

# Optimising Technical Assistance Through Partnership

Federated States Of Micronesia Regional Enhancing Agency

November 25, 2016

Project name: Progressing Gender Equality in the Pacific (PGEP) program

Outcome area: Enhancing Agency

Project partner: Pacific Community (SPC)

Total funding: \$373,140

Funding timeframe: 2015–2018

Pacific Women and SPC are trialling an innovative technical assistance model through the joint engagement of a gender equality adviser. The adviser, employed by SPC, supports both Pacific Women and SPC initiatives in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Palau and the Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI). After only six months, the adviser is already reporting benefits of this collaborative arrangement.

Based in Pohnpei, Ms Maire Dwyer supports gender mainstreaming in government policies and programs through the SPC's Pacific Women-funded PGEP program, as well as working with the Australian Embassy to establish and monitor Pacific Women country plans.

'As a matter of course, the SPC's PGEP program works collaboratively with other Pacific Women-funded programs,' Ms Dwyer said. 'Having a single person play this dual role strengthens synergies between the two programs and makes sense given the small populations in the three countries. The arrangement saves on travel time, and costs as elements of both programs can progress concurrently on a single mission.'

The linkages between the gender equality work of governments in the North Pacific with the projects supported through the Pacific Women country plans are often very direct, for example the Palau country plan provides for a gender analyst to work in Government to boost its efforts on gender mainstreaming. The RMI country plan is supporting Women United Together Marshall Islands, a women's NGO, to develop the country's first support service for women and girls experiencing violence. The women's economic empowerment projects in development under the Pacific Women country plans in both FSM and Palau, could help extend the reach of the gender

officers in the respective governments by strengthening their relationships with the private sector.

Recently, Ms Dwyer visited the three other states of FSM (Chuuk, Yap and Kosrae) with Ms Norleen Oliver, the Gender Development Officer for the FSM Government. On these trips, they consulted on the proposed FSM gender policy.

‘We met with the governors, and they all stressed the importance of awareness raising as part of the efforts to progress towards gender equality. People consulted generally recognised the need for initiatives such the introduction of domestic violence legislation only Kosrae has this at the moment. People understood that women were held back by conventions and norms and they understood that their state would progress more if women could progress. People also made the connection to social inclusion. For example, in Yap, the group consulted identified that the caste system was holding them back,’ Ms Dwyer said.

The consultations were part of the PGEP program, but the information gathered in them will also inform the priority activities of the Pacific Women country plan for FSM. Whilst RMI had endorsed its country plan prior to 2015, formal endorsement of the country plans for both FSM and Palau will be sought.

Ms Dwyer is part of the SPC’s Social Development Program, which has an internal mandate to strengthen gender mainstreaming within SPC, thereby providing a further point of leverage for progressing towards gender equality within this key regional organisation.

‘In the end, success in supporting the countries in the North Pacific to uplift the status of women and ensuring that women benefit from programmes and services is about supporting the people in country to do this,’ observed Ms Dwyer. ‘The message we want to get across is that gender is everybody’s business and this means tackling a whole range of conscious and unconscious biases and barriers that limit women’s opportunities. That said, Pacific Women’s funding is helping countries to kick start critical initiatives.’

*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](#).*