

# A Pacific Girl program by Pacific girls

Federated States Of Micronesia | Fiji | Papua New Guinea | Regional  
Solomon Islands | Tonga | Vanuatu | Enhancing Agency

October 7, 2020

By Louisa Gibbs and Sian Rolls, Pacific Women.



Camilla Hansen during the Pacific Girls Speak Out in October 2019. Photo credit: Pacific Women Support Unit / Sian Rolls.

‘If we work together, we can build a better world. I would like to talk about us... we are the seeds of today. Today, we’ve got to make a tomorrow,’ Camilla Hansen, 19, from Tonga, encouraged other adolescent girls at Pacific Girl’s Inception Workshop.

Pacific Girl is Pacific Women’s dedicated, multi-country program to support adolescent girls to reach their full potential. It addresses priority issues identified through consultations with more than 200 adolescent girls, including sexual and reproductive rights, access to education, cyber safety, climate change and freedom from violence.

Six countries have Pacific Girl projects: the Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu. Pacific Girl partners are looking at integrated approaches across organisations and activities, with Pacific Girl providing dedicated resources to accelerate their

work. Other Pacific Women partners also provide opportunities for adolescent girls including through schools-based programs, violence prevention activities and menstrual health initiatives.

Significant is the scale of commitment for Pacific girls – at \$4.5 million – and its design by Pacific girls. Adolescent girls have been involved in every step of the program’s design and are now taking a lead in its implementation.

Girls from Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Tonga and Vanuatu were among 70 participants of the program’s Inception Workshop to plan future Pacific Girl activities, gain a better understanding of the program’s six focus countries and develop tools to track progress. The Inception Workshop, held during October 2019 in Fiji, brought together these adolescent representatives, civil society organisations and the wider development community. Adolescent girls prepared for the Inception Workshop by holding their own, closed, Girls Pawa Toktok.



Adolescent girls from Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Tonga and Vanuatu with Fiji’s Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation, The Honourable Mereseini Vuniwaqa. Photo credit: Pacific Women Support Unit / Sian Rolls.

‘For us, as Pacific girls, we’re happy and proud to be part of the development of the Pacific Girl program,’ said Adi Ana Cirikiwai, 18 from Fiji, at the Inception Workshop. ‘The Pacific Girl program started off last year, in May, where the girls met for the first time, shared issues, cultural values and identified solutions simultaneously and, most important of all, became sisters.’

Pacific Girl partners are working with a wide range of girls, including those in rural and remote areas, out-of-school girls, girls who lack a stable home environment and younger adolescents (from as young as 10 years old).

Participants in Pacific Girl projects are taking up the challenge to build a better world by continuing to lead and direct the program. For instance, in Papua New Guinea, 128 new student advocate leaders are spearheading Equal Playing Field's Safe School, Strong Communities project. Girls in Tonga have written poems and songs on girls' empowerment and broadcast them to a national and regional audience on radio station Broadcom 87.5FM.



Members of the Adolescent Girls Advisory Group for the Laef blo mi, vois blo mi project. Photo credit: CARE Vanuatu.

In Vanuatu, CARE's Laef blo mi, vois blo mi project is working with girls aged 12–19 in rural and remote areas of Tafea province to provide life skills and respectful relationships education. As part of this initiative, CARE has invited 10 girl leaders to form an Adolescent Girls Advisory Group (AGAG). The AGAG guides how CARE implements the program. 'I am thankful to be part of the AGAG,' said Melin Nirua, 15. 'I am learning a lot from the trainings.'

Also excited to learn new skills is Meriam Johnson, 18. 'There are girls in our communities who do not have this information. I am proud to be part of the AGAG and to learn about self-esteem and self-confidence. I feel empowered to share with my other friends in school and sisters in my community.'

The AGAG is upholding Pacific Girl's principle of 'nothing about us without us.' The AGAG members are recognising the power and control that girls themselves have in their lives, individually and collectively. 'I have a voice and I can lead,' shared Rachel Lume, 19. 'Together we can make a change.'

This story has been developed for the Pacific Women Annual Progress Report 2019. It features Pacific Women-funded initiatives and partners.

For more information about Pacific Women's support for initiatives across the region, refer to the interactive map: <https://pacificwomen.org/map/>

For more information about Pacific Girl, visit: <https://pacificwomen.org/our-work/initiatives/pacific-girl/>