



PACIFIC WOMEN  
SHAPING PACIFIC DEVELOPMENT

# Promoting Gender Equality in Papua New Guinea

HIGHLIGHTS 2012-2021

**10**  
Years

**1.5**  
Million People

**54**  
Projects

**59**  
Partners



## About *Pacific Women* in Papua New Guinea

Almost 1.5 million Papua New Guinean women, men and children have been able to access services and information across 20 of 22 provinces and regions of Papua New Guinea through initiatives supported by Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development (*Pacific Women*). *Pacific Women* is supported by the Australian Government through the Papua New Guinea-Australia Partnership.

Over the past nine years, *Pacific Women* has developed a wide array of partnerships to advance gender equality actions. Through *Pacific Women*, Australia partners with governments, local and international non-government organisations, the private sector, disabled people's organisations, coalitions and others to improve the political, economic and social opportunities of Pacific women and to end violence against women and girls.

*Pacific Women* is one of the largest global commitments to gender equality. Initiatives supported by *Pacific Women* respond to the commitments made by leaders in the 2012 Pacific Leaders' Gender Equality Declaration and Papua New Guinea development strategies, including Medium Term Development Plans.

More information on the cumulative impact of *Pacific Women* in Papua New Guinea since it began in 2012 is detailed in the *Pacific Women* in Papua New Guinea Performance Report 2012–2021 ([www.pacificwomen.org](http://www.pacificwomen.org)).

**'It was powerful knowing there are other women and men in other parts of the country working on the same issues, sharing same frustrations, adding value to your work by being part of the bigger fight.'**

Eriko Fufurefa, Kafe Urban Settlers Women's Association

Photo credit: Queensland University of Technology / Verena Thomas.



## *Pacific Women's* reach in Papua New Guinea

Over the life of the program, *Pacific Women* has supported partners to reach at least 1,496,000 women, girls, men and boys in Papua New Guinea.<sup>1</sup> Activities have benefited women from 20 of 22 provinces and regions. This includes 389,733 women, girls, men and boys who participated in COVID-19 prevention awareness and hygiene advice sessions during March–December 2020.

In the recent six month period, July–December 2020, *Pacific Women* partners have reached an estimated 413,598 women, men and children, including providing crisis services for 3,258 women and girls and 814 men and boys experiencing violence and child abuse. A further 69,581 women, men and children participated in awareness raising, advocacy and outreach activities to end violence against women. Support to take up leadership positions benefited 613 women; and 255 women participated in financial literacy or business skills training or had access to financial services. At least another 99 men actively promoted ending violence against women and women's access to services.

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise stated, all reach figures are from partner reports covering period August 2012–December 2020. While every effort has been made to avoid double counting, the cumulative reach numbers may include people that have been reached through more than one activity and that person would then be counted more than once. Most partners that offer violence response services only count clients once, even if they are repeat clients or receive multiple services.

## Valuing long-term relationships

Gender equality cannot happen overnight. *Pacific Women's* nearly 10-year life span has enabled a multi-pronged and strategic approach to promoting gender equality, including longer-term commitments, collaboration across sectors, addressing multiple levels of society and incorporating research. The long-term relationships have enabled *Pacific Women* partners to test and assess the effectiveness of approaches and to tackle situations where entrenched and institutionalised forms of gender inequality exist. The longer-term partnerships also allow partners and communities to see the positive changes in individuals, within families and communities and to share lessons on what promotes success with others. In this way, *Pacific Women* has influenced and informed the development of new initiatives by both the Government of Papua New Guinea and other development partners.

## Strengthening local capacity

*Pacific Women* is strengthening the technical expertise of local implementing partners to design and implement projects to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment outcomes. This includes evidence-based, structured prevention activities; expanding access for women and girls with disabilities; understanding child protection issues and implications for violence against women programming; and monitoring activities and analysing data to inform programming choices.

Ume Wainetti, former National Coordinator of the Family and Sexual Violence Action Committee.

Credit: *Pacific Women* Support Unit / Sian Rolls.



## Responding to the COVID-19 pandemic

*Pacific Women* partners inform national responses to the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure that the needs of women and girls' are taken into account and reflected in government responses. *Pacific Women* partners continued to operate and provide services throughout the lockdown periods. Financial resources, training and/or protective equipment provided by *Pacific Women* partners to other organisations enabled more service providers to remain open. *Pacific Women* partners contributed to the national, regional and international understanding of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women and girls by focussed research on this impact.

*Pacific Women's* diverse range of partnerships are supporting Australia and Papua New Guinea to work together to respond to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, including initial responses, early recovery and building resilience. *Pacific Women* is building on its existing partnerships and adapting its programming to support Papua New Guinea's COVID-19 response and recovery.

## Violence Prevention and Response



In Papua New Guinea, 59 per cent of women have experienced physical or sexual violence.<sup>2</sup> This is close to twice the global average.

*Pacific Women* supports work that is reducing violence against women and girls and ensuring survivors of violence have access to support services and to justice.

