

Sharing Experiences from 17 Years as a Pacific Woman MP

Niue Regional Leadership And Decision-Making

November 25, 2016

Project name: Pacific Women's Parliamentary Partnerships (PWPP) project

Outcome areas: Leadership and decision making

Project partner: International and Community Relations Office, Australian Department of the House of Representatives

Total funding: \$2,850,037*

Funding timeframe: 2013–2018

The Hon Va'aiga Tukuitonga has been a Member of Parliament in Niue for 17 years and attended her third PWPP project annual forum in Apia in 2016.

Pacific Women supports the PWPP project, which seeks to improve understanding of the factors that constrain women's political participation, and to build the capacity of women MPs in the Pacific, the institutions in which they work and the staff who support them. Hon Tukuitonga finds the annual gatherings beneficial as it's a good opportunity for countries to share what they are doing to advance gender equality.

As one of the region's longest serving woman parliamentarians, she reflected: 'It's a really challenging job and one that women should come out, take a step forward and do it. Not be scared, be strong and be humble. Be confident that they can make a difference.'

Hon Tukuitonga also believes it is important to keep track of the numbers of women parliamentarians and celebrate the successes.

'In my country since we got self-Government, ten women have got into the House that's for the last 40 years. And I think that's a big number for a small country.' Niue has a 20 member parliament and currently two (10 percent) of its parliamentarians are women. This is greater than the average representation of women in parliament across the Pacific, which sits at 6.7 percent (excluding Australia and New Zealand).

This year delegates at the forum focused on women's economic empowerment in the Pacific. The 60 delegates, including eight male

parliamentarians, from 21 different parliaments discussed the role of legislators in supporting women's economic empowerment and the positive flow on effects for families, communities and nations when women are able to participate fully in the economy.

'My hope for Niuean women is to work harder and prove that they can do things like men. But our women are trying to balance home life, family life and time with community and they are doing well. Since 2006, thirty-three women have applied for licenses to have businesses. They are informal ones but I think that's the best for my country because it's a small place,' Hon Tukuitonga stated.



Hon Va'aiga Tukuitonga, Member of Parliament in Niue, is one of the strongest advocates of gender equality in the country and Pacific. Photo: Shazia Usman/Pacific Women Support Unit.

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.