

Strong Leadership for the New Kiribati Women and Children Support Centre

Kiribati [Ending Violence Against Women](#)

November 25, 2017

Project Name: Establishment of the Kiribati Women and Children Support Centre

Project partner: Kiribati Family Health Association

Total funding: \$209,895

Funding timeframe: 2016-2018

Funded under the Australian aid program's [Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development](#) initiative, and with support from the Kiribati Family Health Association, the Kiribati Women and Children Support Centre is scheduled to open in early 2018. Its inaugural coordinator brings a wealth of experience to the job and 'a goal to support women and children who are affected by violence.'



Kiribati Women and Children Support Centre Coordinator Ms Teretia Tokam.
Photo: Tara Chetty, Pacific Women Support Unit

Ms Teretia Tokam was recruited in June 2017 as the Support Centre's first coordinator. She is working to ensure everything is in place to welcome clients in the new year. With a Bachelor of Laws from the University of the South Pacific, Ms Tokam started her professional life at the Attorney-General's office in Tarawa.

'I moved away from being a lawyer to becoming an advocate for ending violence against women. My turning point ... is when I did a domestic violence case in the Court of Appeal, appearing for the state. It was a brutal case: the woman was badly bashed up by her husband, who bit her upper lip right off. A number of women would come to see us, me and my lawyer friends, for help and it gave me the idea that perhaps I can do more for the women.'

In 2008, Ms Tokam became the Kiribati country focal point for the Regional Rights Resource Team of the Pacific Community where she was involved in advocacy and support for the drafting of the Te Rau N Te Mwenga (Family Peace) Act 2014.

'I see myself as very fortunate with the capacity building on human rights I received during that time; to be able to link all the pieces together,' she says.

Later, Ms Tokam joined the then Ministry of Internal and Social Affairs, as the National Coordinator on Ending Sexual and Gender-based Violence.

'One of our success stories was the coordination ... Before, the NGOs, government departments and courts, did things on their own, separately. So we created [a] taskforce to ensure that everyone from different sectors came to the table to share and coordinate.'

Most recently, Ms Tokam completed a Master of Applied Anthropology and Participatory Development at the Australian National University on an Australia Awards Scholarship. She returned to Tarawa to take up the role at the Support Centre with a clear vision:

‘To be a successful centre that provides quality services to women and that women are confident to access / use the support from the centre. And, hopefully, to reduce the rate of violence and empower women at the same time.’

**This Story of Change was originally published in the [Pacific Women Annual Progress Report 2016 – 2017](#). All values are consistent with that reporting period. For the most up-to-date value of activities, visit our [interactive map](#).*