



SPC
Secretariat
of the Pacific
Community



Celebrating our Progress, Shaping our World

12th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women
20–24 October 2013

5th Pacific Ministers for Women Meeting
24–25 October 2013
Rarotonga, Cook Islands

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Secretariat of the Pacific Community
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women
feed
the world

Introduction

From 20 to 24 October 2013, more than 200 people met in Rarotonga, Cook Islands, to discuss how commitments towards gender equality in the region have progressed. The overall aim of the conference was to bring together government ministers and senior decision makers, development partners, research institutions and civil society organisations to review and develop strategies for accelerating progress in the achievement of gender equality and women's human rights in our region. This is in line with *The Revised Pacific Platform for Action on Advancement of Women and Gender Equality 2005 to 2015* and other regional commitments on gender equality, including most recently the *Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration* of 2012.

To backtrack, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) successfully coordinated the 1994 *Pacific Platform for Action on Advancement of Women and Gender Equality*, the PPA. Formalised by the Noumea Declaration and endorsed at the 4th Regional Conference of Women and the 1st Ministerial Conference on Women and Sustainable Development held in Noumea in 1994, the PPA formed the basis of the Pacific region's contribution and participation at the 4th World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995.

The Beijing conference approved the *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*, which identified 12 critical areas of concern for gender equality and women's empowerment. The PPA identified 13 largely identical critical areas that provided additional contextual information and recommendations for action specific to our region. The 13 critical areas are: health, education and training, economic empowerment, agriculture and fishing, legal and human rights, shared decision-making, environment, culture and the family, mechanisms to promote the advancement of women, violence, peace and justice, poverty, and indigenous people's rights.

In 2004, the 9th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women reviewed the PPA, including national and regional achievements, challenges and obstacles. Ministers re-clustered the 13 critical areas of concern under four strategic themes in *The Revised Pacific Platform for Action on Advancement of Women and Gender Equality 2005 to 2015*:

- ▶ mechanisms to promote advancement of women;
- ▶ women's legal and human rights;
- ▶ women's access to services;
- ▶ economic empowerment of women.

Critical emerging issues were also identified: poverty eradication; globalisation and trade liberalisation; HIV and AIDS; labour migration; peace and security; tradition and religion; media, information, communication and technology; and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), including making them more applicable for the Pacific.

SPC has convened a regional gathering to discuss the role of women in development since the first regional Seminar of South Pacific Women held in Papeete, French Polynesia in 1981. This led to the establishment of the Pacific Women's Resource Bureau and the convening of triennial conferences of Pacific women and ministerial level discussions on gender equality and the advancement of women.

The 12th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women

Convened by SPC and hosted by the Government of Cook Islands, the 12th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women was the biggest on record, attracting representatives from 21 SPC member countries and territories. More than 200 women attended, representing a diversity of life stage and background.

Representing youth, 26 delegates from the Pacific Young Women's Leadership Alliance, attended the conference. They had participated in the inaugural Pacific Young Women's Dialogue held right before the conference. Their dialogue emphasised five areas: eliminating sexual and gender based violence, ensuring sexual and reproductive health rights, eliminating discrimination against persons with disabilities, promoting full and decent employment and economic empowerment for young women, and ensuring the full participation of young women at all levels of decision making.

With the theme Celebrating our Progress, Shaping our World, the conference highlighted progress made since the last conference. Some Pacific Island countries and territories (PICTs) had passed domestic violence legislation, supported inclusion of sexual and reproductive health rights at international meetings, and made progress on gender equality at the national level and by including it in development forum discussions. However, the Pacific region still has a long way to go to achieve substantive gender equality.

The conference had three objectives: to identify lessons from past successes, develop recommendations for a strong message of renewed commitment, and identify new strategies to ensure faster and more sustainable progress.

Because some commitments made on gender equality are yet to be fully integrated into national and regional development agendas, the conference focused on strategies and mechanisms for refining national and regional approaches to ensure that gender equality becomes a high-level priority.

The recommendations (in Section 3) target the advancement of all women, including young women and girls, women living with disability and those living in remote areas. Priority areas are violence against women, health, access to services, and gender disaggregation in the context of the 'data revolution' recommended by the UN High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

This report presents the proceeding of the 12th Triennial Conference of the Pacific Women. Section 1 presents a summary of The Revised Pacific Platform for Action on Advancement of Women and Gender Equality. Nine regional overviews presented at the conference are included in Section 2, and Section 3 contains the outcomes of the conference.

Acknowledgement

We would like express our gratitude to the government and people of Cook Islands for hosting the 12th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women.

We would also like to thank FEMLIMK Pacific for the media coverage, and PACMASS, UN Women, and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat for providing financial assistance to the Conference.



Section 1

The Revised Pacific Platform for Action on Advancement of Women and Gender Equality

Delegates from all 22 SPC member countries and territories met in Noumea in 1994 and endorsed a set of principles and plan of action to advance gender equality in the region. The Pacific Platform for Action was then taken to the Fourth World Conference on Women Beijing, 1995, which produced the Beijing Declaration and Beijing Platform for Action. Since the Pacific Platform for Action (1994) and Beijing Platform for Action (1995) were adopted, Pacific Island countries and territories have used them to guide national and regional action and international cooperation to empower women in achieving political, legal, social and cultural rights.

In 2004, the Pacific Platform was reviewed at the 9th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women and Second Pacific Ministers Meeting on Women (Nadi, Fiji). Twenty Pacific Island countries and territories adopted the Revised Pacific Platform for Action on the Advancement of Women and Gender Equality 2005–2015 as a ‘living document’.

Progress in implementing RPPA commitments is monitored through the Triennial Conference of Pacific Women. Senior officials responsible for women’s affairs from Pacific Island governments, representatives of non-government organisations, development partners, researchers and academics meet to review progress, discuss challenges and make recommendations to further advance gender equality across the region.

The Revised Pacific Platform for Action is a regional framework developed and agreed to by representatives from all Pacific Island countries and territories. It has four strategic themes:

- i) mechanisms to promote the advancement of women;
- ii) women's legal and human rights;
- iii) women's access to services; and
- iv) economic empowerment of women.

The RPPA offers targets and indicators on women's rights and gender equality and is a reference for developing national gender equality policies and supporting the integration of gender concerns in a broad range of sectors. It also includes recommendations to address emerging challenges such as poverty, globalisation and trade liberalisation, HIV/AIDS, labour migration, peace and security, tradition and religion, media and communication technology.

Priority areas for action

Countries called for stronger institutional mechanisms for action; improved legal and human rights; improved access to health and education services; and more opportunities for economic empowerment.

Mechanisms to promote the advancement of women

To develop and strengthen mechanisms to enhance the advancement of women and gender equality at all levels, the RPPA objectives include:

- ▶ establishing and strengthening national institutions – such as departments responsible for women's affairs also being responsible for coordinating and monitoring efforts toward gender equality;
- ▶ strengthening the capacity of government ministries and departments to mainstream gender in policy and legislative processes;
- ▶ adopting national gender equality policies;
- ▶ developing capacities to produce and use gender statistics;
- ▶ strengthening partnerships with civil society;
- ▶ advocating and raising awareness on gender inequality issues.

Women's legal and human rights

Human rights for all are enshrined in the constitutions and legislation of countries and territories. However, institutions, attitudes and social barriers often prevent women from gaining the full protection of legal systems, exercising their legal rights, and participating in decision-making. Cultural beliefs, religious practices and social bias, and a lack of awareness of legal rights also hinder the exercise of rights. This strategic area proposes measures on legal and human rights, participation of women in political and public decision-making and elimination of violence against women. Recommendations include:

- ▶ promoting legal and human rights and eliminating all forms of discrimination against women;
- ▶ reviewing legislation, policies, programmes, administrative procedures and regulations to ensure compliance with the *Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW);
- ▶ establishing legal aid assistance programmes to ensure that women have access to judicial process;
- ▶ promoting legal literacy for both women and men;
- ▶ increasing political party support for women candidates and taking affirmative action by putting in place policies and practices that enhance gender parity in political representation;
- ▶ promoting equal participation by men and women in public life – political parties, statutory bodies and boards, management roles in governments, the private sector and civil society organisations;
- ▶ adopting policies and programmes to prevent sexual and family violence and criminalise any form of violence;
- ▶ collecting sex disaggregated data on violence against women and its economic costs in order to curb the prevalence of sexual and family violence;
- ▶ providing substantial support for programmes to assist victims of domestic violence;
- ▶ adopting a multi-sectoral approach and recognising the important role of men, women, boys and girls in addressing the problem of violence against women; and
- ▶ adopting policies and guidelines against sexual harassment.

Women's access to services

This area focuses on services related to health, and education and training. The RPPA recommends:

- ▶ improving the quality of and access to affordable medical and reproductive health services;
- ▶ providing a full range of reproductive health information and services to both men and women, including young and adolescent men and women;
- ▶ reviewing all aspects of legislation relevant to reproductive health;
- ▶ supporting full integration in health policies and services of issues for women living with disabilities;
- ▶ adopting measures to support equal access to education and training (including technical and vocational education) at all levels; and
- ▶ revising school curriculums and textbooks to ensure they are free of gender stereotyping.

Economic empowerment of women

Recognising women's critical role in sustainable development and poverty alleviation, the RPPA recommends in particular:

- ▶ adopting measures to ensure women's rights to equal opportunity in all fields of employment
- ▶ supporting income-generating activities for women in rural areas and in disadvantaged households

The Secretariat of the Pacific Community has been mandated by Pacific women's national institutions and non-governmental organisations to assist Pacific Island countries and territories in their efforts to improve the status of women and monitor the implementation of the Pacific Platform for Action on Advancement of Women and Gender Equality and the Beijing Platform of Action. SPC, the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and development partners, such as UN agencies, provide technical assistance to countries and territories on these issues.



Section 2

The 12th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women *Celebrating our Progress, Shaping our World*

The overall aim of the conference was to bring together senior decision makers within governments, development partners, research institutions and civil society organisations to develop strategies for accelerating progress in the achievement of gender equality and women's human rights in our region. This followed on from the global 15-year review of the *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* (BPA) endorsed at the Beijing 4th World Conference on Women in 1995, and its regional counterpart, the *Pacific Platform for Action on Advancement of Women and Gender Equality*, the PPA.

The 12th Triennial Conference held in Rarotonga, Cook Islands took place over four days: 20–24 of October 2013.

"The theme of the meetings – Celebrating our Progress, Shaping our World – is a timely reminder of the need to ensure accountability to the range of gender equality treaties and policies that reaffirm the experiences and expertise of Pacific women," said Linda Petersen, Human Development Programme Manager.

"We are also meeting at a time when we can collectively ensure that commitments to gender equality are integrated into the development of the post-2015 agenda, because there cannot be sustainable development without the inclusion of women."

The areas of focus of the conference corresponded to the four strategic themes of the *The Revised Pacific Platform for Action on Advancement of Women and Gender Equality 2005 to 2015*, the RPPA. The following presentations were made.

1. Launch of the MDG Tracking Report, which includes a key feature on the third goal on gender equality and women's empowerment
2. Mechanisms to promote the advancement of women
3. Women's legal and human rights
4. Elimination of violence against women
5. Women's access to education
6. Women's access to health services
7. Economic empowerment of women
8. Emerging areas of work (peace and security, migration, climate change)
9. Upcoming regional and international development processes

Working group sessions provided the opportunity for delegates to discuss issues and strategies to address gender inequality. Their recommendations are reflected in the conference outcomes document.

After the conference, delegates are expected to take the outcomes and recommendations back to their respective governments and administrations, organisations and institutions for consideration, discussion and action at national level.



2013 Pacific Regional MDG Tracking Report

Feleti Teo, Deputy Secretary General, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) and the Honourable Minister Mark Brown, Minister for Internal Affairs, Cook Islands, jointly presented the first report of the conference. Feleti Teo provided an overview of the 2013 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) Tracking Report, which was the fourth Pacific Regional MDGs Tracking Report. While the principal purpose of the report was to assess the progress made by Pacific Islands Forum countries towards achieving the MDGs by 2015, the theme of the 2013 report was gender equality: MDG goals were examined through a gender equality lens. The report also looked at partnership and resource mobilisation. Detailed assessment on gender and the MDGs reinforced the stance that gender equality and empowering women are central to achieving all MDGs.

Except for Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Tonga, all countries involved are on track to achieve gender parity in education (MDG Target 3.a). However, concerns are emerging region-wide over the attendance and performance of boys, particularly in high school. Only Cook Islands, Niue and Palau are on track to achieve the broader goal of promoting gender equality and empowering women, and most countries recorded slow progress in this area. Higher education for young women has not led to better employment outcomes due to gender barriers in labour markets, gendered stereotypes about suitable occupations for women, and traditional expectations regarding unpaid domestic work.

As part of the same presentation, the Chair, Mark Brown, continued Agenda Item 1 by presenting the 2012 *Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration*. In 2012, Pacific Leaders recognised that gender inequality is imposing a high personal, social and economic cost on Pacific people and nations. They committed to implement specific national policy actions to promote gender equality in areas of gender responsive government programmes and policies, decision-making, economic empowerment, ending violence against women, health and education.

Regarding gender responsive government programmes and policies, governments should incorporate articles from the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (CEDAW) into legislative and statutory reforms and policy initiatives across government. Governments should support the production and use of sex-disaggregated data and gender analysis to inform government policies and programmes. Governments should also strengthen consultative mechanisms on budget and policy issues.

Regarding decision-making, governments should adopt processes, including temporary special measures, to accelerate women's full and equal participation in governance reform at all levels and women's leadership in all decision-making. Governments should also advocate for increased representation of women in the private sector and local level governance boards and committees.

Regarding the economic empowerment of women, governments should implement equal employment opportunity and gender equality measures in public sector employment. Governments should also remove barriers to women's employment and participation in the

formal and informal sectors and target support to women entrepreneurs in those sectors. Further, they should improve the facilities and governance of local produce markets.

Regarding ending violence against women, governments should implement a package of essential services for women and girls who are survivors of violence, and enact and implement legislation on sexual and gender-based violence.

Regarding health and education, governments should ensure that reproductive health education, awareness and service programmes receive adequate funding support and encourage gender parity in informal, primary, secondary and tertiary education, and in training opportunities.

2012 Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration

In 2012 the Leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum brought new determination and invigorated commitment to efforts to lift the status of women in the Pacific and empower them to be active participants in economic, political and social life. Leaders committed to implement specific national policy actions to progress gender equality in areas of: gender responsive government programs and policies; decision making; economic empowerment; ending violence against women; and health and education

Gender Responsive Government Programs and Policies

- ▶ Incorporate articles from CEDAW into legislative and statutory reforms and policy initiatives across government
- ▶ Support the production and use of sex disaggregated data and gender analysis to inform government policies and programs
- ▶ Strengthen consultative mechanisms on budget/policy issues
- ▶ Decision Making
- ▶ Adopt measures, including TSM, to accelerate women's full and equal participation in governance reform at all levels and women's leadership in all decision making
- ▶ Advocate for increased representation of women in private sector and local level governance boards and committees

Economic Empowerment

- ▶ Remove barriers to women's employment and participation in the formal and informal sectors
- ▶ Implement equal employment opportunity and gender equality measures in public sector employment
- ▶ Improve the facilities and governance of local produce markets
- ▶ Target support to women entrepreneurs in the formal and informal sectors
- ▶ ***Ending violence against women***
- ▶ Implement a package of essential services for women and girls who are survivors of violence
- ▶ Enact and implement legislation regarding SGBV

Health and Education

- ▶ Ensure reproductive health education, awareness and service programs receive adequate funding support
- ▶ Encourage gender parity in informal, primary, secondary and tertiary education and training opportunities

The Honourable Minister of Internal Affairs of Cook Islands, Mark Brown, concluded the presentation by stating that Pacific Leaders called on development partners to work in a coordinated, consultative and harmonised way to support national efforts to address gender inequality across the region.

Mechanisms to Promote the Advancement of Women

Brigitte Leduc, Gender Equality Advisor, SPC presented the first thematic issue of the conference, relating to mechanisms for the advancement of women.

INTRODUCTION

Developing and strengthening 'appropriate mechanisms that will enhance the advancement of women at all levels' is the first strategic objective of the Pacific Platform for Action. It includes:

- ▶ the existence and use of sex disaggregated data and gender analysis across all sectors, supporting policy development, government services, budgeting, monitoring and reporting processes;
- ▶ laws and policies complying with CEDAW and enforcing gender equality and women's human rights;
- ▶ a rigorous national gender equality policy that sets clear priorities and mandates;
- ▶ strong and appropriately resourced national machineries for women that are able to influence policy making and monitor advancements toward gender equality;
- ▶ a gender perspective that is effectively mainstreamed throughout the government; and
- ▶ effective partnership between the government and civil society organisations.

In 2012, Pacific leaders reiterated their commitment to develop 'gender responsive government programmes and policies,' in the Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration 2012.

The 2013 *Pacific Regional MDG Tracking Report*¹ highlights positive advancements towards gender equality. For example, there have been notable advancements in the area of education where the majority of countries have achieved gender parity in primary and secondary education. Legislation has been passed to support gender equality – for example in Samoa to increase the number of women in parliament; at the local government level in Vanuatu; and in Tonga, the milestone passage of legislation to protect women and children from violence. However, progress has been slow and inconsistent across all Pacific Island countries and territories (PICTs). While there is strong commitment to gender equality in most

¹ Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2013 Pacific Regional MDG Tracking Report (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Fiji, 2013).

governments in our region, a gender perspective is not yet systematically integrated across sectoral programmes and services and the required changes in attitudes and practices have not occurred. Faster progress needs strong political will accompanied by systems that hold individuals accountable for ensuring gender equality, especially among decision makers and senior managers. Although a few promising approaches have been adopted in the last two years in several PICTs, gender statistics are not yet systematically produced and interpreted for gender equality outcomes, and national machineries for women remain marginalised and under-resourced.

UPDATE ON NEW AND ONGOING INITIATIVES

Sex disaggregated data and gender analysis

The production and use of sex-disaggregated data and gender analysis in policy development and the delivery of government services are critical steps in government approaches to informed decision-making across all sectors. They also underpin initiatives such as gender mainstreaming. At the request of PICTs during the 9th Triennial Conference, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) developed a comprehensive multi-sectoral framework of gender indicators, which was endorsed at the 10th Triennial Conference as well as by Pacific Heads of Statistics. However, progress in using this framework has been limited.

Support for the improved production, compilation and use of gender statistics was initiated in the Cook Islands, Fiji Islands, Marshall Islands and Vanuatu in 2012, and in Solomon Islands in 2013. The experience so far shows that the production and use of sex disaggregated data are far from systematic or comprehensive across all sectors of the government. A wealth of information can be extracted from census and other household surveys (income, expenditure, labour, demography and health) and sectoral situational analyses, but the data is not analysed comprehensively enough from a gender perspective and not used to inform policy development or monitoring and evaluation. The gender statistical profiles produced so far provide the opportunity to map gender gaps in key sectors such as education, health, employment and justice. The next step will be to further build the capacity of government institutions to produce sex disaggregated data, conduct gender analysis and establish gender indicators useful for monitoring progress in bridging gaps and making progress on gender equity/equality.

It is recommended that all 22 PICTs compile gender indicators and establish a system for monitoring progress on gender equality commitments across sectors, working closely with national statistics and planning offices. SPC will continue to support capacity building for the collection, analysis and more effective use of gender statistics, and is working towards the recruitment of a social statistician dedicated to providing these services with the aim of accelerating improvements in gender statistics in all PICTs.

Work done on country analyses to date has highlighted lack of capacity in national machineries for data analysis and interpretation, and in relating this information to the goals of national gender equality policies. National statistics offices are under-resourced in terms of providing the detailed statistical information required for such indicators and there are considerable data gaps, most notably in health, wages and employment, poverty and well-being and access to and control over resources.

Mainstreaming gender across the government

Gender inequality cannot be addressed effectively unless action is robust and comprehensive. Addressing gender inequality issues requires effort from the whole of government, using a multi-sectoral approach involving key stakeholders such as civil society. Gender issues are too often seen as ‘women’s problems’ or the sole responsibility of national machineries for women. One ministry or division cannot take sole responsibility for addressing the multi-dimensional aspects of gender inequality as it concerns the whole of society.

A series of stocktakes of the capacity of government to mainstream gender was conducted in Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Marshall Islands, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Tonga in 2009–2010, and in Kiribati, New Caledonia, Niue, Samoa, Tuvalu, and Wallis and Futuna in 2013. A preliminary examination of the results of the stocktakes has revealed that despite commitments and a certain level of ‘expressed’ political will, a gender perspective is not integrated into most national and sectoral policies and programmes. There are a few specific initiatives targeting women in some sectors, but they are still ‘add-ons’ or specific programmes for women. Further, gender mainstreaming is still not understood as being a crosscutting approach. In most cases, the key issues relate to lack of knowledge and understanding about gender issues and lack of technical capacity (‘how to’) to mainstream gender.

