offences as misdemeanours and others as felony offences. It also sets up specific guidelines for law enforcement officers to follow when they are called upon to deal with instances of domestic violence, including specific rules to help them determine who the victim is.
Nauru	The Penal Code is currently under review.
Tonga	The Family Protection Bill was passed its third reading in parliament in September 2014. The Bill increases the power of police to issue protection orders, includes the legal requirement to inform victims of their rights and the content of legal proceedings and sets up a monitoring committee.
Tuvalu	Tuvalu's Family Protection and Domestic Violence Bill was passed during its second reading in December 2014. The Bill provides protection from violence within domestic relationships and criminalises behaviours relating to domestic violence, including physical, sexual, verbal, psychological and economic abuse. The Bill also gives legal authority to the subordinate and principal courts to make protection orders to deal with actual or potential incidents of domestic violence, and also prescribes the procedures for obtaining a protection order.

Source: National Review on the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action; Regional Rights Resource Team, SPC; Stocktakes of the Gender Mainstreaming Capacity of Pacific Island Governments.

At the regional level, following lobbying by women's organisations and national women's machineries (NWMs), sexual and gender-based violence appeared on the agenda of the Pacific Island Forum Leaders Meeting in 2009, which was held in Cairns, Australia, where the leaders made a commitment to meaningfully address those issues. This commitment led to the establishment of the Pacific Islands Forum Reference Group on Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) in 2009. The reference group is an independent, high-level group of experts whose mission is to support national efforts in realising the 2009 mandate. In recent years the reference group has emphasised studying the economic and social cost of violence against women and galvanising the allocation of resources for essential services and initiatives to prevent violence (SPC 2013).

### 3. Challenges to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action

Various challenges to the effective elimination of violence against women have been mentioned by reporting countries. These include the lack of coordination among national institutions and the absence of data management and monitoring systems to assess the effectiveness of measures taken to reduce violence. Only three PICTs reported the percentage of officially reported cases of violence against women and girls that resulted in the perpetrators being prosecuted. Prosecution rates varied from 35 per cent in Vanuatu (2012), to approximately 50 per cent in New Caledonia, and 93 per cent in French Polynesia (2013).

**Promising practice:** Papua New Guinea has developed hospital-based Family Support Centres (FSC) to assist victims of violence, offering a ‘one-stop shop’ for coordinated medical, psychosocial and referral services. The availability of all services in one location helps to address the needs of women survivors in a comprehensive and timely manner.

Other challenges commonly observed across PICTs relate to insufficient services for survivors of violence, especially in rural areas and outer islands, women’s poor access to justice, and the attitudes and stigma associated with reporting violence.

#### a. Availability of services for survivors

There is a dearth of infrastructure and services to support women living with the immediate and long-term consequences of domestic violence. Despite the high rates of violence observed across PICTs, Palau, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Tuvalu and Wallis and Futuna reported having no shelters for women and their dependents affected by domestic violence. Papua New Guinea reports three, and Fiji two shelters, while Kiribati, Nauru and the Solomon Islands have one each. Due to a lack of public budgets for services for survivors, most of the support services available to women in situations of violence – mainly counselling and referral – are provided by civil society organisations, including women’s rights groups and church-based organisations.

Access to legal, health and social services is further complicated by long distances and the costs and constraints of transportation, especially for survivors living in the outer islands. Poor access is magnified for women and girls affected by multiple layers of discrimination, such as those with disabilities, sex workers, sexual minorities, and those from migrant and ethnic minorities. Several reporting PICTs mentioned that the majority of women who had reported domestic violence eventually returned to their homes.



## b. Attitudes and stigma leading to under-reporting

Across the Pacific there have been undeniable gains in raising awareness of the far-reaching consequences of violence against women at the individual, community and national levels, much of it due to civil society activism.

Despite such progress, tolerance for acts of violence against women and girls remains quite high across the Pacific Islands region, especially in the context of the family. Intimate partner violence is often condoned by both women and men, and is seen as a normal aspect of relationships between men and women. The Solomon Islands mentioned in its national report that a survey showed women were more likely than men to justify violence against women (69 per cent of women compared with 65 per cent of men).

**Promising practice:** In the Solomon Islands, the establishment of 'Safenet' – a network of service providers created by the Ministry of Women to collaborate to assist victims of domestic violence, is considered to have improved the quality of care experienced by survivors of domestic violence.

In certain circumstances the difference between men's and women's tolerance for violence against women was significant (for example, if the wife goes out without telling her husband, 50 per cent of women, compared with 42 per cent of men, said that violence was justified).<sup>30</sup> In 2011 in Vanuatu, three in five women (60 per cent) agreed with at least one of the 'justifications' given for a man to beat his wife.<sup>31</sup>

Such widespread attitudes of tolerance of violence against women are likely to generate a climate of minimisation of women's experiences of violence, and to deter reporting. In addition, small populations and a lack of privacy in communities often create peer pressure and stigma against reporting.

**Promising practice:** The Sexual Offences Unit of the Fiji Police Force has a 'no-drop' policy, whereby all reports of domestic violence are to be thoroughly investigated and resolved within 24 hours. A similar no-drop policy is in place in Palau, Solomon Islands, Samoa and the Federated States of Micronesia.

Several PICTs, including Nauru and Palau, reported that most cases of domestic violence reported to the police were withdrawn before they reached court.

Palau reported that, although only a dozen domestic violence cases were reported every year, a great proportion of alcohol-related crimes also involved domestic violence but were not reported as domestic violence-related cases.<sup>32</sup> Several other PICTs reported a similar experience of such under-reporting.

<sup>30</sup> Solomon Islands Demographic and Health Survey 2006-2007 (unpublished).

<sup>31</sup> Vanuatu National Survey on Women's Lives and Family Relationships 2011.

<sup>32</sup> Between 2010 and 2012, alcohol-related crimes in Palau approximately doubled, as follows: Assault and battery (88 to 190 cases); assault and battery with a deadly weapon (65 to 126 cases); disturbing the peace (122 to 225 cases); drunk and disorderly conduct (121 to 230 cases); and domestic violence (seven to 13 cases).



Some PICTs have yielded positive results in addressing the under-reporting of gender-based violence. In New Caledonia a media campaign that ran during 2012 and 2013, on the topic of describing what sexual coercion involves within couples, has led to an increase in information requests, consultations, complaints and admissions to domestic violence shelters.

Fiji, Samoa and Vanuatu have established training for their police and law enforcement officers. Gender-based violence awareness-raising through community outreach is also an approach common to several PICTs. The Fiji Police Force's Child Abuse and Sexual Offences Unit is actively working with schools to raise awareness about the Domestic Violence Decree, Crimes Decree, Child Welfare Decree and related offences and penalties.

For women who do press charges, access to justice can be difficult. New Caledonia reported that the co-existence of civil and customary laws could lead to women survivors of violence facing a dual judicial procedure. To remedy this situation, the Congress of New Caledonia, under pressure from civil society organisations, asked the French Government to revise the judicial procedure.<sup>33</sup>

Other PICTs mentioned the length, cost and complexity of judicial procedure as an important obstacle to women obtaining justice in situations of violence.

<sup>33</sup> In New Caledonia two civil statuses are applicable: A common law status, and a customary law status for indigenous Kanak people who live in customary areas or who have decided to adopt this status. According to Article 7 of the Organic Law of 19 March 1999, individuals who claim Kanak customary status are governed by customary rules for civil matters, such as marriage, adoption, inheritance and some land issues.

## 4. Recommendations

The 11th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women recommended that:<sup>34</sup>

- Ministries of health adopt medical protocols for collecting evidence on sexual and gender-based violence to be used in court cases. (Paragraph 18n)
- Work be expanded to sensitise police to issue of gender equality and violence against women to ensure that they respond appropriately to cases of such violence, including through proper record keeping. (Paragraph 18o)
- Pacific Island Countries and Territories, with development partners, support, strengthen legal systems to prosecute and punish perpetrators of violence against women, including through provision for custodial sentences where appropriate, and re-education programmes. (Paragraph 18p)

The conference noted that:<sup>35</sup>

- The rights and the particular vulnerability and needs of marginalized groups, including LBT women, women with HIV, and women with disabilities, and urges governments, national women's machineries, women's organisations and crisis services to ensure that support services address the needs of these women when they have experienced violence. (Paragraph 19)

The 12th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women:<sup>36</sup>

- Recognis[ed] the high prevalence rates of violence against women, young women and girls, including those with disabilities, and the impact of gambling, drug and substance abuse on increasing violence, the conference called for urgent and increased investment in policies, programmes, research and legislative reforms that provide services and support, including access to rights and justice. (Paragraph 23)
- Called for Pacific Island Countries and Territories and development partners to support research regarding social and economic impacts of all forms of violence against women, including sorcery-related violence. (Paragraph 25)
- Acknowledged the need to ensure that discrimination faced by women, young women, and girls with disabilities and their particular vulnerability to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and poverty to be

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34 SPC 2010. Outcomes and recommendations from the 11th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women, Noumea.

35 Ibid.

36 SPC 2013. Outcomes and recommendations from the 12th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women, Rarotonga.

recognized in line with CEDAW and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), and supported evidence-based studies by PICTs (with the support of development partners) to improve knowledge and data on women with disabilities for improved policy and programming. (Paragraph 27)

- Called for the elimination of SGBV and violence against women, young women and girls, including those with disabilities, and those in rural and remote locations, and for this:
  - ◆ to be included in national development strategies, plans and public financing mechanisms; (Paragraph 28a) and
  - ◆ to be adequately resourced through clearly identifiable budget allocations, expenditure and human resources (Paragraph 28b).
- Supported access to justice for survivors of violence by the adoption of national legislation, effective legal assistance, and just and effective remedies, which involve both the formal and the non-formal (or traditional) justice systems to be addressed through the development and coordinated implementation of effective multi-sectoral national policies, strategies and programmes that include measures for prevention, protection and support services, and monitoring and evaluation. (Paragraph 29)
- Supported the engagement of adolescents and youth as strategic groups for ending the cycle of violence through the implementation of educational programmes, based on gender equality and human rights. (Paragraph 30)
- Supported the incorporation of strategies for ending violence against women, young women, and girls, including those with disabilities, into health policies, training curricula, medical guidelines and standard operating procedures, including strengthening of health systems and their human resources, in order to assist efforts to effectively prevent and address violence against women. (Paragraph 50)

## Critical area E: Women and armed conflict

There is very limited information available on women and armed conflict in PICTs. This issue has received very little attention in the national reviews of the Beijing Platform for Action. Nevertheless, there are several examples in the region where Pacific women have played important roles in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Pacific women have been effective in utilising their roles as mothers, and older women draw upon the traditional authority bestowed on elders. While women have participated in high-level decision-making, their role has been more broadly one of indirect influence of male decision-makers – a role that has been largely undervalued in studies of peace and conflict. The peacebuilding work undertaken by women in the Pacific has been essential in building the necessary foundations upon which formal peace settlements and reconciliation have begun and taken root.

Case studies and interviews reveal that Pacific women peacebuilders work at the ‘grass-roots’ level, and that their roles have been generally low key and undervalued, but nonetheless vital for peace processes to begin and gain momentum. They provide the underlying foundations for societies to emerge from conflict, without which formal peace negotiations and reconciliation could not occur. Once peace negotiations are underway, women can help steer negotiations through challenges by maintaining a broader perspective of peace, and continually reminding the usually-male negotiators what is important in the peace process. After the formal agreement, women peacebuilders consolidate the peace through their networks, by socialisation of the peace agreement to communities and through supporting reconciliation.

### 1. The impact of armed conflicts on women in the Pacific

Crises and peacebuilding have provided opportunities for women to break out of traditional roles. Many Pacific women do work for peace, and others try to maintain their normal lives without getting involved, however it should be noted that some women have actively supported armed groups through assisting them with logistics, reconnaissance, spreading inflammatory rumours and sabotage, and direct participation in armed conflict. While women in Pacific cultures are generally thought of as less violent than men, a relatively small proportion of women do also perpetrate violence themselves.<sup>37</sup> On the other hand, many Pacific men, of course, work tirelessly for peace, including during difficult times of violent conflict. It is acknowledged that the roles and qualities described here are generalisations based on a series of six case studies from the region and from interviews conducted with key actors.

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<sup>37</sup> Brigg M. et al. 2012. See also Noble C. et al.2011.

The roles played by women striving for peace include reaching across conflict lines using common values and traditions, advocacy for the cessation of violence, promotion of dialogue and traditional mechanisms to heal grievances, and appealing to political and military figures on traditional, religious and moral grounds.

These roles were observed during the conflict – or ‘tensions’ – in the Solomon Islands, from 1998 to 2003, when women’s groups ‘built bridges’ between protagonists. For example, one women’s church group crossed battle lines to hold prayer meetings with combatants. This activity underscored the common Christian faith and reminded ‘the combatants of a larger sense of shared Solomon Islands identity that transcended ethnic and communal lines, while also emphasising Christian virtues of forgiveness and nonviolence.’<sup>38</sup> In Fiji, a regional civil society organisation – femLINKPACIFIC – uses radio dialogue to bring rural women and government officials together to discuss development challenges face by women. It also establishes peacebuilding strategies with local women by building relationships within local groups and among key government policymakers.<sup>39</sup>

Pacific women draw upon a number of positions in society in assuming these roles. In some cases women draw on their traditional authority as mothers to have their voices heard and to bring two sides together. At the Burnham One talks, held in New Zealand in July 1997, to facilitate the forming of a joint position between the rival Bougainville Revolutionary Army and Bougainville Resistance Force, women spoke out amidst accusations of murder and threats of violence, with the narrative: ‘Look, I am here, there is my son over there, and over there is my other son. And all of you, you are all our sons,’ appealing as mothers for both sides to come together as Bougainvilleans.<sup>40</sup>

Women peacebuilders have also made appeals to combatants on behalf of women and children as the innocent victims of conflict. In the Kondika tribal conflict in Jiwaka Province, in the Papua New Guinea Highlands, women of the displaced Mindpakanem clan gave presentations to the tribal leadership and the national government on the plight of women and girls in displacement. In addition, the women provided valuable insights to a peace mediation team into the thinking of the Mindpakanem men, who felt ashamed at not being able to protect their women. These appeals and the sharing of cultural insight helped to shape the peace process and influence decision-making at the leadership level.<sup>41</sup> In the Solomon Islands, a group called Women for Peace (WFP) used their traditional authority as mothers to meet with combatants and to help them understand the impact of the conflict on women, children and vulnerable groups, and to negotiate for the return of child combatants.<sup>42</sup>

In other cases, women have been able to draw on cultural tradition to empower themselves to work for peace. In the Solomon Islands, tradition – ‘kastom’ – has been reported to have been both a hindrance and of assistance to women peacebuilders. In particular, in rural communities kastom imparts traditional powers to elderly women

38 Brigg et al. 2012.

39 Murdock J. 2012.

40 Reddy P. 2006. In: Lees S. et al. 2013.

41 Lees S., Be’Soer L.M. et al. 2012.

42 Brigg et al. 2012.



and mothers. In Melanesian tradition, women have a traditional status as peacemakers, who intervene in conflict to prevent violence. However, some interpretations of tradition have stifled the voice and actions of women peacebuilders, especially in public domains and high-level decision-making.<sup>43</sup>

Female church figures and groups have drawn on their respected positions within the church and their broader religious authority. In Bougainville, for instance, church networks have been natural forums for women to mobilise other women. In 1996 the Bougainville Inter-Church Women's Forum, made up of 700 women from the main churches in Bougainville and led by Sister Lorraine Garasu, held the Women's Peace Forum in Arawa to advocate for a cessation of conflict and a greater voice for women in decision-making at all levels. After the Peace Forum, women established small groups to mediate with combatants in the bush.<sup>44</sup> In the Solomon Islands many women's church groups met with combatants, and used Bible stories to convey messages of 'loving thy neighbour as one's own' and forgiveness. They emphasised that they considered it their Christian duty to intervene in this way.<sup>45</sup>

Women often take on new leadership roles in times of conflict. The Executive Director of femLINKPACIFIC, Sharon Bhagwan Rolls, explained that during the Fiji coup of 2000, women were mobilised through a peace vigil. The media could 'connect with the women... despite diplomats only speaking to the government and George Speight,' and this resulted in public support for the vigil and ultimately contributed to the peace resolution.<sup>46</sup> These



43 Ibid.

44 Interview with Sister Lorraine Garasu, 8 June 2013, by telephone.

45 Brigg et al. 2012.

46 Interview with Sharon Bhagwan-Rolls, 24 July 2013, in Suva, Fiji.

various roles have often overlapped with other roles that women play, for example, as a mother, a church member and a landowner. Women have leveraged all of these roles in peacebuilding.

