



Pacific  
Community  
Communauté  
du Pacifique

# SPC Women Lead

Rising together - Creating Pathways - Empowering Women

July-September 2024



***Carrying my kainga  
with me - my roots  
and culture mean  
everything. It's a  
reminder of why  
I strive to make a  
difference for the  
Pacific Islands***

**Sonia Schutz-Russell,**  
**Senior Adviser to Director General**

## **In this edition:**

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- Gender Awareness Trainings Launched
- Gender Equality Flagship Framework Progress
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From the desk of the

## ***Principal Strategic Lead - Pacific Women & Girls***

### ***Aloha, Bonjour, Bula Vinaka, Halo, Malo e lelei, Talofa Lava,***

This year marks significant milestones in our journey towards gender equality in the Pacific. We celebrate 45 years since the first Pacific Triennial Conference of Pacific Women and 30 years since the creation of the Pacific Platform for Action (PPA).

In July, we undertook the immense responsibility of organising the 15th Triennial Conference for Pacific Women in the Republic of the Marshall Islands. This remarkable event brought together around 300 delegates from 22 Pacific nations. In collaboration with the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, the 8th Pacific Ministers for Women and 3rd Pacific Women Leaders meetings were held consecutively, amplifying the region's commitment to gender equality.

These gatherings aren't just ceremonial, they are powerful tools for accountability, allowing us to track progress and support our members to be accountable to their commitments to women's rights.

As the custodian of the PPA and the convenor of the Triennial Conference, SPC plays a pivotal role in advancing these efforts. The PPA is the driving force behind implementing the gender equality commitments made by Pacific Leaders, as reaffirmed in the Revitalised Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration 2023.

At SPC, our work shapes regional policy and supports key development goals. An example of this is the Micronesia Gender Equality Framework, which demonstrates how sub-regional collaboration can strengthen regional initiatives.

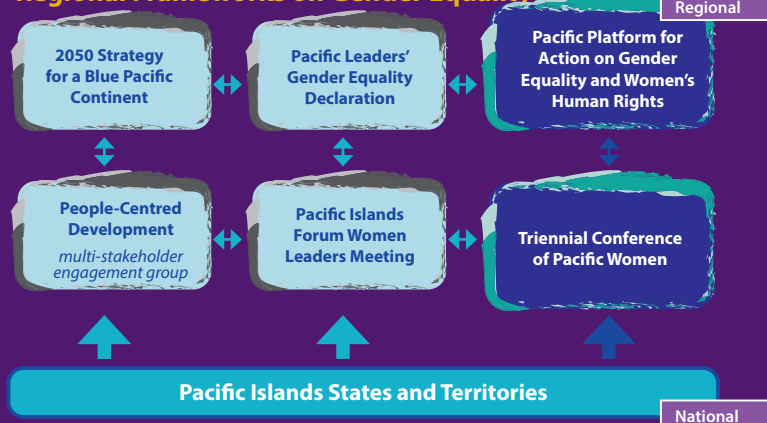
By empowering smaller island nations to come together, we help amplify their voices on the global stage, helping secure vital resources for gender equality programmes. Collective action at the sub-regional level also fosters the sharing of best practices, more effective coordination, and stronger outcomes that contribute to the region's broader gender equality agenda.

The ongoing work demonstrates the value of our Gender Equality Flagship to the region. It is our framework to harness our capabilities and create pathways to empower women and girls across the Pacific. While its design process is underway, it is proving to be responsive to current needs and is also forward looking.

I hope you enjoy reading the highlights of our work. Best wishes for the rest of the year.

*Mereseini Rakuita*

### **Regional Frameworks on Gender Equality**



The SPC Gender Equality Flagship is grounded on the Revitalised Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration (PLGED) and the Pacific Platform for Action (PPA).

Both are fundamental normative frameworks dedicated to promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls in all their diversity across the Pacific region.



## Message from the **WIL Programme Coordinator**

### **A Warm Welcome to Our Third Quarter Update!**

We're thrilled to bring you a vibrant edition packed with stories, insights, and events that reflect our shared commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment across SPC and our member states.