“Strategies to respond to climate change, globalisation and trade, migration, peace and security as well as meeting the education and health needs of Pacific communities must also take into account women and girls,” said Ms Drollet, stressing the importance of partnerships. “Just as we need strong and robust national women’s machineries, we also need vibrant civil society and clear partnerships with the private sector as well, if we are to meet our envisioned goals of gender equality.”

There have been numerous capacity building initiatives in the region on different aspects of gender mainstreaming, such as policy development, gender budgeting and gender analysis. There has also been sectoral training in macroeconomics, climate change, energy, disaster preparedness and law reform. However additional sectoral capacity building initiatives must be offered at national and regional level, starting with tertiary education curricula. This includes at university level; training for public service staff at all levels on sectoral gender issues; global, regional and national commitments to address gender inequality; strategies for mainstreaming gender; development of sectoral guidelines; and provision of sectoral technical assistance on gender. In addition, governments need to put in place systems to make staff accountable for mainstreaming gender.

In the French territories, the parity law has contributed to increased representation of women in politics and laws that guarantee equal rights for women. However, the gender stocktake conducted in New Caledonia and Wallis and Futuna in 2013 showed that capacity constraints and needs for gender mainstreaming are very similar to the rest of the region, and not enough support is available. New Caledonia and Wallis and Futuna are slowly opening up to the gender mainstreaming approach and there is a critical need to include

French Pacific territories in region-wide programmes of support and training on gender mainstreaming.

To translate words into action, mechanisms must be put in place to make people accountable for promoting gender equality, respecting women's human rights, and mainstreaming gender across government programmes and services. This does not necessarily require the establishment of new systems, but mainstreaming of gender into existing systems and processes by: ensuring that sex disaggregated data is used routinely for policy development; ensuring that corporate plans reflect and are linked to the national gender policy and plan of action; allocating sufficient budgets; and by reporting to governments and to parliament on the benefits women and men have received from government services.

In 2013, Solomon Islands adopted an innovative approach to gender mainstreaming across government by including a gender equality related set of performance indicators in the contracts of Permanent Secretaries against which they will be assessed. This initiative introduced by the Public Service Commission is relatively simple but has the potential to have a tremendous effect on changing behaviours and attitudes towards women in the Public Service, while advancing the development and implementation of gender equality policies and programmes across the government. For example, Permanent Secretaries will have to demonstrate 'evidence of gender sensitivity within the recruitment and selection process in the Ministry'; and 'zero tolerance' of workplace harassment including sexual harassment. They will also be required to appoint a gender focal point, develop a gender implementation strategy as part of their Corporate Plan, collect and disseminate gender statistics and profiles, and report on their ministry's progress on gender mainstreaming as part of annual reporting processes.

National machineries (NMs) for women

NMs are government offices, departments, commissions or ministries that provide leadership, coordination, monitoring and support for government efforts to achieve greater gender equality. They are critical in ensuring governance and development in their country or territory is responsive to women's needs and human rights, yet they remain highly marginalised in most PICTs. The gender mainstreaming capacity stocktakes referred to earlier shared similar findings in relation to NMs, i.e. they have insufficient staff and budget; their location in the government gives them little capacity to influence national and sectoral policies; and their mandate is not always clear in terms of coordination and monitoring.

Many PICTs (Cook Islands, Solomon Islands) have reviewed or are in the process of reviewing (Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Marshall Islands, Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu) their national women's/gender policy. None of the French Pacific territories have a national gender policy. All policies demonstrate a shift from a 'women in development approach' to a 'gender equality and women's empowerment' approach with specific targets for addressing the causes of gender inequality. Most policies have also set the development of the government's capacity to mainstream gender as a key policy outcome. The revision of policy provides a good opportunity to revise the mandate of the NMs to focus on a coordination and policy advisory role. This would be a major shift for NMs and they would need support from government, civil society organisations and development partners in this transition. This requires different capacities, adequate resources, strategic positioning within government

to facilitate a crosscutting and coordination role with the ability to influence decision making, and increased collaboration and partnership with sectoral ministries, national entities and civil society organisations.

Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP)

CROP agencies include the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), SPC, Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency, Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, South Pacific Tourism Organisation, University of the South Pacific, Pacific Islands Development Programme, Fiji School of Medicine and the Pacific Power Association.

A strong call was made to CROP agencies by the 11th Triennial Conference to strengthen their capacity to provide gender responsive services to PICTs, to encourage gender mainstreaming and accountability. Changes have been slow at this level too.

In 2012, both PIFS and SPC underwent an external review of their programmes. The PIFS review drew attention to regional activities and how they assist in advancing national interests. Whilst the fundamental importance of dealing with issues associated with disabilities, gender and human rights was not disputed, the difficulties in allocating priority to initiatives within domestic budgets were apparent. A key recommendation of the external review of SPC's programmes was to strengthen organisational capacity to mainstream gender across all its programmes.

In 2012, CROP heads endorsed the establishment of the CROP Gender Working Group which had previously met on a more informal basis. Its objectives are to:

- ▶ assist and collaborate in the implementation of the CROP gender stocktake report;
- ▶ collaborate in addressing gender issues and concerns regionally where appropriate;
- ▶ identify emerging and high priority gender related issues and ensure that these are brought to the attention of CROP heads as appropriate;
- ▶ ensure that the principles of gender equality and human rights are included as primary components of all work undertaken by CROP at international, regional and national level; and
- ▶ assist all CROP organisations to coordinate efforts and combine skills and resources to help countries address important emerging or on-going priority issues relating to advancing gender equality.

The first meeting of the formal working group will be held in October 2013 following the ministerial meeting.

CROP agencies and development partners also have a responsibility to mainstream gender at corporate level and across their programmes and services to countries, so that gender mainstreaming is not an addition but an integral part of the mainstreaming development agenda. Although there have been strong commitments made through several global,

regional and national instruments, little attention has been given to the gender perspective in macroeconomic and trade policies, climate change and disaster preparedness initiatives, and sustainable energy. A gender capacity stocktake of CROP agencies undertaken several years ago highlighted the lack of expertise and capacity on gender in regional organisations. Regrettably, this situation has not improved and gender expertise across CROP agencies is either limited or non-existent.

SPC has developed a simple but comprehensive mechanism to monitor organisational gender equality commitments – the Gender Commitments Monitoring Framework. It allows for regular and systematic planning and tracking of implementation of gender equality related commitments and requirements across the organisation. The results are reviewed six monthly by a Gender Mainstreaming Committee comprising representatives of the executive, corporate services, planning, programmes and the staff committee. The results are reported regularly in SPC's Annual Reports, and at governing body meetings. The mechanism allows for status reviews, prioritisation of gap areas, implementation planning, allocation of resources and analysis of progress over time. This mechanism was developed for all CROP agencies, but its adoption has not been systematic.

Regional mechanisms to support the advancement of women

Sexual Gender Based Violence Working Group: In response to the serious nature of sexual and gender based violence and the regional concern that this has far-reaching human security consequences, the Forum Reference Group to Address Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) was endorsed by the Forum Regional Security Council. The Reference Group is an independent high-level group of experts established by the Forum Regional Security Committee to guide the Forum Secretariat and support Forum members' efforts to implement the 2009 Forum Leaders' decision to address SGBV in the region. The Reference Group comprises representatives of the government of Solomon Islands, Tonga, Kiribati; civil society; and SPC and the UN Women Pacific.

Regional Peace and Security Action Plan and Working Group: The Pacific is the only region to endorse the Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. The formulation of the action plan was informed by the efforts of Pacific activists who belong to the Pacific Women's Media and Policy Network on UN Security Council Resolution 1325. Coordinated by FemLINKPACIFIC, the group includes Leitana Nehan Women's Development Agency, Vois Blong Mere Solomon and Ma'a Fafine mo e Famili of Tonga.

The implementation of the action plan is monitored by a PIFS Reference Group on Women, Peace and Security which includes representatives of governments (Marshall Islands, Papua New Guinea and Tonga) and civil society (FemLINKPACIFIC and Leitana Nehan Women's Development Agency), with support from UN agencies and SPC.

The action plan focuses on three pillars: (i) gender mainstreaming and women's leadership in conflict prevention and management, political decision-making and peace building and peacekeeping; (ii) gender mainstreaming and women's participation in security sector oversight and accountability; and (iii) protection of women's human rights in transitional and post-conflict contexts.

The Regional Action Plan is a crucial step in acknowledging how women continue to play an important role in brokering peace. It also now ensures that the annual Pacific Islands Forum Regional Security Committee has two standing agenda items addressing gender, conflict, peace and security.

Regional commitments

Revised Pacific Platform for Action (RPPA): Delegates from all 22 of SPC's island member countries and territories met in Noumea in 1994 and endorsed a set of principles and plan of action to advance gender equality in the region. The Pacific Platform for Action was then taken to the Fourth World Conference on Women, 1995, which produced the Beijing Declaration and Beijing Platform for Action. Since the Pacific Platform for Action (1994) and Beijing Platform for Action (1995) were adopted, PICTs have used them to guide national and regional action and international cooperation to empower women in achieving political, legal, social and cultural rights.

In 2004, the Pacific Platform was reviewed at the 9th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women and Second Pacific Ministers Meeting on Women (Nadi, Fiji). Twenty PICTs adopted the Revised Pacific Platform for Action on the Advancement of Women and Gender Equality 2005–2015 as a 'living document'.

Progress in implementing RPPA commitments is monitored through the Triennial Conference of Pacific Women. The RPPA will expire in 2015 and PICTs will need to decide if it is necessary to review the Platform and agree on new priorities on with a set of refined targets and indicators.

Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration: *Forum Leaders adopted the Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration in 2012. The Declaration brought 'new determination and invigorated commitment' to five key areas: women in decision making, women's economic empowerment, ending violence against women, health and education, and gender responsive government programmes and policies. Following the Leaders' direction for annual reporting on country progress in implementing the Declaration, a performance monitoring framework to track progress was developed. The progress report uses development indicators based on data already available in the region, primarily from SPC's National Minimum Development Indicators (NMDI), and is aligned with the 2013 Pacific Regional Millennium Development Goals (MDG) report. This pilot reporting framework, reviewed by technical experts and statisticians, will be further subject to country level consultation. Country consultations and capacity building for Forum Island Countries on the Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration Progress Report are planned.*

Panel Discussion

The panel was composed of: Eliam Tangirongo, Chairman - Public Service Commission, Solomon Islands; Kevin Hosking, Senior Statistician, Cook Islands; Asita Molotii, Director of Women, Office of Prime Minister, Tuvalu; Kathryn Relang, Director, Women United Together Marshall Islands (WUTMI).

The first panel member, the Chairman of the Public Service Commission, Solomon Islands, gave examples of successful ways Solomon Islands is implementing gender mainstreaming across its government. These include appointing gender focal points within government departments, documenting evidence of gender sensitivity within recruitment, and implementing a zero-tolerance policy on workplace harassment, including sexual harassment. Gender assessments are now part of the portfolio of things considered in hiring and dismissal decisions made by government.

The Cook Islands' Senior Statistician, Ministry of Finance and Economic Management, discussed using statistics to get a better perspective on gender equality and inequality in Cook Islands. This information could be useful to develop policies that are more gender sensitive and benefit more people.

The Director of Women, Office of Prime Minister, Government of Tuvalu, stated that women's equity has gained status in Tuvalu, resulting in it being represented in the Office of the Prime Minister. Being in the Office of the Prime Minister provide her with more leverage to influence decision making made at high level and coordinate better with other ministries.

The Director, Women United Together Marshall Islands (WUTMI), noted that disconnects often exist between governments and the community and that CSOs can help fill these gaps. WUTMI, for example, has been a recipient or a sub-recipient of grants to implement surveys and other projects in agriculture, education, and health, including tuberculosis, sexually transmitted infections, and HIV/AIDS. WUTMI partners with a variety of government departments including the Ministries of Justice and Health.

Women's legal and human rights

Ruby Awa, Senior Trainer, Regional Rights Resource Team (RRRT), SPC, presented an overview of progress in Pacific women's legal and human rights.

KEY GENDER EQUALITY ISSUES IN THE REGION

During the 11th Triennial Conference, it was noted that there is a need for ongoing assistance in the ratification, reporting and implementation of CEDAW, as well as in developing CEDAW-compliant legislation. The outcomes also specifically noted 'the lack of legislative measures, policies and plans for the elimination of violence against women and girls.' High rates of violence against women (VAW) were identified, along with a need to ensure that national policies and plans are developed and adequately resourced in order to address violence against women. Additionally, it was highlighted that the Pacific region has the lowest level of representation of women in national legislatures. Conference outcomes recommended the need to implement temporary special measures and affirmative action in electoral quotas to address this.

Since the 11th Triennial Conference, Pacific Island Forum Leaders adopted the *Pacific Leaders' Gender Equality Declaration 2012*. This reaffirms the Leaders' commitment to gender responsive policies and programmes targeting violence against women, embracing women's participation in all levels of decision making, promoting gender responsive legislation,



and overall aiming to improve equality and outcomes for women. To fulfil the Leaders' commitment, it was recognized that necessary investments in capacity building and the development and resourcing of policies, programmes, implementation and accountability mechanisms, are critical to galvanise real progress towards gender equality.

This paper discusses the progress that has been made in these areas since the 11th Triennial Conference, including challenges in achieving these outcomes, and recommendations for the future.

UPDATE ON NEW AND ONGOING INITIATIVES

This section of the paper provides an update of new and ongoing initiatives in advancing women's legal and human rights.

CEDAW

The importance of CEDAW ratification, reporting, implementation and the development of CEDAW compliant legislation was identified in the 11th Triennial Conference. The use of CEDAW as a catalyst for change has contributed to the passing of legislation in the area of family law, domestic violence and employment relations. As at July September 2013, all Pacific Island countries and territories (PICTs) except Tonga, have either signed or ratified CEDAW. PICTs that are party to the convention have submitted initial and periodic reports, with Kiribati, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) and Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI) having put in place national consultation processes to enable the State to complete and submit national reports. However, implementation of CEDAW at the national level remains a challenge, particularly in progressing States' obligations under Article 2, to 'embody the principle of the equality of men and women in their national constitutions or other appropriate legislation' and to adopt appropriate legislative and other measures 'prohibiting all discrimination against women'. It is essential to note that CEDAW must also be considered in parallel with other human rights conventions, such as the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (CRPD)² in order to ensure that the intersectional discrimination faced by women with disabilities is addressed.

2 UN General Assembly, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: resolution / adopted by the General Assembly, 24 January 2007, A/RES/61/106 <<http://www.refworld.org/docid/45f973632.html>> at 30 September 2013.

VAW

VAW is a significant long-term threat to the economic, social and cultural well-being and security of PICTs. It has multiple human rights ramifications, resulting in not only trauma to women, families and communities, but also engendering productivity losses through resultant health issues, inability to advance in education or training, and loss of employment. States and civil society have utilised the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) system to highlight human rights issues, of which concerns regarding gender, in particular violence against women, were highlighted as significant³. A group particularly affected by VAW is women with disabilities, who experience higher levels of both physical and sexual violence compared to other women.⁴

Since the 11th Triennial Conference, the Leaders' Gender Equality Declaration 2012 was a recommitment to progressively implement a package of essential services for women and girls who are survivors of violence. Leaders also recommitted to enact and implement legislation regarding sexual and gender-based violence to protect women from violence, whilst imposing appropriate penalties for perpetrators of violence.

Recent national studies have been undertaken to improve the level of knowledge in the Pacific of the prevalence, causes and consequences of violence against women, particularly domestic violence (DV). Country studies have been completed in Samoa, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Tonga, Fiji and Kiribati. These have been completed under the auspices of the United Nations Population Fund's Violence Against Women Project, implemented by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), supported by AusAID, and using the World Health Organization methodology. An important feature of the methodology is a global comparison of prevalence and other VAW indicators. Studies in an additional five countries – Cook Islands, FSM, RMI, Nauru and Palau – are to be completed. At the end of 2014 there will be comparable national prevalence data for 11 PICTs.

Thus far, reports indicate alarming rates of prevalence of violence against women. They show very high levels of severe physical and sexual violence experienced by women in intimate relationships. For example, in 2011 it was found that 51 per cent of women surveyed in Vanuatu had experienced physical violence, 44 per cent had experienced sexual violence and 60 per cent had experienced physical and/or sexual violence.⁵ In 2010/2011 in Fiji it was found that 64 per cent of women reported having experienced physical violence, sexual violence, or both by a male partner or husband.⁶

3 Secretariat of the Pacific Community Pacific, *Island States and the Universal Periodic Review* (2012) <<http://www.rrrt.org/publications-media/item/69>> at 09 September 2013.

4 Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, *2013 Pacific Regional MDG Tracking Report* (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Fiji, 2013).

5 Vanuatu Women's Centre and Vanuatu National Statistics Office, *Vanuatu National Survey on Women's Lives and Family Relationships* (2011) <<http://www.usaid.gov.au/countries/pacific/vanuatu/Documents/womens-centre-survey-womens-lives.pdf>> at 11 September 2013.

6 Fiji, Presentation of Initial findings of the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre (FWCC) study, *National Research on Women's Health and Life Experiences in Fiji (2010/2011)- a survey exploring the prevalence, incidence and attitudes to intimate partners violence in Fiji* (Fiji Women's Crisis Centre), 2011.

Despite high rates of violence in the Pacific, access to support services and protection through the justice system for survivors of violence and their families is low.⁷ This remains a consistent challenge for the Pacific region and at present, only four countries, Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa and Solomon Islands, have specific violence against women policies and plans.

The Forum Reference Group to Address Sexual and Gender-based Violence was formed in 2009 to raise awareness about sexual and gender-based violence in the Pacific and invigorate the commitment of Forum Leaders to eradicate sexual and gender-based violence and ensure that all individuals have equal protection under the law and equal access to justice. In early 2013, the Reference Group commenced the first phase of a major project to identify the economic costs of violence against women. This was in response to growing recognition worldwide that violence against women has economic implications, either through direct medical and healthcare costs or loss of productivity. After the first phase of the project, which resulted in an assessment of the economic cost of violence against women in Kiribati and Solomon Islands, plans to support similar assessments in other PICTs are under discussion. These studies will not only provide advocacy support for accelerated efforts in preventing and eliminating violence against women, but will also inform overall planning and targeted policy responses at a national level.

VAW legislation

There have been some important changes in the region since the 11th Triennial Conference. Some examples of recent changes and new legislation addressing the issue in the region include:

FSM: Specific DV Offence created under *Pohnpei Family Violence Bill 2012* and *Kosrae Domestic Violence Bill 2012*.

Fiji: Passed *Domestic Violence Decree 2011*. VAW part of the National Women's Plan of Action (2010–2019).

Kiribati: Draft *Family Peace Bill* currently undergoing national consultations. Developed *National approach to eliminating sexual and gender-based violence – Policy and Strategic Action Plan (2011–2021)*.

RMI: Passed *Domestic Violence Prevention and Prohibition Act 2011*.

Samoa: Protection orders available under the *Family Safety Act 2013*; DV referred to in Crimes Act 2013, which also provides a wide definition of 'rape' and rape within marriage. VAW is covered under policy objectives in the *National Policy for Women of Samoa 2010–2015* and the *National Policy for Children in Samoa 2010–2015*.

Solomon Islands: *Draft Family Protection Bill*, issued in 2013, provides for DV offence. The *Child and Family Welfare Bill* is pending cabinet ratification. The High Court confirmed that the common law marital exemption does not apply for the offence of rape in Solomon Islands in the case of *Regina v Gua*.⁸

7 AusAID, *Annual Review of Development Effectiveness 2008 (2009)* <http://www.ode.usaid.gov.au/publications/pdf/arde_report-2008.pdf> at 11 September 2013.

8 [2012] SBHC 118; HCSI-CRC 195 of 2011 (8 October 2012).

Tonga: Passed the Family Protection Bill 2013.

Tuvalu: Draft *Family Protection and Domestic Violence Bill 2011*, which is currently undergoing national level consultations.

Papua New Guinea (PNG): The Draft *Family Protection Bill 2013* was recently endorsed by cabinet for introduction into parliament.

Vanuatu: Developing the National Gender and Women's Empowerment Policy 2013–2023. The *Vanuatu Family Protection Act 2008* was enacted in 2009, and is being implemented by the Department of Women's Affairs.

In addition, crimes that are committed under the label of 'sorcery' are increasingly being recognised as having gender-based elements. The PNG parliament repealed their Sorcery Act in May this year, due to the challenges in proving 'sorcery'. Women's rights activists have lobbied to remove 'sorcery' as a crime and to prosecute crimes committed under the label of sorcery under normal criminal code provisions, including rape, torture, sexual assault and kidnapping.

