

# Stronger counselling services in Tuvalu

Tuvalu [Ending Violence Against Women](#)

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Project name: Psychosocial Counsellor Adviser

Project partner: Department of Community Affairs, Ministry of Home Affairs and Rural Development

Total funding: \$420,600

Funding timeframe: 2018–2019

The Tuvalu Family Protection and Domestic Violence Act 2014 includes a provision for certified counsellors to provide services to survivors of violence. As Tuvalu did not have any certified or trained counsellors, Pacific Women and the World Bank are co-funding training to establish a pool of counsellors in Tuvalu who are equipped to provide counselling services to victims of violence.

Two trainers from the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre facilitated two weeks' training on principles of counselling, gender equality and violence against women and girls in November 2017. Participants included government and non-government organisation staff working on gender-based violence issues, police, religious leaders, community workers, teachers and Kaupule members.\*\*



Participants at the counselling training. Photo credit: Pacific Women Support Unit.

‘Because of this training I have learned a lot about gender, domestic violence and the importance of counselling,’ said Mesitta Faasiu, Social Development Officer from the island of Nanumea. ‘I have also learned about how to support those who face violence.’

From this pool of gender-sensitised counsellors, the training facilitators and staff from the Gender Affairs Department selected 20 participants for the next level of training. These counsellors have now completed three of 18 accredited modules of the Australia-Pacific Technical Coalition Diploma of Counselling.

These training initiatives respond to findings in the 2017 Pacific Women review of counselling services in Pacific Island countries. The review identified a need to improve the qualifications of counsellors across the region, with only 40 per cent of organisations that provide counselling services employing counsellors with a relevant diploma or degree.

To further improve counselling services in Tuvalu, Pacific Women is funding a dedicated Psychosocial Counsellor Adviser in the Community Affairs Department of the Ministry of Home Affairs for 18 months. The adviser is working to improve services by supporting the pool of local counsellors and creating policies, guidelines and an overall framework in which counsellors can operate. The work prioritises counselling services for women, children and people with disabilities in Tuvalu who have experienced violence.

\*\*The Kaupule is the executive arm of the traditional assembly of elders on each of Tuvalu’s islands.