The work of organisations such as Voice for Change in Papua New Guinea, on peacebuilding issues, has empowered women not only to be more active in conflict resolution, but also to become more active in a range of development and local governance issues. Through working with civil society women have learned more about their rights to be free from gender- and sexual-based violence in the home and in the community. They have learned to speak out on a range of issues that affect their lives, which they would have previously felt reluctant to do, due to cultural norms. This bodes well not just for the resolution of conflict but for improved human security and women's empowerment in the broader sense. A number of rural women whom Voice for Change has worked with have gone on to be active in the village courts and in their local wards, and to stand in local government elections. According to Mary Kini, a human rights defender and peacebuilder from Papua New Guinea, 'they became empowered and came out from their hiding places.'<sup>47</sup>

## 2. Successful legislative and policy changes

In Papua New Guinea the United Nations recently assisted the Autonomous Bougainville Government to develop a Women, Peace and Security Action Plan, using the framework of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women and peace and security. A technical working group on women, peace and security was established, comprising 12 members: seven women and five men. The purpose of the Action Plan is to understand gender and development challenges in post-conflict Bougainville, including raising awareness on key women's, peace and security issues, and strengthening the commitment to gender equality within the province. The Action Plan should also ensure and guide the inclusion of women's issues and priorities in the processes leading up to the proposed referendum on the independence of Bougainville before 2020.

In Solomon Islands a National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security is being developed by the Ministry of Women. It is the country's response to the UN Security Council's calls to implement Resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888, 1889 and 1960 in Solomon Islands for the full participation of women in conflict prevention and peace building initiatives as well as the protection of women and girls in situations of conflict. Of the five commissioners appointed in 2008 to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), two were women: one Solomon Islander and the other from Central America.

The establishment of the TRC demonstrated Solomon Islands' concern about addressing the atrocities and hardships that affected Solomon Islanders during the tensions from 1998 to 2006, and to provide them with an opportunity to express their views to bring closure. The commission also provided the opportunity for the voices of women to be heard, and women made oral and written submission to the commission.

<sup>47</sup> Interview with Sharon Bhagwan-Rolls, 24 July 2013, in Suva, Fiji.



However, a review of the TRC revealed significant challenges. It was evident that insufficient attention was given to gender in the preparatory period of the TRC, and consequently the gender-responsiveness of the initiative was more ad hoc than strategic. For example, a consistent definition of sexual violence was not used throughout the proceedings. It was recommended that UN Women support, strengthen and expand the well-designed research on women that the TRC was conducting, and complete a follow-up study to determine further steps to support the Solomon Islands Government and NGOs in addressing the needs of women who were severely affected by the tensions.<sup>48</sup>

At the regional level, in December 2010, as part of the 10th anniversary commemoration of UNSCR 1325, a Pacific Regional Working Group on Women, Peace and Security was established, with members drawn from the Pacific Islands Forum, members of the Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific, United Nations agencies and civil society. In June 2011 the Forum Regional Security Committee gave the group the policy task of developing a Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. This was subsequently supported by Pacific ministers for women in August of the same year. The Regional Action Plan, launched in October 2012, was developed by the Working Group for Women, Peace and Security, and comprised members from the Solomon Islands Government, the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, femLINKPACIFIC, UNDP, UNFPA, UN Women, SPC and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

The Regional Action Plan provides a framework for PICTs to build and benefit from women's contributions in conflict prevention and peacebuilding, to mainstream gender in security policy-making, and to enhance the protection of women's and girls' human rights in humanitarian crises, transitional contexts and post-conflict situations.

### **3. Obstacles to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action**

#### **a. Insufficient recognition and support for women**

There is still a long way to go in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action, especially in relation to high-level decision-making and peace negotiations. PICTs' national review reports indicate that the largest barriers to implementation in these areas are cultural norms and traditional structures. While some women are not interested in taking up a role in high-level decision-making, some are qualified and eager, but are not given adequate opportunities. Although having women in parliaments is a broader issue than women leaders in peacebuilding, it is representative of the challenges that women face in having an active voice in peacebuilding. Moreover, parliamentarians and other government leaders often participate in peace negotiations, representing national interests, so having more women parliamentarians and officials would facilitate the participation of more women at the highest levels in peacebuilding processes.

<sup>48</sup> Evaluation report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. (In prep.).

Women's commitments to childcare, domestic duties and income-generation activities were identified in national reports as obstacles to participation in peacebuilding, especially at higher levels. Many women are not able to abandon everyday duties to attend meetings, training and activities. This hinders their ability to participate in intensive, high-level negotiations.<sup>49</sup>

Sexual and gender-based violence has been recognised in PICT reporting and elsewhere as being extremely disempowering for women. While there has been increased acknowledgement of the pervasive and damaging nature of sexual violence in general, including by Pacific leaders in their 2012 Communiqué,<sup>50</sup> the occurrence of rape as a systematic and strategic weapon of war, or as acts carried out by combatants in conflict, is still not widely acknowledged, according to Sharon Bhagwan Rolls.<sup>51</sup>

Short-term and inadequate funding to civil society organisations that work to support women in peacebuilding has been identified as an issue, notably in United Nations reports on women, peace and security (UN 2014). High transportation costs in the Pacific, the need to stay engaged for extended periods of time in peacebuilding, and a lack of donor support for conflict prevention, are key challenges facing women peacebuilders.

### **a. Lack of capacity to implement international and regional instruments**

The Pacific Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, the Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration, UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (and related resolutions 1820, 1888, 1889, and 1960),<sup>52</sup> and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), all contain provisions for furthering women's involvement in peacebuilding. Through their association with the Pacific Islands Forum and the United Nations, Pacific nations have acknowledged and approved these instruments.<sup>53</sup> However, increasing the awareness of these instruments, and what they mean in practice for regional organisations, national governments, civil society organisations and village councils, is necessary in order for them to have any meaning in the Pacific context.

At the regional and national levels, organisations advocating for greater acknowledge and acceptance of women's role in peacebuilding need to better understand the decision-making mechanisms and entry points, according to Sharon Bhagwan Rolls. For example, her organisation, femLINKPACIFIC, has worked closely with the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat through the bi-annual PIFS-CSO Dialogue, and will be part of the new Pacific Islands Forum on Women, Peace and Security. Having an understanding of regional and national decision-making

49 Interview with Arieta Koila Costello-Olsson, 12 June 2013, by telephone.

50 Pacific Island Forum Leaders Communiqué 2012, Cook Islands, paragraph 47. 'Leaders pledged to act to end violence against women by progressively implementing a set of essential services to women and girls who are survivors of violence, and enacting and implementing domestic violence legislation to protect women from violence and impose appropriate penalties for perpetrators of violence.'

51 Interview with Sharon Bhagwan Rolls, 24 July 2013, in Suva, Fiji.

52 See UN Women, Resolutions and Instruments at: [http://www.unifem.org/gender\\_issues/women\\_war\\_peace/resolutions\\_instruments.html](http://www.unifem.org/gender_issues/women_war_peace/resolutions_instruments.html) for further details on these resolutions and other related instruments.

53 In regard to CEDAW, as at July 2013, among PIF countries only Tonga had not acceded. Palau had acceded but was yet to ratify the convention.

mechanisms enables organisations to gain access to decision-makers, raise the awareness of decision-makers of the issues the organisations advocate, and influence policy.

## 4. Recommendations

The Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security for the Pacific, launched in October 2012, endorsed 3 focus areas and proposed the following actions:<sup>54</sup>

- i) Gender mainstreaming and women's leadership in conflict prevention and management, political decision-making and peacebuilding and peacekeeping;
  - Strengthened capacity and networking of women and young women leaders from government, civil society and private sector in mediation, dialogue, peace negotiations and constitutional reforms.
  - Enhanced capacity of governments to adopt measures to increase women's representation at all levels of leadership and decision-making.
  - More effective participation of women leaders in the context of the Biketawa Declaration and Good Office role of the Secretary-General of the Forum Secretariat.
- ii) Gender mainstreaming and women's participation in security sector oversight and accountability;
  - Enhanced mainstreaming of Women, Peace and Security in the Forum Regional Security Committees priority setting and decision-making.
  - Improved mainstreaming of Women, Peace and Security within the work of the Secretariat's Political, Governance and Security Programme and Regional Law Enforcement Secretariats.
- iii) Protection of women's human rights in transitional and post-conflict contexts.
- iv) Ending Violence against Women (EVAW) policies ensure women and girls' access to health, psychosocial, legal and protection in times of humanitarian emergency and in reconstruction and rehabilitation after conflict and crisis.

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<sup>54</sup> PIFS 2012. Pacific Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2012-2015.

## Critical area F: Women and the economy

As discussed above, higher levels of education do not always translate into greater access to employment for women. Women's access to productive resources and opportunities for income generation is still highly affected by discriminatory practices and traditional beliefs, and hindered by women's involvement in subsistence farming and unpaid work in the home (PIFS 2013). Labour force participation rates for both men and women tend to be lower in the Pacific Islands region than in other parts of the world, due to the high proportion of subsistence agriculture and fishing, the importance of the informal sector and the limited labour market. Nevertheless, the gender gap in employment rates is considerable in the region. According to the 2013 Pacific Regional Millennium Development Goals tracking report, all Melanesian countries are considered off-track for additional MDG 1 Target 1B on achieving full and productive employment and decent work for all, including for women and young people (Ibid).

### 1. Women's access to employment and productive resources

In FSM, Kiribati, Niue, Palau, Samoa and Vanuatu, the proportion of women who are economically active has declined since the last SPC review of the Beijing Platform for Action in 2010. Although the reasons for this decline may vary across PICTs, the trend indicates increasing barriers to women in accessing the labour market. The table below reflects for the proportion of men and women in the labour force (both employed and looking for a job), and its evolution since the last review of the Beijing Platform for Action in 2010.

Table 9: Labour force participation rate by sex: 2000s and 2010s

PICT	Labour force participation rate (%) 2000s			Labour force participation rate (%) 2010s (or most recent)		
	Men	Women	Year	Men	Women	Year
Cook Is.	76	64	2006	77	65	2011
Fiji	72	38	2007	68	50	2010
FSM	59	40	2000	52	28	2007
Kiribati	72	56	2005	67	52	2010
Marshall Is.	66	35	2006	65*	35*	2013
Nauru	65	49	2004	79	49	2011
New Caledonia	85	71	2006	75*	61*	2013
Niue	77	60	2005	38	30	2011
Palau	74	72	2000	77	60	2005
PNG	66	35	1999			
Samoa	69	31	2001 <sup>55</sup>	58	23	2011
Tonga	64	49	2006	63	42	2011
Tuvalu	70	48	2002	68	51	2012
Vanuatu	86	71	1999	81	61	2009
Wallis and Futuna	39	27	2003	37 in Futuna, 50 in Wallis*	24 in Futuna, 38 in Wallis*	2008

Source: PRISM 2009d; NDMI database, SPC.

\* For Marshall Islands, New Caledonia and Wallis and Futuna, the source of information is the Beijing +20 Regional Surveys. For Marshall Islands, the 2009 data is from the Solomon Islands 2009 Population and Housing Census: Gender Report.

55 For more detail see: [https://www.icaadglobal.org/files/files/Fiji\\_White\\_Paper\\_IGI\\_7\\_18\\_13\\_Published\\_.pdf](https://www.icaadglobal.org/files/files/Fiji_White_Paper_IGI_7_18_13_Published_.pdf)

Figure 5, below, provides an overview of men's and women's occupations in selected PICTs. It highlights how women are under-represented in most income-generating occupations, especially salaried work.

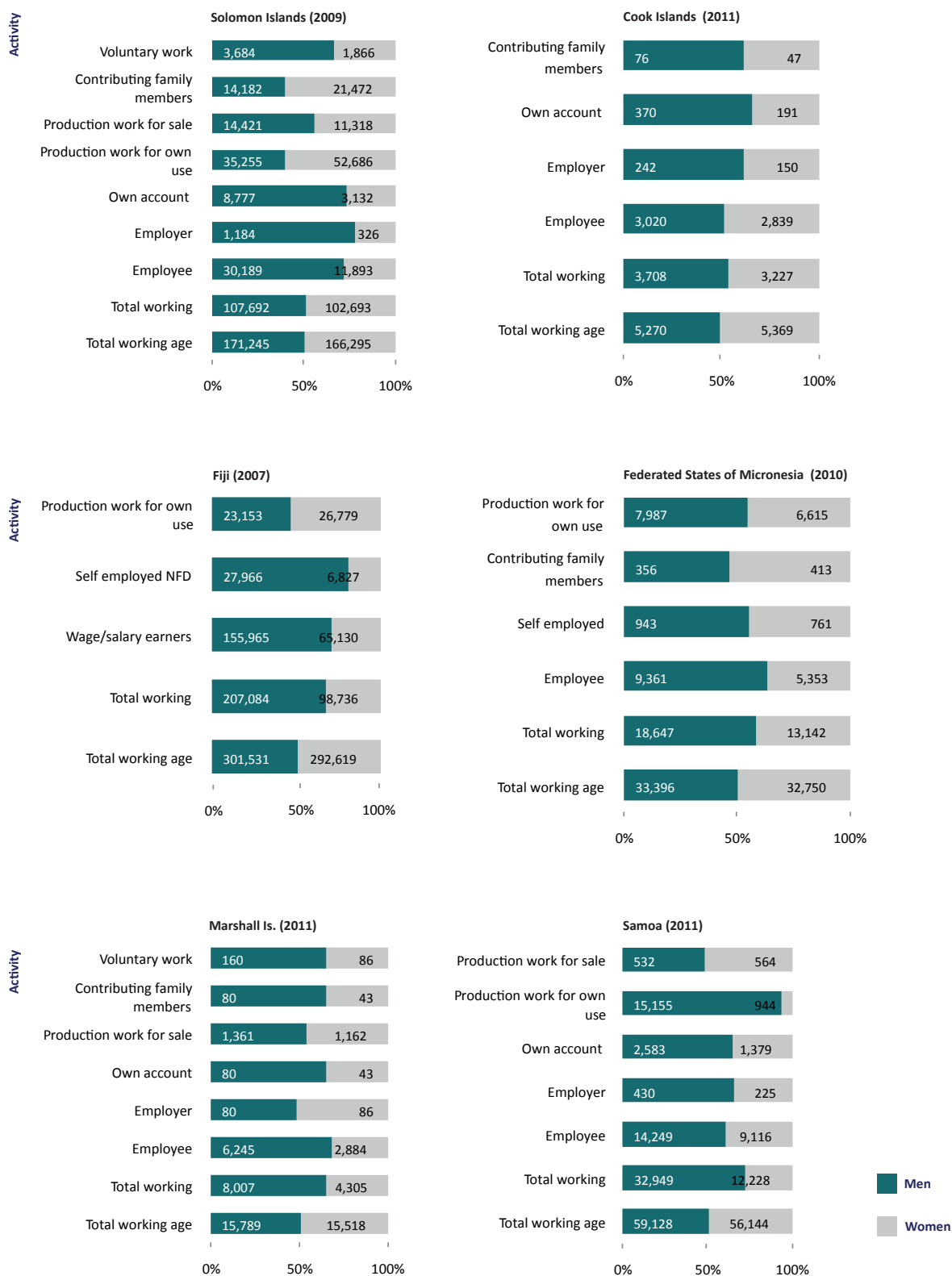


Figure 5: Work status by sex, for selected PICTs (latest census year, percentage of work type, with number shown)

Some PICTs, including New Caledonia, have experienced considerable progress in women's access to employment in the past four to five decades. The proportion of economically active women grew from 32 per cent in 1969 to 45 per cent in 2011. Improved access to education and training for women in this period, and the expansion of the tertiary sector that was made possible through periods of high economic growth, are the main factors explaining this evolution. New Caledonia is one of the few PICTs where labour market growth has absorbed most of the new entrants. Despite such gains, the employment rate for men remains 14 per cent higher than for women. Women are the slight majority of unemployed workers (52 per cent in 2009) despite levels of qualification being significantly higher among women than among men.