Whilst progress has been made since the 11th Triennial Conference, the development and implementation of gender-sensitive legislation, national policies and action plans remains a challenge. The absence of comprehensive legislation that adequately addresses all forms of VAW is noted and further reform is required to ensure adequate redress for women in situations of violence. The link between domestic violence legislation and adequate updated family law legislation is but one example. This approach does not address systemic discrimination against women.⁹ While data on VAW are readily available, it is not well used in developing policies, supporting legislative reform or supporting programme development. A human rights and evidence-based approach is critical for this purpose.

Coordination mechanisms such as national committees and sub-committees have faced significant challenges in addressing the needs of women and families. The SAFENET referral mechanisms developed to address sexual and gender-based violence prevention and response requires significant strengthening in the form of human resource capacity and adequate financial allocations. In general, budget allocations have not increased to meet the rising demands of sectoral capacities and services, nor has there been a significant increase in the resourcing and functions of national women's machineries within government.

Additionally, where countries have not revised their legislation, gender-based violence is not recognized as a specific crime. Rather than insisting on effective punishment as deterrence, emphasis continues to be placed on reconciliation. The challenges ahead now lie with ensuring that newly enacted legislation is resourced, implemented and monitored.

9 P I Jalal, *Good Practices in Legislation on Violence against Women; A Pacific Islands Regional Perspective (2008)* <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/vaw_legislation_2008/expertpapers/EGMGPLVAW%20Paper%20_P%20Imrana%20Jalal_.pdf> at 10 September 2013.



Women in decision making

One of the key issues highlighted in both regional and international commitments include addressing barriers to women's political participation. Equality of women and men in the realm of political life is recognised as a human right in international frameworks. For example, in CEDAW Article 7, it is outlined that State parties should take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of a country. In the Pacific region, gender balance in legislatures is uneven and generally slower than in other parts of the world.¹⁰ According to the 2013 *Pacific Regional MDG Tracking Report*,¹¹ in Federated States of Micronesia, Palau and Vanuatu, women currently do not hold any seats in parliament. Additionally, FSM is one of three countries worldwide to never have elected a woman into their national office.¹² Male dominated parliaments tend not to pass legislation promoting gender equality, nor do they provide adequate resources towards policies for women's empowerment.

Most PICTs, including Samoa and Solomon Islands, use majority electoral systems, such as first past the post, which has been proven to be generally more favourable to men than women.¹³ Of the 162 candidates who stood for parliamentary in March 2011, only eight were women, and just two were elected. In early 2012, the Government of Samoa proposed to increase the number of women in parliament by creating a temporary special measure (TSM) through a constitutional amendment. The bill passed into law in June 2013, introducing

10 United Nations Development Programme, *Women's Representation in Local Government in Asia Pacific- Status Report 2010* (2010) <<http://www.undp.mn/publications/WomenInLocalGovernmentStatusReport2010.pdf>> accessed 10 September 2013.

11 Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, *2013 Pacific Regional MDG Tracking Report* (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Fiji, 2013).

12 Ibid.

13 J Fraenkel, *The Impact of Electoral Systems on Women's Representation in Pacific Parliaments: A Report Conducted for the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat by the Pacific Institute of Advanced Studies in Development & Governance (PIAS-DG)* (2007) <http://www.forumsec.org.fj/resources/uploads/attachments/documents/REPORT_2_A_Woman_s_Place_is_in_the_House_-_the_House_of_Parliament-51.pdf> accessed 10 September 2013.

a minimum quota of five women, or ten per cent, in the Samoan parliament. This indicates that allocating seats to women in parliament is slowly gaining momentum.

Vanuatu uses the single non-transferable vote system, which research shows may be more proportional in outcome, leading to more women being elected. Yet since independence in 1980, only five women have been elected as members of Vanuatu's parliament. Despite a record high in the number of women who ran in Vanuatu's 2012 national elections, none of the 17 women who contested succeeded in winning a seat. Volatile party structures and the lack of voluntary political party quotas for women within party structures, contribute to an environment that is not enabling for women candidates. There has, however, been progress at the municipal level, with the recent passing of the amendment to Vanuatu's *Municipality Act*, making it mandatory to reserve thirty to thirty-four per cent of seats for women in municipal councils. The Department of Women's Affairs recently commenced a comprehensive gender-responsive diagnostic of the 2012 elections, which highlights the specific challenges faced by women in getting elected. This diagnostic will better inform how to promote TSM measures in Vanuatu.

In Solomon Islands, since independence, only two women have been elected to the national parliament and at the provincial level, just over a dozen women have been provincial assembly elected members. It is in this regard that the Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs (MWYCFA) has pushed ahead the development of TSM reform as something stemming from the government's policy statement, rather it being a women's initiative. A TSM Legislative Taskforce was established in 2011 by the Government of Solomon Islands, to pursue TSM legislative and policy options, including re-visiting a 2009 TSM proposition. The taskforce reports to the Ministry for Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs, and the Prime Minister's Office. It engaged a researcher to identify appropriate measures, including TSM, which would be most relevant for Solomon Islands. The researcher identified three such options:

- ▶ enactment of the *Political Party Integrity Bill*, outlining the support women candidates would receive and options that would encourage parties to support them;
- ▶ change the electoral system, which has been recommended by the Political Integrity and Stability Project; and
- ▶ provide civic education on TSM for reserve seats for women in parliament.
- ▶ The taskforce and the MWYCFA have endorsed all the recommendations and are beginning the process of civic education and consultation with the general population on the mechanics of appropriate measures and TSM, within the context of the options highlighted by the research.

The taskforce conducted the first civic education and planning consultation in Honiara in September 2013, and plans to repeat this in the other nine provinces in Solomon Islands.

In addition to appropriate measures to promote gender-responsive governance through increased women's political participation and representation, actions must also reflect the multiple realities of women and men. There is a need to recognise that women are not a

homogenous group, whilst ensuring that all women, regardless of socio-economic origin or ethnic background, are provided with the opportunity and encouragement to contribute to women's political representation.

Panel Discussion

The panel was composed of Leituala Kuiniselani Toelupe Tago Elisara, Chief Executive Officer, Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development, Samoa; Virisila Buadromo, Executive Director, Fiji Women's Rights Movement; Dorosday Kenneth Lui, Director for Women, Vanuatu; Polotu Fakafanua-Paunga, Deputy CEO and Head Women's Affairs, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Tonga.

As the first panel member, the Chief Executive Officer, Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development, Samoa, presented Samoa's Constitutional Amendment on a TSM for women members of parliament. There have been women in Samoa's parliament since 1971, although often only two or three. Samoa's Constitution Amendment Act 2013 provides for a minimum of 10% seats (equivalent to five seats) for women members of parliament. If five or more women are elected into parliament after any election, the amendment will have no effect. Using a flexible formula, if no woman is elected to parliament, the five women candidates who receive the highest number of votes will occupy the allocated seats in parliament, increasing the number of seats to 54. Elections scheduled for 2016 will test Samoa's new constitutional amendment and Samoa will report the results at the next Triennial Conference. The representative from Samoa also noted the fact that the Women Matai Survey, funded by PIFS, is currently in progress, and assistance has been received from the Government of Australia to increase women's involvement in political decision making.

The second panel member, Executive Director, Fiji Women's Rights Movement, reported that sexual and reproductive health services continue to be underfunded throughout the Pacific region. Successes in this area have come at the expense of other areas related to reproductive health, due to the lack of integration of women's issues in governments. Almost 50% of the Pacific population is under the age of 25 and adolescents have specific sexual health needs. For example, the low use of contraception among youth across the region constitutes a risk for increases in HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

The next panel member, Director for Women, Vanuatu, discussed progress in women's rights in Vanuatu, highlighting the importance of having gender sensitive policies in place. While the country enacted domestic violence legislation in 2009, it more recently approved TSMs for women in parliament. Vanuatu began a gender mapping exercise in June 2013.

The final panel member, Deputy CEO and Head Women's Affairs, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Tonga, presented on the Tonga Family Protection Bill. Lobbying for the bill's passage involved perseverance and understanding the working relationships between the different ministries and the different CSOs. The bill was also supported by RRRT. Creating champions in the cabinet and the legislative assembly, achieving government buy-in through a cabinet decision, establishing strong relationships with the attorney general's office and the head of police, engaging key NGOs, and nurturing relationships with development partners, were all important parts of lobbying to achieve approval.



Elimination of violence against women

Melissa Alvarado, EAW Programme Manager, UN Women Multi-Country Office Fiji, presented the regional overview.

KEY GENDER EQUALITY ISSUES IN THE REGION

Violence against women and girls has serious and wide-reaching consequences in relation to individuals, families, communities and countries as a whole. VAW in the Pacific is now recognised as a leading violation of human rights, a challenge to economic and social development, and a threat to human security. Pacific leaders are steadily paying more attention to measures to end VAW throughout the region. PICTs that have now completed VAW prevalence studies have paved the way for a much deeper understanding of the issue in these countries. In addition, these studies have allowed a more nuanced understanding of the issue through more in-depth analysis of prevalence data in each country. Comparisons between data sets from different countries show that the types of violence women experience vary considerably.

Studies have shown clear links between childhood and adult experiences of violence, with childhood violence putting both girls and boys at greater risk of either perpetrating violence or becoming victims of violence later in life. This knowledge can inform programming aimed at breaking the cycle of violence by working with young children, parents and communities to promote gender equitable attitudes and practices from very young ages. Pacific VAW studies also reveal that the majority of women who experience VAW do not seek help from services such as the police, health, social welfare, counsellors and the justice system. Better and more information may help to improve services for survivors of VAW, and reach out to women who feel silenced.

With this greater understanding of VAW and improvements in policy, legislation, programming and preventive actions, attention has turned to specific settings and populations as key to prevention and response actions. Examples include the increased engagement of youth in prevention strategies, the specific focus on the links between VAW and people living with disabilities, and the intertwined relationship between VAW and HIV. In all cases, the need for multi-sectoral responses to prevention and services has been affirmed. Prevention of violence has gained increased prominence. There are several ongoing and new initiatives to work with men and boys in communities, faith-based organisations, the workplace and in the field of sport, in partnership with women's organisations. In addition, VAW has become a leading concern in considering gendered responses to the cross-cutting issue of climate change-related disasters in the Pacific region.

To address VAW, it is necessary to adopt, review, and ensure the effective implementation of laws and comprehensive measures that criminalise violence against women and girls. Enacting legislation that provides for comprehensive multidisciplinary and gender-sensitive preventive and protective measures – such as emergency barring and protection orders and appropriate punishment of perpetrators – is essential.

VAW must also be adequately represented in the post-2015 agenda, with particular focus on three areas that address inter-related dimensions of gender inequality.

The debilitating fear or experience of violence. Due to the great physical and psychological harm to women and girls, this violence is a violation of human rights, constrains their ability to fulfill their true potential and carries great economic costs for the individual and society. Therefore, a resolve to eliminate violence must be a prerequisite for any future development agenda.

The often skewed distribution of capabilities, e.g. knowledge, good health, and sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, as well as the gender inequality regarding access to resources and opportunities, needs to be addressed with renewed urgency. These are the basic foundations for sustainable development and realising human rights.

The low numbers of women in public decision-making in institutions from national parliaments to local councils needs to be remedied to ensure that women's voices feature prominently in democratic institutions and public and private deliberations. The lack of women's voices in decision-making is noted, in particular in key institutions influencing public opinion and promoting accountability, such as the media and civil society. This lack is also found in private-sector institutions, such as in the management and governance of companies, and it has its roots in unequal power relations in the family and community.

Together, these three dimensions affect women's and girls' safety, economic and social security and their voices in shaping public policy priorities. All must be considered in a renewed development agenda to address VAW.

UPDATE ON NEW AND ONGOING INITIATIVES

At the 2010 Pacific Islands Forum Leaders' Meeting, heads of governments acknowledged the initiative of the Forum Regional Security Committee to establish a Reference Group on Sexual and Gender Based Violence, and endorsed the creation of the mechanism to take forward the mandate from Leaders in 2009: that sexual and gender-based violence was a risk to human security and a potential destabilising factor for communities. Pacific Islands Forum Leaders mandated the reference group to raise awareness of the seriousness of sexual and gender-based violence and its impact on the Pacific. The reference group is an independent high-level group of experts, established to guide the Forum Secretariat and support Forum members' efforts to implement the 2009 Forum Leaders' decision to address sexual and gender-based violence in the region. Part of the work of the group is to consider options for costing the far-reaching economic and social impact of VAW on individuals and governments, and also to consider implementation of laws and policies in order to assist with resource allocation to essential services and initiatives to prevent violence.

Leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum met in 2012 to recommit to efforts to lift the status of women in the Pacific and empower them to be active participants in economic, political and social life. Leaders expressed concern that, despite some positive initiatives to address violence against women, overall progress in the region towards gender equality is slow, and violence against women remains unacceptably high. To realise this goal, Leaders committed with renewed energy to implement the gender equality actions of the Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Millennium Development Goals, the Revised Pacific Platform for Action on the Advancement of Women and Gender Equality (2005 to 2015), the Pacific Plan and the 40th Pacific Islands Forum commitment to eradicate sexual and gender-based violence. Specific actions to address VAW were outlined, including progressively implementing a package of essential services (protection, health, counselling, legal) for women and girls who are survivors of violence, and enacting and implementing legislation regarding sexual and gender-based violence to protect women and impose appropriate penalties for perpetrators of violence.

In 2012, the governments of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands invited the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, for official country visits. Her official reports, released in 2013, presented findings and specific recommendations for each country. Both governments are taking action to address the recommendations in the reports. In addition, the UN Rapporteur released a seminal report in 2013 on state responsibility for the elimination of VAW, another tool that states and civil society organisations can use for advocacy and implementation. This report underscores the importance of states' addressing the need of individuals for appropriate responses and justice, as well as the need to establish functional systems for response, prevention and accountability.

In 2013, the Forty-Fourth Pacific Islands Forum was held, attended by heads of state and governments from across the Pacific region. Leaders acknowledged the progress that had been made towards the Pacific Leaders' Gender Equality Declaration, including several PICTs enacting national legislation regarding the Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination against Women; and enactment of legislation specific to various types of VAW. Leaders also acknowledged the Pacific Islands Forum Reference Group to Address

Sexual and Gender Based Violence and reiterated that sexual and gender-based violence is not to be tolerated. They also acknowledged the important role of police and community agencies.

In 2013, Pacific governments and civil society representatives were closely involved with negotiations on developing the Agreed Conclusions during the Commission on the Status of Women. States are now using the Agreed Conclusions as a new guide for preventing and eliminating violence against women. In July 2012, parliamentarians joining in a regional human rights consultation hosted by SPC's Regional Rights Resource Team, issued the Participating Pacific members of Parliament UNITE Statement. The statement affirmed a strong commitment to preventing and responding to violence against women, children and persons with a disability, and was aligned with the UN Secretary General's UNITE campaign to end violence against women.

Some Pacific governments, such as Kiribati and Solomon Islands, have developed policies to address gender-based violence and have adopted national action plans. These plans provide a framework of priority actions for implementation, resourcing and monitoring, and can be used by both government and development partners to provide support and monitor progress. It is critical that all of the relevant partners, including government agencies and civil society organisations, are engaged in this process. Additionally, adequate resourcing is key.

New research by the UN, released in September this year, has shown that 23 per cent of men who were interviewed about their perpetration of sexual violence against women admitted to committing at least one rape. The UN Multi-country Study on Men and Violence in Asia and the Pacific interviewed over 10,000 men in six countries in Asia and the Pacific. The findings reveal feelings of sexual entitlement, or notions that a man has the right to have sex with a woman whether or not she consents. In Bougainville, 62 per cent of men admitted to forcing a woman to have sex. Of these, just under half had perpetrated this crime more than once. Men who had themselves suffered violence as a child were more likely to commit rape and partner violence. More than half of non-partner rape perpetrators first did so as adolescents (19 years of age or younger), which points to young people as an especially important population to engage for prevention of rape, before that first act is committed.

PICTs are developing new and improved ways of responding to VAW in a more coordinated and survivor-centered manner. Referral networks and systems that are more comprehensive and engage more providers are gaining prominence. Service providers are continuing to develop ways of ensuring that survivors get more direct access to help by setting up hotlines and monitoring referrals to other agencies. Providers are collecting more detailed data about survivors and cross-checking some of that information with other agencies in order to better target and improve services, as is the case in Kiribati and Solomon Islands.

Across the region there have also been improvements in addressing VAW through legislation. Please refer to Agenda Item 3: Overview Paper on Women's Legal and Human Rights for a list of key achievements with regard to VAW legislation. Whilst there has been progress with regard to legislation, the absence of comprehensive legislation that adequately addresses all forms of VAW is noted, and further reform is also required to ensure adequate redress for women in situations of violence. Additionally, where countries have not revised their legislation, gender-based violence is not recognised as a specific crime. The challenges

ahead now lie with ensuring that newly enacted legislation is resourced, implemented and monitored.

Yet whilst there are some improvements in preventing and responding to VAW, there is still much work to be done in addressing this issue. For the majority of women survivors of violence, access to services remains, unfortunately, still out of reach. Skilled providers that can provide high quality, sensitive, confidential services are needed across sectors: health, social welfare, police, justice and education. Each of these service providers need specific guidelines to deliver responses to survivors of VAW, responses that are developed in collaboration with survivors of VAW as the experts and that are consistently enforced and monitored. Service providers must work with each other; no one type of service can solve the problem alone. Women's access to justice remains very limited, particularly to formal justice systems. Women who experience violence need impartial and fair treatment by all protection and justice actors, who take violence very seriously and act immediately to protect the woman and her family. Systems for government accountability are needed to ensure that commitments are fulfilled in a progressive manner; various government departments can assist in holding each other accountable, with support from civil society. Increased attention to preventing violence before it starts is essential to interrupting the cycle of violence and creating future generations that live without the fear and consequences of violence. And finally, the cultivation of a supportive, non-blaming environment for survivors of VAW is essential to allow women to break their silence about violence, tell their story and receive the help they deserve. Responsibility for violence must be placed where it belongs: with the perpetrators of violence.

Panel discussion

The panel was composed of Anne Kautu, Senior Women's Development Officer, Ministry for Internal and Social Affairs, Kiribati; Marilyn Rose Tahigogona, Coordinator of the Vanuatu Women's Centre; Superintendent Akatauiru Matapo, Cook Islands Police Service; Daisy Alik-Momotaro, Secretary, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Marshall Islands.

The first panel member, Senior Women's Development Officer, Kiribati Ministry for Internal and Social Affairs, announced that Kiribati established its Ministry for Women in the second half of 2013. The government of Kiribati is providing instruction on gender-based violence (GBV) in education and in training centres, working closely with males in the sectors. She said, 'NGOs are a very important part of eliminating GBV', notably in development of law reform.

The second panel member, Coordinator of the Vanuatu Women's Centre, discussed how the Women's Centre enters communities to conduct dialogues and raise awareness in areas where people live. Trained community members and leaders participate in leading the dialogues, providing counselling, and making referrals.

The next panel member, Superintendent of the Cook Islands Police Service, announced that Cook Islands appointed a Domestic Violence Police Officer and established rules for her to follow. Cook Islands has a 'no-drop' policy on prosecutions of domestic violence and the Police Service developed a manual of best practices, in consultation with other stakeholders, for dealing with this crime and its victims. The Police Service conducts ongoing SGBV training for staff and non-sworn officers, including supplemental training for supervisors.

The final panel member, Secretary, Marshall Islands Ministry of Internal Affairs, discussed the Marshall Islands' law on GBV, the Initiative for a Better Response to Address Violence Everywhere (iBRAVE), which was passed in 2011. iBRAVE is executed at the community and policy levels. To get the law passed, stakeholders identified a male champion in parliament and other supporters who lobbied lawmakers. UNDP provided assistance with the costing exercise after the law was passed.

Women's Access to Services – Education



Resina Katafono, PIFS MDG Regional Adviser, presented a regional overview women's access to services – education. Gender parity has improved and now most Pacific countries are close to gender parity in primary and secondary school.

KEY GENDER EQUALITY ISSUES IN THE REGION

International literature acknowledges that women who have higher levels of education benefit in many ways: they tend to receive higher incomes; have a better standard of living; have fewer, better educated and more well-nourished children; and make more use of health services for their families and themselves than do women with lower education levels. The benefits of education are evidently multigenerational, but a high level of education does not always equate to better employment outcomes for women as a result of traditional expectations about women's work, gender barriers and stereotypes.¹⁴

The *2013 Pacific Regional MDG Tracking Report*¹⁵ highlights a number of key issues that are faced by women and girls in the Pacific with regard to access to education. For example, most PICTs have achieved close to gender parity, yet successful completion of primary school and secondary education remains a challenge for several PICTs that are not within the percentage range to achieve gender parity. Issues that also affect enrolment and retention rates

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ Ibid.

amongst girls include: pregnancy, risks associated with travelling to education institutions and centres, early marriage, insecure toilet facilities, risks of harassment and sexual assault from students and teachers, and the direct and indirect costs associated with education.¹⁶ The opportunity costs of attending school can also be a factor. Some girls are required to stay at home to care for younger children or older relatives while parents work; whilst other families may need girls to seek employment in order to contribute to family incomes.

