



IN BRIEF

ADVANCING GENDER JUSTICE IN THE PACIFIC



The Context

Women's Political Participation in the Pacific

Pacific Island Countries (PICs) have the lowest levels of representation of women in parliaments and local governments¹. The Federated States of Micronesia and Vanuatu are among the few countries in the world with no women elected or appointed officials in the national parliament. Gender inequality manifested in socio-cultural norms, negative stereotypical gender roles and lack of empowerment have often barred women from leadership positions. As a result often women are less likely to stand as candidates and in those countries where increasing numbers of women are running as candidates they are still not being elected in large part because of lack of public support for women in leadership roles. Electoral System bias was also found to contribute significantly to the inequality of opportunity for women interested in political representation² have also been highlighted as significant barriers to gender responsive political governance.

Women's Human Rights in the Pacific

Over the last 30 years the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) has evolved from being just an international standard, to being a standard that is integrated into national constitutions, laws and policies. CEDAW has great significance as a statement of global commitment on gender equality, and it is critical as a concrete, practical tool for advancing gender equality at national levels.

All but two PICs have ratified CEDAW. However, Pacific governments have experienced difficulties with timely CEDAW and general human rights reporting and effective implementation. A numbers of barriers have been identified which contribute to this including; the size of Pacific state structures, the lack of institutionalised mechanisms to report and implement human rights obligations and the inability to harmonise reporting obligations at the national level.³ Even countries are successful in enacting legislative change guided by CEDAW to achieve gender equality, the majority of Pacific Islanders live in rural areas or on outer islands, and that this rural population's access to justice is limited to lower formal and informal courts.

Our Contribution

Advancing Gender Justice in the Pacific

UN Women works in partnership with governments, civil society and international organisations to promote women's human rights and political participation in the Pacific. The Advancing Gender Justice in the Pacific Programme (AGJP) has been designed based on nationally identified priorities that acknowledge and highlight the complexity in changing social norms, values and cultural practices around human rights, access to justice and women's political participation. The programme builds on UN Women's global and regional comparative advantage in promoting gender responsive governance.

¹ Women's Representation in Local Government in the Asia Pacific- Status Report, UNDP, 2010.

² Larserud S. and Taphorn R., Designing for Equality, IDEA, 2005.

³ Promoting national level human rights coordination systems fir the Pacific; a unified approach, 2011 Sandra Bernklau SPC/RRRT

AGJP is based on an understanding of gender responsive governance as the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels that acknowledges that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities are respected and will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender responsive governance creates equal opportunities for women and men to contribute and benefit from economic, social, cultural and political leadership.

The programme has a regional approach but interventions will continue to be adapted based on indicated country specific priorities. Eleven Pacific Island Countries have been identified for programme implementation: Solomon Islands, Samoa, Fiji, Vanuatu, Nauru, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI) Palau, Cook Islands, Tuvalu and the Kingdom of Tonga.

Advancing Gender Justice in the Pacific Initiatives

The Pacific Women's Access to Justice and Human Rights Initiative (Women's Rights Initiative) to promote harmonised human rights reporting as well as de-jure and de-facto implementation of CEDAW.

The Gender Responsive Political Governance Initiative to promote women's political participation and representation and gender responsiveness of state structures, systems and processes. (It is the next phase of UN Women programming on gender equality in political governance. Over the past 4 years UN Women through the Gender Equality in Political Governance (GEPG) project, sought to raise awareness on gender equality and electoral system and highlighted how appropriate measures could be used to address gender bias).

Pacific Women's Access to Justice and Human Rights Initiative (Women's Rights Initiative)

Through the Women's Rights Initiative UN Women will work towards contributing to two outcomes: Increased application of women human rights standards through multi-sectoral harmonised human rights reporting and implementation; and Women, girls and marginalised groups have increased access to justice through the adoption of gender responsive informal and formal justice chains.

Through the Women's Rights Initiative UN Women will partner with government, civil society and international partners to:

- Build capacity among key stakeholders to develop sustainable processes and mechanisms to ensure multi-sectoral and harmonised human rights reporting and implementation;
- Support the development and implementation of advocacy tools to build awareness among the general public and key stakeholders on CEDAW in to Tonga and Palau;
- Conduct gender and women's empowerment trainings to committee members from non-traditional government partners such as Departments/ Ministry of Finance, Statistics and Planning etc;
- Strengthen capacity among all duty-bearers with special attention given to the capacity of the National Women's Machineries (NWM) to ensure that their capacity is fully strengthened to be able to provide leadership and guidance to human rights committees with regards to gender mainstreaming and CEDAW reporting and implementation;
- Establish and/or strengthen capacity of national NGO women's rights watch groups (national NGO umbrella organisations), tasked to monitor and lobby for CEDAW implementation and provide technical assistance to the governments.
- Build technical expertise in gender responsive drafting, legislative review policy development and implementation among relevant government sectors in order to integrating CEDAW into legislative change;
- Provide a communication/ meeting platform for women human rights litigation networks; and
- Conduct research to establish the accessibility, reach and the level of gender responsiveness of legal aid providers in partnership with the NWM and the Ministries/ Departments of Justice; and
- Support the development and implementation of evidence- based gender responsive legal aid strategies.



