

Men standing up to end violence against women

Tonga Ending Violence Against Women

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Project Name: Program Against Violence Against Women

Project Partner: Women and Children Crisis Centre, Tonga

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The Women and Children Crisis Centre in Tonga is implementing a second phase of a Pacific-centred male advocacy training program. As a result of the training, more men are standing up to end violence against women and girls —even when it makes them feel uncomfortable.

Mr Melkie Anton is one of a group of men from across the Pacific who worked closely with the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre and the Pacific Women's Network Against Violence Against Women to design this training. Over five years, the group developed the Pacific owned and led initiative. Now a lead trainer, Mr Anton explains that:

'being a male advocate on ending all forms of violence against women and girls, gender equality and women's human rights is not an easy role. In fact, you have to be prepared to feel uncomfortable, because we will be taking a deep look at our male privileges, our power and how we use that to control women'.



Participants at the Male Advocacy Training in Nuku'alofa, Tonga. Photo Credit: Women and Children Crisis Centre, Tonga.

The training involves deep discussions about issues including culture and religion, challenging participants to re-look at attitudes and behaviours that consider women to have lower status than men. It also includes practical sessions on how to respond to the justifications given against the achievement of gender equality, women's human rights and the fight to end all forms of violence against women and girls.

The sessions get participants thinking, with one man querying:

'Why do we test women's virginity ('api') before marriage and we don't care about the man's sexual history? He could have several sexual relationships and children before marriage but no one cares about that. All we care about is testing the woman's virginity, to the point that where a man knows that his wife was not a virgin when they married, he will use that

against her until she dies and is buried. He will remind her of that every time they have a dispute. Our expectations and testing of a woman's virginity and not having any expectations on the man is unfair on the woman—is this aspect of culture still required?'

With support from Pacific Women, the second cohort of Pacific Island men commenced the three stage Male Advocacy training in Nuku'alofa in May 2017. The 35 men will be supported by male advocates, including six Tongans, who were part of the inaugural training.

*This Story of Change was originally published in the [Pacific Women Annual Progress Report 2016 – 2017](#). All values are consistent with that reporting period. For the most up-to-date value of activities, visit our [interactive map](#).