These challenges are in addition to access to education concerns for the broader community, which include: increased urbanisation resulting in higher population density and more intensive utilisation of social and physical infrastructure, leading to overcrowding of facilities such as schools; increased poverty, which affects enrolment and retention rates; varied quality of education services; inequitable provision of good quality education to outer islands and remote rural communities; and the growing number of marginalised young people who are disengaged from schooling. Women and girls with disabilities also experience worse access to education and training than their non-disabled peers.

Women and girls also continue to be disadvantaged in technical and vocational education and training (TVET). Access for girls to TVET is limited by current traditional school curricula and career pathway options, which demarcate, through selection methods and study options, the traditional subjects of home economics for girls and technical trades for boys. Whilst scholarships have been allocated to open up opportunities for women and girls in vocational, trade and technical areas at post-secondary and tertiary level, the constraining secondary school context in terms of gender stereotyped curricula and learning pathways defeat the opportunities provided by these scholarships. Access to higher education is also limited by inflexible and outdated entry points prescribed by higher institutions; a lack of recognition of experience and skills gained in the informal sector; scholarship opportunities that limit participation of women and girls to those who have passed certain formal examinations and high level literacy tests; and a lack of curriculum resources, instructors and targeted structured programmes.

There is also a shortage of impact data available regarding women and girls' educational achievement at post-secondary and tertiary education, and the extent of Pacific women accessing scholarships and studying in professional and tertiary programmes. Whilst donors regularly undertake tracer impact studies on award recipients, these are not often disseminated to the public. They are also rarely used for policy development and planning in the prioritisation and awarding of scholarships, both at a regional and national level. More data are needed to contribute to a more accurate picture of Pacific women's and girls' access to education.

While there are a number of concerns regarding education for women and girls, it must be noted that, conversely, some PICTs, including Samoa, Fiji and Kiribati, have a reverse gender issue, where girls stay at school longer than boys and achieve better results. In Samoa, significantly more boys than girls are at risk in literacy and mathematics, according to standardised tests.¹⁷

The University of the South Pacific also has more female than male students and graduates. The question this situation poses is whether these educational achievements will later be translated into employment outcomes.

16 Ibid

17 Samoa Ministry of Education, *Sports and Culture, Educational Statistics Digest* (2010) < http://www.spc.int/prism/images/EducationDigests/SAMOA/Samoa_Stats_Digest_2010.pdf > at 3 October 2013.

One mechanism that seeks to guide and monitor initiatives in the region in addressing access to education and the quality of education is the Pacific Education Development Framework (PEDF) 2009–2015. One of its three strategic goals is: ‘to achieve universal and equitable participation and access to Pacific education and training’. The framework is grounded in two sets of imperatives. First, on the commitments made by Pacific countries to global education calls for action and, second, the national and regional response to the specific needs and challenges of education in the Pacific region. Global commitments include the Education for All agenda and goals, the Millennium Development Goals relating directly or indirectly to education, the United Nations Literacy Decade and also the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development.

An additional mechanism is the Pacific Qualifications Framework and the Pacific Register of Qualifications and Standards, managed by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), through the Secretariat of the Pacific Board for Education Assessment Quality. This aims to address challenges in relation to access to education, based on inflexible entry levels for higher level education for women and girls. It provides a basis for equivalent qualifications, recognises skills and experience, and enables portability of qualifications across different educational and professional domains in the Pacific region.

UPDATE ON NEW AND ONGOING INITIATIVES

Since the 11th Triennial Conference, a number of initiatives have begun in the region, or have been ongoing. In 2011, Pacific Leaders at the 42nd Pacific Islands Forum reaffirmed their commitment to raising educational standards, expanding vocational and technical training, and improving participation rates. Leaders welcomed Australia and New Zealand’s announcement that they would work to ensure 500,000 more children in the Pacific are enrolled in school and that 75 percent of children can read by the age of 10 by 2021. In 2012, the Forum Education Ministers meeting was held to discuss sustainable equality education and the progress made under the PEDF. It was found that, whilst progress had been made, there are still challenges in access to education, particularly for remote communities; narrow learning pathways through national curriculum, which limits opportunities for women and girls to engage in education that suits their interests and capabilities; and the gender issue, which relates to the trend in boys’ performance and enrolment.

Although not specific to women and girls, a key initiative in the region since the 11th Triennial Conference has been that of the Pacific Islands Literacy and Numeracy Assessment (PILNA) in 2012, which was used to set literacy and numeracy baselines amongst PICTs. A regional sample of about 27,000 Pacific Island pupils completing four and six years of primary schooling in 2012 in 14 countries was selected to be part of the assessment. All pupils who completed four and six years of primary education were target populations in the smaller countries, while a stratified cluster random sample of about 2000 pupils from each year level was taken in the seven larger countries. The key finding and conclusion is that the literacy and numeracy situation across PICTs is facing significant challenges. Seven in every ten students completing six years of formal primary school fail to acquire literacy skills expected at the end of six years’ schooling (70.8%) and five in every ten students (51.8%) in the case of numeracy, relative to the indications in the Regional Benchmarks for literacy and numeracy.

AusAID, regional universities and international agencies have been addressing the lack of resources and trained staff in the region in relation to climate change, non-communicable diseases, human security and TVET by offering research scholarships, curriculum and resource development, and training of trainers. A pilot programme for train-the-trainer and resource development work was undertaken in 2012 by GIZ, SPC and national education systems in Tonga and Vanuatu. The programme has resulted in 57 women trained in climate change mitigation responses at SPC's Community Education Training Centre alone, and more in Tonga and Vanuatu.

Country initiatives have also taken place. For example in 2010, Papua New Guinea (PNG) abolished school fees for the initial three years of schooling. Girls generally have experienced lower rates of enrolment in primary education than boys. A preliminary analysis of this approach since its implementation has shown that this initiative has increased primary school enrolments, particularly for girls. Tuvalu has also adopted an accelerated approach to improving the quality of education to address key concerns in meeting Millennium Development Goal 2, including issues related to lack of gender perspectives in service delivery. Interventions are in accordance with the Tuvalu Education Strategic Plan 2011–2015, and include developing and implementing professional standards for teaching staff, developing and implementing outcomes-based curricula, and implementing a standardised assessment for monitoring literacy and numeracy. Lastly, Tonga's Ministry of Education is currently implementing a gender audit of curricula to eliminate gender stereotypes.¹⁸

Panel Discussion

The panel was composed of Lia Maka, Head of the Community Education Training Centre (CETC), SPC; Gail Townsend, Executive Director, Ministry of Education, Cook Islands; Lanieta Tuimabu, Board and Women's Committee Member, Pacific Disability Forum, Fiji; Honourable Minister Maere Tekanene, Minister of Education, Kiribati.



¹⁸ Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, *2013 Pacific Regional MDG Tracking Report* (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Fiji, 2013).

The first panel member, the Head of the Community Education Training Centre (CETC), SPC, presented a short history of CETC, highlighting some of the graduates from its technical and vocational training programmes. She announced three new CETC publications: *Changing women communities of the Pacific: Five decades of SPC's Community Education Training Centre*, *The Pacific Mix 2: Traditional and modern recipes for the Pacific Islands*, and *Community Education Training Centre: Graduates 2004–2013*. In November 2013, CETC will be phased out and transitioned from SPC to the University of the South Pacific (USP), effectively ending its operations after 50 successful years of empowering women. Concluding her remarks, the Head of CETC emphasised the need for TSMs to be implemented for scholarships awarded to women studying TVET.

The second panel member, the Executive Director, Cook Islands Ministry of Education, spoke on teenage pregnancy and its impacts on women's education. In the past, young women who became pregnant generally left school and did not continue. In Cook Islands, health education is changing to promote good reproductive decision-making skills. Also, legislation has been adopted to prohibit schools from excluding a student because she is pregnant. The challenges that remain are sustaining professional development services on reproductive education, providing accessible facilities near schools for young mothers and mothers-to-be, and encouraging a change in belief about pregnancy and schools, which takes time to change.

The next panel member, a Board Member and Women's Committee Member of the Pacific Disability Forum, highlighted the situation for people with disabilities in schools. Existing school buildings do not have appropriate access for people with disabilities. There is also a shortage of teaching materials for people with disabilities. Women and girls with disabilities are often targeted for physical and sexual abuse, leading parents of girls with disabilities to withdraw their daughters from school. She concluded by stating that education is the key to advancement of women and girls with disabilities. It provides access to information and enables people with disabilities to communicate their needs. Common interests and experiences bring people with disabilities into contact with other students and enable confidence gains. Without a basic education, employment is almost impossible for people with disabilities. The eight Pacific countries that have not already done so should ratify the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*.

The final panel member, the Vice-chair and Honourable Minister of Education, Kiribati, began her comments by stating that there should be no denial of education for girls who become pregnant. Kiribati is updating its inclusive education legislation to include guaranteed education for students who can use their five senses. Kiribati is also creating an after-hours school for dropout students, as there has been an increased dropout rate for junior secondary schools. Some teachers teach less than ten pupils, and as a result Kiribati has introduced composite (or multi-grade) classes. These strategies can help education for all.



Women's Access to Services – Health

Dr Wame Baravilala, Reproductive Health Adviser, UNFPA Pacific Sub-Regional Office presented the regional overview on women's access to health services.

KEY GENDER EQUALITY ISSUES IN THE REGION

A key concern for Pacific Island countries and territories (PICTs) is that of women's access to health services, as outlined in the Revised Pacific Platform for Action, in which HIV/AIDS is also outlined as an emerging critical area. Women's health and access to health services is also identified as a concern in the 2013 Pacific Regional MDG Tracking Report (MDG Tracking Report).¹⁹ Of significance, are concerns regarding women's sexual and reproductive health, HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases (STIs), non-communicable diseases (NCDs), and health concerns faced by women with disabilities.

As identified in the 2013 Pacific Regional MDG Tracking Report, women face a number of challenges with regard to sexual and reproductive health. For example, the conditions under which women engage in sex may affect their health; low contraceptive use, coupled with unmet needs regarding family planning, leads to high fertility rates, particularly for young people; and violence against women (VAW) has an impact on a women's sexual and reproductive health. Women are also more vulnerable than men to contracting HIV and STIs. In addition, it was identified that women with a disability experience higher rates of violence than other women, including sexual violence, as well as overall poorer health outcomes.²⁰ These concerns are further compounded by difficulties in accessing health services. In addressing women's health concerns and access to health services in the region, it was identified during the 11th Triennial Conference that there is a need for strengthening monitoring and evaluation of health services, for support and collaboration on women's

¹⁹ Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, *2013 Pacific Regional MDG Tracking Report* (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Fiji, 2013).

²⁰ Ibid.

health issues amongst key actors, and for increased funding for health infrastructure and technology.

This paper will further discuss concerns regarding health and access to health services as mentioned above, outline what progress has been made in the region since the 11th Triennial Conference, and note key challenges and recommendations for the future.

KEY FINDINGS – INITIATIVES TO ADDRESS ISSUES

Sexual and reproductive health

Sexual and reproductive health is a key concern for PICTs. For example, disempowerment experienced by some women and girls may also lead to a lack of power to negotiate safe sex and family planning. Young women and men often have insufficient access to the information, tools and services they need to make decisions related to their sexual and reproductive health. There is also insufficient awareness of the sexual and reproductive health consequences of VAW, with women affected by VAW rarely seeking support from health workers.

Since the 11th Triennial Conference, there has been progress with regard to the sexual and reproductive health of women in the Pacific, but also challenges in addressing this issue. In the *ICPD Pacific Report*,²¹ there are three areas that have shown important improvement, as detailed below.

Compared to the 1990s, reported skilled birth attendant rates increased in all countries except three: Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Papua New Guinea (PNG) and Vanuatu. Nine countries reported most recent rates over 90 per cent; of these Cook Islands, Nauru, Niue and Palau reported 100 per cent skilled birth attendant rates. According to the 2012 MDG Tracking Report, Kiribati, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu reported rates below 90 per cent and PNG reported a rate less than 50 per cent; the latter three regressing.²²

In terms of maternal deaths, most Polynesian countries will achieve MDG 5a (Reduce the maternal mortality ratio by three quarters between 1990 and 2015) by 2015 but most Melanesian countries (where most of the deaths occur) will not. Of particular concern is the slow progress in Solomon Islands and Vanuatu and the regression noted in PNG. For Micronesia, the picture is mixed with respect to meeting MDG 5a target. It is noteworthy that, for most PICTs, the actual number of women who die in childbirth each year is a single digit, but each death is one death too many.²³

21 United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), *Pacific Regional ICPD Review, Review of the Implementation of the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action in the Pacific Beyond 2014* (2013) <<http://countryoffice.unfpa.org/pacific/?publications=7892>> at 1 Oct 2013.

22 Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2013 *Pacific Regional MDG Tracking Report* (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Fiji, 2013).

23 Ibid.

While adolescent fertility rates (births to women 15–19 years/1000 women 15–19 years) declined in eleven countries between 1990 and 2010–11, rates continue to be over 50 for five countries (Republic of the Marshall Islands, Nauru, PNG, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu). Persistently high adolescent fertility rates in some countries highlight the need for stronger focus on adolescent sexual reproductive health services and information.²⁴

Additionally, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) has been leading the development of the Pacific Sexual Health and Wellbeing Shared Agenda 2014–2018, to address sexual and reproductive health needs in the region. The Agenda, currently in development, will replace the Pacific Regional Strategy for HIV and other STIs, which ends this year. The Shared Agenda sets out the vision for addressing sexual health in the region, as identified by 22 Pacific Island governments, regional partners, civil society organisations and at risk groups. It examines how best to deliver comprehensive sexual health services and programmes to address interrelated sexual health issues, such as STIs and HIV, unintended pregnancy, gender-based violence and the promotion of positive, healthy relationships.

HIV/AIDS and STIs

STI rates are very high throughout PICTs, particularly amongst young people. These rates are associated with low levels of condom use, as is the spread of HIV, which is predominantly sexually transmitted. Again, self protection for women and girls, and a lack of power with regard to negotiating safe sex increases susceptibility to HIV and STIs. In PNG, HIV rates are approaching epidemic proportions. HIV is also well established in Guam, French Polynesia and New Caledonia.²⁵ Studies show that many women who are infected have been reached by HIV awareness programmes and possess a basic knowledge, yet this does not always lead to behaviour change on account of disempowerment, socio-cultural roles and low perceived risk.

Since the 11th Triennial Conference, there has been progress with regard to addressing HIV/AIDS and STIs in the Pacific, but also challenges in addressing this issue. The challenges are associated with 'incomplete or non-testing of affected individuals, leading to underreporting, [and] there may be other socio-cultural factors at play.'²⁶

In 2012, a draft human rights and gender equality policy was developed by the Pacific Islands Regional Multi-Country Coordinating Mechanism (PIRMCCM). This was submitted to the 12th PIRMCCM meeting and the Pacific Response Fund Committee (PRFC) meeting in June for final review. The policy was developed after consideration of the gender and women's human rights audit of the Implementation Plan for the second Pacific Regional Strategy on HIV and other Sexually Transmissible Infections 2009–2013 (PRSIP II). The policy recommends actions related to leadership, programme development and resource mobilisation, which address the specific inequities due to men's and women's different health risks and health seeking behaviours. 'Women and girls largely remain socially and economically vulnerable; they have less access and control over health information, care services and resources to

24 Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, *2013 Pacific Regional MDG Tracking Report* (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Fiji, 2013).

25 Ibid.

26 United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), *Pacific Regional ICPD Review, Review of the Implementation of the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action in the Pacific Beyond 2014* (2013) <<http://countryoffice.unfpa.org/pacific/?publications=7892>> at 1 Oct 2013, page 24.



protect their health. Violence against women (and gender-based violence) poses a threat to women's health and heightens their risks to STIs and HIV.²⁷

Some important gains have recently been outlined in the Pacific Regional ICPD Review, as described below.²⁸

Life-saving treatment for HIV has been provided to all those who need it and protocols have been put in place in a number of countries to eliminate mother-to-child transmission of HIV. In addition, there is greater attention being paid to the issues of stigma in order to ensure anonymity for pregnant women and their babies who are HIV positive, within the constraints of small countries and their small close knit communities.

The second *Pacific Regional Strategy on HIV and other Sexually Transmissible Infections 2009–2013* has been implemented across the North and South Pacific regions, funded by AusAID and actioned through the auspices of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) and its partners, including UNFPA. Its aim is to reduce the spread and impact of HIV and other STIs while providing support for people living with and affected by HIV in Pacific communities. In the majority of PICTs, persons living with HIV have accessed antiretrovirals (ARVs) and other treatments.

27 PRSIP11, *Gender and Women's Human Rights Audit of the Pacific Regional Strategy on HIV and other Sexually Transmissible Infections, 2009-2013* (PRSIP II) <http://www.spc.int/hiv/index2.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_view&gid=245&Itemid=148> at 1 October 2013.

28 United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), *Pacific Regional ICPD Review, Review of the Implementation of the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action in the Pacific Beyond 2014* (2013) <<http://countryoffice.unfpa.org/pacific/?publications=7892>> at 1 Oct 2013.

Lastly, PNG has developed its own National Health Plan (2011–2015) and National HIV/AIDS Plan (2011–2015) and has been taking steps to enhance its HIV surveillance system, with improvement in data quality as well as increased testing.

Non-communicable diseases

NCDs, such as diabetes, cancer and heart disease, are a significant concern for the Pacific region, causing eight in every ten deaths. In 2012, life expectancy dropped in Tonga as a result of NCDs. Yet even where NCDs are not fatal, they can cause disability and poor health.²⁹ Unhealthy diets, tobacco use, use of alcohol and physical inactivity are key causes of NCDs.³⁰ Cancer of the cervix, caused by the human papilloma virus (HPV), is also an NCD and rates of occurrence among Pacific women are among the highest in the world.³¹ Overall, the rates of NCDs are set to increase globally by 17% over the next ten years, with women experiencing the biggest increase. Biological differences, social marginalisation, social customs and gender roles mean that women and men are exposed to different NCD risks, with these factors contributing to an increased risk for women.³²

Since the 11th Triennial Conference, there has been progress with regard to focusing on non-communicable diseases. The 2011 Pacific Islands Forum Leaders meeting highlighted NCDs as being a major cause of premature death in the region. NCDs were held to be at epidemic proportions, creating a 'human, social and economic crisis'. Leaders adopted the Forum Leaders Statement on NCDs, and committed to take action in this area.³³

Eight PICTs, with assistance from the USA and New Zealand, are now vaccinating young women in school against the HPV virus, which aims to prevent cervical cancer. In Fiji, assistance from AusAID has supported vaccination for secondary school girls. There is encouragement from GAVI Alliance (Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation) for PNG and Solomon Islands to apply for pilot funding.

Women with disabilities

Women with disabilities face discrimination and stigma as a result of their disability and gender role. They experience overall worse health outcomes, high rates of physical and sexual violence that affect their health, cases of involuntary sterilisation,³⁴ and barriers to realising their sexual and reproductive rights.

29 World Bank, *Thwarting a Disease Crisis in the Pacific* (2013) <<http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2013/01/16/thwarting-a-disease-crisis-in-the-pacific>> at 11 September 2013.

30 Pan-American Health Organisation, *Non-Communicable Diseases and Gender* (2012) <

31 United Nations Population Fund, *The Impact of Non-Communicable Diseases on Reproductive Health in the Pacific, With Special Reference to the Health of Women and Girls* (2013) <http://countryoffice.unfpa.org/filemanager/files/pacific/TOR_NCDs.pdf> at 12 September 2013.

32 Pan-American Health Organisation, *Non-Communicable Diseases and Gender* (2012) <

33 United Nations Population Fund, *The Impact of Non-Communicable Diseases on Reproductive Health in the Pacific, With Special Reference to the Health of Women and Girls* (2013) <http://countryoffice.unfpa.org/filemanager/files/pacific/TOR_NCDs.pdf> at 12 September 2013.

34 Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, *2013 Pacific Regional MDG Tracking Report* (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Fiji, 2013).

