



JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

YWCA's *Girls Rise Up!* is breaking the silence and giving a voice to young girls in Honiara

Wednesday 10 February 2021 (Honiara, Solomon Islands): Clera Tegu is a 17 year-old girl from Makira Ulawa Province who says the *Girls Rise Up!* project "has changed my life."

Clera is one of over 200 young girls involved in the *Girls Rise Up!* project.

Girls Rise Up! is led by the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) in partnership with CARE International and supported by Australia through the Pacific Girl program, managed by Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development (*Pacific Women*).

It aims to develop the confidence, skills and knowledge of at-risk girls while helping them establish supportive peer networks and the opportunity to safely advocate for issues that affect them.

Clera, who lives with her elder brother in Honiara, is a person who is deaf and now has a voice through sign language to advocate for other girls with disabilities, as a result of *Girls Rise Up!*

Her focus is on her abilities, especially since she attended a workshop for people with disabilities in 2018 where she met Stella Wai'oha, *Girls Rise Up!* mentor and Project Officer for People With Disabilities Solomon Islands (PWDSI). PWDSI is a *Girls Rise Up!* Partnership Stakeholder.

"There are many programs with *Girls Rise Up!* but I chose life skills. I attended *Girls Rise Up!* program in 2019 to 2020," said Clera, relaying her story through an interpreter on how she was introduced to the program that has made such a significant and positive impact on her life.

"I heard [about] the program from my mentor, Stella. Stella asked me to join *Girls Rise Up!* training and life skills workshops."

Clera was also supported by Diana Ma'ahoro, her training interpreter, who is a Project Assistant Officer with YWCA.

She learned a lot through the life skills program such as how to make paper beads, dye lavalava plus make jewellery including the earrings, necklace and bangles she wears each day.

"Marketing my products, I earned money that helped me to buy food, church offering and clothes," Clera said.

In sign language, Clera said she is very patient and humble. "My family communicates with me using verbal and I can read their lips," she said through her interpreter.

"I don't learn any skills until I joined the *Girls Rise Up!* program and, as a deaf person, life skills has helped me. Attending trainings, I know that my actions speak louder."

"I know that standing here as a deaf person to show you that having many skills has changed my life and I can contribute to my family's income.

"My deaf motto: my hands are my mouth, my eyes are my ears."

Clera has been empowered with self-confidence and life skills by attending *Girls Rise Up!* and has also been recommended by her mentors to attend the Red Cross Special Disability Center in Honiara.

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Photo attached:



Photo Caption: Clera Tegu is now a confident young girl after joining the *Girls Rise Up!* program.

Credit: Photo supplied by YWCA

Background:

Girls Rise Up! is a Pacific Girl project led by the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) of Solomon Islands in partnership with CARE International. It is supported by Australia through the Pacific Girl program, managed by Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development (Pacific Women). *Girls Rise Up!* aims to develop the confidence, skills and knowledge of 200 at-risk girls and establish supportive peer networks in Solomon Islands. Providing girls with the opportunity to safely advocate on issues that affect them, while engaging service providers to support the needs and priorities of the girls.

CARE International is an international aid organisation that works around the globe to save lives and end poverty. CARE seeks a world of hope, inclusion and social justice, where poverty has been overcome and all people live in dignity and security. CARE puts women and girls in the centre because poverty cannot be overcome until all people have equal rights and opportunities.

Pacific Girl is a multi-country program to support adolescent girls in Pacific Island countries achieve their full potential. Pacific Girl partners are working to equip adolescent girls to make informed decisions, while engaging with the boys, parents, carers and communities in their lives to build more supportive environments. The \$4.5 million Pacific Girl program funds projects, including *Girls Rise Up!*, with selected civil society organisations in Pacific Island countries. Pacific Girl is managed by Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development (Pacific Women),

Pacific Women connects more than 170 gender equality initiatives supported by Australia and implemented by over 160 partners across 14 Pacific Island countries. Providing technical, knowledge sharing and convening support to the portfolio of partners is the Pacific Women's Support Unit.