

A Fair Legal Response to Violence Against Women on Remote Islands

Kiribati Ending Violence Against Women

November 25, 2016

Project name: Judiciary enabling rights outreach to the vulnerable

Outcome area: Ending violence against women

Project partner: Kiribati Magistrates' Court

Total funding: \$125,398*

Funding timeframe: 2016 –2017

Pacific Women is supporting the judiciary in Kiribati to reach out to some of the most remote communities in the country. The judiciary's Enabling Rights project raises awareness both with lay magistrates and the broader community, on issues of procedural fairness in domestic violence cases and access to justice for women and children who have experienced violence.



In Kiribati, judicial staff part of the Enabling Rights project conducted workshops with villages on laws and procedures related to addressing violence against women. Photo: Kiribati Magistrate Court.

Magistrates' courts deal with the majority of cases involving violence against women. The judiciary in Kiribati includes over 150 lay magistrates. These lay magistrates have important decision making responsibilities in their communities with the support of court clerks, despite receiving no formal legal training.

Over the past two years, the judiciary has been working to build the capacity of the lay magistrates to ensure that the justice system is responding efficiently, fairly and comprehensively in cases involving violence against women and children. This has included interactive training to give lay magistrates a better understanding of the relevant laws and court procedures that exist in Kiribati.

Pacific Women supported the judiciary to continue this training in 2016 as part of an expanded project that also included a community outreach component.

The Enabling Rights project has been designed and delivered by Pacific Judicial Development Programme certified trainers who are also qualified court officers, including both the Chief Registrar, Deputy Chief Registrar, Judiciary Diplomacy and Public Relations Officer and two magistrates in Kiribati. The project uses case studies, role plays and reflections in face to face consultations.

As well as working with lay magistrates, the project engaged with the public to allow them 'to see, feel and understand positively' their roles in ending violence against women, particularly with respect to legal responses to the violence and how to access and use the justice system.

The project used two methods to connect with communities. First, a live radio program was broadcast on the national radio station, enabling the awareness messages to reach people living on remote islands.

Secondly, judicial staff conducted three-day community workshops on each of the 19 islands in the Gilbert group with the three-day consultation for the Line group (Kiritimati, Tabuaeran and Teeraina) held in Kiritimati Island. These workshops used existing High Court circuits to outer islands to enable court officers and judges to participate in discussions with the public.

The isolation of these outer islands means that many of the concepts introduced by the project were new and challenging for lay magistrates and

court users. However, the facilitators reported that the training resulted in raised awareness of the laws and procedures to deal with cases involving women; and increased competency of lay magistrates to perform their duties. The facilitators perceived that the project will ultimately create a safer and informed society in Kiribati who will be confident to access and use the justice system to bring domestic violence criminals to justice.

** 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](#).*