

Using faith-based approaches to progress human rights and gender equality

[Regional Ending Violence Against Women](#)

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Project name: Partnering Women for Change

Project partner: UnitingWorld

Total funding: \$370,000

Funding timeframe: 2015–2018

Pacific Women is supporting UnitingWorld's Partnering Women for Change project that uses biblical interpretations to progress human rights and gender equality. The project supports churches to ensure that women, girls and people with disabilities have increased safety and wellbeing in their homes and communities.



Geraldine from the United Church in Solomon Islands addressing the participants at the Women's Fellowship Annual Training workshop funded by Pacific Women. Photo credit: UnitingWorld.

In Pacific Island countries, 95 per cent of people identify as Christian and the Church has a strong influence on people's behaviour. UnitingWorld is developing a network of Pacific Islander theologians to create training resources and advocate for gender equality. A key outcome of the project to date is that seven denominations in Papua New Guinea have officially adopted gender equality as their doctrinal position.

The project also supported churches to provide opportunities for women in leadership roles and decision making and worked with women to increase their confidence to take on these roles in their churches. UnitingWorld supported a young woman from Solomon Islands to attend the Christian educators' training. Subsequently, she completed her Bachelor of Divinity, qualified for ordination as a Minister and has been appointed as the first woman lecturer at the United Church in Solomon Islands Theological School.

In April 2018, UnitingWorld hosted a forum at the Pacific Theological College in Fiji for civil society organisations, faith-based agencies and educators to explore how biblical themes of gender can promote equality for all. The two-day forum provided an opportunity for non faith-based organisations to better understand the arguments based on biblical texts that support gender equality.

'[The learning] will be very helpful in addressing bottlenecks within the church with regards to gender and human rights,' said Matelita Seva-Cadravula, Executive Director for the Reproductive Family Health Association of Fiji. 'We will certainly utilise the approach during our community outreach.'

The day after attending a Gender Through Theology workshop, a ni-Vanuatu man woke up early and, for the first time ever, prepared breakfast for his wife and family. The man reported that through the workshop he had come to understand women and men were equal in the eyes of God but, up until then, his wife had not been treated as equal in their home. It was his turn to make breakfast.