

Helping duty bearers to uphold their responsibilities

[Fiji](#) [Papua New Guinea](#) [Regional](#) [Solomon Islands](#) [Ending Violence Against Women](#)

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‘After 24 years working in remote islands, this has changed me a lot in how I’ll now support survivors of domestic violence,’ said Makelesi Vuvulo, who is a Community Health Nurse.

‘Before, we’d focus on reconciling couples but now we know the priority is the survivor, their care and recovery,’ Ms Vuvulo said during the 2019 national rollout and implementation of Fiji’s Service Delivery Protocol for Responding to Cases of Gender-Based Violence. This is part of a Pacific initiative led by governments across five countries – Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Tonga – in partnership with UN Women through the [Pacific Partnership](#).^[1] It supports frontline responders to improve the coordination and quality of services across multiple sectors, from health to police and justice.

Ms Vuvulo joins other health workers, police officers, court officials, crisis centre counsellors and other duty bearers across Pacific Island countries to better serve survivors of violence.

What is a duty bearer?

When a woman or girl experiences gender-based violence, she needs support from a range of services: the police, the legal system, social services and health. The best results for survivors of violence occur when the duty bearers in these organisations know about gender-based violence, understand their roles and coordinate with other services.

Duty bearers include, among others:

- Police officers
- Magistrates and judges
- Doctors and nurses
- Gender-based violence counsellors
- Welfare officers.



Police officers in Solomon Islands participate in an access to justice project training. Photo credit: The Pacific Community (SPC) Regional Rights Resource Team (RRRT).

In Solomon Islands, Authorised Justices appointed under the Family Protection Act 2014 have increased the knowledge and skills they need to properly execute their duties, including issuing interim protection orders. The first order was issued in October 2018 as a direct result of training from the Pacific Community's (SPC) Regional Rights Resource Team's (RRRT) Access to Justice project.

Community theatre has also been helping Authorised Justices deepen their understanding of their role and responsibilities. During training, most Authorised Justices correctly stated that domestic violence is not justifiable in any situation and not acceptable under the law. However, some still thought there were situations where domestic violence could be justified, such as when men as head of the family discipline women. A local theatre company helps Authorised Justices – who have a duty to protect survivors of violence – to address these entrenched perceptions through role plays.

Journalists also play a role in how we talk about violence against women and girls. In Papua New Guinea, there were notable improvements in police and court reporting after journalists participated in SASA! training implemented by Population Services International. Media monitoring for the use of survivor-centred language identified fewer breaches in January–June 2019 (11) than in the previous six months (26).

These duty bearers are some of the many being supported by Pacific Women partners to better serve women and children. Across countries, partners are addressing social norms that may act as a barrier to duty bearers upholding their responsibilities. They are finding that long-term, consistent support to leadership and resourcing is required to bring about sustained changes in the way duty bearers undertake their roles. This work is ensuring that providing survivor-centred services is a strategic priority for all duty bearers in the Pacific.

This story has been developed for the Pacific Women Annual Progress Report 2019. It features the work of several Pacific Women-funded initiatives and partners. For more information about Pacific Women's support for initiatives across the region, refer to the interactive map: <https://pacificwomen.org/map/>