In this edition, we're shining a light on **institutional strengthening for gender equality** - a cornerstone of our work that goes far beyond policy. You'll find stories about how we're working to weave gender indicators into divisional business plans and hear about our very first gender awareness training sessions. These efforts are foundations for our Gender Equality Flagship and implement Key Focus Areas 4 and 7 of our Strategic Plan (Equity, Education, and Social Development; Transforming Institutional Effectiveness).

We're excited to feature two **male advocates** who share their perspectives on gender equality. In the **Pawa Meris<sup>1</sup>** section, you'll meet inspiring women whose work in SPC and a CROP<sup>2</sup> agency across the Pacific speaks to the power of collaboration and impact.

Our **Gender Community of Practice** has grown to over 70 passionate members, creating a thriving space for networking, knowledge-sharing, and solidarity. We'd love for you to join us in this supportive community if you're passionate about advancing gender equality.

We're also introducing the theme **"Rising Together - Creating Pathways - Empowering Women"** as the heartbeat of this newsletter.

Walking the talk on gender equality means aligning SPC's actions with this vision. It's about confronting disparities, re-examining policies, and fostering a culture where all individuals have equal opportunities to contribute and thrive. By creating gender-sensitive programs that include both women's and men's voices, SPC sets a standard for what gender equality looks like in action.

We hope you enjoy this edition and find inspiration in the stories. Send feedback or contributions to [juliebu@spc.int](mailto:juliebu@spc.int) and [lorizab@spc.int](mailto:lorizab@spc.int)

Sincerely,

*Julie Bukikun*

1. *Pawa meri is a tok pisin word commonly used in Papua New Guinea to refer to women in leadership roles, women breaking barriers, challenging social or societal norms or leading and influencing agenda for positive change and empowerment of other women.*
2. *Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific (CROP) was established by Pacific Islands Forum Leaders to improve cooperation, coordination and collaboration between Pacific regional organisations.*

### **SPC Women in Leadership Programme - 3 Pillars Structure**



#### **Our Organisation**

SPC's organisational culture is safe, inclusive and empowering for diverse Pacific women and all staff.



#### **Our People**

Gender equality is a norm at SPC where women are in leadership roles and contribute meaningfully to the strategic direction of the organisation.



#### **Our Influence**

SPC demonstrates strong engagement with CROP and PICT leaders in advancing women's leadership, women's rights, and equality across the regional architecture.



## Update on WIL MELF Framework Rollout: Mainstreaming gender through MEL Systems

In line with its Programme Pillar on Institutional Strengthening on gender equality, the WIL Programme embarked on developing a Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework.

This specifically contributes to the **Strategic Plan Key Focus Area (KFA) 7: Transforming Institutional Effectiveness and KFA 4: Equity, education, and social development**. The goal is to mainstream gender equality and uphold the rights of women and girls in all their diversity throughout SPC's divisional and programmatic operations.

Consultations from June to August with Divisional MEL Leads was positive with keen interests shown in integrating gender-sensitive MEL practices. The consultations revealed that while many divisions have strong external gender indicators to support KFA 4, fewer have implemented internal indicators to bolster KFA 7 and institutional strengthening.

The WIL Programme is now preparing to support divisions incorporate these practices into their business plans over the coming months based on these outcomes:

1. **Commitment to Internal Indicators:** Divisions agreed to complete a mapping exercise of internal gender equality and women's leadership indicators.
2. **Collaboration for Progress:** A combined map of indicators was created, showing strong interest across divisions in strengthening internal processes to track progress.
3. **Expansion of Reporting Frameworks:** Divisions expressed a desire to enhance the SPC High-Level Report Framework to better support gender equality reporting.
4. **Resource Sharing:** Divisions showed eagerness to share MEL and reporting toolkits to enhance collaboration.

The WIL programme is actively seeking opportunities to raise awareness on this area of work. Through the support of our Strategy, Planning and Learning Division, the WIL Programme Coordinator organised a panel discussion on the relevance of mainstreaming gender equality in MEL systems at the Pacific MEL Convening in September.