Several reporting PICTs emphasised the small size of their economies, and that most jobs are concentrated in urban centres and main islands, whereas a significant proportion of women live in rural areas (SPC 2010b). For example, Marshall Islands acknowledged that while some jobs growth has been evident in recent years, this growth has been mostly in the government sector. The growth in the working age population is outpacing job creation, leaving the Marshall Islands with a large unemployed population, with unemployment particularly high among young people and women.

**Promising practice:** In the Solomon Islands, UN Women worked to build the capacity of women market vendors in the Honiara Central Market, and improved their access to financial services, through a partnership with Bank of the South Pacific and Honiara City Council.

Women's economic empowerment in the Pacific Islands region remains a key challenge, as women continue to experience limited job opportunities, remain under-represented in management positions and face weak employment and social protection mechanisms, particularly in the private sector. For example, although based on sparse data, it is evident that women workers face high levels of sexual harassment in the workplace. A 2008 study conducted in Fiji found that one female respondent in three has been sexually harassed. Impunity for sexual harassment remains widespread.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>56</sup> For more detail see: [https://www.icaadglobal.org/files/files/Fiji\\_White\\_Paper\\_IGI\\_7\\_18\\_13\\_Published\\_.pdf](https://www.icaadglobal.org/files/files/Fiji_White_Paper_IGI_7_18_13_Published_.pdf)

## 2. Successful policies, legislative changes and programmes

Women's economic empowerment depends not only on accessing employment, but also significantly on the conditions in which women work.

Fiji reported having introduced the first national minimum wage in 2013, of FJD 2 per hour. This change is expected to most affect women, especially those in the tourism, garment and service sectors.

In Palau, in February 2013, a bill was introduced into the National Senate to establish three months of paid maternity leave to pregnant employees, with an option for one additional month of unpaid leave. Prior to this, maternity leave entitlements for women working in the public or private sector were variable and ad hoc. A health impact assessment testified to the many public health benefits for mothers, infants, families and the community at large if paid maternity leave benefits were extended to all women employees, and the period was extended to three months. The new bill reflects these recommendations.

Over the past 15 years there have been noticeable improvements in maternity protection, equal opportunity and anti-discrimination legislation in the Pacific Islands region. Fiji, Solomon Islands and Samoa reported having adopted legislation to guarantee equal access to employment for men and women, with clauses dealing with equal pay for equal work. But these countries also indicated that monitoring mechanisms were lacking, and about it is uncertain how effectively existing legislation is implemented, especially in relation to protection from dismissal during pregnancy and maternity leave (ILO 2010).

In most PICTs that have adopted maternity leave benefits, the benefit is usually paid by the employer rather than through social insurance or taxation. Cook Islands is an exception to this. The country has allocated NZD 49,000 in the 2012-13 fiscal year to assist private sector employers in paying for a six week maternity leave system. This amount was forecast to increase to NZD 192,000 in 2013-14 (SPC 2015).

In addition, in most PICTs, the majority of women workers are employed informally, and thus remain outside the scope of such protection frameworks.

Table 10, on the following page, captures the minimum wage, equal remuneration and anti-discrimination legislation, as well as maternity leave benefits available across the region.

**Promising practice:** : In Papua New Guinea in 2013, the Safe City Programme – an initiative of UN Women and the National Capital District Commission, in partnership with Microbank – helped to reduce security risks to market vendors, who are primarily women, by allowing them to make payments through their mobile phones rather than carrying large quantities of cash. This initiative also improved market governance, as fees collected through this bill pay system are then used for further transactions. Prior to this initiative loss through theft or corruption was common.



Table 10: Overview of minimum wages and maternity leave benefits in the Pacific Island countries

Countries	Minimum wage and scope	Equal remuneration legislation	Anti-discrimination measures	Protection from dismissal linked to pregnancy	Scope of maternity benefits	Length of leave	% of wages
<b>Cook Islands</b>	NZD 6	No information	Yes (Employment Relations Act, 2012)	Yes, guaranteed return to work, (Employment Relations Act, 2012)	Public and private sector employees	6 weeks	100%
<b>Fiji</b>	Yes, amount varies by sector	Yes (Employment Relations Promulgation, 2007)	Yes (Employment Relations Promulgation, 2007)	Yes (Employment Relations Promulgation, 2007)	Yes to all female workers with the exception of military forces, police force and prison and corrections services	84 days	100%
<b>Kiribati</b>	Yes, but rates not specified	Yes (Employment Ordinance, as amended 2000 and 2008)	Yes (Employment Ordinance, as amended 2000 and 2008)	Yes (Employment Ordinance, as amended 2000 and 2008)	Yes, all female workers	12 weeks	25%
<b>Palau</b>	No information	No information	No information	No information	Yes, all female workers	12 weeks	No data
<b>Papua New Guinea</b>		Yes (Employment Act, 1978)	No	Yes (Employment Act, 1978)	Yes, all female workers	As necessary for hospitalisation before confinement and six weeks after birth	Unpaid
<b>Solomon Islands</b>	Yes, SBD 3.20 per hour in agriculture and fishing sectors. In all other sectors, the minimum wage is SBD 4 per hour	Yes		Yes (Labour Act and Rules, 1996)	Yes, all female workers with the exception of casual workers	12 weeks	25%
<b>Vanuatu</b>	Yes, all workers across public and private sectors VUV 170 per hour (Order 109, 2012)	Yes (Employment Act 1983, amended in 2010)		Yes (Employment Act 1983, amended in 2010)	Yes, all women employees	12 weeks	50%

Source: ILO Database on Conditions of Work and Employment Programme, accessed on 29 September 2014, at: <http://www.ilo.org/dyn/travail/travmain.byCountry2> (except Palau – information was provided in the Beijing +20 National Review).

### 3. Obstacles to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action

#### a. Limited job opportunities

In most PICTs the private sector is particularly under-developed, and the lack of job creation is a key concern. In several PICTs the majority of women live in rural areas, while most public services and private companies that are likely to offer jobs tend to be located on the main islands and in urban areas.<sup>57</sup> Women's restricted access to vocational training and tertiary education, as well as their family responsibilities, greatly limits their employability. The reports of PICTs in which women's education accessibility and attainment has improved, such as in Fiji and New Caledonia, highlight that women are disproportionately affected by unemployment, despite women's higher average level of qualifications than men.

At an aggregate level, developing PICTs in the Pacific (including Papua New Guinea and the French territories) are estimated to have the second-highest rate of vulnerable workers of all developing country groupings, where vulnerable workers are defined as those working in the informal and subsistence economies, for family, or on their own account. The majority of both men and women are vulnerable workers: an estimated 84 per cent of women and 71 per cent of men.<sup>58</sup>



<sup>57</sup> For example, Solomon Islands' 2009 National Population and Housing Census on gender highlights that an 'imbalance in the number of women and men [is] more noticeable in urban centres; in Honiara, there are significantly more men than women in the capital.'

<sup>58</sup> United Nations 2012.

While many Pacific Island people have responded to unemployment and limited job prospects by choosing to migrate, several PICTs reported that legal migration opportunities in the context of seasonal temporary programmes to Australia and New Zealand were more limited for women, thus depriving them of important income-generating options.

## **b. Family and community demands on women's time**

Several reporting PICTs acknowledged that the multiple roles women play within the family and the community negatively affected their ability to dedicate time and energy to developing business activities. Samoa identified women as being particularly 'time poor', and described their challenge of balancing economic roles alongside their social and family obligations. Women are generally active in all aspects of village life, both within their extended families and through village-wide structures such as women's committees. In some villages all adult women are expected to participate in the women's committee (while other villages are less prescriptive). Even single women indicated that, in addition to their time spent at work, they had responsibilities within their families and communities. As a way to enable women's access to formal business development opportunities, Samoa reported having considerably simplified the processes for registering a company (Companies Act, July 2008).

Up-to-date, reliable and comparable data on time use are very limited for countries in the Asia-Pacific region (OECD 2012) and non-existent in PICTs, since no national time use survey has ever been undertaken, either as a standalone or as a satellite survey. However, data originating from other surveys, such as Household Income and Expenditure Surveys (HIES), indicate that the Pacific Islands region shows patterns similar to those of other developing countries, with women doing the bulk of unpaid work, especially domestic work (UNDP 2009).

## **4. Recommendations**

The 11th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women acknowledged:

- The need for gender responsive legislation and fiscal policies that will enhance the information economy, especially marketplaces. (Paragraph 22b)
- The need for legislation that provides improved parental leave and child care provisions for all working parents, including parents working in the information economy. (Paragraph 22c)
- The need for improved access to financial services and training for all women entrepreneurs, women involved in labour mobility schemes, and women managing natural resources. (Paragraph 20d)

The conference recommended:<sup>59</sup>

- That national and regional level discussion and frameworks on market development, trade, agriculture, fisheries, land issues, information and communication technology, infrastructure and energy involve the participation of women and integrate gender and women's human rights. (Paragraph 23b)
- That PICTs and regional organisations ensure women's full participation in the development of all policies and the implementation of all programmes on natural resource management. (Paragraph 23g)

The 12th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women:<sup>60</sup>

- Called for all PICTs to review the implementation of national employment legislation and policies, to promote decent work, to remove discriminatory practices and pay, and to eliminate sexual harassment that limits women's overall participation in the economy. (Paragraph 61)
- Supported and welcomed initiatives that improve the efficiency, productivity and safety of local markets and encourage national ownership by PICT's governments. (Paragraph 62)
- Encouraged state-owned and private enterprises to improve and expand women's employment opportunities, and to promote, equitably, women to leadership positions. (Paragraph 63)
- Urged governments to provide economic incentives for the private, not-for-profit, and state sectors to train and employ young women. (Paragraph 66)
- Called on governments and the private sector to provide good quality, accessible and affordable childcare as a critical driver of women's economic empowerment and economic development. (Paragraph 67)
- Urged CROP [Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific] agencies and development partners to facilitate regional research, with gender analysis, on the impact of labour migration and remittances in the Pacific to develop strategies to empower people to migrate with dignity. (Paragraph 70)

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59 SPC 2010 Outcomes and recommendations from the 11th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women, Noumea.

60 SPC 2013 Outcomes and recommendations from the 12th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women, Rarotonga.

# Critical area G: Women in power and decision-making

Women's political representation in the Pacific Islands region is the lowest of any global region.<sup>61</sup> Across the 16 Pacific Island countries and territories that provided information for this report, on average, 13.6 per cent of parliamentarians are women (December 2014), which is 8 per cent below the global average.<sup>62</sup> However, the situation varies widely across the region, from French Polynesia, where 56 per cent of parliamentarians are women, while there has never been a woman elected in FSM. Excluding the French territories, the proportion of female parliamentarians is a woeful five per cent. Traditional beliefs about men's and women's roles, women's limited social capital and a lack of support from political bodies explain the poor progress of women's political representation in the region.

## 1. Women's access to decision-making and leadership positions

Table 11, below, presents the data provided by reporting PICTs on the evolution of the number and proportion of women holding parliamentary mandates and leading ministries over the past several years.

Table 11: Number and percentage of women elected in parliament, by number, percentage and year

PICT	Year	Number of female members of parliament	Total number of seats in parliament	Percentage of female members of parliament	Year	Number of female members of parliament	Total number of seats in parliament	Percentage of female members of parliament
Cook Islands	2007	3	24	12.5	2014	5	25	20
Fiji Islands	2006	13	103	12.6	2014	7	50	14
French Polynesia	2009	30	57	52.6	2013	30	54	56
FSM	2008	0	14	0	2013	0	14	0
Kiribati	2008	3	46	6.5	2014	4	46	7.7
Nauru	2010	0	18	0	2013	1	19	5.2

61 For this comparison, the Inter-Parliamentary Union refers to eight regional averages classified by descending order of the percentage of women in the lower or single house of parliament. The eight defined regions are: Nordic countries, Americas, Europe (OSCE member countries), Europe (OSCE member countries excluding Nordic countries), sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, Arab States, the Pacific. As at 1 December 2014.

62 Data from the Inter-Parliamentary Union. For both houses combined, the world average is 21.8% of women: <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm> accessed on 16 October 2014.



PICT	Year	Number of female members of parliament	Total number of seats in parliament	Percentage of female members of parliament	Year	Number of female members of parliament	Total number of seats in parliament	Percentage of female members of parliament
New Caledonia	2009	23	54	42.6	2014	23	54	42
Palau	2008	2	29	6.9	2014	3	25	10.3
PNG	2007	1	109	0.9	2012	3	111	2.7
RMI	2007	1	33	3	2011	1	33	3.3
Samoa	2008	4	49	8.2	2014	3	49	6
Solomon Islands	2008	0	50	0	2010	1	50	2
Tonga	2009	1	33	3.1	2014	0	17	0
Tuvalu	2008	0	15	0	2013	1	15	6
Vanuatu	2008	1	52	1.9	2010	0	52	0
Walis and Futuna	2009	4	20	20	2014	4	20	20
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>86</b>	<b>706</b>	<b>12.2</b>		<b>86</b>	<b>634</b>	<b>13.6</b>

Source: PRISM 2009e; Information provided to SPC from government country focal points; National Reports on the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and Regional Surveys (excluding Cook Islands, Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Tonga, in which elections or by-elections took place after the completion of national reports); Women in Parliament Database of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, updated on 1 September 2014; Pacific Women in Politics, accessed on 30 January 2015; for Palau, percentage for both House of Delegates and House of Senate from Palau National Report for Beijing +20; for Solomon Islands, Solomon Islands Electoral Commissions, accessed on 15 December 2014.