Since the 11th Triennial Conference, there has been progress with regard to addressing concerns faced by women with disabilities in the Pacific. In 2013, a study entitled *A Deeper Silence* was completed by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), in which the health of women with disabilities residing in Kiribati, Solomon Islands and Tonga was considered. It was found that there is a lack of awareness regarding women with disabilities and their sexual and reproductive health needs. The consequences are particularly severe for women with disabilities who are also subject to social, cultural and economic disadvantages as a result of gender discrimination. It was also found that women and girls with disabilities are two to three times more likely to be victims of physical and sexual abuse than those without a disability.³⁵

The study not only provides a comprehensive snapshot of issues faced by women with disabilities, but also initiatives that are being undertaken in each of these countries. For example, since the 11th Triennial Conference, Kiribati has developed the Kiribati National Development Plan 2012–2015, which aims to strengthen support services for women and inclusion for people with a disability in decision making. The Draft Kiribati National Disability Policy 2011–2014 was also developed to meet the needs of people with a disability and dismantle barriers to equality.³⁶

Access to health services

Access to good health care remains a challenge in the Pacific region. Constraints to women's access to health services are numerous; they include social and cultural issues, the health care system itself, the set-up of sexual and reproductive health services, and access issues specific to different groups. With regard to the access issues, women who have been subjected to violence rarely report to health workers, although they may present with another health concern. Most health systems in the Pacific do not address VAW and those that do may not be sensitive, comprehensive or competent enough to deal with the issues. Women with disabilities may also require extra support and guidance to overcome barriers in accessing health services and seeking referrals. Health care providers require training to develop a sound understanding of VAW and disability issues, including how to sensitively support women in accessing health services.

The high level of migration is also an issue related to access to health services. Many health professionals, such as doctors, nurses, midwives and specialists, choose to move to countries such as Australia and New Zealand where opportunities and remuneration are better. The result is that the average health worker density for the Pacific is around three per 1000 compared to ten or more per 1000 in New Zealand and Australia. It is also difficult to attract doctors and nurses to rural communities, where services are limited. Many professional posts have been left unfilled, with severe consequences for the delivery of health services, especially in rural areas. There is also a lack of appropriately trained staff and a lack of opportunities for existing staff to receive refresher training.

With regard to a lack of medical staff, the 10th Pacific Health Ministers Meeting discussed health workforce development in the Pacific earlier this year. Several PICTs are in the

35 United Nations Population Fund, *A Deeper Silence* <<http://countryoffice.unfpa.org/pacific/drive/ADEEPERSILENCE.pdf>> at 11 September 2013.

36 Ibid.

process of implementing measures to improve their national health workforce. For example, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu have created task forces to address issues relating to human resources for health. A medical internship programme is also under way in Kiribati, from which a group of 18 medical graduates returned from Cuba in August 2013.³⁷

Additionally, a few countries have developed a gender policy and plan of action to be embedded in their Department of Health, to promote access to health services. The development of a gender policy and plan of action is crucial to ensuring equity between women and men as users and providers of health services. It can also take into account specific needs and considerations, such as geographic isolation with regard to sexual and reproductive health services, and can support same-sex health service providers where concerns relate to sensitive issues.

Solomon Islands and Fiji are two examples in which promising initiatives for gender-sensitive policy development can be found. In Solomon Islands, the Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS) has designated a Gender Focal Point in the Police Department. The MHMS engages with the national committee for implementation of the Gender Equality and Women's Development (GEWD) policy, through chairing sub-committees and hosting the coordination of the SAFENET 'whole of government' mechanism for prevention and response to violence against women and children. In Fiji, the Health Sector Support Programme has recently undergone an assessment to promote gender equality and social inclusion, leading to recommendations. These include recommendations at the strategic policy level and interventions by the Ministry of Health in line with Fiji's *Roadmap for Democracy and Sustainable Socio-Economic Development (2009–2014)* and the Ministry of Health's *Shaping Fiji's Health: Strategic Plan (2011–2015)* at the organisational and community level.

Panel Discussion

The panel was composed of Gaylene Tasmania, Director for Community Development, Ministry for Community Affairs, Niue; Mme Eliane Tevahitua, Member of the French Polynesia Territorial Assembly, French Polynesia; Amelia Rokotuivuna, Young Woman Member, YWCA Fiji; Paulini Saurogo Turagabeci, Young Women Project Coordinator, YWCA Fiji.

The first panel member, the Director for Community Development, Ministry for Community Affairs, Niue, stated that some development partners collect data on NCDs and governments need to be able to access and use it. Government agencies also need to develop policies to empower development partners and NGOs. Often, NGOs can use project funding more efficiently than government agencies.

The second panel member, Mme Eliane Tevahitua, Member of the French Polynesia Territorial Assembly, stated that a mass territorial gynaecological cancer-testing regime could diminish mortality from HPV and STIs. Also, women should make claims for parity in parliament if they want women's public health issues to become priorities. This would help make the annual budget allocated to screening more sustainable.

³⁷ World Health Organisation & Secretariat of the Pacific Community, *10th Pacific Health Ministers Meeting: Health Workforce Development in the Pacific* (2013) < http://www.wpro.who.int/southpacific/pic_meeting/2013/documents/PHMM_PIC10_10_HRH.pdf > at 12 September 2013.

The third panel member, a Young Woman Member, YWCA Fiji, stated that 90 per cent of the people in Fiji diagnosed with HIV/AIDS are youth. Under Fiji's new constitution, rights against discrimination go further than under any of Fiji's previous constitutions. After an anti-discrimination decree, which is currently under consideration, is passed, Fiji will likely ratify CEDAW. Also, condom vending machines are being installed in rural areas of Fiji, enabling women, including youth, to gain tools to make sexual and reproductive rights-related decisions.

The final panel member, the Young Women Project Coordinator, YWCA Fiji, presented a short video on sexual and reproductive health titled *The Girl Effect*. The Fiji YWCA went to rural and urban area councils and taught two-day workshops on sexual reproduction and health rights, focusing on providing comprehensive sexuality education. Concluding her remarks, the Young Women Project Coordinator stated that addressing access to health structures is more than just the building of physical structures — it is also the repairing of social structures.

Economic Empowerment of Women

Amy Luinstra, Senior Gender Specialist, East Asia Pacific Region, International Finance Corporation (IFC), presented the regional overview on the economic empowerment of women.

KEY GENDER EQUALITY ISSUES IN THE REGION

While there is evidence of progress for women in the Pacific, for example, in regards to access to education, this has not yet translated into significant improvements in economic opportunity. Women's labour force participation rates in the region are low, with significant disparity recorded in Solomon Islands, Fiji, Papua New Guinea (PNG), the Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI) and Samoa where men's participation rate is almost double that of women's. Legal and other barriers to economic empowerment are common. In Tonga, there has been some progress towards gender equality through the recent passing of the Family Protection Bill 2013. However, there are still barriers to economic empowerment; for example, the average woman can expect to receive 13 years of education but cannot own property. Similarly, in Samoa, 98 per cent of women are literate, but the financial infrastructure is poor and access to bank accounts and credit is limited.³⁸ In Fiji, only 19% of businesses are registered to women and most of those are micro and small businesses. Women's disadvantage can also stem from cultural and religious norms, the traditional division of labour, and failure of policy to deliver and fund services that work as well for women as they do for men. These gaps in access to financial services and safe and productive employment persist at great cost to women and their families as well as to national economies.

Women's economic empowerment is considered to be a key driver of sustainable economic development. Likewise, research demonstrates that there is a business case for the private sector to not only ensure non-discrimination in hiring and promoting women and giving them loans, but also to pro-actively seek opportunities to support women as employees,

³⁸ Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) and Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC). *Addressing Inequalities: The Case of Small Island Developing States in the Pacific* (2012) <<http://www.worldwewant2015.org/node/291977>> at 26 September 2013.

managers, and entrepreneurs. The primary resource required is political will and sustained support for Pacific Island countries and territories (PICTs) to implement initiatives. Sustained technical assistance and resources should be provided and encouraged to achieve key outcomes. Different capacities and resource availability for achieving long-term goals in PICTS, in particular in small island states, should be acknowledged in working to improve economic empowerment amongst women.

INITIATIVES TO ADDRESS ISSUES

This section of the paper provides an update on new and on-going initiatives for improving economic empowerment for women.

Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration 2012

In 2012, the Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration brought new determination and commitment to empowering women to be active participants in economic, political and social life. In the area of women's economic empowerment, the Declaration specifically committed Leaders to:

- ▶ Remove barriers to women's employment and participation in the formal and informal sectors, including in relation to legislation that directly or indirectly limits women's access to employment opportunities or contributes to discriminatory pay and conditions for women
- ▶ Implement equal employment opportunity and gender equality measures in public sector employment, including State Owned Enterprises and statutory boards, to increase the proportion of women employed, including in senior positions, and advocate for a similar approach in private sector agencies
- ▶ Improve the facilities and governance of local produce markets, including fair and transparent local regulation and taxation policies, so that market operations increase profitability and efficiency and encourage women's safe, fair and equal participation in local economies
- ▶ Target support towards women entrepreneurs in the formal and informal sectors, for example, financial services, information and training, and review legislation that limits women's access to finance, assets, land and productive resources.

Following the adoption of the Forum Leaders Gender Equality Declaration, the then Prime Minister of Australia, the Honourable Julia Gillard, announced a 10 year AUD 320 million dollar initiative to improve political, economic and social opportunities for women in FICs. A key component of the Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development (PWSPD) programme is that of increasing economic opportunities for women through improved access to financial services and markets. Thus far PWSPD has supported the development of PWSPD Country Plans, with clear expected outcomes and resource support for Cook Islands, Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands. Similar plans are expected to be developed in other FICs.

FEMM Action Plan

Forum Economic Ministers, at their 2012 meeting, reiterated the vital role of women in the economic development of member countries and the urgent need to improve women's participation in economic activities and development. They adopted a FEMM Action Plan with specific priorities for women's economic empowerment. The priorities focus on: improving women's employment and participation in the formal and informal sectors; increasing women's access to finance, business ownership and markets; improving women's right to safe, fair and equal participation in local economies; and improving access to and the use of sex disaggregated data.

In 2013, Ministers reaffirmed these commitments and supported the proposal for a Leaders Gender Equality Declaration Reporting Framework with indicators to measure their progress. They also supported research commissioned to determine the economic costs of violence and related policy and legislative reforms; encouraged the development and use of sex disaggregated data on women's economic empowerment; and called for the implementation of legislation that reduces discriminatory practices at national level, for example in regard to pay and conditions for women, sexual harassment and limitations to women's overall participation in the economy.

Reporting National Progress on Women's Economic Empowerment

A Reporting Framework with progress indicators has been developed by PIFS with the support of SPC to assist Forum member countries report progress against the commitments in the Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration. It contains specific measures on women's economic empowerment and can also be used by Forum Economic Ministers to measure progress on FEMM's commitments in this area. The indicators are:

- ▶ Basic needs poverty rate (sex disaggregated)
- ▶ Labour force participation: ratio of women to men
- ▶ National retirement scheme : ration of women to men
- ▶ Share of women in paid employment in the non agricultural sector: percentage
- ▶ Ratio of women's average wage to men's average wage.

The 2013 Progress Report on the Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration noted that, overall, reliable data to measure women's economic empowerment remains weak, and referenced the Women's Economic Opportunity Index data on six FIC – Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Tonga, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. Most of these countries scored well with regards to access to education and citizenship rights. However, they were particularly weak on property ownership, access to finance and in the implementation and enforcement of the labour conventions on equal pay for equal work. The data and Progress Report will also be publicly available on the PIFS website.

Removing Barriers to Women's Employment and Economic Participation

Cook Islands passed the Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012, which aims to improve and promote equality for both women and men in the workplace, including through maternity leave provisions. In March 2013, the Samoan Government passed the Labour and Employment Relations Act prohibiting sexual harassment in the workplace. Kiribati, Samoa, Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu are progressing labour law reform with technical support from the International Labour Organisation (ILO). A recent project in Tonga worked to finalise their draft Employment Relations Bill. The draft bill aims to provide the legal framework for promoting workplace employment relations, protecting the rights and welfare of employees, and investment to safeguard increasing opportunities for employment, contributing to women's employment and economic participation.

The Forum Secretariat is exploring opportunities to collaborate with ILO and UN Women to support labour reforms in smaller island states in response to Women's Economic Empowerment Plans for the Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI) and Nauru. A concept note is being developed in consultation between ILO and UN Women for extended work in smaller island states on 'Addressing legislative and policy barriers to women's economic rights'. More recently, UN Women collaborated with SPC and PIFS to partner on a pilot project in Cook Islands to support craft development, provide marketing tools and strengthen market access capabilities for women involved in the pearl industry.

RMI and Nauru have produced Women's Economic Empowerment Plans with support from the Forum Secretariat through UN Women (Small Island States Catalyst Funds). There are plans for similar women's economic empowerment mainstreaming and policy development projects to be implemented in remaining small island states by the Forum Secretariat.

In response to the mandate set by the 2012 FEMM to improve the enabling environment for women's economic participation, a state owned enterprise (SOE) survey was conducted in Cook Islands, RMI, Palau, Niue, Tuvalu, Tonga and Fiji and preliminary results presented at the 2013 FEMM. Apart from providing an indication of the proportion of females participating in SOE, it also examines the enabling components of securing women's participation and leadership on public sector boards. Country findings will aid policy makers to tailor solutions to improve, and provide enabling conditions for, increased women's participation and appointments to SOE boards and other similar positions. Economic Ministers have supported the extension of this SOE survey to all FICs and a full report is to be completed by the end of this year.

The private sector can also play a role in improving employment opportunities for women. The International Finance Corporation's (IFC) WINvest programme brings together private sector partners and clients to substantiate and share lessons on the business case for improving working conditions and employment opportunities for women. Evidence on the business case and practical advice to companies on how to improve employment for women will be more widely disseminated among private sector actors in the region.

Women's access to financial services, business ownerships and markets

The government of Papua New Guinea (PNG) is removing barriers to safe financial services through banks and microfinance institutions and improved financial infrastructure. Such initiatives are supported by ADB's Private Sector Development Initiative, IFC, and co-financed by Australia. IFC is currently scaling up its mobile banking and financial literacy program beyond PNG to Fiji, Tonga, Samoa, Vanuatu, and Solomon Islands – a region where fewer than 15% of adults have bank accounts. A gender neutral business start-up guide and gender microfinance strategies for IFC financial institution clients in Pacific Islands are also under development.

PNG, Fiji, Samoa, Vanuatu, Tonga and Solomon Islands are also introducing a more robust, secure and cheaper mode of payment and transfers, improving the ability of women entrepreneurs and business owners to save and invest, supported by IFC.

Women's right to safe, fair and equal participation in local economies

Fiji, Solomon Islands, PNG and Vanuatu have begun improving local market infrastructure, which includes plans for improvements for security for women within the market vicinity. This work is supported by UN Women, UNDP, and the aid programmes of Australia and New Zealand.

The Forum Secretariat and Forum Reference Group to Address Sexual and Gender Based Violence have commissioned research to determine the economic costs on national economies, communities and families of women being affected by violence in the Pacific. This includes loss of productivity, cost of services to victims and their families, policing and judicial costs.

The main challenge in implementing women's economic empowerment is the political will to implement results-oriented empowerment policies.

Panel Discussion:

The panel was composed of Raymonde Raoulx, President of UFFO, French Polynesia; Dorosday Kenneth Lui, Director for Women, Vanuatu; Vaine Wichman, President, Cook Islands National Council of Women.

The first panel member, President of UFFO (*Union des Femmes Francophones d'Océanie*), reported on an exploratory survey of how the experience of an economic hardship situation (as occurred during the past five years in French Polynesia) differs for men and women. Women mentioned rise in petty crime, domestic violence, and controlled substance addictions. Women look at hardship from a social perspective whereas men look at it from a monetary perspective. Also, women seem to be more reactive in the face of hardship, when compared to men.

The second panel member, Director for Women, Vanuatu, discussed Pacific women and the informal employment sector. Improvements need to be made to governance and infrastructure of produce markets.

The final panel member, President, Cook Islands National Council of Women, presented the enactment of the Cook Islands Employment Relations Act 2012. This legislation guaranteed the same maternity leave and maternity-related employment protections in the Cook Islands' public and private sectors.

The Honourable Minister of Internal Affairs, Cook Islands, highlighted the importance of the new Employment Relations Act, which was smoothed by combining the country's finance and internal affairs portfolios under one ministry. He also announced that 60% of this year's USP graduates in Cook Islands were women. This was facilitated by the way USP is now able to deliver education to remote campuses, including Cook Islands.

Emerging areas of work

Helen Tavola, Regional Adviser Social Development and Planning, UNESCAP, began the presentation on emerging areas of work by stating that new priorities at the regional and international levels are not always addressed from a gender perspective.

KEY GENDER EQUALITY ISSUES IN THE REGION

There is a wealth of qualitative and quantitative research on temporary migration, also known as circular migration, in the Pacific. It is widely recognised that labour migration flows and trends are influenced by gender dynamics in the countries of origin and destination, but there is very little emphasis on the gender dimensions of migration in the research. While migration can provide new opportunities to improve women's lives and change oppressive gender relations, it can also perpetuate and entrench traditional roles and inequalities that expose women to new vulnerabilities as a result of the precarious legal status of the migrant and high levels of exclusion and isolation. These vulnerabilities can be severe amongst women migrants in unsupervised and unregulated sectors, such as domestic work and care-giving, and can include domestic violence, exploitation, abuse and labour rights violations. Other negative aspects to labour migration are a lack of transparency and information, including information on processes, regionally and at national level; inadequate policies regarding migration; illegal practices; limited legal rights; and little programme or other kinds of support for migrant women workers generally, which increases their vulnerability to exploitation and violence in receiving communities.

The Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) sets out measures for national and international action to promote the advancement of women. Whilst it is recognised that few women have attained positions at a decision-making level or are in a position to influence policy, the BPFA emphasises the need for negative or degrading images of women to be addressed in order to paint a balanced picture of the diverse lives and contributions women make to society. The media and ICT are obvious tools for working in this area. There is also a need to consider how ICT, women's media networks and government can collaborate to overcome the perpetuation of gender-based discrimination and the denial of the rights of women and girls, which remain the single most widespread driver of inequalities in today's world.

The Pacific region is highly vulnerable to earthquakes, tsunami and other natural hazards, both climate-related and of geological origin. This is due to the small and geographically dispersed characteristics of most PICTs, the high proportion of the population and economic infrastructure that are located in hazard prone coastal regions, and the high dependence of economic systems on the health and productivity of natural ecosystems. This can have adverse effects on livelihoods and human welfare, affecting particularly the more vulnerable populations such as people with disabilities, the elderly and children. This is exacerbated by social and gender inequalities.

Women and girls with any form of disability are among the more vulnerable and marginalised of society. There is an urgent need for all policy-making and programming to take them into account and address their concerns. Special measures are needed at all levels to integrate them into the mainstream of development. Over the years, the concerns and realities of women with disabilities have been raised through research, by civil society and in policy-making, but this has been sporadic and progress has been slow. In August 2013, Pacific Islands Forum Leaders, in recognition of this, called for accelerated efforts to fulfil the *Pacific Leaders' Gender Equality Declaration* priorities and, among other things, reiterated support for women with disabilities in the regional agenda.

Gender impact of temporary labour migration

The Regional Seasonal Employer (RSE) Scheme was introduced in 2007, to allow for the temporary entry of offshore workers to work in the New Zealand horticulture and viticulture industries. Five Pacific states were selected for the scheme: Kiribati, Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu. Facilitation measures were developed to support the implementation of the policy. Among other things, the RSE Scheme aimed to create a sustainable seasonal labour supply, protect New Zealanders' access to seasonal employment, minimise immigration risk, and contribute to New Zealand's broad objectives in the region with regard to encouraging Pacific economic development, regional integration and stability.³⁹ Temporary workers were recruited for a period of up to seven or nine months at a time. By the end of 2013, 480 Solomon Islanders will have worked in New Zealand under the scheme and this is expected to increase to 600 in 2014. Ni-Vanuatu seasonal workers in New Zealand will exceed 3,000 by 2014.⁴⁰

A study conducted by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 2012 found that the scheme resulted in positive changes to the status of Ni-Vanuatu women; they gained additional responsibilities as receivers and managers of remittances, and it increased their opportunity to establish small business ventures. However, negative effects included loneliness and depression as a result of irregular contact with partners/spouses whilst they were overseas, a reduction in household productivity, difficulty with child rearing, and family breakups.⁴¹

39 New Zealand, Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, *Final Evaluation Report of the Recognised Seasonal Employer Policy* <<http://dol.govt.nz/publications/research/rse-evaluation-final-report/final-06.asp>> at 2 Oct 2013.

40 PACNEWS, *Ni-Vanuatu Seasonal Workers in NZ Will Pass 30000 – Commissioner*, Friday 27 September 2013.

41 International Labor Organization, *Building the Development Potential of Seasonal Work: A case study of seasonal workers in Vanuatu* (International Labor Organization, Fiji, 2012).

Labour migration may also be seen across other industries. Many nurses and teachers from Fiji and other Pacific countries have migrated to rim countries and the Middle East. A number of Pacific Islanders reside in North America as caregivers and domestic workers, many of whom often do not possess the necessary authorisation required under immigration regulations to work and therefore face daily risks as illegal migrants. Military and security-related employment also sees labour migration. For example, Fiji's economy is increasingly reliant on remittances from citizens working overseas, with military and security-related recruitment being a growing source of revenue. By mid-2005, there were over 1,000 Fijians working in Iraq and Kuwait as soldiers, security guards, drivers and labourers. Over 2,000 Fijians serve overseas in the British Armed Forces.