Since 2012, *Pacific Women* in Papua New Guinea has supported:

- 20,255 women and girls to access crisis support services (including: case management; counselling; health and justice services; safe accommodation; and emergency relocation).
- 1,049,678 people to participate in community awareness, outreach and advocacy about ending violence against women and children.

## Women's Economic Empowerment



The National Financial Inclusion Strategy recognises that women are significantly less financially empowered than men with very high levels of financial exclusion, even where financial services are available.

*Pacific Women* supports work that ensures women have expanded opportunities to earn an income and accumulate economic assets.

Since 2012, *Pacific Women* in Papua New Guinea has supported:

- 15,842 women (and 8,109 men) to access financial literacy training and financial services.
- 232 women to expand their businesses by accessing finance, increasing their income and/or increasing the number of employees as a result of engagement with the Women's Business Resource Centre.

## Women's Leadership and Influence



There are currently no women representatives in Papua New Guinea's national parliament and it is estimated that women hold only 1.4 per cent of the local level government and ward positions.

*Pacific Women* supports work to build women's skills and confidence to take up leadership positions; competitively contest elections; and to improve women's collective voice to promote their interests.

Since 2012, *Pacific Women* in Papua New Guinea has supported:

- 3,131 women to take on leadership roles at the community, provincial and national level.
- 187 women to graduate with a Certificate IV in Leadership and Management.
- 20 market vendor associations to register, representing 4,500 vendors.
- Nine Young Women's Associations to form in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville.

## Enhanced Knowledge and Understanding



*Pacific Women* supports research and shares learnings to improve policy, programming and practice to promote gender equality and women's empowerment.

Since 2012, *Pacific Women* in Papua New Guinea has supported:

- 6,839 women to access formal opportunities to share their ideas and learn from each other (learning forums, research and program learning events).
- 87 research papers to be published, increasing understanding of gender inequality, discrimination, the causes of violence and drivers of change in Papua New Guinea.

<sup>2</sup>Almost two-thirds (64 per cent) of ever married women reported experiencing violence from a spouse. National Statistical Office Papua New Guinea and ICF (2019). Papua New Guinea Demographic and Health Survey 2016–18. <https://dhsprogram.com/publications/publication-fr364-dhs-final-reports.cfm>

*Pacific Women* investment has established new services, expanded existing services and improved the quality and coordination of support services for survivors of family and sexual violence. Two new case management centres have opened in Lae and Port Moresby. A new safe house has opened in Port Moresby, four family support centres have been built or refurbished. The Nazareth Centre for Rehabilitation expanded its Men's Hub operations and has trained 236 women and 132 men as basic trauma counsellors. *Pacific Women* partners developed safe house guidelines and provide skills training to improve the standards of care, including in the COVID-19 context, for safe house staff and clients.

*Pacific Women* projects have strengthened and improved timely referrals and coordination arrangements between service providers. Tools and training have increased the knowledge of duty bearers, service providers and community activists about relevant laws and practical strategies to assist survivors of violence to navigate and access available support including the court systems.

Families report a 22 per cent increase in income and a 12 per cent increase in women making decisions about how to spend the money they earn solely themselves, as a result of participating in *Pacific Women's* family-based approaches to improve gender equality in agricultural communities.

Financial literacy skills training have led to new attitudes towards budgeting, with a significant proportion of participants reporting increased savings that are enabling longer-term productive investments and increased income.

*Pacific Women* is ensuring partners' initiatives are based on evidence of what works in the Pacific context to meaningfully empower women economically. This means ensuring partners create opportunities for women not just to increase earnings, but also work with men to promote shared decision making over income and assets and household goal setting. Women are establishing micro-businesses and savings clubs plus securing formal qualifications and employment opportunities.

After demonstrating their leadership skills as project executives on community development projects funded through *Pacific Women*, 23 women were elected by their communities as ward representatives – half the total number of wards – in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville. In a beneficiary survey conducted in 2018, 82 per cent of villages in which grants were implemented reported a significant positive change in their perception of the role of women in their community.

Working through existing institutions and community structures, such as market vendor associations, *Pacific Women* partners are building women's negotiation and mobilisation skills and women's awareness of election processes to prepare them to competitively contest elections; and improving women's decision making over their own bodies by increasing access to sexual health and reproductive rights and services.

*Pacific Women* supports events that bring gender equality advocates and activists together to build momentum for social change. These events create space for discussing often taboo gender issues such as violence against women, sexual and reproductive health and rights, disability and gender identity.

*Pacific Women* dedicated research projects have covered topics such as: women's leadership and decision making across the Pacific; the relationship of women's access to economic opportunities and violence; sorcery accusation-related violence; the cost of family and sexual violence to businesses; and the use and efficacy of family protection orders.

*Pacific Women* partners have developed and shared tools, training manuals, communication posters, songs and other resources to promote local behaviour change action.

