

A new service opens for survivors of violence

Kiribati Ending Violence Against Women

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Project name: Support the implementation of the Kiribati Women and Children’s Support Centre’s Strategic Plan

Project partner: Kiribati Family Health Association

Total funding: \$321,900

Funding timeframe: 2014–2018

The Kiribati Women and Children Support Centre opened in Tarawa in January 2018. It is the first formal counselling and advocacy service for women in the country, filling a gap for families experiencing violence.



Left to right: Ramaua Tebau and Teretia Tokam of the Kiribati Women and Children Support Centre. Photo credit: Pacific Women Support Unit.

Teretia Tokam, the Centre Coordinator, says Kiribati has one of the Pacific region's highest rates of domestic violence. The Kiribati Family Health and Support Survey from 2010 found that 68 per cent of ever-partnered women aged between 15 and 49 had been subjected to physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime and that childhood sexual abuse stood at 19 per cent.

'The goal is to better support women and children who are affected by violence,' said Ms Tokam. 'We want to ensure the Centre provides quality services while ensuring women and children feel safe and confident to come to us and seek support.'

The Centre provides free, confidential counselling for women and children, access to legal information and case management. It also has a telephone help line and works to raise community awareness of domestic violence. Pacific Women is supporting the development of a three-year strategic plan, including an implementation plan and budget, to guide the Centre's activities.

As the only service provider of its kind in Kiribati, the Centre plays a vital role in supporting the government to implement the Te Rau N Te Mwenga (Family Peace) Act 2014 that contains actions to prevent and respond to domestic violence, gives direction on how survivors can be supported and includes measures to hold offenders accountable. It also helps the government uphold its commitments under the Eliminating Sexual and Gender-Based Violence National Action Plan 2011–2021 and international obligations such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

The Centre is operated by the Kiribati Family Health Association, a local non-government organisation that aims to develop a network of support for women and children survivors of violence. Pacific Women partners UN Women and the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre have also provided technical assistance and training to the Association.

At the opening of the Centre, Ms Tokam acknowledged the need for stakeholders to work together: 'Today's launch has only been made possible because of strong collaborations across many government, non-government, civil society, development and other partners, all committed to reducing gender-based violence and child abuse cases at the national, regional and global levels,' she said.