In the Cook Islands, the number of women parliamentarians is now at its highest ever, with four women members of parliament elected in 2014. The Speaker of Parliament is a woman and was appointed from outside of parliament, thus bringing the proportion of women in parliament to five, representing 20 per cent of parliamentarians, and six of the 16 ministries are presently headed by women.

The generally small numbers of seats in elected assemblies, and the correspondingly small number of ministers and high-level public officials, constitute additional barriers to women's entry to such positions<sup>63</sup> In addition, analysing the evolution of women's access to elected and decision-making positions is hindered by the variety of institutional settings adopted by PICTs. Electoral systems based on the British 'first-past-the-post' model are common among PICTs, but this system has been shown to disadvantage women in favour of long-established candidates.

<sup>63</sup> The average number of seats in the lower houses of parliament in PICTs is 35 (author's calculations based on data from Pacific Women in Politics, at: <http://www.pacwip.org/women-mps/national-women-mps/> accessed on October 26 2014).

Women are still relatively under-represented at the higher levels of decision-making, as well as in the legislative and executive branches of government. Progress in women's representation is very slow, as illustrated by the situation in the Marshall Islands, where only one woman has been elected to the 33-seat Nitijela (the lower house of the country's bicameral legislature) since 1990. In Vanuatu women's representation in the national parliament has declined over the last two legislatures, and the current parliament is composed only of men.

In the Marshall Islands, the 12-seat Council of Chiefs (Iroj) – which serves a largely consultative function, dealing mainly with customary and traditional practices – currently has three women members. In addition, in 2014, of the 10 permanent secretaries, four are women, heading the ministries of Health, Internal Affairs, Resource Development and Foreign Affairs.

Despite these relatively low figures for women's political representation, women are showing an increasing interest in political affairs. The Solomon Islands has monitored the number of female political candidates since 1980 as well as the percentage of votes they receive. Table 12, below, shows that, despite steady progress, women political candidates in Solomon Islands remain starkly marginalised.

Table 12: Number and percentage of women candidates, and percentage of votes received, in Solomon Islands

Year	1980	1984	1989	1993	1997	2001	2006	2010
Women candidates	1	2	1	10	14	14	26	26
Total candidates	218	207	255	280	336	339	453	509
Percentage of women candidates	0.5%	1%	0.4%	3.6%	4%	4%	6%	5%
Percentage of votes for women candidates	0.1%	0.9%	1%	3%	3.2%	2.6%	3.7%	2.7%

Source: Solomon Islands. 2013. Combined initial, second and third periodic reports on CEDAW.

A similar trend, of increased political engagement of women, is noticeable in Papua New Guinea, where, following a United Nations and National Council of Women media campaign in 2012, more women than ever before (135) contested the 2012 elections. Three were elected to the National Parliament, and many women candidates were in the top 10 in their respective electorates. These results demonstrate a significant shift: since Independence in 1975, only seven women had ever been elected to Papua New Guinea's parliament.

## 2. Attempts at policy and legislative change

Certain reforms have been adopted to improve women's political representation, but without accompanying support measures, they are not likely to be effective. For example, Fiji reported that a goal of at least 30 per cent

representation of women was established in 2003, but the target has not been achieved as a result of the lack of measures to accelerate equal representation between men and women has caused this target to be missed.

In August 2013 the Vanuatu Parliament approved an amendment to the Municipality Act to provide for a temporary quota of reserved seats for women in municipal councils – ranging from 30 to 34 per cent across the various municipalities – which is to operate for four terms. This legislative change has facilitated the election of five women to the Port Vila Municipal Council. In the justice sector one female judge has been appointed to two courts concurrently – the Supreme Court and the Court of Appeal of Vanuatu – and more female magistrates have been recruited.

Papua New Guinea reported that in Bougainville three seats (8 per cent) are reserved for women parliamentarians. The government has indicated its strong intention to increase the number of reserved seats to six at the next election.

The French law of parity applies to the legislative bodies of the Pacific French territories, such as New Caledonia, Wallis and Futuna and French Polynesia. Parity requires that political parties put forward equal numbers of male and female candidates for legislative office. As a result of the implementation of the law in the territories since 2000, the number of women in territorial parliaments had significantly increased by 2012: from 12 per cent to 52 per cent in French Polynesia; and from 17 per cent to 43 per cent in New Caledonia. However, a 2007 evaluation of the implementation of the French parity law in the French territories pointed to a strong gendered division of political responsibilities between men and women parliamentarians, and a lack of political influence for women (SPC 2010a).



The Papua New Guinea Parliament passed the Equality and Participation Act in 2012, which provided for reserved seats for women as a Temporary Special Measure. However, the required enabling legislation to change the Constitution was defeated in a subsequent vote, and accordingly the Act has not come into force.

Samoa exemplifies a promising reform. The Samoan Constitution was amended in 2013 to introduce a quota system, by which 10 per cent of parliamentary seats will be reserved for women, with five floating seats. This means that if women win at least five of the 49 seats, the measure will not be activated, however if only two women win, three additional seats will be activated for the women candidates who won the greatest proportion of votes in their constituency during the general election. Key members of the government



have indicated their hope that the reserved seats will not have to be activated due to natural progression of women's representation. The Office of the Legislative Assembly intends to provide ongoing capacity-building support to encourage participation in parliament, including to women political aspirants.

The Solomon Islands' Ministry of Women has, since 2009, advocated for the introduction of a temporary special measure to reserve 10 per cent of parliamentary seats for women.<sup>64</sup> Although the bill that was presented to achieve this was initially defeated in cabinet, a survey carried out by the Regional Assistance Mission in the Solomon Islands in 2013 found that 71 per cent of the 3,405 respondents supported reserved seats for women. The Political Parties Integrity Bill was adopted in 2014, which mandates political parties to select and endorse at least 10 per cent of women candidates, providing a financial incentive of SBD 10,000 to the relevant political party if a female candidate is elected. However, the Act does not presently stipulate any sanctions for political parties that do not comply with the provisions.

In Fiji the 2013 Constitution brought significant change to the parliamentary structure and electoral system. The bicameral legislature, composed of a Senate and House of Representatives comprising 103 representatives, moved to a unicameral house of 50 members. The Constitution also introduced a proportional representation voting system, with only one national constituency. The Political Parties decree of 2013 introduced a national minimum threshold of five per cent women candidates for political parties.

A Women's Parliamentary Forum was held in October 2013, to coincide with the parliament's October sittings. Conducted with the support of the UNDP's first Transformational Leadership Development Programme and the UNDP Parliamentary Support Project, the forum is part of a broader programme that aims to familiarise potential women candidates with the functions and processes of the Samoan parliament. The forum provided a valuable opportunity for discussion about how the parliament could provide the required capacity-building support in 2014 and 2015, so that women from the public and private sectors, as well as from rural areas, can become more politically involved.

### 3. Obstacles to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action

#### a. Gender norms

Several reporting PICTs identified that stereotypical attitudes about men's and women's roles in society, and discriminatory practices in media reporting, had a profound impact on public perceptions of men and women

**Promising practice:** In New Caledonia 120 local women took part in a training programme to learn about local governance. In partnership with the Association of Mayors, the session focused on municipal management and the different electoral steps leading to a municipal mandate.

<sup>64</sup> The complete survey findings are available at:  
<http://www.ramsi.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/People-survey-2013-Key-Results-FINAL-1-33be46f6-c837-4a3c-b06b-108ff94827c6-0.pdf>

candidates. Women often lacked the social capital and the self-esteem to feel legitimate as candidates, especially in a context of male-dominated political parties, along with frequent smear campaigns.

Public affairs are still often perceived as a man's domain. In the Solomon Islands it is a common, mistaken, belief that only men are eligible for public office.

Research has shown that women are often dissuaded from standing for election by family and community members (Huffer 2006), and are more likely to access leadership positions in civil society organisations than to seek formal political representation. Women who have achieved professional success can be reluctant to face the exposure and reputational risks associated with a political campaign (SPC 2010b).

Several PICTs mentioned the need to address these negative perceptions through advocacy and awareness-raising of the roles that women play in communities. Despite evidence that increasing the numbers of women in parliament improves the attention paid by parliaments to women's issues (IPU 2008), and although data is lacking on men's and women's voting behaviour, PICTs reported anecdotal evidence that women voters tend to mistrust, and therefore refrain from voting for, female candidates.

In addition, practical barriers and regulations continue to affect women disproportionately. The Solomon Islands' report highlighted that women are less likely to access the necessary campaign funds, which constitutes an important obstacle, especially in the light of the SBD 2000 contesting fee for the national elections, and the SBD 1000 fee for provincial elections.

## **b. Resistance to affirmative action**

With the exception of Samoa, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, the French territories and Vanuatu, most reporting countries indicated that there are no national targets for achieving equal representation of women and men in elected and civil service positions. Very few PICTs have undertaken electoral reform to remove the barriers to women participating in elected bodies at all political levels.

Across all PICTs there are signs of cultural resistance and a lack of understanding of the measures that are likely to reduce the barriers to women's political representation. For example, the report from Papua New Guinea recalls that 'in 2012, during discussions over the introduction of reserved seats for women in parliament, the three newly elected female members of parliament threatened to leave the ruling coalition Government if any member [were to support] the Equality and Participation Act or enabling Bill. All three have stated publicly that they do not support equity measures for women candidates.'

## 4. Recommendations

The 11th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women recommended:<sup>65</sup>

- Pacific Island Countries and Territories, with technical and financial assistance of development partners, intensify efforts to create and foster an enabling environment to promote women's equal role in decision-making at all levels, including through:
  - ◆ Constitutional and legislative reform.
  - ◆ Electoral reform.
  - ◆ Policy development.
  - ◆ Support to mechanism enabling women to overcome barriers posed by their multiple roles and responsibilities e.g. addressing conditions of employment, labour laws and childcare services.(Paragraph 17a)
  
- That PICTs, with technical and financial assistance from development partners, continue to improve advocacy for women's leadership and the empowerment of women as leaders, including through:
  - ◆ Community and voter awareness.
  - ◆ Information and training for women who wish to enter public life at all levels including village administrations, local government, public boards, and communities and national government.
  - ◆ Training and capacity building for women in decision-making positions including in parliamentary procedures and good governance.
  - ◆ Training and support for bringing young women in to public life and decision-making.
  - ◆ Advocacy with traditional leaders and leaders of faith-based organisations to recognise the importance of and support women in public life and decision-making.
  - ◆ Documentation and sharing of success stories of women in public life and decision-making.
  - ◆ Use of the media and community organisations in advocacy and empowerment activities.(Paragraph 17b)

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65 SPC 2010. Outcomes and recommendations from the 11th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women, Noumea.

## Critical area H: Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women

The Beijing Platform for Action called for all countries to create or strengthen their institutional mechanisms for the consideration of women's needs and perspectives and the advancement of women to decision-making in all spheres of public life. The strategic objectives of the BPA include the creation or strengthening of national machineries and other governmental bodies, the inclusion of gender perspectives in legislation, public policies, programmes and projects, and the generation and dissemination of sex-disaggregated data and information for planning and evaluation. Most PICTs reported that national mechanisms remain inadequate to effectively address the needs and interests of women and girls.

### 1. Situation of national women's machineries across the region

Table 13, below, presents the characteristics of the national women's machineries (NWMs) reported by PICTs in terms of budget allocation and number of staff.

Table 13: Institutional mechanisms (NWMs) for gender equality and the advancement of women

Countries or territories	Gender mainstreaming reference document	Full name of NWM and year of creation	Budget allocation to the NWM as a percentage of national budget, year	Number of full-time staff positions in NWMs (2014)
Cook Islands	National Policy on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment 2011-2016	Gender and Development Division, Ministry of Internal Affairs (1993)	Not reported	2
Fiji	Gender Policy, 2014 Women's Plans of Action (1999- 2008, and the current 2010- 2019)	Department of Women in the Ministry of Women, Social Welfare and Poverty Alleviation (1989)	0.01% (2013)	27 <sup>66</sup>
Federated States of Micronesia	No specific national gender policy	Department of Health and Social Affairs: Gender Development and Human Rights Office	\$48,000	1
French Polynesia	No specific gender policy	Family and Women Status Delegation, 1993	0.03% (2013)	6
Kiribati	No specific national gender policy	Family and Women Status Delegation (1993)	\$79,805	8
Marshall Islands	No specific national gender policy	Ministry of Women, Youth and Social Affairs (2013)	less than 1% (2013)	1

66 Stocktake of the gender mainstreaming capacity of Pacific Island governments: Fiji 2014.

Countries or territories	Gender mainstreaming reference document	Full name of NWM and year of creation	Budget allocation to the NWM as a percentage of national budget, year	Number of full-time staff positions in NWMs (2014)
<b>New Caledonia</b>	No specific national gender policy	Gender and Development Office, Community Development Division, Ministry of Internal Affairs (1980)	0.09% (2013)	2
<b>Nauru</b>	Nauru National Women's Policy, 2014. Currently under consideration by Cabinet. Nauru National Women's Plan of Action 2005-2015	Women's Affairs Department, 1997	Not reported	5
<b>Papua New Guinea</b>	National Policy for Women and Gender Equality, 2011	Office of Development of Women, Ministry of Community Development and Religion	609,300 kina (2009) [2]	Not reported
<b>Palau</b>	No specific national gender policy	Gender Division, Bureau of Aging and Gender, Ministry of Community and Cultural Affairs	Approximately 0.01% (2013)	1
<b>Samoa</b>	National Policy and Plan of Action for Women of Sāmoa 2010 -2015	Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development	2% (2010)[3] <sup>67</sup>	65
<b>Solomon Islands</b>	National Policy on Gender Equality and Women's Development	Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs	2,6 million (2013)	5
<b>Tonga</b>	Gender and Development Policy (revised in May 2014)	Women's Affairs Division, Ministry of Internal Affairs (1993)	1% (2014)	6
<b>Tuvalu</b>	National women's policy (1999 revised in 2005 and in 2014), and Department of Women's Affairs corporate plan (2007-2009)	Gender Affairs Department in the Office of the Prime Minister (1999)	5% (2014)	4
<b>Vanuatu</b>	National Gender and Women's Policy 2014 - 2018, under development	Department of Women's Affairs	0.23% (2014)	16
<b>Wallis and Futuna</b>	Wallis and Futuna has developed a gender policy based on France's, but it has not yet been applied	Women's Rights and Gender Equality Delegate, Women and Handicraft Commission at the Territorial Assembly	less than 2% (2013)	1.5

Source: National Reviews and Regional Surveys on the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, Stocktakes of the gender mainstreaming capacity of Pacific Island governments.

The great variety of institutional set-ups that characterise national women's machineries in the region hinders a comparative analysis of budget allocations. With the exception of Samoa, Tuvalu and Wallis and Futuna, budget

67 Total expenditure is for Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development.

allocations for national women's machineries did not exceed one per cent of national government budgets. These expenditures are similar to the average expenditure that was identified across the region in 2008, of one per cent of national budgets (SPC 2008).