UN Assembly

Gender Responsive Political Governance Initiative



Pacific Woman promoting Women in Parliament Globally

UN Women will use international, regional and where relevant national frameworks, such as the Convention on The Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Pacific Island Forum leaders Gender Equality Declaration (GED), to inform the Gender Responsive Political Governance project initiatives. Through the project UN Women will work toward three outcomes:

- Improved gender responsive political governance systems and processes through appropriate measures;
- Women's equal participation in politics and decision-making through the advancement of transformational leadership; and
- Increased understanding and appreciation of and for the importance of women's political participation among the general public.

Through the Gender Responsive Political Governance Initiative UN Women will partner with government, civil society and international partners to:

- Complete diagnostic research on women's political participation to assess the structural and social barriers to women's political participation, in order to recommend relevant appropriate measures;
- Develop and disseminate advocacy tools that promote understanding among national parliament and local leadership regarding which appropriate measures would be most relevant in addressing any structural gender biases that are revealed in diagnostic studies;
- Build awareness among political party leadership on the importance of women's political participation and representation, as well as

capacity to build sustainable and inclusive political parties;

- Support national consultations on appropriate measures, constitutional amendments and/or voluntary options adopted by political institutions to promote women's political participation;
- Strengthen understanding and capacity strengthened among policy makers and EMB to implement appropriate measures to promote WPP;
- Strengthen technical and transformational leadership capacity among women candidates and build pipeline of young women candidates;
- Strengthen collaborative and coordinated women's political advocacy networks, nationally, regionally and in the diaspora inclusive of BRIDGE Training Facilitators;
- Strengthen capacity among organisations that promote gender equality and women's empowerment through leadership and decision making;
- Develop and disseminate advocacy tools and communications campaigns that promote women as leaders and voter education for women and marginalized groups;
- Support a cadre of academics and fellows that will form a Gender Justice Hub, which develops and disseminates knowledge products on women's political participation in the Pacific; and
- Raise awareness and build capacity on public transparency and gender responsive budgeting practices.



Pacific Island Women Registering to Vote



How We Make a Difference in the Pacific

Quality Technical Assistance and Programme Implementation

UN Women is recognized as a leader globally and in the Pacific on gender responsive governance. As such UN Women is called on support and partner with a wide range of governance initiatives and actors in the Pacific. Governments, civil society organizations, UN, development agencies, and regional organizations have requested technical assistance from UN Women specifically on governance initiatives.

In addition AGJP has begun implementation of some activities in partnership with the EU and AusAID. Examples of initiatives that UN Women is contributing to include:

- Implementation of a joint project in the Republic of Marshall Islands to strengthen a local human rights committee to develop CRC and CEDAW state reports and to align UPR recommendation to the treaty implementation process (participating UN agencies are UN Women, UNICEF, OHCHR and UNFPA);
- A joint project between UN Women and UNICEF to harmonise CRC and CEDAW reporting in the Federated States of Micronesia;
- Establishment of a human rights committee in Vanuatu led by the Ministry of Justice to align all human rights reporting and implementing obligations;
- Technical support to the NWMs in Solomon Islands and Fiji on how to integrate gender into the harmonised reporting process;
- Gender responsive legal mapping in the Solomon Islands;
- Strengthening and building cohesion among the women's political advocacy network of BRIDGE training facilitators in Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu;
- Developing advocacy tools on CEDAW, Appropriate measures and Gender Equality for policy makers and the general public;
- Providing Technical and Financial Support to the Solomon Islands government and TSM Taskforce to complete Appropriate Measures Options Research Paper;
- Supporting national consultations in the Solomon Islands with the TSM Taskforce based Appropriate Measures Options research;
- Supporting the Fiji Women's Forum to training trainers in gender responsive civic education;
- Providing technical and financial support to the Pacific Young Women's Leadership Alliance;
- Providing technical and financial support to establish Women Empower Belau an organisation that promotes women's political participation and representation in Palau;
- Providing technical and financial support to the Samoa Office of the Electoral Commissioner in developing advocacy tools to promote gender equality and political participation;
- Providing technical and financial support to the Samoa Law Reform Commission in CEDAW integration; and
- Collaborating with UNDP and the Pacific Island Forum Secretariat in hosting a Mock Parliament in Palau and other PICs.

For more information please contact:

Tonni Brodber

Technical Advisor

UN Women

Level 3, Kadavu House

Victoria parade, Suva Fiji

tonni.ann.brodber@unwomen.org

and

Doreen Buettner

Regional Human Rights and Programme Advisor

UN Women

Level 3, Kadavu House

Victoria parade, Suva Fiji

doreen.buettner@unwomen.org



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