Recent qualitative and quantitative research assessing the impact of migration in Fiji reveal that the proportion of women from return migrant households spent much more time in domestic chores and caring for family members, including children, the elderly and the sick, than did non-migrant and absent migrant households. (Return migrant workers are defined as household members who have spent more than three months living abroad within the last ten years and have since returned to their country of origin.) Other findings of the study reveal that 68 per cent of females compared to 32 per cent of male migrants remitted money for child support, and 30 per cent of ethnic Fijian migrants were employed in the service industry, with a high percentage travelling to the United States as female health workers and a smaller percentage to the Middle East for jobs in the security sector.⁴²

Although Kiribati and Tuvalu are part of the RSE Scheme, the Seafarer Scheme is more economically important for both countries, making a significant contribution to their economies. Remittances contribute an estimated 15 to 20 per cent of Kiribati's national income, and 50 per cent of Tuvalu's national income. Kiribati currently receives remittances of AUD 12–13 million and Tuvalu receives AUD 3–4 million.⁴³

The maritime industry, foreign fishing vessels in particular, are crucial to the economy of Kiribati. Earnings from Kiribati's exclusive economic zone's access fee and the licensing of foreign fishing vessels are central to the generation of government revenue. Large foreign 'factory' ships moor off the port of Betio for months at a time, and cash spent by foreign seafarers while on-shore also delivers substantial economic benefits to the district.

It has been established that migration, both international and within national borders, is a key factor in the transmission and spread of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections in the Pacific. People who are highly mobile may be at greater risk of engaging in behaviour that involves higher HIV risk exposure. This is especially so for workers who engage in circular migration, spending time away from home and family with discretionary income, and who are targets for the sex industry or subject to peer pressures.⁴⁴

42 Kaitani, M., Mohanty, M., Muliana, T., Kumar, R., Kumar, S. and Naidu, V., *Development on the Move: Measuring and Optimising Migration's Economic and Social Impacts in Fiji* (University of the South Pacific, Fiji, 2010).

43 Borovnik, M., *Working Overseas: Seafarers remittances and their distribution in Kiribati* (Asia Pacific Viewpoint, 2006).

44 Secretariat of the Pacific Community, *Migration, Mobility and HIV: A rapid assessment of risks and vulnerabilities in the Pacific* (Secretariat of the Pacific Community, New Caledonia, 2010).

The separation of migrants from the family unit, as a result of labour migration, can have profound effects on family organisation and the lives of family members. The issue of men's labour migration and the impact on their non-migrating wives has received a growing amount of research attention. Repeated findings of various studies indicate a link between men's labour migration and women's autonomy. Explanation for the increased autonomy of the non-travelling migrant (the wife) include the rationale that husbands exercise their authority over wives in numerous daily decisions and activities, such as how to spend money, when to visit friends and family members, including parents, and when to go shopping. All these decisions, combined with having to ask a husband's permission to undertake these activities, could vastly impact on a wife's autonomy. Although it is established that women's autonomy increases in relation to men's labour migration, the permanence of this autonomy and what happens on his return have not been extensively researched. Anecdotal evidence suggests that it can result in increased levels of domestic violence if the male feels his role has been undermined.

Countries of origin are also in a unique position to facilitate safe migration of their migrant workers. A supportive institutional and regulatory framework can protect and empower migrants in the recruitment process and pre-departure stages. This includes disseminating information and providing tailored training and skills to those migrating, taking into consideration the person migrating and the nature of migration. Policies and regulations for recruiting agencies and private recruitment agencies can also be strengthened.

Given the importance of temporary labour migration to families, communities and national development in the Pacific, together with the lack of research into the gender impact of migration, it is critical for member countries and development partners to concentrate efforts on research. PICTs should also consider the situation of female migrant workers, including the gender impact of temporary forms of labour migration in their own countries, in CEDAW reporting.

Media and ICT

PICTs have recognised the need to address gender inequality using the power of the media and ICT to accelerate the progress of regional and international gender commitments, including BPFA. BPFA highlights the need to empower women through increased skills, knowledge and access to ICT, as well as to strengthen or create self-regulatory mechanisms for the media in order to eliminate gender-bias in programming. To address these issues, BPFA has two strategic objectives: to increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision-making in and through the media and new communication technologies, and to promote a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media. Some of the recommendations in BPFA include support for training of national women's machineries and gender advocates in the use of the media, support for gender-sensitive training for local media outlets, and the development of policies and programmes that give rural women and communities' access to information through promotion of gender issues and human rights.

While there is much more to be done, there has been some progress toward gender sensitivity in the media, particularly through the work of women-led media networks. Work in this area includes the development, production and distribution of media content that addresses existing inequalities, especially in rural and remote communities. Civil society networks, in



particular women's media networks, have been instrumental in the development of local media content for rural and outer island women and communities. However, it is essential that national women's machineries and women's groups throughout the region gain media training to help them capitalise on the major role that the media can play in advocating for gender equality, and also that increased funding is provided for such initiatives.

FemLINKPACIFIC is an example of a media and ICT organisation and network that engages women, through the media, at the local and community levels and in rural areas in four PICTs to define community development policies and priorities. Since 2007, FemLINKPACIFIC has convened the Pacific Women's Media and Policy Network on UN Security Council Resolution 1325. In 2009, it also became the regional secretariat for the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict. Since the establishment of the organisation's community radio project in 2004, FemLINKPACIFIC's young women's programme 'Generation Next' has given rise to the involvement of young women from rural communities, as well as key urban centres, to claim their communication rights.

While the news media have predominantly been the recipients of media training programmes in the Pacific, the Beijing+10 report also identified the need for ongoing and cumulative media training for national women's machineries and gender advocates. SPC has responded to requests for gender-sensitive training for the media, but requests for such training are ad hoc. In a recent development, the SPC Regional Media Centre has been downsized as a result of the 2012 Independent External Review of the organisation and no longer has the capacity to provide this kind of service nationally or regionally. There is a need to take a more innovative approach and link training with the sustainability of the production of gender-inclusive content, as well as proactively influence the strengthening of the range of institutions that are delivering media and journalism training programmes.

Media-related outputs are also not systematically included in programme planning, and responses to newspaper and other reports that impact on women's lives are rare. National women's machineries do not feature prominently as 'generators' of gender education or media releases, and relationships with media representatives are usually informal and irregular. Whilst this is slowly changing – for example, in Solomon Islands the broadcasting unit has a close relationship with the national women's machinery – additional focus is needed in this area.

Opportunities to address media and ICT issues potentially rest with the Pacific Media Assistance Scheme (PACMAS), which has recently adopted a comprehensive gender policy, and they also utilise the Global Media Monitoring Project and women's media networks. Additionally, the upcoming Global Forum on Media and Gender, organised by UNESCO, UN Women, and media and NGO partners globally, will focus specifically on the women and media priorities of BPFA, as well as the quality, availability and use of tools developed as a result of initiatives, including the Global Media Monitoring Project.

Gender and climate change

Women have a critical role to play in natural resource management and food security in the region, given their use of both land and marine resources over generations. Women possess knowledge and skills that are fundamental to sustainable resource use and food security. There is a strong and urgent need to recognise the cultural and social value of environmental resources, and to safeguard people's rights to use these resources.

The appropriate conservation of the historic environment, including cultural landscapes, and the safeguarding of relevant traditional knowledge, values and practices, in synergy with other scientific knowledge, enhance the resilience of communities to disasters and climate change. The feeling of normalcy, self-esteem, sense of place and confidence in the future among people and communities affected by disasters should be restored and strengthened through cultural programmes and the rehabilitation of their cultural heritage and institutions. The nexus between culture and environmental resources – including food security – climate change and women should be recognised and valued, and reflected in policy making. There is a need to ensure strong inclusion of the voices of Pacific women. This can be done through presentation and discussion about their important roles in climate change adaptation and mitigation, in food security, and in ensuring sustainable livelihoods for their families and communities. This would include food production, taking into account the different agriculture ecosystems, cultures and societies in the small island developing states (SIDS) process and the post-2015 development agenda.

There is an increasing amount of literature in the Pacific on integrating gender into climate change programming, yet there is still limited research in this area. SPC has recently rolled out the second phase of the Stock-take of Gender Mainstreaming Capacity of Pacific Island countries, referred to in the session on institutional mechanism. Preliminary findings found that there is very little awareness of gender mainstreaming across government, particularly in key sectoral ministries. Whilst government staff are exposed to one-off training on gender issues specific to their area of work, e.g. climate change, education or health, knowledge of the application of gender mainstreaming into sectoral and multi-sectoral policies and work priorities is very low.

SPC is working towards a more multi-sector and integrated programming approach to address climate change, disaster risk and human security issues. This involves working across divisions in SPC and across government ministries. Taking a more holistic multi-sector approach to addressing climate and natural hazard risks is essential to delivering more resilient development outcomes that take into consideration the needs and concerns of women and men in accessing and controlling resources.

Women and girls with disabilities

Lastly, women and girls with disabilities are a key concern in the region, yet it is not reflected in the Millennium Development Goals. Women and girls with disabilities face stigma and discrimination due both to their gender roles and their disabilities. Despite helpful laws, policies and systems of practice in some countries, compared to their disabled male or non-disabled female peers, women with disabilities are generally less well educated, experience higher rates of unemployment, are more likely to be abused, are poorer, are more isolated, experience worse health outcomes, and generally have lower social status. Often, those perpetrating abuse of women and girls with disabilities are immediate family members, carers or in a position of power, which discourages the women and girls from reporting for fear they may be further victimised. The abuse therefore remains unrecognised by the public and by policy makers.⁴⁵

Research commissioned by the United Nations Population Fund in Solomon Islands, Tonga and Kiribati on the sexual and health experiences of women with disabilities found that women with disabilities experience significant violence, both physical and sexual, at a higher rate than other women. Women with intellectual or mental disabilities are particularly vulnerable to abuse, as they are less able to report abuse and may not be believed. The research found that some also suffered severe discrimination through involuntary contraceptive use or sterilisation, and neither health workers nor police were trained to understand the needs of this client group.⁴⁶

So far, Cook Islands, Nauru, Niue (through New Zealand), Vanuatu, Palau, Papua New Guinea and Kiribati have formally ratified or acceded to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Fiji, Federated States of Micronesia and Solomon Islands have initiated the process by becoming signatories, with Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa and Tuvalu yet to take any action with regard to the Convention.

Panel Discussion

The panel discussion was composed of Veena Singh Bryar, Programme Director, FemLINKPACIFIC; Anne Kautu, Senior Women's Development Officer, Ministry for Internal and Social Affairs, Kiribati; Yoshiko Yamaguchi, National Coordinator, UNDP/GEF Small Grants Programme, Marshall Islands.

45 Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, *2013 Pacific Regional MDG Tracking Report* (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Fiji, 2013).

46 United Nations Population Fund, *A Deeper Silence* <<http://countryoffice.unfpa.org/pacific/drive/ADEEPERSILENCE.pdf>> at 11 September 2013.

The first panel member, the Programme Director, FemLINKPACIFIC, began her presentation by introducing FemLINKPACIFIC: a CSO that works specifically with marginalised women in the Pacific. FemLINKPACIFIC translated UN Security Council Resolution 1325, on women and peace and security, into local languages for distribution to island populations. FemLINKPACIFIC is also involved in community radio, enabling Pacific women to become engaged in a participatory manner. Greater emphasis is needed to assure that communication tools are available to local government entities and communities.

The second panel member, the Senior Women's Development Officer, Kiribati Ministry for Internal and Social Affairs, spoke about the impacts of labour migration. Migration can bring increased income but also lead to family strife, including divorces. Rural women sometimes move to urban areas to be in touch with spouses overseas. Women and children have learned how to use Skype and computers to communicate with family overseas.

The Senior Women's Development Officer, Kiribati Ministry for Internal and Social Affairs, also spoke about Kiribati's programme to increase women's participation on fishing boats. Since the last Triennial, Kiribati has stopped the programme. A few women have come back from sea pregnant; one committed suicide; there were lots of sexual harassment allegations. The women formed relationships with the male seafarers, who were married. Kiribati is implementing additional SGBV and sensitivity training and is still training women for careers on fishing boats but the programme of placing women aboard ships has not yet resumed. The Senior Women's Development Officer also discussed a programme called 'Migrating with Dignity'. This programme provides an opportunity to study nursing in Australia for Kiribati women, who can then decide to remain in Australia or return to Kiribati. To date, 81 Kiribati women travelled to Australia for the training, which enables Kiribati to be more prepared for forced migration due to climate change.

The final panel member, the National Coordinator, UNDP/GEF Small Grants Programme, Marshall Islands, discussed gender perspectives of climate change in Marshall Islands. The system implemented for family wellbeing was put at risk because of climate change. Women work in climate change adaptation and their roles and knowledge give them unique opportunities to mitigate and respond to climate change.

Upcoming regional and international processes

The regional overview was presented jointly by Feleti Teo, Deputy Secretary General, PIFS and Roberta Clarke, Regional Director, Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, UN Women.

A number of regional and international processes guide work amongst Pacific Island countries and territories (PICTs) in relation to gender equality. The purpose of this paper is to summarise the ongoing regional and global processes related to gender equality that PICTs are engaged in, explain the importance of these high-level processes for ground-level results, and identify opportunities for ensuring that gender quality issues are integrated into regional and international development processes. It is critical that women in the Pacific can effectively capitalise on these processes to support their efforts to promote gender equality and enable the empowerment of women. Reference is made to the Revised Pacific Platform for Action (RPPA) as a regional mechanism, but for a more detailed discussion on the RPPA, cross reference with the overview paper for Agenda Item 2: Mechanisms to promote the advancement of women.

KEY GENDER EQUALITY ISSUES IN THE REGION

It has been a challenge amongst PICTs to meet commitments relating to gender equality. Despite focused attention on the importance of achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Pacific region has had mixed success in achieving MDG 3. The pace of progress towards greater gender equality remains slow and inconsistent across all PICTs. This variation is influenced by a web of intersecting, fluctuating and often conflicting factors, with political will being a powerful influence. When leaders act on their commitments to build gender equality by making the necessary investments in policies, programmes and action plans, as well as providing adequate resources to support implementation and accountability mechanisms, they galvanise the pace of progress. It is essential that at a regional level we continue to seek opportunities within regional processes and accountability mechanisms for deeper integration of gender. This paper will discuss several key regional and global processes guiding work amongst PICTs, as well as discuss how gender can be better integrated into such processes.

REGIONAL PROCESSES AND ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISMS

Over the last two decades, PICTs have progressed in advancing gender equality through multiple regional mechanisms, including the RPPA on Gender Equality and the Advancement of Women, the Pacific Plan, the Forum Compact, the Forum Economic Ministers Meeting (FEMM), and the Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP). However, despite progress made in relation to each of these mechanisms, gender inequalities remain deeply entrenched in Pacific societies.

Pacific Plan

The Pacific Plan was endorsed by Forum Leaders at their annual meeting in Madang in October 2005. It was designed as a 'living document', able to adapt to the Pacific region's changing landscape. The framework aims to implement the Forum Leaders' vision, which includes calling for a 'region of peace, harmony, security and economic prosperity, so that all

of its people can lead free and worthwhile lives'. The inclusive nature of this vision formed a foundation for identifying several priority areas for improving gender equality at the regional level. The introductory sections of the Pacific Plan state that one of the plan's key purposes is to 'promote and protect cultural identity, regional inclusiveness, sub-regional representation, human rights, gender, youth and civil society'. In line with this, a strategic objective of the plan, under the pillar of sustainable development, is that of 'improved gender equality'.

To achieve the Pacific Plan's strategic objectives, Forum Leaders have agreed to a series of priorities for regional action. The current Pacific Plan priorities related to gender, set in 2009, are: supporting the implementation of measures, existing commitments and programmes aimed at increasing awareness of, and addressing the causes and consequences of, sexual and gender-based violence, and developing legislation to criminalise gender-based violence in all forms; and supporting efforts to allow an enhanced role for women in national decision making processes.

Progress against these and other priorities are captured in the Annual Pacific Plan Progress Report. Latest updates are captured in other relevant papers presented during this meeting. For example, the 2013 reporting on gender under the Pacific Plan was organised around the 2012 Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration.

Changes to the Pacific Plan and its future priorities

Over the past year the Pacific Plan has been subject to a comprehensive review led by former Papua New Guinea Prime Minister, the Right Honorable Sir Mekere Morauta. The principal review recommendations were presented to Forum Leaders at this year's meeting in Marshall Islands. Leaders welcomed the review and called for the final review report to be submitted by the end of October. Forum officials will consider the report's recommendations and prepare advice for the Forum Leaders at a planned special retreat in the early part of 2014. Several of the review notes and presentations are available on the PIFS website, providing an indication of their recommendations for the future direction of the Pacific Plan.⁴⁷

Indications are that the future Pacific Plan is being viewed as a more focused framework for integration rather than a regional development plan. This suggests that some current priority areas included in the current plan may not be included in the future, especially those that do not explicitly focus on integration, such as the current gender-related priorities. However, there has been a call for the proposed new framework to reflect shared regional values, which could present an opportunity for affirming the region's commitment to gender equality. For example, the values could be drawn from current communiqués and declarations, including the Pacific Leaders' Gender Equality Declaration.

PIFS is committed to engage in a consultative process for developing any new Pacific framework to ensure that it reflects key regional values and priorities. Government and non-government stakeholders will be kept well-informed of any such work.

⁴⁷ Accessible at <http://www.forumsec.org/pages.cfm/about-us/the-pacific-plan/>.

Forum Compact

Forum Leaders, through the Cairns Compact on Strengthening Development Coordination (Forum Compact) in 2009, made commitments to strengthen PICTs' systems, institutions and policies to effectively use development resources. Leaders requested consistent actions and evidence of both development outcomes and coordination processes, and maintainance of high-level attention to these issues through tracking progress and annual reporting. Peer reviews are coordinated by PIFS, and are an important part of the Forum Compact. They bring together PICT officials and development partners to mutually address development challenges, based on the idea that, if a PICT seeks to improve its development efforts, it may be useful to seek advice from Pacific neighbours. In 2014, attention will turn to the peer review of development partners, to determine their alignment and harmonisation with Forum Island countries and Pacific development cooperation policy frameworks, systems and processes.

Forum economic ministers action plans

PIFS convenes several key ministerial meetings. Among these are the Forum Economic Ministers Meetings (FEMMs). During the 2012 and 2013 FEMMs, the vital role of women in the economic development of member countries and the urgent need to improve women's participation in economic activities and development were highlighted. FEMM action plans included specific priorities for women's economic empowerment: improving women's employment and participation in the formal and informal sectors; increasing women's access to finance, business ownership and markets; and ensuring women's right to safe, fair and equal participation in local economies. In the 2013 FEMM Action Plan, Ministers also supported the development of a reporting framework for the Pacific Leaders' Gender Equality Declaration, with indicators to measure progress on Forum Island countries' commitments to women's economic empowerment.

CROP working groups

The CROP working group mechanism was established in the mid-1990s, to institutionalise interaction between CROP agencies and improve coordination on key cross-cutting sectors and themes. The primary role of the working groups was to address important emerging or ongoing priority issues in order to achieve a clearer understanding of the issues. Gender issues have featured on an ad-hoc basis through working groups such as the Health and Population Working Group, chaired by SPC, and the Sustainable Development Working Group chaired by PIFs and SPREP.

CROP agencies have been called on to systematically monitor implementation of gender-related commitments through all working groups, in particular through the CROP Gender Working Group. Formalised in 2012, this group has the mandate to (a) provide advice on coordinated and integrated approaches in the delivery of CROP services across PICTs, in line with advancing regional gender equality commitments; and (b) to provide technical assistance to effectively mainstream gender into the work of CROP agencies. The CROP Gender Working Group meets twice a year and is co-chaired by PIFS and SPC.

INTERNATIONAL PROCESSES

A number of international processes are in development, or already contributing to work in the region, including: the post-2015 agenda; the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD); the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW); the UN Executive Board and UN Women civil society groups. These are discussed below.

Post-2015 agenda

With the MDGs set to expire in 2015, global discussions are well under way regarding the replacement MDGs, termed the 'post-2015 development agenda'. In a parallel process, the Rio+20 Summit has recognised the importance and utility of developing a set of sustainable development goals (SDGs), to be integrated into the post-2015 agenda. These two processes will be merged, with the UN Secretary General expected to define a path for combining these goals by early 2014.

Whilst there have been many discussions and proposals regarding the post-2015 agenda, the UN High Level Panel on Post-2015 (HLP) has been a key reference point. The HLP has proposed 12 goals and corresponding targets, which include MDGs that require further focus, such as those relating to poverty, gender, education and health, as well as goals for water and sanitation, food security, energy, jobs and equitable growth, sustainable resource management, good governance, peace and security, and finance.