Three PICTs reported that their NWM budget allocation had decreased since 2010; by 25 per cent in French Polynesia and 53 per cent in Wallis and Futuna. Vanuatu explained that its budget allocation covered only staff salaries and services, but excluded any funding provision for programmes and activities. This situation is common to many PICTs' national women's machineries.

**Promising practice:** In Samoa, the Cabinet Development Committee has introduced gender analysis as a requirement for any aid project proposal. This is a positive step towards enhancing the inclusion of gender concerns across all development activities.

Few NWMs are ministries in their own right, nor are they set up within strategic ministries. In the Republic of the Marshall Islands the 'Women's Desk' was upgraded and renamed the Women in Development Office (WDO), and it was then transferred to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Social Welfare (now the Ministry of Internal Affairs). While this move was intended to give the office more prominence and broader responsibilities, its role subsequently became more limited, and the office's function was moved to the Community Development Section, where it has remained.

Similarly, in Papua New Guinea, in 2005 the Office of Development of Women (ODW) was established as a stand-alone mechanism. However, it does not enjoy a prominent status in the country's political architecture to the extent that confers any authority or influence over sectoral ministries. There were moves to transfer the ODW to the Department of the Prime Minister, but the National Executive Council decided, in early 2014, that it should remain within the Ministry of Community Development and Religion. Women's welfare is one of the many social sectors covered by the ministry (along with youth, welfare, the disabled, the elderly, religion and non-governmental organisations), and it lacks the budget or authority to drive progress.

In contrast, Tuvalu's Gender Affairs Department was elevated to the Office of the Prime Minister, reflecting the government's recognition of the importance of addressing issues affecting women. The department's move to the Office of the Prime Minister has enabled the department to focus its attention on mainstreaming gender considerations across all of government, moving away from its previous focus on project-based service delivery. While attention will still be given to women's development projects, a stronger focus will be given to addressing strategic interventions at a macro level in support of equal choices and opportunities for women and men (SPC. In prep.).

## 2. Successful legislative and policy changes

As shown in Table 13, in most countries NWMs have succeeded in organising consultations and inputs, and building consensus towards the adoption of policies specifically directed towards gender equality and the empowerment of women. The support of development partners and civil society has proved essential in progressing many of these initiatives. Budgeting, planning and monitoring of the implementation of national gender policies vary greatly between PICTs.

**Promising practice:** From 2009 to 2014, 14 PICTs undertook stocktake exercises on gender mainstreaming. The objectives were to assess the national policy, legal and organisational environment and to determine strategies for strengthening gender mainstreaming in government activities. Six dimensions were assessed, including political will, technical capacity, financing, organisational culture, etc. The Gender Stocktakes were conducted by SPC, with the support of the Australian Government.

In many cases NWMs have proven adept at raising awareness for, and coordinating advocacy efforts towards, the adoption of strategies for key areas of women's empowerment, most notably the prevention of violence against women. In several cases, such as in Solomon Islands, national strategies on violence against women developed by NWMs have paved the way for the adoption of comprehensive legislation criminalising violence against women. In the Republic of the Marshall Islands and the Cook Islands, national women's machineries conducted respective costing exercises for the implementation of domestic violence legislation (the Domestic Violence Prevention and Protection Act 2011 in RMI, and the Family Law Bill in the Cook Islands, to be tabled in 2015). The greatest progress has been achieved in PICTs where NWMs and key civil society organisations share common goals.

In some PICTs, NWMs have successfully pushed for the adoption of institutional measures to promote gender equality. As discussed in section G: Women in power and decision-making, Samoa adopted a constitutional amendment to reduce the barriers to women's representation in parliament. Another example is in the standing orders adopted by the Fijian Parliament in October 2014, by which any legislation considered by the parliament (as well as any inquiry undertaken by parliamentary committees) must be accompanied by a full gender analysis, highlighting the impacts and benefits for men and women of the proposed initiative.<sup>68</sup>

Several reporting PICTs mentioned having successfully integrated gender components into their national development strategies. Vanuatu reported having supported the mainstreaming of gender considerations in land management, climate change and disaster risk reduction, agriculture and rural development, public utilities and infrastructure development, education, and sports development. However, such successful collaborations over the inclusion of gender considerations in national policies are often established on an ad hoc basis, sometimes under the leadership of development partners rather than through an institutionalised system. In many cases, evidence-based monitoring, evaluation and reporting frameworks are lacking or ineffective.

<sup>68</sup> Clause 110 (2) states: 'Here a committee conducts an activity listed in clause (1), the committee shall ensure that full consideration will be given to the principle of gender equality so as to ensure all matters are considered with regard to the impact and benefit on both men and women equally.'



### 3. Obstacles to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action

#### a. Lack of capacity to influence government initiatives

The Beijing +15 report for Pacific Island countries and territories concluded that the weakness of institutional mechanisms to mainstream gender across government initiatives accounted for the slow pace of progress in all other critical areas of the Beijing Platform for Action (SPC 2010b). That diagnosis remains valid to a certain extent. Recent assessments of the enabling environment for gender mainstreaming conducted in 12 PICTs revealed that gender is not adequately mainstreamed across government sectors. Consequently, gender issues are rarely discussed in processes for adopting strategic plans and are poorly reflected in government development plans (SPC. In prep.).

**Promising practice:** In the Solomon Islands establishing gender focal points across ministries has been made a key performance indicator for permanent secretaries. The determination of gender focal points' responsibilities is decided on the basis of strategic functions within ministries rather than on personal characteristics such as skills, experience and attitudes.

In several PICTs there is evidence of low levels of 'ownership' of gender mainstreaming targets by ministries, very limited and ad hoc collection of the data required for gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation, and weak accountability in ministries' efforts to conduct gender-responsive actions. Several reports indicate that gender mainstreaming taskforces meet irregularly and are affected by a high turnover of representatives. In New Caledonia, all institutions, with the exception of the Customary Senate, have established commissions or services dedicated to women's affairs. However, despite these mechanisms, gender is rarely mainstreamed across sectors.

This is evident in Fiji, where thematic taskforces appointed to implement gender policy are reported to have been less active than anticipated, due to competing priorities and, often, low levels of specialised knowledge in their members.

Most NWMs mentioned insufficient budgets and staffing, limited technical capacity, and a lack of coordination with other government entities. These were identified as key obstacles to their ability to influence government action in a cross-cutting way. Several reports highlighted that NWMs found themselves isolated and marginalised within their respective governments, with poor access to information and little influence over national initiatives likely to impact women's access to opportunities and resources. Linkages between NWMs and other government institutions were weak overall, which further hampered the capacity of NWMs to influence and support the promotion of gender equality. Similarly, linkages with civil society could be stronger. Women's organisations have often played an important role in promoting the creation of national women's machineries. Although there is interaction between NWMs and civil society on some levels, mutual support could be better structured.

The availability of sex-disaggregated data is uneven among PICTs and across sectors. The collection, updating and analysis of such data are inadequate in all reporting PICTs. This hampers proper planning as well as monitoring efforts in the area of gender equality and women's empowerment. Individual agencies and development partners may collect such data on an ad hoc basis, but knowledge management and data-sharing across government is ineffective.

## **b. Lack of political will at national levels**

In 2012 Pacific Island leaders adopted the Gender Equality Declaration,<sup>69</sup> to acknowledge the high development costs generated by gender inequality. Leaders expressed their concern at the slow pace of progress towards gender equality in the region. Through the declaration, heads of states committed to adopting measures to accelerate progress in six key areas: gender-responsive government programmes and policies, decision-making, economic empowerment, violence, health, and education. While this important signal of political will at the highest level was welcomed by gender equality advocates, enforcement of the declaration remains slow (PIFS 2014).

Although leaders have expressed support for gender equality, this has not generally translated into concrete actions and the provision of resources to give traction to the gender equality agenda and to encourage ministries to promote gender in law reforms and policies. A lack of accountability measures in the implementation and monitoring of the declaration remains an issue. Concrete commitment, through investment in gender mainstreaming and professional development of government staff, remains lacking.

Technical, political and cultural reasons are often cited as barriers to legislating and formulating policies aligned with CEDAW. A lack of capacity for monitoring progress, data collection, and applying gender mainstreaming were the most frequent obstacles mentioned by senior public civil servants interviewed during the gender stocktakes conducted in 14 PICTs (Kitalong, A. 2014). Women's programmes in several PICTs continue to focus on the practical needs of women (access to education, employments, infrastructure and public services), rather than their strategic interests (transformation of the causes of gender inequality such as challenging laws, policies and customary practices; equal participation in decision-making; control over strategic resources, etc.), which have greater transformative impacts on gender equality.

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69 The full text of the declaration is available at: <http://www.forumsec.org/resources/uploads/attachments/documents/2012%20Forum%20Communique,%20Rarotonga,%20Cook%20Islands%2028-30%20Aug1.pdf>

## 4. Recommendations

The 12th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women:<sup>70</sup>

- Acknowledged and supported ongoing capacity building of national statistics offices, planning departments and sectoral agencies of governments, including national women's machineries to collect, analyse and use gender statistics. (Paragraph 15)
- Supported capacity development of NWMs, other governments institutions, and civil society organisations (CSOs) on gender mainstreaming, and called on PICTs to enhance support to capacity development and adequate resourcing for NWMs to support the process of gender mainstreaming. (Paragraph 16)
- Called for public service commissioners to mainstream gender within the public service, including strengthening human resource development policies to advance gender equality. (Paragraph 17)

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<sup>70</sup> SPC 2013. Outcomes and recommendations from the 12th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women, Rarotonga.

# Critical area I: Human rights of women

The ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of all Discriminations against Women (CEDAW) by most Pacific Island countries and territories is a major step towards the protection of the human rights of women and girls, and the eradication of gender-based discrimination. CEDAW provides human rights lawyers, women's groups and NWMs with an unprecedented mandate to seek accountability for women's rights issues, to challenge existing biases and to raise awareness about women's rights.

Despite the widespread ratification of CEDAW by PICTs, most of the convention's standards have not been translated into enactments in either national legislation or structural change in asserting women's rights. Women's status and wellbeing are still disproportionately affected by discriminatory behaviour and practices limiting their enjoyment of their human rights.

## 1. Main areas of concerns in the protection of women's human rights

### a. Weak enforcement of human rights law

The Revised Pacific Platform for Action on the Advancement of Women and Gender Equality notes that 'although human rights are enshrined in the Constitutions and legislation of Pacific countries, institutional, attitudinal and social barriers often prevent women from gaining full protection of their legal systems or exercising their legal rights. Cultural beliefs, religious practices and social bias, and a lack of awareness of legal rights hinder the exercise of rights' (SPC 2005).

Recent stocktakes of the enabling environment for gender mainstreaming in 14 Pacific Island countries and territories concluded that many improvements were needed in order for national laws to conform to the commitments made on gender equality and women's human rights. There are several examples of laws that either discriminate against women or contribute indirectly to discrimination in fundamental areas of women's lives, including family law, health, inheritance and access to justice. Women's limited rights related to land ownership in PICTs remains an obstacle to women achieving higher social and economic status.

Beyond the issue of alignment of national legislation to the provisions of CEDAW, women's right experts and advocates note weak enforcement of national legislation, especially in matters linked to women's human rights and prevention of gender-based violence. Harmful practices are often prosecuted or otherwise dealt with under general, non-specific criminal laws, outdated or ineffective laws, or laws that are not effectively implemented due to patriarchal attitudes or a lack of resources (Jalal 2009).

## b. Women's access to land

Women's lack of land ownership is a major issue. Strong patriarchal cultures, particularly in parts of Melanesia, have contributed to historical, systemic discrimination against women with regard to land ownership.

Governments often use customary rules in the context of land ownership as a means of preventing women or their direct descendants from sharing land resources equally with those who are descendant from the male lineage (Amnesty International 2008). In PNG, for example, more than 90 per cent of land is under customary ownership. In some countries in the region with matrilineal structures, a woman may be the lawful landowner, but she may have limited control over that land, as men from her family or community make decisions about its use. Further, female landowners are routinely excluded from most decision-making forums concerning the use of land for mining projects. Such exclusion further limits women's ability to protect their interests and capital assets. Several researchers have shown how changing social systems have, in many cases, eroded women's traditional status and power in land ownership and management over the last three decades (Stege et al. 2008).

In patrilineal societies women are often excluded from owning registered land. In Papua New Guinea, where more than 90 per cent of land is under customary ownership, the country's 2009 CEDAW Report states that women cannot enforce rights to land and property, nor claim income from cash crops or land leases, such as for extractive and logging activities and infrastructure construction. In Tuvalu land rights are governed by the Native Lands Act and the Tuvalu Lands Code, and these have not been reviewed in relation to CEDAW obligations. However, consultations conducted by the Tuvalu NWM revealed that, despite acknowledgement of the discriminatory effect such regulations have on women, evolution of land inheritance rules and practices is a highly sensitive and polarising issue. There are differing perspectives in Tuvalu about whether legislative review of the Land Act should be prioritised as a gender equality issue (SPC. In prep.).

## 2. Successful policies and legislative changes

Considerable progress has been achieved in the past two decades in the field of family law, in particular the repealing of discriminatory clauses against women and girls. In many cases these amendments were the result of sustained advocacy efforts by civil society organisations. Fiji reported that the Family Law Act of 2005 provides a single, no-fault ground for divorce – that the 'marriage has broken down irretrievably' – removing several grounds required in previous legislation. The legislation also established family divisions in both the High Court and Magistrates Court. The Act provides for spousal and child maintenance and matrimonial property distribution.

**Promising practice:** In December 2013 Samoa established a National Human Rights Institute within the office of the ombudsman, with the mandate to monitor and report on the observance of human rights standards in the country.

In CEDAW State Reports several reporting PICTs have indicated they are undertaking legal reviews of their legislation's conformity with CEDAW. In Papua New Guinea a Constitutional and Law Reform Committee (CLCR) is conducting a legislative reform exercise to address discrimination in national legislation, using CEDAW as a reference point.

Similarly, Samoa's the Law Reform Commission was mandated to review the level of compliance of all legislation with the relevant articles of CEDAW, and to identify additional compliance issues with articles of the convention that have been implemented through domestic legislation.

Several PICTs have reported to the CEDAW Committee in recent years, and civil society organisations have produced shadow reports, which indicates positive ownership of the convention among women's rights advocates. Following a request by the CEDAW Committee, French territories submitted their own reports in 2013, as annexes to France's report to CEDAW.<sup>71</sup> New Caledonia reported adopting a consultative approach to the development of the report. Civil society organisations, women's groups and customary authorities were consulted, and this exercise offered an opportunity to raise awareness about the content of the convention and its relevance in the New Caledonian context.

**Promising practice:**

In Vanuatu a National Human Rights Committee was established in 2014, with representatives from government and civil society organisations, in an attempt to harmonise reporting across all human rights treaties.

Palau held its first Mechesil Belau Conference in 1995, in preparation for the Fourth World Conference for Women in Beijing. The Mechesil Belau serves as a platform for decision-making in areas that contribute to improving the lives of women, families and communities, and it has met annually since 1995. Traditional women leaders from each state hold a series of consultative meetings to identify and define issues to be addressed each year. It remains a dynamic space in which to discuss gender issues and make progress in improving lives.