# Pacific Women in Papua New Guinea

## Key achievements during 2020–2021



*Pacific Women* is ensuring that **women's voices, interests and needs are prioritised in the Government's COVID-19 response and recovery planning**. This can be seen in the prioritisation and mainstreaming of the protection of women, children and vulnerable populations in the COVID-19 response; and the recognition of gender-based violence services as 'essential services' and staff as frontline workers for COVID-19 vaccination prioritisation.

The **private sector is acting to make workplaces safer for women**. The Business Coalition for Women supported two companies in 2020 to apply gender-smart safety audits that seek out women's perspectives on workplace safety and address constraints to women's participation in non-traditional sectors. There are now 15 subscribing organisations engaged in the *Bel isi* PNG public-private partnership. These companies receive support to implement gender-safe workplace policies and employees have priority access to safehouse and case management services. There is evidence that work undertaken within these workplaces since 2018 to respond to family and sexual violence and to challenge widely held beliefs is reducing the acceptability of violence against women. A survey conducted in November 2020 of over 1,400 employees found that acceptability of family and sexual violence by employees of three *Bel isi* PNG subscribing companies was significantly lower than that of the wider population (11 per cent of surveyed employees compared with 70 per cent of women and 72 per cent of men in the general population).

*Pacific Women* creates **opportunities for women to exercise organisational and leadership skills**. By 2020, CARE was supporting 16 **village savings and loans associations**, providing women with opportunities to practice their leadership and decision-making skills as part of five-member management committees. In mixed membership associations, at least three of the five management committee members must be women. Evaluation during 2020 identified women leaders in savings and loans associations were demonstrating increased confidence in fulfilling their management roles and shared that they are now speaking up confidently in other contexts.

Members of the 16 village savings and loans associations supported by CARE in 2020 report they were the only avenue for loans to support their families during the 2020 COVID-19 lockdown periods and to restart their activities when restrictions were lifted.

*Pacific Women is increasing women's financial inclusion through skills training, information and access to services and loans. Pacific Women supported the creation of informal savings clubs as well as connecting women (and their families) to formal financial institutions.*

A 2020 evaluation of the Gender-Based and Sorcery-Related Violence project found **positive changes in attitudes and behaviours related to violence against women and girls were leading to reductions in violence and changes in restrictive gender norms.** Behaviour changes identified by communities and partners include: community members reporting cases of violence to leaders; neighbours and community members intervening to stop violence; men increasingly performing household duties previously thought of as women's responsibility; and men being more supportive of their wives participating in public life, including in leadership roles and economic activities and sharing decision making within households.

In August 2020, the **Coalition of Parliamentarians to End Gender Based Violence convened.** The Coalition of Parliamentarians is a bipartisan group of 20 parliamentarians co-chaired by the Governors of National Capital District and East Sepik Province. The Coalition of Parliamentarians has a website <https://www.unitedforequalitypng.com/> and a Facebook page. It has developed a strategic advocacy plan. The Coalition of Parliamentarians issues resolutions and media statements calling for actions to address gender-based violence and supporting temporary special measures for women to be elected to parliament. The Coalition of Parliamentarians was instrumental in the gazettal by the Government in November 2020 of the **Special Parliamentary Committee on Gender Based Violence and the establishment of the parliamentary inquiry into gender-based violence in 2021.**

**Top Photo:**

Jacqui Joseph, Co-founder and CEO Equal Playing Field  
Credit: Equal Playing Field

**Bottom Photo:**

Jamie Wartovo, Sanap Wantaim male youth advocate, and Jacinta Kasozi, international United Nations volunteer, engaging in discussion with a market vendor  
Credit: UN Women



## Pacific Women creating more equality

*Pacific Women* is one of the largest global commitments to gender equality. As a result of *Pacific Women*'s long-term commitment to partners' efforts, gender transformative change is happening in Papua New Guinea. Women and men in their family, communities and workplaces, are changing the way they behave to reduce the harms to women and girls and to strengthen their families, communities and workplaces.

*Pacific Women* partners have identified eight elements that have been key to achieving gender transformation in Papua New Guinea. 'What Works for Gender Transformative Approaches in Papua New Guinea' is downloadable at: [www.pacificwomen.org](http://www.pacificwomen.org).



Long-term commitment



Working across multiple levels of society



Working with women as change agents



Including tailored gender capacity building



Gender transformation is explicit in the project's design



Working with credible partners and local change agents



Engaging men meaningfully in gender transformation



Building on existing protective customs and practices

**Cover photo:** Agnus Titus, Nazareth Centre for Rehabilitation leading the Women Human Rights Defenders Forum in Siwai, Autonomous Region of Bougainville 2017. Credit: International Women's Development Agency / Harjono Djyobisono.

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**Disclaimer:** This publication has been funded by the Australian Government in partnership with the Government of Papua New Guinea through the *Pacific Women* program. The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily the views of the Australian Government.

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[www.pacificwomenreport.org](http://www.pacificwomenreport.org)



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