The discussions of the SDGs Open Working Group (OWG), mandated by the Rio+20 Summit, also provide important insights into the direction that the intergovernmental process is taking in determining the SDGs. The OWG has met four times and discussed the conceptualisation of the SDGs, in relation to poverty eradication; food security and nutrition, sustainable agriculture, desertification, land degradation and drought, water and sanitation, employment and decent work for all, social protection, youth, education and culture, and health and population dynamics.

A key related global process called for at the Rio+20 Summit, was the convening of a third international conference on the sustainable development of small island developing states (SIDS) in Samoa in 2014. A Pacific regional meeting held in preparation for the 2014 SIDS conference highlighted key issues for the Pacific region in relation to the post-2015 agenda and SDGs. Collectively, SIDS later agreed on key priorities for inclusion in the post-2015 agenda, at the inter-regional meeting in Barbados. These include: consideration of the special case of SIDS; the need for a people-centred agenda that focuses on eradicating poverty, engendering equality, and achieving environmental sustainability; sustainable resources management in the context of land, water and food security, agriculture and biodiversity; the emerging NCD health crisis; commitment to sustainable consumption patterns; vulnerability indices to better represent SIDS' situation; targets and indicators relevant to SIDS; climate change as a cross-cutting issue; and oceans as a thematic priority. Furthermore, at their recent meeting in Majuro, Forum Leaders also highlighted the importance of disaster risk management, culture and mental health as important priorities for the Pacific.

International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD)

At the ICPD held in Cairo in 1994, 179 countries adopted a twenty-year programme of action (PoA), built on the success of population, maternal health and family planning programmes of previous decades, whilst addressing current needs. The ICPD recognises that reproductive health and rights, as well as women's empowerment and gender equality, are cornerstones of population and development programmes, and that these must be rooted in principles of human rights, respect for national sovereignty and religious and cultural backgrounds.

Pacific parliamentarians met in August 2013 at the Pacific Conference of Parliamentarians for Advocacy on ICPD beyond 2014, to discuss progress, challenges and priority strategies for achieving ICPD's programme of action. Subsequently, the Moana Declaration⁴⁸ was endorsed. It includes the need to ensure sexual and reproductive health and rights for all people, without discrimination, and ensures a commitment to increasing women's and young peoples' participation in decision making and in political, social and economic processes at all levels. Pacific parliamentarians also called for the need to increase support and protection for girls and young women, including enhancing access to education and comprehensive mechanisms for ensuring their access to sexual and reproductive information and services.

Commission on the Status of Women

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. During its annual two-week session, representatives of UN member states, civil society organisations and UN entities gather at the UN headquarters in New York to discuss progress and commit to further action. UN Women supports all aspects of the commission's work and facilitates the participation of civil society representatives.

The annual sessions are therefore a key opportunity for member states and other stakeholders from all regions to exchange experiences, lessons learned and good practices in the promotion of gender equality, and to agree on common strategies for overcoming gaps and challenges. Such broad-based participation enriches the dialogue, strengthens the evidence-base on the status of gender equality, and encourages interaction among countries and across regions regarding opportunities and challenges. Preparations for the annual sessions at a national level provide opportunities to strengthen political commitment, mobilise stakeholders and raise awareness about the priority and review themes of the session, and to advance concrete actions to improve the daily realities of women and girls.

Participation at this annual meeting is often a challenge, given the high cost of travel and level of preparation prior to the meeting. Over the years, funding for government and civil society participation has been received from the Government of Australia, the Government of New Zealand and UN agencies. In 2013, a pre-CSW workshop was convened jointly by PIFS, SPC, UN Women and UNFPA. It was aimed at increasing awareness of CSW processes and building the capacity of Pacific delegates in engaging in global negotiations and advocacy.

48 United Nations Population Fund, *Moana Declaration returns people to the heart of development agenda* (2013) <http://countryoffice.unfpa.org/pacific/2013/08/17/7672/moana_declaration_returns_people_to_the_heart_of_development_agenda/> at 1 October 2013.

Delegates were informed of the substantive issues surrounding VAW and national and regional responses to eliminating violence against women and girls. Participants were able to contribute towards the PIF statement by sharing key regional messages, which included support for preventive measures. Active engagement by Pacific delegations in the CSW process is critical so that the agreed conclusions reflect the Pacific context and increase national ownership of the commitments in support of action at national and regional level.

UN Women Executive Board

The operational activities of UN Women are governed by the UN Women Executive Board and based on the General Assembly resolution 64/289, which stipulates that: 'the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Executive Board of the Entity shall constitute the multi-tiered intergovernmental governance structure for the operational activities and shall provide operational policy guidance to the Entity'. The board also engages with the executive boards of other UN entities in an effort to harmonise approaches to operational activities. Members of the board are elected for a period of three years, and currently a representative from Solomon Islands has a seat on the board until 2015.

Decisions of the UN Executive Board include organisational, procedural, programme, policy, oversight, budgetary and financial matters. These decisions affect the resources, scope and programming of UN Women in the field. Therefore, representation of PICTs on the board is critical to inform and ensure that decisions take into consideration the complex context of the Pacific Island region and for UN Women to respond appropriately and adequately to concerns affecting PICTs.

UN Women civil society advisory groups

UN Women, at the global, regional, sub-regional and country levels, has recently established civil society advisory groups (CSAGs), advisory bodies created to facilitate effective, ongoing and structured consultation with civil society. UN Women acknowledges civil society's vital role in advancing shared strategic objectives to promote gender equality, women's rights and women's empowerment, particularly through the sector's innovative approaches to initiatives, policy perspectives and partnerships.

The Pacific CSAG comprises 15 representatives from PICTs, with a track record of work within civil society in areas related to gender equality and women's empowerment. Representatives have been chosen from gender equality networks, women's organisations, and from other non-governmental, grassroots and community organisations. The Pacific CSAG's composition aims to ensure representation of the diversity of women in the region.

CSAGs will be instrumental in strengthening outreach to civil society groups and other key stakeholders to amplify advocacy and action in contributing to the post-2015 development framework and to the implementation of the United Nations CSW agreed conclusions, as well as the Beijing+20 work programme and processes. CSAGs offer an opportunity to strengthen national ownership and to contribute to coherence between the normative and operational work of the United Nations on gender equality.

INTEGRATING GENDER EQUALITY INTO PROCESSES

UN agencies are increasing harmonisation with PIFS and SPC around work related to gender equality and the empowerment of women in the region and globally. Areas of collaboration and cooperation related to regional and international processes include: supporting and participating in the Triennial Conference for Pacific Women; providing technical assistance to the preparation materials for the annual Forum Leaders' Meeting; actively participating in the PIFS Reference Group for Sexual and Gender-based Violence; collaboratively moving ahead with the development of VAW costing studies; supporting the Working Group on Women, Peace and Security; engaging with development partners to advance VAW legislation; providing technical assistance to the preparation materials for the Forum Economic Ministers' Meeting; supporting work on gender statistics; providing technical support to Pacific delegations attending CSW; and supporting preparatory events related to the SIDS conference.

There are a number of methods by which to improve engagement in regional and global processes and promote gender equality at the national, regional and international levels. These include:

- ▶ establishing joint UN/CROP/national government task forces for addressing gender equality and the empowerment of women at the country-level;
- ▶ lobbying for gender-responsive budgeting across all sectors;
- ▶ establishing space for civil society to discuss key issues and to advocate;
- ▶ coordinating inputs from key stakeholders into national and regional reports;
- ▶ supporting young women's pre-meetings and dedicated sessions on young women at key national, regional and global forums; and
- ▶ including young women's and marginalised groups' issues in strategic national and regional meetings.

Panel Discussion

The panel was composed of Polotu Fakafanua-Paunga, Deputy CEO and Head Women's Affairs, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Tonga; Dame Carol Kidu, ICPD Champion, High Level Task Force for ICPD; Resina Katafono, MDG Regional Adviser, PIFS; Noelene Nabulivou, Executive Committee Member, Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN).

The first panel member, the Deputy CEO and Head Women's Affairs, Tonga Ministry of Internal Affairs, presented on Tonga's experiences at the Commission on the Status of Women and discussed engagement by PICs in international organisations. A workshop convened by PIFS, UN Women, SPC, and UNFPA aided in Tonga's preparation to represent Pacific interests at the meeting. She stated that most representation from the Asia-Pacific region comes from Asia, not the Pacific. Increased empowerment and networking opportunities can come from representation at UN organisations.

The second panel member, the ICPD Champion, High Level Task Force for ICPD, presented the ICPD Review and requested that her entire presentation be included in the record (Annex 3). The presentation focused on the International Conference on Population and Development Beyond 2014 (ICPD), a 20-year plan adopted by 179 countries at the International Conference on Population and Development in 1994 to address population, sexual and reproductive health, and gender. It is a set of priority development goals agreed to at the Millennium Summit in 2000 by 189 countries and 147 heads of state to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.

The next panel member, the MDG Regional Adviser, PIFS, discussed the MDGs. One of the positive features of the MDGs is that there were only eight goals and they were easy to understand. The post-2015 agenda is a single set of development goals with a single agenda; there will be one development agenda after 2015. The Triennial is the opportunity for PICTs to make a global impact by delivering specific recommendations in the Outcomes Document, which can influence the post-2015 development agenda.

The final panel member, the Executive Committee Member, Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN), also encouraged representatives to provide actionable text in the Outcomes Document. Small island developing states and other least developed countries have much that they can learn from each other and collaborate on. The post-2015 agenda should contain sustainable text on good quality comprehensive health care, including STIs.



Section 3

Outcomes of the 12th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women

The content of the outcomes of the conference were developed by the drafting committee taking into account:

- a) the recommendations at the end of each regional overview;
- b) discussion by the delegates following the presentation of each regional overview; and
- c) proceedings of the working group discussions.

Six working groups, one for each theme and one francophone group, convened to discuss the issues presented in the regional overviews, suggest ways forward and make recommendations. These were presented in plenary and further discussed. The drafting committee incorporated the group recommendations into the Conference Outcomes Document.

Recommendations and outcomes of the 12th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women

National Auditorium Rarotonga, Cook Islands (20–24 October 2013)

PREAMBLE

1. The 12th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women, hosted by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) and the government of Cook Islands, was held from 20 to 24 October 2013 at the National Auditorium, Rarotonga, Cook Islands.
2. The conference celebrated progress in gender equality in the Pacific region and discussed the future and how, as Pacific nations, to position gender equality in the post-2015 development agenda at the national, regional and international levels. The conference reviewed national and regional implementation of gender equality commitments: *The Revised Pacific Platform for Action on Advancement of Women and Gender Equality 2005–2015 (RPPA)*, *the Pacific Leaders' Declaration on Gender Equality*, and treaties and conventions, including the *UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women and UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (Women, Peace and Security)*. The review emphasised critical areas of concern and there was discussion on strategies for accelerating progress on mechanisms to promote the advancement of women.
3. The conference acknowledged the need for support for the ongoing ratification, reporting and domestication of the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)*⁴⁹ into legislation, policy and practice, including, where appropriate, constitutional reform.
4. With the theme of 'Celebrating our Progress, Shaping our World', the conference highlighted the progress made so far towards gender equality while recognising that the Pacific Islands region has a long way to go to achieve substantive gender equality. Some Pacific Island countries and territories (PICTs) have passed domestic violence legislation, have supported the inclusion of sexual and reproductive health rights at international meetings, and have made progress on gender equality at national level, and have included gender equality in development forum discussions. As some of the commitments made are yet to be fully integrated into wider national and regional development agendas, the conference focused on strategies and mechanisms for refining national and regional approaches to ensure that gender equality becomes a high-level priority.
5. The conference made a number of recommendations regarding the priority areas of violence against women, health and access to services, as well as on gender disaggregation in the context of the 'data revolution' recommended by the UN High-

49 UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*, 18 December 1979, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 1249, p. 13 <<http://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b3970.html>> at 11 September 2013.

Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda. Discussions highlighted actions taken by the Pacific Island countries and territories (PICTs) to improve prevention and response to violence against women.

6. The conference welcomed participation of the 26 delegates from the Pacific Young Women's Leadership Alliance. The Pacific Young Women's Dialogue, held on Rarotonga immediately prior to the 12th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women, emphasised five areas: eliminating sexual and gender-based violence, ensuring sexual and reproductive health and rights, eliminating all forms of discrimination against persons with disabilities, promoting full and decent employment and economic empowerment for young women, and ensuring full participation of young women at all levels of decision making. Annex 1 contains the outcomes of that meeting.
7. The conference recommended strategies and innovations for accelerating progress in achieving gender equality. The three objectives of the conference were to:
 - a) identify lessons from past successes;
 - b) develop recommendations for a 'strong message of renewed commitment'; and
 - c) identify new strategies to ensure faster and more sustainable progress.
8. Conference participants numbered over 200, making it the largest Conference of Pacific Women on record. Participants included representatives of 21 SPC member countries and territories – American Samoa, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Guam, Kiribati, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Caledonia, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Wallis and Futuna, Australia and New Zealand – and regional, non-governmental, civil society, academic, United Nations and donor partner organisations.
9. The conference acknowledged diverse forms of discrimination and struggles women experience based on their age, their physical condition, their location, their social status, their economic situation, their sexual orientation and their matrimonial status. The conference also reflected on further vulnerability caused by the impacts of climate change, by radiation resulting from nuclear weapons testing, and by practices such as sorcery-related violence and killing and human trafficking. Hence, the recommendations contained in the outcomes document target the advancement of all women, including women with disabilities and those living in remote areas.

2013 PACIFIC REGIONAL MDG TRACKING REPORT

The 2013 Pacific Regional MDGs Tracking Report and the 2012 Pacific Forum Leaders' Gender Equality Declaration were presented at the conference. The section of the tracking report the conference focussed on was section 3 on MDG 3: gender equality and women's empowerment. It highlights achievements in terms of parity in education, but draws attention to significant progress still required to increase women's representation and participation in political leadership and to eliminate violence against women.

In 2012, Pacific Forum Leaders committed to implement specific national policy actions to advance gender equality in the areas of gender-responsive government programmes and policies, decision-making, economic empowerment, ending violence against women, health and education.

The conference:

10. Called for SPC and development partners to support countries to develop an integrated regional set of statistical indicators for national, regional and international frameworks to streamline annual and periodic reporting processes.
11. Urged regional and international partners to harmonise reporting on gender equality and support national reporting initiatives.
12. Recommended that PICTs strengthen existing reporting mechanisms on international, regional, and national instruments to parliament so as to inform leaders and decision makers and all other stakeholders on the progress made towards gender equality.
13. Requested SPC to extend technical and reporting assistance to all SPC members for annual reporting, including on the Pacific Leaders' Gender Equality Declaration.

MECHANISMS TO PROMOTE THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

Strengthening institutional mechanisms and support for the advancement of gender equality and women's empowerment was discussed in several areas: statistical information for improved evidence-based policy-making and advocacy; the gender mainstreaming approach; national machineries for women and their role; and the role of the Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP). Regional mechanisms of note to support the advancement of women include the Forum Reference Group to Address Sexual and Gender Based Violence and the Regional Peace and Security Action Plan and Working Group – the first regional action plan in the world.

The conference:

14. Acknowledged ongoing regional work to compile gender indicators and supported the establishment of a regular monitoring and reporting system across sectors in all PICTs.
15. Acknowledged and supported ongoing capacity building of national statistics offices, planning departments and sectoral agencies of governments, including national women's machineries (NWMs) to collect, analyse and use gender statistics, and urged SPC to increase capacity to supply training and technical assistance to all PICTs to improve their statistics on gender.
16. Supported capacity development of NWMs, other government institutions, and civil society organisations (CSOs) on gender mainstreaming, and called on PICTs to enhance support for the capacity development and adequate resourcing for NWMs to support the process of gender mainstreaming.

17. Called for public service commissioners to mainstream gender within the public service, including strengthening human resource development policies to advance gender equality.
18. Acknowledged the need to strengthen engagement between government and CSOs, including shared resourcing arrangements and clarity of roles and responsibilities to achieve goals in advancing gender equality.
19. Commended the development and endorsement of the Pacific Regional Action Plan: *Women, Peace and Security 2012–2015*, and recognised the complementarity of it to the RPPA and supporting instruments on gender equality.
20. Encouraged development partners, including CROP agencies, to establish and strengthen efforts to mobilise resources for its implementation.
21. Endorsed the review of the RPPA, and requested SPC to take the lead in this process with the support of PIFS and other CROP agencies, in consultation with all PICTs, taking into consideration the need to harmonise RPPA reporting with other regional and international mechanisms and to accelerate gender mainstreaming across all programmes.

WOMEN'S LEGAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Progress made in women's legal and human rights since the 11th Conference were presented. Key issues where progress has been slow are enforcing gender responsive legislation for CEDAW commitments; legislative measures, policies and plans for the elimination of violence against women and girls; adequate resourcing for policies and laws that address gender equality; implementing temporary special measures and affirmative action to rectify the region's low level of representation of women in national legislatures. CEDAW reporting also remains a challenge.

The conference:

22. Called for governments to consider social protection measures for vulnerable women, including but not limited to women with disabilities, older women, women living with HIV/AIDS/STIs, young women, girls, female-headed households, widows, divorced women, migrant workers and caregivers.
23. Recognising the high prevalence rates of violence against women, young women and girls, including those with disabilities, and the impact of gambling, drug and substance abuse on increasing violence, the conference called for urgent and increased investment in policies, programmes, research and legislative reforms that provide services and support, including access to rights and justice.
24. Commended the regional advocacy work conducted by the Pacific Islands Forum Reference Group to Address Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV), supported their proposal to conduct national studies on the economic impacts of SGBV, and requested dissemination of the findings to all PICTs on completion.

25. Called for PICTs and development partners to support research regarding social and economic impacts of all forms of violence against women/SGBV, including sorcery-related violence.
26. Acknowledged the importance of creating temporary special measures (TSMs) and appropriate strategies to increase political and public participation and representation for women – including young women, indigenous women and those with disabilities – at all levels of government, including traditional systems,
27. Acknowledged the need to ensure that discrimination faced by women, young women, and girls with disabilities and their particular vulnerability to SGBV and poverty be recognised in line with CEDAW and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), and supported evidence-based studies by PICTs (with the support of development partners) to improve knowledge and data on women with disabilities for improved policy and programming.
28. Called for the elimination of SGBV and violence against women, young women and girls, including those with disabilities, and those in rural and remote locations, and for this:
 - a) to be included in national development strategies, plans and public financing mechanisms; and
 - b) to be adequately resourced through clearly identifiable budget allocations, expenditure and human resources.
29. Supported access to justice for survivors of violence by the adoption of national legislation, effective legal assistance, and just and effective remedies, which involve both the formal and the non-formal (or traditional) justice systems to be addressed through the development and coordinated implementation of effective multi-sectoral national policies, strategies and programmes that include measures for prevention, protection and support services, and monitoring and evaluation.
30. Supported the engagement of adolescents and youth as strategic groups for ending the cycle of violence through the implementation of educational programmes, based on gender equality and human rights.
31. Called for the post-2015 development agenda to adopt a transformative stand-alone goal to achieve gender equality, women's rights and women's empowerment, structured around several target areas: freedom from violence, gender equality in capabilities and resources, gender equality in decision-making power, and a voice in public and private institutions.
32. Called for sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) to be guaranteed, ensuring that women, young women, and girls, including those with disabilities, receive comprehensive and confidential SRHR services that respect their human rights throughout their life cycle.

33. Called for legislative reform to eliminate discriminatory laws and harmful practices that criminalise or impede access to abortion, emergency contraception and HIV/AIDS services, and instead create survivor-centred approaches for people with a history of sexual abuse.
34. Called for accountability from representatives at regional and international levels, including reporting back from CROP working groups to PICTs and reporting back on progress made since the last Triennial.

WOMEN'S ACCESS TO SERVICES – EDUCATION

Education is vital for women's empowerment, and also benefits families, communities and economies. The 2013 Pacific Regional MDG Tracking Report highlighted the achievement of gender parity in most PICTs, yet this remains a challenge for several PICTs. Issues affecting enrolment and retention rates amongst girls include pregnancy, travel to school risks, early marriage, insecure toilet facilities, risks of harassment and sexual assault, and costs associated with education. Women and girls with disabilities experience worse access to education and training than their peers without disabilities.

The conference:

35. Called for PICTs to adopt measures that ensure that girls have equal access to primary, secondary and tertiary education, especially in rural and remote areas, and areas of great hardship.
36. Called for PICTs to adopt measures that promote respect for the safety of women and girls in the school environment, including measures to prevent as well as to respond to SGBV.
37. Encouraged training and education institutions to expand choices for women and girls in accessing technical and vocational education and training (TVET), and higher education.
38. Called for PICTs to put in place inclusive policies to accommodate pregnant young women and mothers to complete their education.
39. Requested countries and CROP agencies to support greater research and gender analysis with strategies to address the root causes of the lower retention and achievement rates of boys in some PICTs.
40. Called for PICTs to disseminate data regarding Pacific women's access to education and to support initiatives that address all barriers – civil, political, social, cultural, economic and physical – faced by women, young women, and girls, including those with disabilities, to access all levels of education.
41. Supported improvements in the quality of education towards strengthening literacy and numeracy rates, and noted that SPBEA and the Forum Education Ministers have initiated work in this area.