### 3. Obstacles to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action

#### a. Women's poor knowledge of their human rights

Considerable progress has been reported throughout the Pacific Islands region in recognising gender issues in relation to legal and human rights. In addition to states' efforts, multilateral, bilateral, regional and civil society organisations have played leading roles in achieving this progress. Many initiatives have been implemented to raise awareness at all levels of society.

In Tuvalu, for example, the legal literacy programmes cover issues such as CEDAW, gender equality, domestic violence, family law, and HIV and the law. Some community paralegals have used this knowledge to help victims of domestic violence and to provide first-hand legal advice on matters regarding land and family issues.

<sup>71</sup> Wallis and Futuna and French Polynesia submitted their reports in 2012 and New Caledonia submitted in 2013.



Despite this significant progress across the region, several PICTs reported that the majority of women, especially in rural areas, displayed poor knowledge and understanding of their rights in the context of the family, economic relations, land issues and marriage. A 2010 study conducted in the South Province of New Caledonia highlighted that 73 per cent of respondents considered themselves ill-informed of their rights and unsure about how to assert them in daily life. The coexistence of different civil statuses in New Caledonia (common law and customary) have made access to justice more complex in matters of marriage, inheritance, land management and filiation (relationships between family members).

## 4. Recommendations

The 11th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women recommended that:<sup>72</sup>

- Pacific Islands Countries and Territories accelerate work to ratify, report on and implement CEDAW and that development agencies provide technical assistance and funding for this and assist NGOs to produce alternative (shadow) reports. (Paragraph 16b)
- Pacific Islands Countries and Territories review customary laws and practices for compliance with CEDAW. (Paragraph 16c)

The 12th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women:<sup>73</sup>

- Acknowledged the importance of keeping the intersectional issues that women and girls with disabilities face on the regional and national agenda, and reiterated support for the inclusion of those issues in national gender and disability policies to be reported on via CEDAW, CRPD, and other relevant human rights instruments. (Paragraph 72)



72 SPC 2010. Outcomes and recommendations from the 11th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women, Noumea.

73 SPC 2013. Outcomes and recommendations from the 12th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women, Rarotonga.



## Critical area J: Women and the media

Pacific Island countries and territories have recognised the need to address gender inequality in the media and information and communication technologies (ICTs), as a powerful instrument for change, through various regional and international gender commitments, including the Beijing Platform for Action. While there remains much more to be done, there has been some progress towards gender sensitivity in the media, particularly through the work of women-led media networks. Work in this area includes the development, production and distribution of media content that addresses existing inequalities, especially in rural and remote communities. However, there has been limited funding to support women's media initiatives.

### 1. Progress in increasing women's access to and participation in the media in the Pacific

While the news media has been the primary recipient of media training programmes in the Pacific region, the review of progress in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action in PICTs in 2010 also identified the absence of ongoing media training for national women's machineries and gender advocates. Media-related outputs are not systematically included in programme planning, and responses to newspaper and other reports that impact on women's lives are rare. It noted that national women's machineries do not feature prominently as generators of gender education or media releases, and relationships between NWMs and media representatives (print, radio, television) are usually informal and irregular.

The review recommended several strategies to address the issue of women, media and ICTs. Some of these recommendations included support for the training of national women's machineries and gender advocates in the use of media, supporting gender sensitivity training for local media outlets, and the development of policies and programmes to give rural women and communities access to information through the promotion of gender equality and human rights.

Civil society networks, and in particular women's media networks, have been instrumental in the development of local media content for rural and outer island women and communities. Gender sensitivity and human rights training for media outlets has been rare. There is a need to take a more innovative approach to link training with the sustainability of the production of gender-inclusive content, and to proactively strengthen the range of training institutions that are delivering media and journalism training programmes to ensure that these are inclusive of the gender equality agenda.

There are interesting opportunities to address these recommendations through the Pacific Media Assistance Scheme (PACMAS), which has recently adopted a comprehensive gender policy, and through utilising the Global Media Monitoring Project and women's media networks.

While women's media networks epitomise the promotion of gender equality in the media in practice, using both traditional and new media and ICT platforms, greater recognition of the contribution they are making is needed, and it is necessary to mobilise resources to support the advancements and the challenges in gender equality and women's rights.

## **2. Successful policies and legislative changes**

Samoa reported its support of the Asia Pacific Journalism Centre – a leadership initiative for journalists from Pacific Islands Forum countries. This centre aims to improve news reporting on economic issues involving women. The programme promotes women as news media leaders, with special attention on reporting business and economic news in a way that properly addresses the role and place of women in local economies, appeals to women as audiences, and develops women's economic literacy. It also addresses the broad spectrum of issues concerning women, including human rights issues, such as maternal health, equal opportunity and access to resources (both physical and intellectual), and gender-based violence.

Palau reported significant progress in gender equity in the production and dissemination of media programmes by women. In 2001 Roll'em Productions began operations with female executive producers and female reporters. In 2007 OTV began production with a local Palauan female producer and a female programme, sales, and marketing manager. Since 2007 OTV's producer has regularly attended regional workshops on the Millennium Development Goals that included gender, climate change, freedom of expression and micro-enterprises.

Since 2004 each of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Tonga and Fiji has granted broadcast licences to women-led community radio stations operated by women's organisations (WUTMI in the Marshall Islands, Ma'afafine moe Famili in Tonga and femLINKPACIFIC in Fiji).

Efforts have been made in some PICTs to organise professional women's media networks, with mixed results. The regional women's community media network, femLINKPACIFIC, links women peace activists in Fiji, Bougainville, Solomon Islands and Tonga, using media initiatives as a platform for collective policy advocacy for the advancement of the UN Security Council's (UN SCR) women, peace and security resolutions. In 2005, through this regional network, the Leitana Nehan Women's Development Agency in Bougainville was able to identify early warning indicators of the potential for renewed violence. The agency undertakes UN SCR 1325 awareness training workshops in village communities, and documents women's stories, while taking an active role in raising awareness on women's issues, human rights and gender equality. The agency continues to speak out against violence through a local radio network, and carries out awareness-raising campaigns and workshops on issues affecting women and children in villages (SPC 2010).

NGOs such as Fiji Media Watch (FMW) and femLINKPACIFIC, as well as Fiji Women's Crisis Centre and Fiji Women's Rights Movement, conduct media monitoring activities. FMW is the national coordinator for the Global Media Monitoring Project, while femLINKPACIFIC is the regional coordinator. The monitoring focuses primarily on news media content, while there has been limited analysis of the sexual and violent nature of public media programmes which has been evident in Pacific media since the introduction of television since 1991.

FemLINKPACIFIC has provided ICT training since 2003. Content development has taken place mostly through feminist media networks and femLINKPACIFIC's community video and radio programmes, which also provide spaces for other organisations, including faith-based groups.

The Fiji Government's National Gender Policy (February 2014) includes specific strategies linked to 'increasing the participation and access of women to the expression of their opinions and to decision-making in and through the media including their involvement in new technologies of communication; promoting a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media through training.' The Fiji Broadcasting Corporation (FBC) had earlier adopted a gender policy, following the adoption of the Pacific Women in Media Action Plan in 2006.



### 3. Obstacles to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action

#### a. Limited investment in gender-sensitive media reporting

Technology today enables us to produce relevant content, and to connect the issues of rural women not only to national and regional media in the Pacific, but also to the global platforms addressing women's peace, human security and human rights. While community media, in particular radio, is certainly a viable and legitimate platform for women to claim their communication rights, it is vulnerable to limited funding and technical resources (femLINKPACIFIC, unpublished report).

Since 1995 PICTs have invested little in gender and media work for national-level action. An exception is UNESCO's and SPC's joint investment in the development of the Pacific Women in Media Action Plan 2006. While women's rights advocacy campaigns provide insights and information about women's issues, the media needs to be equipped with this information in order to communicate the reality of the status of women in Pacific society. One challenge has been that government-funded media have tended to perpetuate the 'women-in-development' approach, rather than holding governments accountable in relation to gender equality and women's human rights.

There is a need to challenge the existing roles and responsibilities of the mainstream media to improve the portrayal of women in contemporary Pacific society, and to counter the factors that inhibit women's engagement with mainstream media.

#### b. Stereotyping

The Beijing Platform for Action of 1995 called on governments, the international community and civil society to 'take strategic action' with regard to the 'stereotyping of women and inequality in women's access to and participation in all communication systems, especially in the media' (UN 1995).

While the Fiji government is committed to promoting a balanced and non-stereotypical portrayal of women in the media, no major action has been taken in Fiji to promote these aspirations, in addition to the operation of the existing Media Council Code of Ethics. Fiji's Media Decree incorporates a code of conduct on advertising, but this needs to be reviewed in line with national gender policies and commitments.

Since 1995 PICTs have invested little in gender and media work for national-level action, other than UNESCO's and SPC's joint investment in the development of the Pacific Women in Media Action Plan 2006.

There is a need to challenge the existing roles and responsibilities of the mainstream media to improve the portrayal of women in contemporary Pacific society, and to counter the existing factors that inhibit women's engagement with mainstream media.

### **c. Women's limited access to information and communication technologies (ITC)**

There is an urgent need for Pacific women to discuss how they can better work together to address the existing ICT gaps affecting women in the communities in which they work. Women must also review how they contribute to addressing the 'digital gap' among women, especially between urban and rural areas.

Aside from the provision of appropriate ICT training, which needs to take into account regional and national needs and capacity, it is vital that women's media initiatives for communities have access to the necessary resources to enable a greater level of content development, production and dissemination, including in local languages and dialects, as a way to protect and preserve indigenous and traditional cultures.

## **4. Recommendations**

The 12th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women:<sup>74</sup>

- Called for governments to recognise that community media and women's media networks are important for collaboration and partnerships. (Paragraph 74)
- Called for governments and NWMs to use the Global Media Monitoring project to conduct quantitative and qualitative analysis of content to be able to ensure that government communication and media strategies effectively promote their gender-equality commitments. (Paragraph 75)
- Called for Pacific Island Countries and Territories to recognise and fully respect the traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples, especially the knowledge held by women, as well as in territories and areas conserved by indigenous peoples and local communities. (Paragraph 76)
- Called for research with gender analysis by Pacific Island countries and territories, in collaboration with development partners, on the impact of inappropriate uses of Information and Communication Technologies, and called for the development of national regulatory infrastructure and policy. (Paragraph 77)

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74 SPC 2013. Outcomes and recommendations from the 12th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women, Rarotonga.



## Critical area K: Women and the environment

The linkages between culture and environmental resources, climate change and women should be recognised and reflected in policy-making; the voices of Pacific women must be included. The important roles that women play in climate change adaptation and mitigation, in food security, and in ensuring sustainable livelihoods for their families and communities, must be brought into the process. This includes food production, and specifically, taking into account the different use pattern of natural resources, cultures and societies in the small island developing states process and the post-2015 development agenda. The 2014 SIDS global conference reaffirmed that gender equality and the effective participation of women were critical to meeting the challenges posed by climate change.<sup>75</sup>

### 1. Gendered dimensions of environmental degradation in the Pacific

Women have a critical role to play in natural resource management and food security in the Pacific Islands region, given their use of both land and marine resources. They possess knowledge and skills that are fundamental to sustainable resource use and food security. Given women's central role in food production, through subsistence farming, local fishing, seashell collecting, and crop selling, women are likely to be seriously impacted by any degradation in the environment affecting natural resources.



<sup>75</sup> SIDS 2014 global conference outcome document: <http://www.sids2014.org/content/documents/358A-CONF-223-5%20ENGLISH.pdf>

Although increasing attention is being given in the Pacific region to integrating gender into climate change programming, research in this area remains limited.

## 2. Attempts at policy change

Most PICTs are beginning to take steps to integrate gender equality and women's empowerment in policies related to natural resource management, disaster risk reduction and climate change. For example, the Cook Islands National Policy on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment and Strategic Plan of Action for 2011-2016 addresses gender dimensions of climate change and disaster risk management (Cook Islands, unpublished data).

A major achievement by the Cook Islands government has been its consultations with a broad range of stakeholders – including organisations working on social inclusion – in the formulation of the Integrated Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Management (DRM) and Climate Change (CC) in the Pacific. The strategy acknowledges the differential impacts of climate change and disasters on gender and for various social groups, as well as the importance of incorporating women's needs, priorities and skills in the DRM and climate change measures. The Cook Islands' strategy sets the tone for other PICTs, which will be consolidating their separate DRM and CC strategies into integrated action.

**Promising practice:** In the Marshall Islands the National Climate Change Policy Framework covers goals and outcomes related to gender equality, and calls for the development of gender-sensitive strategies for climate change responses.

Gender issues are recognised in many PICTs' National Sustainable Development Strategies and other strategic documents. Further, the need for more concerted efforts for mainstreaming gender into national strategies, programmes and initiatives at all levels were emphasised in many national reports. Many reports referred specifically to the sectors that are most important for resilience building: land use, water resource management, forestry and rural energy.

The Republic of the Marshall Islands has developed a National Climate Change Policy Framework, the fifth goal of which is: 'building education and awareness, community mobilisation, whilst being mindful of culture, gender and youth'. This framework calls for gender-sensitive strategies for climate change responses, and sets out clear gender-focused outcomes aligned with the five goals. Despite the existence of this framework, the country acknowledged that programmes relating to climate change, disaster risk reduction and environmental degradation did not take gender disparities into account.

**Promising practice:** In Vanuatu the government sought to ensure a gender balance in the country's official delegation to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference in 2013, by establishing an open and transparent process for the selection of delegates. Highly qualified and skilled women applied to be part of the delegation, and the selection process resulted in seven women delegates out of the delegation of 15 – or 46% of the total delegation.



Similarly, the Solomon Islands highlighted the development of the National Climate Change Policy, 2012-2017, by the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management and Meteorology. The policy acknowledges women's lower access to education and health and their high exposure to domestic violence. It includes gender equity as a guiding principle, and calls for gender analysis and the inclusion of gender considerations, in all disaster risk reduction and adaptation activities.

Vanuatu reported that it had established the representation of women in the National Advisory Board of Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction, and that it facilitated women's involvement in similar bodies at the provincial and village levels. In preparation for the 19th United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP19) in Warsaw, Poland, in November 2013, the Government of Vanuatu prepared the country's first submission to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The Submission on Gender Balance articulated Vanuatu's support for promoting gender balance and improving women's participation in UNFCCC negotiations. It emphasised the central role played by women in climate change adaptation and mitigation, and the need for women's views and priorities to be taken into account in decision- and policy-making on climate change. The process for preparing the submission was inclusive: stakeholders from government, regional bodies and civil society organisations were consulted to provide input and feedback on the draft submission. Gender experts were also consulted. The final submission was presented to the Vanuatu National Advisory Board for endorsement, and was submitted to the UNFCCC for the COP19 meeting.

In Tuvalu the European Union-funded Global Climate Change Alliance: Pacific Small Island States project seeks to build the capacity of farmers from all islands in Tuvalu to contribute to food security, and to set up agroforestry activities. It was recognised by the stakeholders involved in the planning process that farmers and landowners in Tuvalu are mostly male. Thus, a parallel initiative was developed with members from the Tuvalu National Council of Women (TNCW) to build on women's agricultural practices and to add a home gardening component to the project.

