

Review of counselling services for survivors of violence in the Pacific

Regional Ending Violence Against Women

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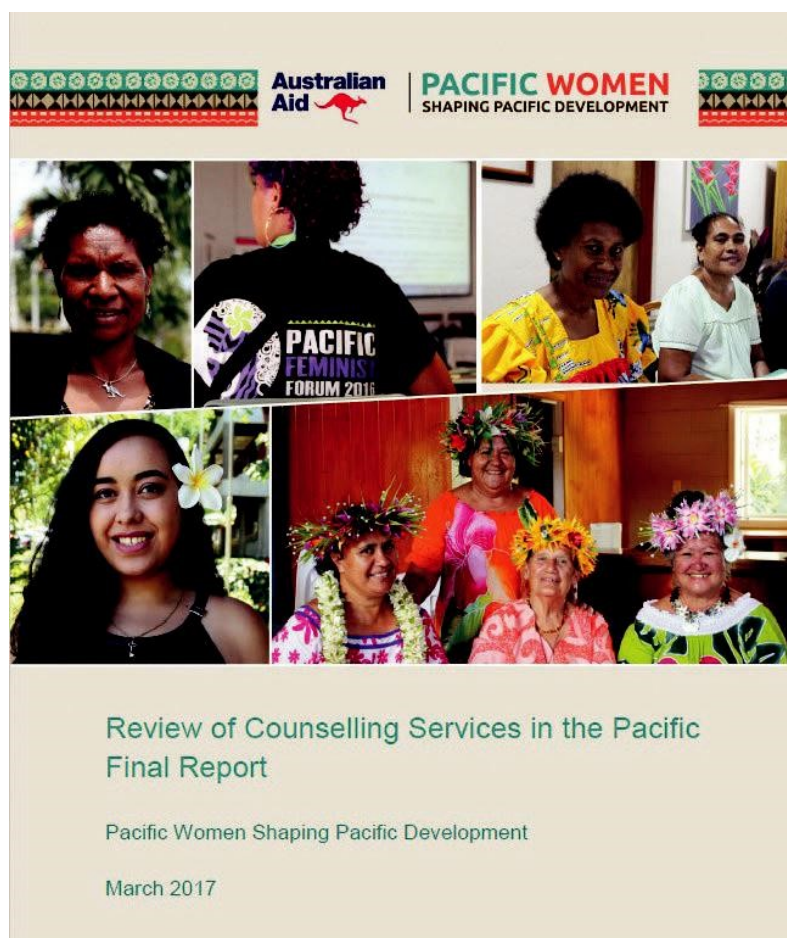
Project Name: Review of Counselling Services in the Pacific

Project Partner: Consultants

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Quality counselling is a key service in supporting survivors of violence against women. To better understand the status of counselling in the region, Pacific Women conducted a review of counselling services in 14 countries. Ten of the 14 countries mandate the provision of counselling in national legislation against sexual and/or family violence.



The review assessed the quality, reach and accessibility of counselling services for survivors of violence.

Through questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussions and country visits, the review identified 85 counselling service providers. Niue reported no counselling services for survivors of violence and 35 per cent of all available services were based in Papua New Guinea or Fiji.

The review found that the most successful organisational models combine counselling services with community outreach, active case management and other integrated services. These include economic, shelter and legal support.

There is a need for improving the qualifications of counsellors, with only 40 per cent of organisations having counsellors with a relevant diploma or degree. Counselling practitioners in 37 per cent of the responding organisations reported having had only one to two weeks' training or practical experience.

Organisations across all 14 countries reported gaps in counselling services, particularly in remote areas and outer islands. To cover these gaps, counselling service providers use phone and mobile counselling services or community-based first responder initiatives. Other service gaps include for persons with disabilities, survivors with complex trauma or multiple disorders as a result of abuse, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex (LGBTQI) people and sex worker communities.

Factors contributing to successful counselling outcomes include: strong and innovative leadership, good case management, community first responder networks, understanding the causes of gender-based violence, engagement of community leaders, a rights-based approach, choice of service providers, culturally appropriate services and secure medium to long-term funding.

Barriers to success include: very limited funding from national governments, lack of national-level guidelines and professional standards, inconsistent coordination between agencies, lack of shelter options for survivors, using non-validated counselling principles, such as encouraging survivors to 'forgive and forget', over-reaching beyond existing counselling skills, lack of regular supervision and evaluation, expectation by survivors for direct intervention and limited behaviour change programs for perpetrators.

The review made recommendations on how future programming could use advocacy, funding, education and up-scaling of successful models to improve counselling services. These recommendations will inform and guide Pacific Women's future work.

You can find the review here: <https://pacificwomen.org/research/review-of-counselling-services-in-the-pacific/>

*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](#).