



MEDIA RELEASE

A need for *Girls Rise Up!* in rural provinces

Tuesday 23 March 2021 (Honiara, Solomon Islands): The *Girls Rise Up!* project in Honiara would this year like to reach further out to the provinces to support more adolescent girls in rural Solomon Islands where they face particular risks.

Girls Rise Up! aims to develop the confidence, skills and knowledge of over 200 at-risk girls to help them establish supportive peer networks and the opportunity to safely advocate for issues that affect them. The project is led by the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) in partnership with CARE International and supported by the Australian Government through the Pacific Girl program, managed by Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development (*Pacific Women*).

Project Manager for YWCA Kristina Saueha, said there is a need for expansion of the project to the provinces to support more girls due to the safeguarding risks they face related to logging and mining operations. Expanding to the provinces was the whole idea behind this project as YWCA has one centre in Munda and two partners in Guadalcanal, namely Aola and Visale.

Kristina said: "stopping abuse of adolescent girls should be everyone's business!"

"I think the whole perception is around safeguarding adolescent girls. It's a concern for YWCA that most abuse cases have not been reported from provinces, especially those in remote areas."

"Some forms of abuse have become 'normalised', so the safeguarding program by YWCA is also a form of advocacy and awareness for government and communities."

She added that participants of the *Girls Rise Up!* project are community women trained to be mentors and the project is targeting girls who are most vulnerable to ensure they have confidence, are aware of and can access services, and use the mentoring services leading them to make good choices. The most important component to the project is the inclusion of girls with disabilities and safeguarding for adolescent girls – ensuring "do no harm" in all activities for safety and empowerment of young girls.

Kristina acknowledged partners and stakeholders who render support to YWCA and CARE for recognising the importance of this project and the positive changes it brings to adolescent girls in Honiara. Importantly, more government and non-government organisation are becoming stakeholders and partners such as Solomon Islands Planned Parenthood Association (SIPPA) and Family Support Centre (FSC), Guadalcanal Provincial Council of Women (GPCW), People With Disabilities- Solomon Islands (PWDSI) and others.

Girls Rise Up! is an ongoing project, with Kristina "looking forward to seeing it reaching out to YWCA partners outside of Honiara and beyond when possible."

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Photo caption: Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) Project Manager, Kristina Saueha, for *Girls Rise Up!* promotes the project to adolescent girls in Solomon Islands, joined by participant Melvina Vou. *Girls Rise Up!* is led by YWCA in partnership with CARE International, supported by Australia through the Pacific Girl program, managed by *Pacific Women*. **Credit: Photo supplied by YWCASI**



Photo caption: Kristina Saueha is the Project Manager for the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCASI) that runs the *Girls Rise Up!* project supporting over 200 at-risk girls in Honiara and surrounds. *Girls Rise Up!* is led by YWCA in partnership with CARE International, supported by the Australian Government through the Pacific Girl program, managed by *Pacific Women*. Credit: Photo supplied by YWCA

Background:

Girls Rise Up! is a Pacific Girl project led by the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) of Solomon Islands in partnership with CARE International. It is supported by Australia through the Pacific Girl program, managed by Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development (Pacific Women). *Girls Rise Up!* aims to develop the confidence, skills and knowledge of 200 at-risk girls and establish supportive peer networks in Solomon Islands. Providing girls with the opportunity to safely advocate on issues that affect them, while engaging service providers to support the needs and priorities of the girls.

CARE is an international aid organisation that works around the globe to save lives and end poverty. CARE seeks a world of hope, inclusion and social justice, where poverty has been overcome and all people live in dignity and security. CARE puts women and girls in the centre because poverty cannot be overcome until all people have equal rights and opportunities.

Pacific Girl is a multi-country program to support adolescent girls in Pacific Island countries achieve their full potential. Pacific Girl partners are working to equip adolescent girls to make informed decisions, while engaging with the boys, parents, carers and communities in their lives to build more supportive environments. Managed by Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development (Pacific Women), the \$4.5 million Pacific Girl program funds projects, including *Girls Rise Up!*, with selected civil society organisations in Pacific Island countries.

Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development (***Pacific Women***) connects more than 170 gender equality initiatives supported by Australia and implemented by over 160 partners across 14 Pacific Island countries. Providing technical, knowledge sharing and convening support to the portfolio of partners is the Pacific Women's Support Unit.