At the regional level, the Pacific Partnerships to Strengthen Gender Equality in Climate Change Response and Sustainable Development (PPGCCSD) is a regional initiative that provides space and resources for women-led civil society groups, youth-led groups, national women's machineries, other ministries, and the Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific, to work towards more effective joint advocacy strategies on gender equality, climate justice response and sustainable development. PPGCCSD was initially convened by Diverse Voices and Action (DIVA) for Equality, the Pacific Youth Council and SPC, with support from development partners and women's groups. The partnership offers a platform for advocacy towards gender-responsive climate change response and sustainable development strategies, and informs civil society activism in key international events, which has included the 3rd UN Global Meeting on SIDS and the UN Secretary General's Climate Change Summit, which were held concurrently in New York and Apia in September 2014. A particularly successful outcome of PPGCCSD's activities has been the work by PPGCCSD women advocates to strengthen the gender equality and human rights

considerations in the outcome document of the SIDS Conference, entitled SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action [SAMOA] Pathway, a roadmap to address the challenges small islands state face and ways to address them collectively.

### 3. Obstacles to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action

#### a. Moving beyond the rhetoric

Although many PICTs have made commitments on paper, translating the words into action remains a challenge in this area. Examples from some PICTs illustrate this: the Fiji national report states that ‘Gender issues are acknowledged but not translated into DRM policies and programmes’; while the Samoa 2011-13 national report states that ‘Gender does not currently feature strongly as an organising principle for DRM activities in Samoa.’ This lack of commitment to addressing gender concerns and priorities is also reflected in the high mortality rate of women and children in disasters. For example, in the 2009 Pacific tsunami, women represented 70 per cent of the adults who died in both Samoa and Tonga.<sup>76</sup> Similarly, evidence from the 2014 floods in Solomon Islands indicates that 22 of the 23 deceased were women and children.

Despite the known vulnerabilities of women and children to climate change and disasters, as well as their capacities to contribute effectively to climate change adaptation and mitigation, and to disaster risk management, there has been little progress in improving the resilience of women to these impacts. The mid-term progress review of the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) in Asia and the Pacific revealed that there is a lack of effective involvement of women in planning and decision-making on disaster risk management. At the same time, women have little or no involvement in decision-making on issues that have a major impact on disaster risk reduction. The review also pointed out that there is poor representation and participation of women’s groups in disaster risk reduction; only 2.4% of Asia-Pacific countries reported on the participation of women’s organisations in national disaster risk management platforms. The region is therefore remains unable to take advantage of the skills and knowledge that women have in building the resilience of their communities.

To address the lack of involvement of women in mitigation initiatives, femLINKPACIFIC’s community radio and the Women’s Weather Watch seek to highlight leadership by women at the community level, including highlighting the role of women in community radio in facilitating a more effective and efficient response to disaster situations. By improving reporting, and outreaching to marginalised groups, women in community media and community radio have the potential to minimise, and even prevent, some of the catastrophic damage that can be visited by natural disasters.

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<sup>76</sup> Source: Tonga National Assessment Report to the 2014 SIDS Conference.

## **b. Collection of sex- and age-disaggregated data and gender analysis remains a low priority**

Sex- and age-disaggregated data across different geographical areas – which is critical in creating the evidence for addressing gender needs and priorities in disaster risk reduction and climate change policy formulation – is lacking. According to femLINKPacific, the devastating floods between January and March 2012, in Fiji, revealed the lack of systematic collection of sex-disaggregated data by the National Disaster Management Office, and the absence of a standard operating system to identify specific vulnerable individuals and groups (including the injured, the sick, people with disabilities, minority groups, the elderly, unaccompanied children). This issue is likely to seriously hamper responses to crises, including humanitarian and rehabilitation action, and to put women and girls at risk. This lack of sex- and age-disaggregated data indicates that, while the Pacific Islands region, over the past few decades, has made great strides in understanding and managing disaster risks, from a hazards and economic standpoint there is a lack of collective understanding about the people or groups who are more exposed to risk – particularly women.

## **4. Recommendations**

The 4th Pacific Women's Ministerial Meeting discussed the gender perspective of climate change impacts, agreeing that:

... adverse impacts of climate change are likely to have far-reaching consequences for Pacific Islands economies and the well-being of Pacific peoples and they may also affect women and men differently. Acknowledging the different yet complementary roles of men and women in ensuring the well-being of their families and the development of their society, the ministers affirmed the necessity of taking into account the knowledge, experiences and priorities of both women and men in order to develop effective climate change strategies. The ministers recognized that gender inequalities and the violation of human rights hamper the capacity of Pacific islands countries and territories to adapt to and mitigate differential impacts of climate change.

In the formal Ministers' Communiqué,<sup>77</sup> the ministers:

- Reiterated the need for a multidimensional approach to climate change adaptation as recommended by the Pacific Beijing +15 review report.
- Noted the need for greater and effective participation of women in the identification of climate change issues, the design of local and national policies and strategies, the implementation of adaptation and mitigation programmes, and the overall decision-making processes at all levels and in the global negotiation process.

<sup>77</sup> SPC 2011. Communiqué of the 4th Pacific Women's Ministerial Meeting, Nadi, Fiji.

- Confirmed the need for gender analysis to be incorporated in strategic planning, programming and results-based implementation of climate change programmes and the production of sex-disaggregated data and indicators to monitor the impacts of adaptation and mitigation initiatives.
- Recommended further research on the gender and human rights dimension of climate change.
- Recommended capacity building of government and civil society organisations to mainstream gender in climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies in all sectors.
- Recognised the value and requested documentation of local and traditional knowledge maintained by both women and men alongside scientific knowledge, to facilitate adaptation and mitigation efforts to building resilience in communities to respond to climate change in the Pacific Islands.
- Agreed that climate change funding priorities should be gender responsive and ensure accessibility to address the needs of and benefit both women and men and recommend capacity building of the government to effectively manage climate change funds to this ends.
- Advised strengthening collaboration and partnership between national women's machineries and climate change departments and ministries as well as other organisations and stakeholders.

## Critical area L: The girl child

Half of the population of the Pacific is aged below 21 years,<sup>78</sup> and approximately one-third is aged less than 14 years (WHO 2013). Hence, the issues facing children and youth are particularly relevant to social and cultural economic development in the Pacific Islands region. Considerable gains have been made over recent years in securing education for girls and addressing the high rates of adolescent pregnancy. However, several challenges remain in order for girls to be able to fully exercise their rights and develop their potential.

### 1. Main issues facing the girl child in the Pacific

#### a. Teenage pregnancy, including experience of abuse and coercion

The lack of sexual education and access to contraception, low levels of agency over one's own body, gender norms and exposure to unwanted or abusive sexual relationships together account for high levels of teenage pregnancy in the region. Despite progress made over the last two decades, the fertility rates of adolescent girls (aged 15-19) have remained high.

Table 14: Evolution of adolescent\* fertility rates: 1990s and 2000s vs 2010s

PICT	Year (1990s/2000s)	Adolescent birth rate per 1000 (1990s-2000s)	Adolescent birth rate per 1000 (2010s/ latest data)	Year (2010s/ latest data)
Federated States of Micronesia	2000	48	46	2010
Fiji	2007	43	36	2007
French Polynesia	2007	51	No data available	
Kiribati	2005	39	49	2010
Marshall Islands	1999	138	85	2011
Nauru	2006	69	81	
New Caledonia	2004	20	No data available	
Niue	2006	28	20	2007-11
Palau	2005	35	27	2010
Papua New Guinea	2000	70	65	2002-06

<sup>78</sup> The median age in the Pacific region is 21.3 years, which indicates that half the population of Pacific Island countries is below that age and the other half is older. However, this regional average masks important variations at the national levels. For example, Palau's median age is 36.2 years.

PICT	Year (1990s/2000s)	Adolescent birth rate per 1000 (1990s-2000s)	Adolescent birth rate per 1000 (2010s/ latest data)	Year (2010s/ latest data)
Samoa	2001	46	39	2011
Solomon Islands	1999	67	62	2009
Tokelau	2001	43	30	2006-11
Tonga	2006	24	30	2011
Tuvalu	2002	42	44	2012
Vanuatu	1999	59	66	2009
Wallis and Futuna	2008	12	No data available	

Source: SPC 2009d for 1990s-2000s data; NMDI database SPC; UNFPA Population and Development Profiles: Pacific Sub-Region, April 2014.

\* Adolescent = aged between 15 and 19 years (Cook Islands Statistics Office 2014).

Note: Table intends to demonstrate each PICT's progression, rather than to make comparisons between PICTs (data periods differ widely between PICTs).

UNFPA's regional extension to the World Population report 2013 for the Pacific, 'I am not a lost cause: Young Women's Empowerment and Teenage Pregnancy in the Pacific', highlighted the links between adolescent fertility rates and low levels of empowerment of women and girls. It emphasised teenage pregnancy as 'an outcome of the power imbalance between girls and their sexual partners; a product of their lack of access to information and thus to informed choice; and a result of failings in the education, health and other public systems' (UNFPA 2013).

**Promising practice:** The Teen Mums Pilot Programme was launched in Samoa in 2013, focusing mainly on sexual and reproductive health rights and life skills. It seeks to support adolescents with their parenting responsibilities, with tools on decision-making, leadership, communication and budgeting. One of the objectives is to reduce cultural and religious stigma associated with teenage pregnancy.

The Solomon Islands reported that, although the birth of a girl child is always welcomed, girls are rarely made aware of their rights, and they are taught by society to think that boys are superior to girls. Such socialising effects are likely to disempower girls, and to reduce their ability to refuse unwelcome sexual advances, to exercise consent and to negotiate the use of contraceptives.

The links between women's empowerment and the levels of teenage pregnancy is further illustrated with data from the Solomon Islands Census 2009, which revealed that the level of education of a mother is an important

determinant of her teenage girl’s exposure to pregnancy.<sup>79</sup> In several PICTs, including Samoa and the Solomon Islands, teenage pregnancy rates are higher in rural areas and the outer islands than in urban areas.

The family health and safety studies undertaken in Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu – which assessed the incidence of violence against women – which showed that the younger a girl’s first sexual experience, the more likely that it was forced. The same studies revealed that between three and eight per cent of women in those countries had their first sexual experience before the age of 15, and that between 23 and 50 per cent of girls had their first sexual experience before the age of 18 (UNFPA 2013). Other data from the Solomon Islands highlight that one girl in five has sexual intercourse for the first time before the age of 15.<sup>80</sup>

Similarly, New Caledonia reported that, according to a 2008 survey, sexual abuse of children is common: 17% of young girls and 5% of boys interviewed said that they had been forced to have sex, or had experienced a forced attempt to have sex, during their childhood (before the age of 16). Conversely, data for all PICTs reveal that the later the first sexual experience, the less likely it was to be forced. In situations where a woman’s first sexual experience was after the age 18, only six to 20 per cent reported that it was forced (UNFPA 2013).

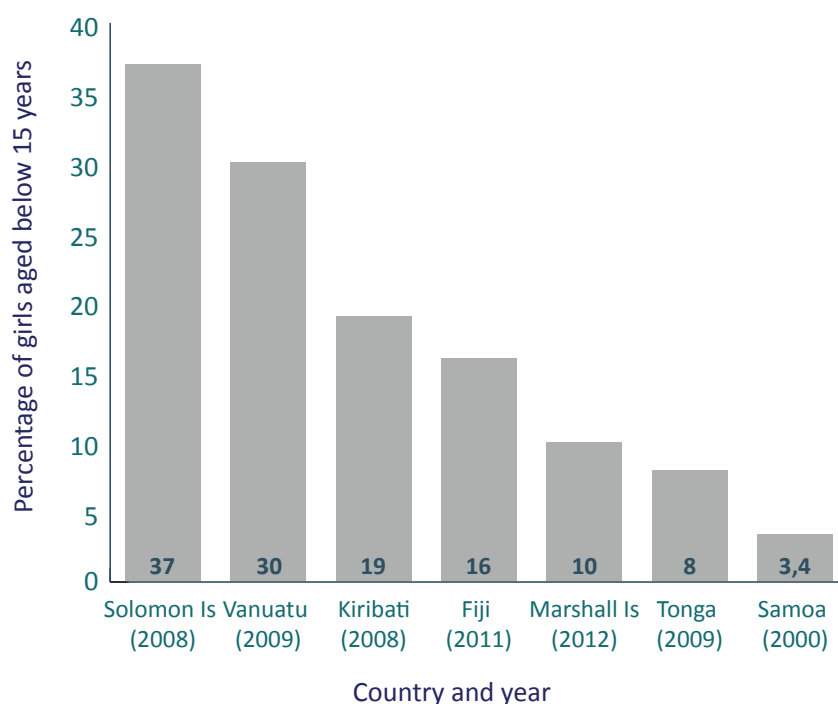


Figure 6: Prevalence of childhood sexual abuse among girls below 15 years of age, selected countries

Source: UNFPA 2013, based on: Kiribati: <http://countryoffice.unfpa.org/pacific/?publications=7461>; Fiji: <http://webmediafast.com/itaukeitrustfund/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/1.pdf>; Samoa: [http://www.who.int/gender/violence/who\\_multicountry\\_study/en/](http://www.who.int/gender/violence/who_multicountry_study/en/); Solomon Islands: <http://countryoffice.unfpa.org/pacific/?publications=7460>; Tonga: <http://countryoffice.unfpa.org/pacific/?publications=749>; Vanuatu: <http://countryoffice.unfpa.org/pacific/?publications=7495>; Marshall Islands (Family Health Study Survey 2012. In prep.).

79 Solomon Islands 2009 Population and Housing Census: Gender Report.

80 Solomon Islands Second Generation Surveillance 2008.



## b. Effects of teenage pregnancy on girls' educational opportunities

Several PICTs highlighted the negative consequences of high rates of adolescent pregnancy on girls' educational attainment. In some, such as the Solomon Islands, pregnancy warrants instant expulsion from educational institutions, while in Nauru, girls are only allowed to continue in education if they are still within the age bracket for compulsory education (up to 18 years). Examples like these create barriers to girls returning to school after giving birth.

**Promising practice:** As part of the country's effort to promote adolescents' education, the Palau Community College has a day care centre on campus to support young mothers pursuing their education.

With lower levels of access to education than boys, girls are less likely to acquire the human capital required to earn income and support themselves and their families, thus increasing their vulnerability to poverty and their dependency on their partners. In the Solomon Islands the 2009 census revealed that teenage mothers were more likely than other adolescent girls to be out of school. Figure 7, below, captures the employment situation of adolescent mothers in the Solomon Islands, pointing out their low level of involvement in formal employment.

