

Strengthening women's civil society leadership

Tonga Leadership And Decision-Making

November 22, 2017

Two key Tongan civil society leaders and members of the Women in Leadership Coalition are Ms Ofa Guttenbeil-Likiliki, Director of the Women and Children Crisis Centre and Ms Betty Blake, President of Ma'a Fafine mo e Famili (translated as For Women and Family). Recognising the pivotal role that leadership plays in development, Pacific Women supported Ms Guttenbeil-Likiliki and Ms Blake to participate in the adaptive leadership training program, part of the Pacific Regional Leadership Initiative.



Ms Ofa-ki-Levuka Guttenbeil-Likiliki (centre) participating in group discussions at the Pacific Regional Leadership Initiative (PRLI). Ms Guttenbeil-Likiliki and four other members of the Women in Leadership Coalition were selected to attend the year-long program. The PRLI was developed by the Australian Government funded Pacific Leadership Program in collaboration with the Cambridge Leadership Associates. Photo: Pacific Leadership Program.

The Pacific Regional Leadership Initiative was developed by the Pacific Leadership Program using the adaptive leadership framework. Adaptive leadership teaches the practice of mobilising people to tackle tough challenges and thrive. The initiative consists of a formal 12-month leadership development program, strategic coaching in addressing practical challenges in everyday work and a train-the-trainer component for selected participants. Through these activities, Pacific leaders are also supported to progress their own initiatives, build a support base, work more strategically and collaboratively and learn to overcome barriers to change.

Ms Guttenbeil-Likiliki has applied the skills she learned so that the Women and Children Crisis Centre could find better ways of working with police. She says:

‘It enabled us to get on the balcony and just unpack what was happening and invite the police to come to the Centre ... We had that holding environment where we could just be honest with each other, to the point where grown adult police were crying. It was quite a courageous conversation and at the end of it, we all came with a common purpose that we want to give the best possible service to the survivor.’

Ms Guttenbeil-Likiliki also applied her train-the-trainer capabilities learned through participation in the Pacific Regional Leadership Initiative to facilitate a two-day adaptive leadership training session in February 2017.

Representatives from the Tupou Tertiary Institute, Tonga’s Women and Children Crisis Centre, Civil Society Forum of Tonga, Tonga National Youth Congress and National Disabled Person’s Organisation of Tonga attended.

Through participation in this regional initiative, Ms Guttenbeil-Likiliki and Ms Blake have been encouraged to think creatively and take informed risks. They are shaping and leading constructive change in their home country of Tonga.