

# Learning Exchanges and Preparatory Electoral Contestant Workshops for Women Leaders

Regional Vanuatu Leadership And Decision-Making

November 25, 2016

Project name: Support for Women in Shared Decision Making (WISDM) work on Temporary Special Measures (TSM) at Municipal and Provincial Level

Outcome area: Leadership and decision making

Project partner: Pacific Leadership Program (PLP)

Total funding: \$250,000\*

Funding timeframe: 2014–2017

The implementation of TSM legislation for women to be elected into councils at municipal level in Vanuatu ensures a minimum 30 percent representation of women. Activities supported by Pacific Women encourage learning exchanges at municipal level as well as building the capacity of potential women leaders to stand for provincial elections.

The TSM legislation in Vanuatu is designed to achieve a quota of 30-34 percent of women municipal councillors for a period of 16 years (four election cycles). The introduction of the legislation at municipal level in 2013 led to the election of nine women councillors in the 2014 Port Vila and 2015 Luganville Municipal Council elections.

Party officials in Luganville saw the potential and opportunity in using TSM to gain seats for their respective parties in the Municipal Councils. Compared to Port Vila, where women self-nominated to stand for election, women in Luganville were identified by political parties as potential candidates through their husbands or male relatives. Pacific Women and PLP partnered with the WISDM Taskforce, led by Vanuatu's Department of Women's Affairs, to facilitate a learning exchange program between elected women members of two municipal councils, and provide training for potential provincial council members.

Like all elected officials, the newly elected women councillors were briefed on the functions of the Council and their roles as duty bearers.

The peer-to-peer learning exchange program for municipal women councillors provided a space to share their challenges and make recommendations on the type of support needed for women candidates before, during and after elections. Recommendations included involving male participants in future workshops to generate support for TSMs at provincial and national level, as well as to ensure that all candidates understand electoral procedures and prioritise issues that affect their communities.

It was also a space where negotiations were made across party lines, and resulted in the nomination (and eventual election) of the first woman Deputy Mayor in the Luganville Council. The Port Vila women councillors had been working together longer (since 2014), had more political experience and were more comfortable in working across party lines to progress issues of common concern.

A Port Vila woman Councillor stated: ‘Yes we are working together, so if one of us finds an opportunity [we] bring it to the council then all of us are working on it...although we represent different political parties.’

The successful implementation of TSMs at the municipal level has encouraged the Government to formally consider TSMs at provincial level. The WISDM Taskforce has embarked on a series of electoral candidate workshops in the provinces to prepare women and men candidates of various political parties for provincial elections. These workshops have incorporated lessons learned from the experiences of the women councillors, to work across party lines and ensure their readiness to stand for elections.



Ms Nelly Willy, PLP Country Representative (far right) in discussion with Luganville Municipal Councillors outside the Council Chambers. Photo: PLP.

*This Story of Change was originally published in the [Pacific Women Annual Progress Report 2015-2016](#). All values are consisted with that reporting period. For the most up-to-date value of activities, visit our [interactive map](#).*

\*This activity is part of a larger program.