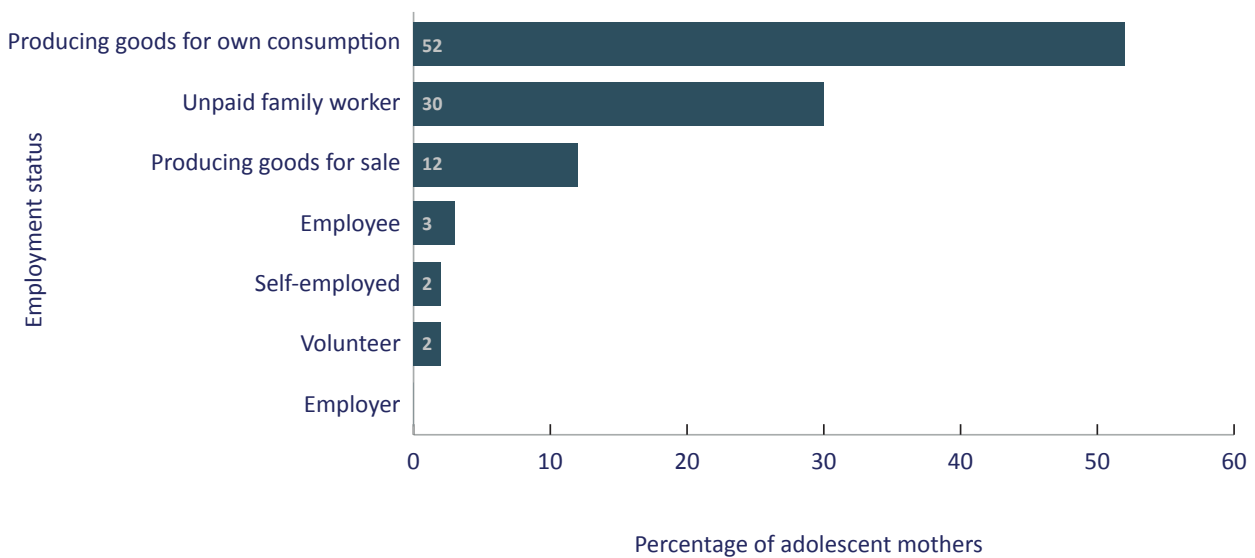


Figure 7: Employment status of adolescent mothers (aged 15-19), Solomon Islands, 2009

Source: Solomon Islands 2009 Population and Housing Census: Gender Report.

### c. Early marriage and sexual exploitation

Marshall Islands and Fiji undertook reforms over the last two decades to equalise the legal marriage age for girls and boys, and for that age to be set at 18 years in line with the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Marshall Islands 2002; Fiji 2009). Marriage at the age of 16 for girls remains lawful in Nauru and Samoa, and marriage before the legal age is possible with parental consent in several PICTs.

Given that such reforms have been implemented relatively recently, an important proportion of today's adult Pacific women were married as children, with potentially far-reaching consequences for their opportunities for education, employment and livelihoods. For example, Figure 8, below, shows the percentage of adult women (20-49) who were married by the age of 18 in PICTs for which data is available.

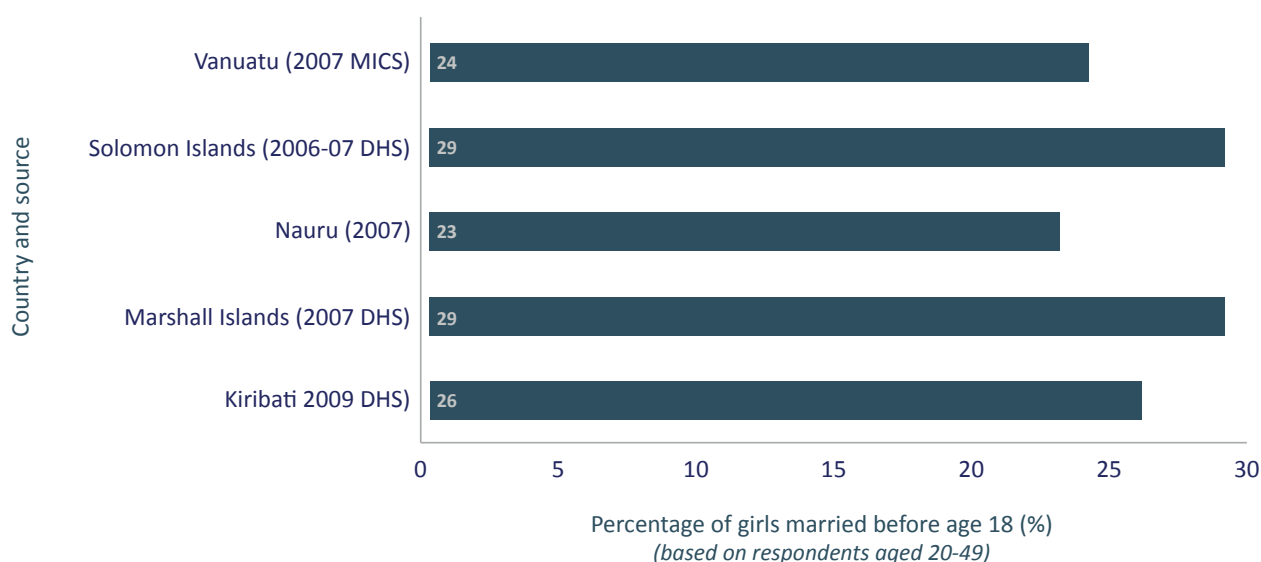


Figure 8: Percentage of girls married by the age of 18 (based on respondents aged 20-49), selected countries

Source: UNICEF Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS); Demographic Health Survey (DHS) data from most recent year, cited in UNICEF 2014. 'Violence against Children in East Asia and the Pacific'.

Although a relatively small proportion of girls were married before the legal age (4.7 per cent of girls and 0.9 per cent of boys aged 15-17) the Solomon Islands reported that in the Western Province, in December 2013, some families are marrying young girls to workers in logging companies.

In an interview with the Radio Australia programme, the chairman of the Child Protection Unit of the Ministry of Health and Medical Services said that many families have been marrying off their young daughters in return for food or money. The sexual exploitation of young girls is also reported to be a problem in Malaita province of the Solomon Islands.

Both quantitative and qualitative information is lacking about the prevalence and forms of sexual and commercial exploitation of children in the Pacific region. In Fiji the ILO's International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour interviewed 1,611 children engaged in various forms of child labour; 42 per cent of them were girls. The research concluded that the number of children involved in child labour was significant, including the worst forms of child labour, such as commercial sexual exploitation. Among the 104 children engaged in commercial sex, 78 per cent were girls and 85 per cent had experienced previous sexual abuse in their family, community or school. The research showed that poverty, exposure to abuse, parental or family neglect, living away from parents for school or dropping out of school, combined with the need for money, remained the key factors pushing children into child labour (International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour 2010).

## 2. Successful legislative and policy change

All Pacific Island countries and territories are state parties to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. In recent decades most PICTs have instituted or reinforced mechanisms that are geared to protecting children from abuses. In 2008 UNICEF conducted a review of four Pacific countries' legislation and policies against a set of 13 indicators. The findings revealed that only about one quarter of Solomon Islands' legal instruments were fully compliant. In Kiribati and Vanuatu the figure was about one fifth and in Fiji about one third, highlighting that more effort is needed to ensure that national legislation upholds the principles of the Convention (UNICEF 2008).

**Promising practice:** In Samoa the Creative Art Group implemented a programme for girl child survivors of sexual violence currently under the care of the Samoa Victim Support Group House of Hope. The programme seeks to empower and heal young women through self-expression and creative art therapy. This programme has provided avenue for survivors to regain a sense of self-worth.

PNG amended its Criminal Code in 2003 to cover sexual crimes and crimes against children. Through this amendment, as well as amendments to the Evidence Act, sexual offences against children are now clearly defined,

and include sexual touching and sexual exploitation, and they carry increased penalties for those in a position of trust, such as parents, teachers and the police. The definition of incest was also expanded to a wider range of relationships, such as the extended family. The Criminal Code now also provides that a person under the age of 16 cannot consent to incestuous sexual relations, and therefore such an act is classified as incestuous rape.

The Children's Division of Solomon Islands' Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs has adopted a national Children's Policy focussing on priority outcomes: child protection, child development, child survival, child participation and improving capacities to implement the policy.

The Lukautim Pikinini (Child) Act was passed by the PNG Parliament in May 2009, replacing the Child Welfare Act of 1961. In August 2010 the PNG Department for Community Development and Religion ran a training programme for government and non-government child protection workers to explain their roles and responsibilities under the new Act. In 2013 further training – provided to focal points in 16 of the 22 provinces – focused on the capacity of provincial community development offices, faith-based organisations and village courts to implement the Lukautim Pikinini Act. 157 community advocates and 346 volunteers were trained.



In Palau programmes are being implemented to promote the participation and retention of women and girls in education, such as a public school policy allowing pregnant students to remain in school. School counsellors work with parents and school health officials to monitor students' health while a pregnant student is enrolled in school. Adult high school programmes provide out-of-school young people aged 18 and over with an opportunity for education.

### 3. Obstacles to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action

#### a. Lack of youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services

Despite efforts to expand the reach of reproductive health services, there is still a need to make relevant, high-quality information and contraceptives more accessible, in order to reduce the number of unwanted pregnancies and to constrain the spread of STIs and HIV/AIDS. This is especially true on the outer islands, where neither contraceptives nor STI testing services are readily available. In most Pacific Island countries, legal grounds for abortion are limited to situations where the life or health of the woman is put at risk by the pregnancy. Only the Cook Islands and Fiji permit abortion in situations of rape or incest.<sup>81</sup> However, those abortion rights may not be open to minors. Anecdotal reports highlight recourse to ‘back-door’ abortions, which pose serious health and safety risks to adolescents.

Sexual education programmes are also under-developed in the region, and sexual and reproductive health issues are rarely discussed between adults and adolescents.

#### b. Limited capacity of young women’s groups

There is little evidence that women’s institutions have the capacity to address the needs of girls and adolescents and to advocate effectively on their behalf. Several PICTs reported that young women’s groups were suffering from a lack of capacity, limited geographical coverage and a lack of funding. In the Solomon Islands, the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA), based in Honiara, runs programmes for young women, but the initiative is dependent on the availability of funding. An informal young women’s group, Girls for Change (G4C), was formed in Honiara, to educate young women about different aspects of life, in particular their sexuality. Due to a lack of capacity, the organisation has ceased its activities. Nauru mentioned the Nauru Young Women’s National Council (NYWNC), which caters for the needs and interest of young women, with a plan of action focusing on health and reproductive rights, women’s representation in decision-making and politics, and upgrading skills for unemployed women, with a special focus on single mothers and women’s human rights. Other women’s civil society organisations, such as the Fiji Women’s Rights Movement, have developed specific programmes for young women’s empowerment through art and sports.

81 As at 2011. Source: UN World Abortion Policies Wall Chart, 2013, accessed on 5 February 2015 at: [http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/policy/WorldAbortionPolicies2013/WorldAbortionPolicies2013\\_WallChart.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/policy/WorldAbortionPolicies2013/WorldAbortionPolicies2013_WallChart.pdf)

### c. Stigma associated with reporting violence

Research from UNICEF carried out in the Pacific Islands region reveals that, regardless of the type of violence, children are experiencing more violence than is reported. One of the issues associated with under-reporting is low levels of awareness about what constitutes child abuse. The UNICEF research highlighted that in Solomon Islands, although the majority of child respondents, aged 16-17 years, claimed to understand appropriate and inappropriate touching, a significant proportion of children were unsure about when they should report such touching. Both children and adults were revealed as perpetrators of inappropriate touching. In Vanuatu 60 per cent of perpetrators were children, and 40 per cent were adults. In Fiji 74 per cent of incidents were perpetrated by other children rather than by adults (UNICEF 2009).

Another element accounting for under-reporting is general attitudes of tolerance and minimisation of domestic violence that are still evident in many PICTs. In Fiji and the Cook Islands, respectively 38 and 19 per cent of adolescent girls (aged 15 to 19) agreed that 'a man should show he is the boss.'<sup>82</sup>

Given the high prevalence of gender-based violence in PICTs, and intimate partner violence in particular, children often witness violence in the home. Prevalence estimates for boys and girls are very similar, with a range of 12 to 32 per cent of children across PICTs in the Asia-Pacific region reporting to have witnessed parental domestic violence at some point in their childhood (UNICEF 2014).

## 4. Recommendations

The 12th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women<sup>83</sup>:

- Called for PICTs to put in place inclusive policies to accommodate pregnant young women and mothers to complete their education. (Paragraph 38)
- Supported access to inclusive, youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services, education and information, including access to safe spaces for women, young women, and girls, including those with disabilities, and supported the teaching of comprehensive sexuality education with appropriate content starting in primary school. (Paragraph 52)

<sup>82</sup> Fiji Family Health and Safety Study 2011 <http://webmediafast.com/itaukeitrustfund/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/1.pdf> ;  
Cook Islands Family Health Safety Survey (FHSS) Report 2014 Te Ata o te Ngakau.

<sup>83</sup> SPC 2013. Outcomes and recommendations from the 12th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women, Rarotonga.



## Conclusions

Progress has undeniably been made towards recognising and protecting women's human rights and achieving gender equality in Pacific Island countries and territories. Most PICTs have adopted laws to protect women and children against domestic violence; there is a better understanding of the need to integrate a gender perspective across all sectors of development and through new initiatives promoting women's political leadership. Overall, women's health and women's access to education are improving, and the multi-faceted contribution of women to the economy has begun to be recognised. However, much progress remains to be made before Pacific Island women are able to say that their human rights are protected, that they benefit equally from development outcomes, and that they can fulfil their legitimate aspirations.

Indeed, substantial challenges remain across the full spectrum of the goals of the Beijing Platform for Action, as has been highlighted throughout this report. The prevalence of violence against women remains high. Women still face important obstacles in accessing productive resources (land, credit, equipment, vehicles, etc.) and employment. Women's representation in decision-making bodies, whether in the political sphere or in the private sector, remains very low. Despite their particular vulnerability to climate change impacts, natural disasters and poor food security, a gender perspective is still not routinely integrated across government, regional organisations or development partner programmes.

Holistic and cross-sectoral processes and approaches that mirror the realities of women's lives and experiences are needed, in all areas of society. Efforts and resources dedicated to gender mainstreaming need to be significantly expanded to ensure that the necessary underlying institutions and mechanisms are in place to drive gender equality reforms. Support for national women's machineries is essential, as they strive to create spaces for action on gender commitments. Mobilising resources is also critical for the development of whole-of-government systems for gender mainstreaming. Commitment is needed to developing appropriate systems for ensuring that regional development, climate change adaptation and cooperation frameworks thoroughly integrate gender perspectives.

The 20th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action, and the Review of progress in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action in Pacific countries and territories, constitute important opportunities to review and reflect on the approaches, successes, obstacles and lessons of recent years, and to develop new, innovative and transformative approaches to accelerate change to benefit not only Pacific women but Pacific nations and societies, and their future generations.



As the world's nations are engaged in negotiations for defining 'the future we want', through a new development agenda that will replace the Millennium Development goals in 2015, it is worth recalling some recommendations made at the 12th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women,<sup>84</sup> which:

- Called on all stakeholders – governments, development partners, civil society and regional agencies – to improve efforts towards increased coordination and harmonisation, including reporting of gender and development outcomes. (Paragraph 79)
- Called for PICTs' leaders, CROP agencies and development partners to actively promote gender equality as a stand-alone goal in the post-2015 agenda, as well as for gender to be mainstreamed across all areas. (Paragraph 81)
- Supported the strengthening of national women's machineries and civil society to ensure the voices and experiences of women, young women, and women with disabilities in the Pacific are reflected in regional and global processes. (Paragraph 82)

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<sup>84</sup> SPC 2013. Outcomes and recommendations from the 12th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women, Rarotonga.

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