42. Called for PICTs to review school curricula and all teaching materials in order to eliminate gender stereotypes and all forms of discrimination.
43. Called for PICTs, with the support of CROP agencies and development partners, to implement initiatives for (a) the ongoing professional development of teachers and vocational trainers, and (b) a core basic teacher training programme that includes compulsory areas in family health and comprehensive sex education, counselling and working with those with special needs.
44. Requested the Forum Education Ministers' Meeting, and all other regional ministerial fora, to include a gender perspective in the development of all education policies and programmes.
45. Requested CROP agencies to provide research on the quality of training and professional development, particularly in the area of health education.
46. Called on PICTs to conduct research into the obstacles to women's access to decent work, even after investments made in higher level and tertiary studies, and identify links between higher education and employment outcomes for women.
47. Requested that all school buildings improve access to people with disabilities on their campuses and in their distance learning programmes.
48. Requested PICTs' education systems to include climate change and gender in school curricula.

WOMEN'S ACCESS TO SERVICES – HEALTH

Women's health involves concerns regarding women's sexual and reproductive health, HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), non-communicable diseases (NCDs), and health concerns faced by women with disabilities. Access to good health care remains a challenge because of social and cultural issues, the health care system itself, the set-up of sexual and reproductive health services, and access issues specific to certain groups, such as women who have been subjected to violence and women with disabilities.

The conference:

49. Noted the discussion of the *Pacific Sexual Health and Wellbeing Shared Agenda 2014–2018* and acknowledged the importance of addressing the social determinants of health, such as gender-based violence and the transformation of gender roles having negative impacts on women's health.
50. Supported the incorporation of strategies for ending violence against women, young women, and girls, including those with disabilities, into health policies, training curricula, medical guidelines and standard operating procedures, including strengthening of health systems and their human resources, in order to assist efforts to effectively prevent and address violence against women.

51. Supported better access to family planning, including for women with disabilities, as a means of improving women's health, empowerment and social advancement, and reducing the risk of maternal death and STI and HIV transmission. The conference also requested the Pacific Health Ministers Meeting to include an agenda item at their next meeting on ways to address the major problem of the unmet need for contraceptives in the Pacific.
52. Supported access to inclusive, youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services, education and information, including access to safe spaces for women, young women, and girls, including those with disabilities, and supported the teaching of comprehensive sexuality education with appropriate content starting in primary school.
53. Commended the collaboration of parliamentarians, government, development partners, and civil society organisations at the recent 6th Asia Pacific Population Conference, and recognised the recently passed Moana Declaration on sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights at the Pacific Parliamentarians' consultation on the ICPD Beyond 2014 meeting, and requested this agenda be included in the health ministers' annual meeting and in decisions on national government allocations to ensure adequate resources for sexual and reproductive health.
54. Highlighted the need to strengthen national screening programmes for breast and cervical cancers, and immunisation against the human papillomavirus (HPV) to prevent cervical cancer, as well as treatment for STIs, including chlamydia, and requested that governments prioritise support in these areas.
55. Acknowledged the positive and negative impacts of traditional medicine and called on governments to examine and explore the use of traditional medicine and practices in the Pacific, and their impact on women's health.
56. Requested that PICTs make health sector information available and accessible to the community and grassroots level.
57. Requested that SPC explore funding opportunities to conduct family health and safety studies for the French territories.
58. Requested PICT governments to explore innovative strategies and new technologies to increase access to good quality, comprehensive, and inclusive health systems, including social protection, to improve health outcomes, including reducing NCD-related deaths and disability in women, especially in rural and remote areas.

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

Women's economic empowerment is part of the Revised Pacific Platform for Action, the Forum Economic Ministers' Meeting action plans 2012 and 2013 and the Pacific Leaders' Gender Equality Declaration. Women face barriers to employment and economic empowerment, and they do not have equal access to financial services, business ownership and markets, nor the right to safe, fair and equal participation in local economies.

The conference:

59. Urged governments to act and report on their commitments to women's economic empowerment as outlined in the Revised Pacific Platform for Action, the Forum Economic Ministers Meeting (FEMM) 2012 and 2013 action plans, and the Pacific Leaders' Gender Equality Declaration.
60. Supported the development and use of sex-disaggregated data on women's economic empowerment.
61. Called for all PICTs to review the implementation of national employment legislation and policies, to promote decent work, to remove discriminatory practices and pay, and to eliminate sexual harassment that limits women's overall participation in the economy.
62. Supported and welcomed initiatives that improve the efficiency, productivity and safety of local markets and encourage national ownership by PICTs' governments.
63. Encouraged state-owned and private enterprises to improve and expand women's employment opportunities, and to promote, equitably, women to leadership positions.
64. Called on governments, the private sector and financial institutions to invest in and support women and young women, including those with disabilities, women living in rural and remote areas, and working in the informal sector, by:
 - a) giving access to productive resources;
 - b) establishing business incubators;
 - c) promoting financial literacy programmes and access to financial services (noting potential negative risks associated with credit programmes); and
 - d) guaranteeing safe and sanitary conditions.
65. Called on PICTs to secure food sovereignty based on the recognition of smallholder farmers, particularly women, as key economic actors whose sovereign right to use and own land should be protected through legally binding safeguards, including against land grabbing.
66. Urged governments to provide economic incentives for the private, not-for-profit, and state sectors to train and employ young women.
67. Called on governments and the private sector to provide good quality, accessible and affordable childcare as a critical driver of women's economic empowerment and economic development.
68. Urged FEMM to identify investment opportunities for women's employment and women SMEs and entrepreneurs in all regional and national tourism strategies and plans, and called on PICTs with support from development partners to invest in these areas.

69. Called on governments and development partners to ensure that all environmental and social impact assessments of extractive industries, which disproportionately affect women and children, include a rigorous gender analysis to identify and mitigate against economic, social, cultural and environmental risks.

EMERGING AREAS OF WORK

The issues identified at the last conference were discussed as new priorities at the regional and international level. There is labour migration. The power of the media to address gender inequality was noted, as well as the challenges of eliminating gender-bias and the traditional stereotypes portrayed of women in the media. Climate change was stressed as a critical regional priority, which should no longer be considered as an emerging issue and should be a separate item in the RPPA. Women and girls with disabilities face a double burden of discrimination due to their gender and their disability and this is now recognised in some national gender equality policies and national disability policies.

The conference:

70. Urged CROP agencies and development partners to facilitate regional research, with gender analysis, on the impact of labour migration and remittances in the Pacific to develop strategies to empower people to migrate with dignity.
71. Considered the threats of human trafficking and urged regional cooperation between governments and relevant stakeholders to take immediate national and regional measures to eliminate it through:
 - a) enactment of effective legislation;
 - b) protection mechanisms within existing regimes; and
 - c) development of appropriate support services.
72. Acknowledged the importance of keeping the intersectional issues that women and girls with disabilities face on the regional and national agenda, and reiterated support for the inclusion of those issues in national gender and disability policies to be reported on via CEDAW, CRPD, and other relevant human rights instruments.
73. Encouraged CROP agencies and development partners to increase and strengthen efforts to mainstream gender into climate change and disaster risk management in the delivery of services to PICTs, recognising women's cultural knowledge and skills as custodians of the environment, and emphasised the importance of the production of sex-disaggregated data and indicators to monitor the impacts of adaptation and mitigation initiatives and increase institutional capacity.
74. Called for governments to recognise that community media and women's media networks are important for collaboration and partnerships.

75. Called for governments and NWMs to use the Global Media Monitoring project to conduct quantitative and qualitative analysis of content to be able to ensure that government communication and media strategies effectively promote their gender equality commitments.
76. Called for PICTs to recognise and fully respect the traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples, especially the knowledge held by women, as well as in territories and areas conserved by indigenous peoples and local communities.
77. Called for research with gender analysis by PICTs, in collaboration with development partners, on the impact of inappropriate uses of ICTs, and called for the development of national regulatory infrastructure and policy.

UPCOMING REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PROCESSES

After the summary of the regional and international processes guiding gender equality work, panellists presented their experience in engaging with CSW, the ICDP review, the MDGs and the development of the post-2015 agenda. The role of civil society organisations in these processes was highlighted as was also the importance of mainstreaming gender equality into all processes and frameworks. The Conference noted the historically low representation of PICTs on UN bodies, in particular the CSW and CEDAW committee, and the need for increased representation to ensure PICT perspectives in the global development agenda.

The conference:

78. Considered the opportunities available through regional and international processes to advance gender equality. Applauding development partners' support to gender equality in the region, PICTs called for more support and shared strategies to advance regional issues into international processes, with particular attention to the special circumstances of SIDS and LDCs in the post-2015 development agenda.
79. Called on all stakeholders – governments, development partners, civil society and regional agencies – to improve efforts towards increased coordination and harmonisation, including reporting of gender and development outcomes.
80. Reminded CROP agencies of their obligations to actively promote and demonstrate commitment to gender equality in the development and delivery of programmes and services.
81. Called for PICTs' leaders, CROP agencies and development partners to actively promote gender equality as a stand-alone goal in the post-2015 agenda, as well as for gender to be mainstreamed across all areas.
82. Supported the strengthening of national women's machineries and civil society to ensure the voices and experiences of women, young women, and women with disabilities in the Pacific are reflected in regional and global processes.

83. Recognised the need for PICT representation on international bodies, including the CSW, the CEDAW committee, (and other gender and human rights bodies), and called for enhanced regional coordination of the nomination process.
84. Called for accountability to PICTs from the relevant Pacific representatives on regional and international level bodies, including reporting by regional working groups on progress made towards implementing recommendations from the last Triennial.

ADDITIONAL ISSUES RAISED BY PICTS

Following the discussion of the recommendations for all agenda items, several countries proposed additional recommendations and these were endorsed by the conference.

The conference:

85. Called for increased ratification of CEDAW and CRPD in the region.
86. Called for PICTs and CROP agencies to foster mentoring opportunities and the creation of mechanisms for young women leaders to engage in national, regional and international processes.
87. Took note of the increased incidence and reporting of sorcery-related violence, including murder, against women in some PICTs. The conference also urged governments and relevant stakeholders to establish measures to eliminate sorcery-related violence and to address its causes, consequences and impacts.



Conclusion

There are areas of progress in achieving women's human rights and gender equality in Pacific Island countries and territories (PICTs). More and more countries have adopted laws to protect women and children against domestic violence; there is a better understanding of the need to integrate a gender perspective across all sectors of development; there are new initiatives promoting women's political leadership; overall, women's health and women's access to education are improving; and women's contribution to the economy has started to be recognised.

Although commitments were made several years ago by PICTs on those issues, some statements from the triennial outcomes document could be considered as quite progressive, notably in relation to women's sexual and reproductive health rights. However, there is still a long road to travel before Pacific Island women have all their human rights protected, benefit equally from development outcomes, and can fulfil their aspirations. The prevalence of violence against women remains particularly high; the Northern Pacific Islands are confronted with an emerging issue of people trafficking; women still face difficulty in accessing productive assets and employment; women's representation in decision making bodies, whether in the political sphere or in the private sector, remains very low; and, despite the particular vulnerability of women to climate change impacts, natural disasters and food security, the gender perspective is still not routinely integrated across government programmes, or in development partners' programmes, or in regional organisations' programmes.

The Triennial Conference of Pacific Women is the only time when women from all over the region can meet, exchange experiences, discuss strategies, and build alliances for improving gender equality in their countries. In a region where the countries are geographically isolated and, in some cases, where societies are very conservative, this type of meeting is important for women. It gives them the opportunity to break the isolation, to strategise and to influence a broader development agenda in the region. The high level of attendance at the conference shows the significant contribution it makes to the empowerment of women in the Pacific Islands.

The outcomes document is intended to provide guidance for national work plans to advance gender equality. It is also used by regional organisations and development partners to set priorities and provide Pacific Island countries and territories with the support they may need. To this end, SPC, PIFS and UN agencies have initiated the harmonisation of the reporting process on gender equality, which is a major request made in the outcomes document. With the support of the government of Australia, SPC is recruiting a gender statistician to provide technical assistance to PICTs and further build their capacity to produce and use gender statistics for policy development, planning, and monitoring and evaluation purposes. In 2014, SPC, together with PIFS, will initiate the review of the Pacific Platform for Action, building on the review of the Beijing + 20 processes.

"I am overwhelmed to be among all these women. We don't have a gender policy yet so I am wondering how I am going to include or mainstream gender into our everyday living like education, employment and health issues if we don't have any gender policy."

Eleanor Mori – 30 yrs, Gender Development/Human Rights Officer, Department of Health/Social Affairs, FSM

'This is my first triennial conference and it strikes me to see the amount of passion of the women in the Pacific coming together to celebrate their commitment, determination and dedication for what they have done over the years. I have just started working in the Gender Sector so this is a fantastic way to learn and network and also an exposure for me. I have a better idea now of the challenges faced by Pacific women and I do intend to work towards achieving gender equality.'

Roselyne Kenneth, 47yrs – AusAID, PNG

'For me as a young woman to be part of this important gathering it inspires me to strive more. The thematic issues of health, education, emerging issues and women's rights should become written legislation and law in our country. Also, as young women, we should recognise the women activists who have started this vision of fighting for women's rights. As a police officer, the information from this conference empowers me in my line of work to advocate for women's rights, particularly violence against women.'

Justina Fono, 30yrs old – Police Officer, Pacific Young Women Alliance Participation, Solomon Islands.

'I think I'm overwhelmed because there is so much I didn't know. I'm amazed that so many women have done so much wonderful work. It makes me think back at home to our fragmented response. There's need for a leader to ensure that there's coordination. I worked in the public health sector for more than 20 years and I wish that I had known this information about gender issues so that I could have incorporated it into my work. Back at home, there's a need to improve translation of policies across all levels because women are not bothered about gender equality. In order to make them believe in gender equality, they need to see evidence first.'

Johana Ngiruchelbad – Mechesil Belau (Palau Women), Palau

Postcards from Rarotonga: *Reflections and Reports from the FemLINKPACIFIC Community Media Team*

Appendix 1

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Appendix 2

Ministers' communiqué



FIFTH PACIFIC WOMEN'S MINISTERIAL MEETING RAROTONGA, COOK ISLANDS, 24–25 OCTOBER 2013

Celebrating our Progress, Shaping our World

COMMUNIQUÉ

PREAMBLE

1. The Fifth Pacific Ministerial Meeting on Women was held on 25 October 2013, at the National Auditorium on Rarotonga, Cook Islands. Ministers and officials responsible for women's ministries and departments in 19 Pacific Island countries and territories (PICTs) attended the meeting. Ministers, including the Honourable Enele Sopoaga, Prime Minister of Tuvalu, and nominated officials represented American Samoa, Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, French Polynesia, Guam, Kiribati, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, and Wallis and Futuna. Representatives of regional, non-governmental, civil society and academic organisations; private sector partners; United Nations agencies; donors; and development partner organisations also attended.
2. The ministers expressed their deep appreciation to the government and people of Cook Islands for hosting the 2013 meeting, for the warm hospitality, for the generous manner in which all delegations to the meeting were welcomed, and for the arrangements made for the meetings. The ministers also expressed their appreciation to the Cook Islands Minister for Internal Affairs for chairing the meeting and to the Kiribati Minister for Education, the meeting's vice-chair.
3. The overall objective of the Fifth Pacific Women's Ministerial Meeting was to consider the outcomes and recommendations from the 2013 12th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women and to agree on ways to effectively integrate gender equality into national and regional development agenda. The conference reviewed the achievements made so far, as well as the challenges and obstacles encountered, in the efforts of PICTs to promote the advancement of women, protect their legal and human rights, eliminate violence against them, and increase their economic empowerment and access to services. The conference noted the conclusions of the *2013 Pacific Regional MDGs Tracking Report*, as well as the significance of the *2012 Forum Leaders' Gender Equality Declaration* in renewing their commitment to protect women's rights and achieve gender equality. The conference also endorsed the review of *The Revised Pacific Platform for Action on Advancement of Women and Gender Equality 2005–2015*.

4. The theme of the 12th Triennial Conference – Celebrating our Progress, Shaping our World – invited critical reflection on recent progress made and the work still to be done before gender equality can be achieved in the Pacific Islands. The ministers acknowledged that achievements have been variable between and within countries and territories in the diverse areas of gender equity. The ministers called for coordinated and concerted efforts to accelerate progress in achieving gender equality.
5. The ministers reaffirmed that the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was central to any long-term improvement in gender equality in the region.
6. The ministers recognised the need for Pacific Island ministers and parliamentarians to be made aware of gender issues using, for example, parliamentary select committees and advocacy committees.
7. The ministers noted the ongoing need for capacity building on gender at all levels, taking into account local knowledge and experience. They also noted the need for information on gender equality and women’s rights to be made available to all women and men, including those in remote and rural areas.
8. The ministers discussed a range of issues that have differential and inter-generational impacts on men and women in the Pacific region, such as climate change, temporary labour migration, economic empowerment, education, NCDs, sexual and reproductive health and rights, health, human trafficking, sorcery-related violence, young women and girls, and extractive industries.

KEY OUTCOMES

At the Fifth Pacific Women’s Ministerial Meeting, ministers:

- ▶ acknowledged the *2012 Forum Leaders’ Gender Equality Declaration*, reflecting high-level political commitment, and welcomed the update on progress in reporting against the declaration.
- ▶ endorsed the proposal by the Secretariat to review the *2005 Revised Pacific Platform for Action on the Advancement of Women and Gender Equality 2005–2015* (RPPA). Discussion focused on the purpose, process, and expected outcomes of the review. Ministers requested a results-oriented and outcomes-focused framework, and recognised the need for a mapping exercise to give an accurate picture of progress on the implementation of the RPPA, which expires in 2015.
- ▶ recognised that climate change is one of the most serious threats to the lives of Pacific people, as it can have a devastating impact on people, their land, and their culture. Climate change affects women and men differently. Recognising this, the ministers called for a fundamental shift in policy approach to an approach that incorporates a gender perspective in climate change programmes and initiatives, as well as in regional and international negotiations to support the advancement of gender equality.

- ▶ recognised that there will be an opportunity at the 2014 Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States (to be held in Samoa) to further promote gender equality in the context of sustainable development.
- ▶ called for the post-2015 development agenda to adopt a transformative stand-alone goal to achieve gender equality, as well as for gender to be mainstreamed across all areas of the post-2015 development agenda.
- ▶ recognising the current reviews of relevant regional and global instruments, called for accountability through strengthened reporting networking and information-sharing mechanisms among women's machineries, PICTs' parliaments, local governments and civil society in order to support national coordination and accountability to commitments for gender equality and women's empowerment.
- ▶ endorsed the need for harmonisation of reporting to minimise costs and reduce the administrative burden on PICTs. Ministers also called for CROP agencies and development partners to provide technical and financial support for PICTs reporting on international commitments, including CEDAW and the Universal Periodic Review. Ministers recommended that work in reporting harmonisation be a core part of the review of the RPPA. Ministers also noted the growing importance of data for national planning and policy development, and requested assistance with training and capacity building in data collection, especially filling data gaps, and analysis.
- ▶ noted the increased incidence and reporting of sorcery-related violence, including murder, against women in some PICTs. The ministers also recognised the need to establish measures to eliminate sexual and gender-based violence, including sorcery-related violence, and to address its causes, consequences and impacts in compliance with human rights frameworks.
- ▶ recognised the high prevalence rates of violence against women, young women and girls, including those with disabilities, and the impact of gambling, drug and substance abuse on increasing violence and on sexual reproductive health and rights, and called for urgent and increased investment in policies, programmes, research and legislative reforms that provide services and support, including access to rights and justice.
- ▶ acknowledged the importance of temporary labour migration to Pacific Island economies and its recent increase. Labour migration contributes to economic empowerment but the ministers recognised the need to explore both positive and negative impacts of temporary labour migration. Ministers also recognised the need to review temporary labour migration schemes between countries to ensure they support the advancement of gender equality.
- ▶ called for the strengthening of national women's machineries, in particular considering their placement in national governments, institutional strengthening, and enhanced resourcing. Ministers also emphasised the need for renewed commitment by governments, CROP agencies and development partners to support national efforts to support gender equality.

- ▶ recognised the threat of human trafficking and urged regional cooperation between governments and relevant stakeholders to take immediate national action to eliminate it by developing and implementing legislation, protection mechanisms, and appropriate support services.
- ▶ recognised the importance of cultural industries to Pacific women and called for an enabling environment to support greater access to markets.

Rarotonga, Cook Islands

25 October 2013

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