



MEDIA RELEASE

***Girls Rise Up!* treats young girls in Solomon Islands with care and patience**

Monday 21 December 2020 (Honiara, Solomon Islands): Treating young girls with care and patience are skills Lyn Subai learnt as a mentor of the *Girls Rise Up!* project in Solomon Islands.

Lyn is one of many trained community mentors in the *Girls Rise Up!* project, led by the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) in partnership with CARE International, 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 over 200 at-risk girls to help them establish supportive peer networks and the opportunity to safely advocate for issues that affect them.

As explained by YWCA Project Manager, Kristina Saueha, the project's participants "are community women trained to be mentors and the project is targeting girls who are most vulnerable, ensuring that they have confidence, awareness and access to services to make the right life choices. The most important components of the project is the inclusion of girls with disabilities and safeguarding for adolescent girls."

Lyn Subai is proud to join other *Girls Rise Up!* mentors to "teach young girls about safeguarding themselves."

"It's up to me as a mentor to really engage with the young girls in teaching them about their safety," said Lyn who, through *Girls Rise Up!*, has been taught to mentor young girls aged 13 to 18 years about life skills and safeguarding practices.

She said engaging young girls to be interested in her mentoring is always tough. So she learnt that, in order for them to be interested in what she wanted them to know, she had to treat them with care "so that they understand you."

"We are not all the same and they [girls] may not be interested in what you are teaching them," she said, adding that her priority is ensuring adolescent girls in Solomon Islands grow up in a safe and empowering environment.

"As mentors [we] work hard and to have [to be] humble minded and soft thinking... in teaching them life skills. [We] make sure [to] be kind to them and they will understand. Patience and hope to do my best."

"What can I do to get more girls to join this *Girls Rise Up* program? To encourage more girls who do not have hope in their future, [especially] in my community, to join this program."

Lyn's training as a mentor has equipped her with skills to teach young girls, but it has also benefited her personally as she has seen some positive changes in her own family and community in Honiara.

"As a mentor in this program, it gives me more skills."

Another mentor Bethlyn Nieng said young people in her Rock Valley community in Honiara are mainly those who do not go to school and are always left out inside the community.

"So the life skills program is one of the activities that can bring them together and be kept busy. When they joined this program, they learn life skills like sewing, dying lavalava, and so forth, so they are now engaging in these activities that will be helpful for them in their own lives."

Lyn said many of the young girls joining the program have learnt advocacy and life skills including skills to earn money, which is important to many of the girls who otherwise may be “doing nothing or not attending schools because they themselves or their parents don’t have money to send them to school.”

“This program is free for them to attend and will support them in their lives, so the *Girls Rise Up!* project is very useful for our young girls.”

Lyn explained it also provides opportunities for “housewives in our community who rely on the salaries of their partners for their survival - they even learn sewing from our youths.”

“My community is happy that YWCA is providing this program for us free. It is really helping us as mentors to reach out to our communities to engage with our youths and empower them financially,” Lyn said.

The *Girls Rise Up!* project is based in Honiara and expects to soon expand to reach further out to the provinces. Additionally, more government and non-government organisation are becoming stakeholders and partners such as Solomon Islands Planned Parenthood Association (SIPPA) and Family Support Centre. YWCA Project Manager, Kristina Saueha, thanked partners and stakeholders who are supporting YWCA and Care International for recognising the importance and the changes this project is bringing to adolescent girls in Honiara.

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Contact for media: YWCA Project Manager, Kristina Saueha, email: kristinasauaha893@gmail.com

Photo



Caption: Girls Rise Up mentor Lyn Subai, displaying a tablecloth sewn at the YWCA as part of the *Girls Rise Up!* project.

Credit: Photo supplied by YWCA



Caption: Bethlyn Nieng showing a dyed lavalava as a product of what she usually teaches young girls in her community as part of the *Girls Rise Up!* project.

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 a global confederation of 14 member and 6 candidate and 1 affiliate organisations working together to end poverty. CARE International 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. Managed by Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development (Pacific Women), the \$4.5 million Pacific Girl program funds projects, including *Girls Rise Up!*, with selected civil society organisations in Pacific Island countries.

Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development (***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.