## Proposed indicators for KFA 7

The WIL Programme is proposing 3 indicators to be added to strengthen KFA 7 across divisions.

| Current KFA 7 indicators:   | Proposed indicators to expand KFA 7:  |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of women participating in decision-making mechanisms/platforms</li> <li>• Number of SPC staff by gender, nationality, employment type.</li> <li>• Number and % of SPC staff participating in learning by gender, age, and other.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Number of women in leadership roles disaggregated by type of role, division.</b><br/><b>Definition:</b> Women in leadership roles include women with people management or programme management responsibilities; committee or activity leadership roles.</li> <li>• <b>Number of SPC staff accessing gender equality and leadership and male advocacy capacity building activities by gender and age, disability, location).</b><br/><b>Definition:</b> Training or capacity building that is focussed on increasing SPC staff awareness, knowledge and skills to support gender equality and leadership and male advocacy capacity building activities by gender and age, disability, location).</li> <li>• <b>\$ and % of SPC budgets spent on WIL, gender equality and to support workplace safety</b><br/><b>Definition:</b> Budget spent on training, capacity building and opportunities for women's career development; all staff awareness and training activities on supporting workplace safety.</li> </ul> |

SPC Staff -  
Have your say!

This survey is to seek feedback to  
improve indicators under KFA 7



or

[CLICK HERE](#)





Varanisese from GEM



Adharsan from EQAP



Jose from HRSD



Jane from LRD



Victoria from FAME



Kaisha from HRSD - PWL at SPC



Kolianita from SPL

**Some key takeaways from the session**

## Pacific MEL Convening: Why gender mainstreaming matters in MEL systems

During the PACMEL event in September, Session 15 focused on integrating gender equality into Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) systems. The discussion underscored the importance of incorporating gender considerations to measure differential impacts effectively, promote inclusivity, and enhance data relevance.

Participants shared experiences and insights on integrating gender within MEL frameworks, exploring strategies for collecting gender data, and addressing institutional gaps. A panel of SPC MEL Divisional Representatives highlighted approaches taken by their divisions, followed by group activities that fostered collaboration and practical reflection. The session concluded with discussions on the role of communications and transformative MEL strategies to support gender equality.

Good to see one-SPC in action

The main key takeaway I took from the Gender Equality, that we need to make more awareness and implementation of Gender Equality

More Gender in MEL discussions! Very interesting!

Amazing work done by different SPC teams to incorporate gender statistics into their respective programmes! Great!

The importance of gender as a whole in terms of the many tools available to embed gender into MEL. Apart from that, data presented drives the need to incorporate gender into policies, budget and national priorities



## Case study on Communication support to MEL – EQAP experience



The Educational Quality Assessment Programme (EQAP) has made significant strides in promoting gender equality through innovative communication strategies. By providing specific examples of successful gender equality initiatives, EQAP demonstrates how targeted messaging can resonate across diverse audiences, fostering a culture of inclusion. The integration of best practices into existing communication plans has proven effective, ensuring that gender equality remains a consistent priority within educational frameworks.

Furthermore, EQAP underscores the critical role of data and monitoring in evaluating the impact of gender equality messaging. By collecting and analysing relevant data, the organisation can assess the effectiveness of its communication strategies, allowing for informed adjustments that enhance engagement and outreach efforts. This evidence-based approach not only validates the initiatives but also informs future planning, enabling EQAP to refine its messaging and strategies for even greater impact.

Through these efforts, EQAP not only champions gender equality but also sets a benchmark for effective communication in educational contexts, paving the way for sustainable and inclusive practices that resonate with Pacific Island communities and beyond.



## Pilot Gender Awareness Trainings Launched

August 2024

In quarter 3, the WIL Programme launched a pilot for gender awareness training through the SPC Gender Community of Practice. This initiative is part of SPC's commitment to fostering gender equality and promoting a people-centred approach across the organisation.

The training was developed in response to the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific, which highlights the need for integrated efforts to address social exclusion and inequality. SPC's strategic plan supports these aims by enhancing gender equality, human rights, and social inclusion through various programmes.



**At its core, gender equality is about dismantling structural biases, creating inclusive pathways for leadership, and setting transparent benchmarks for progress.**

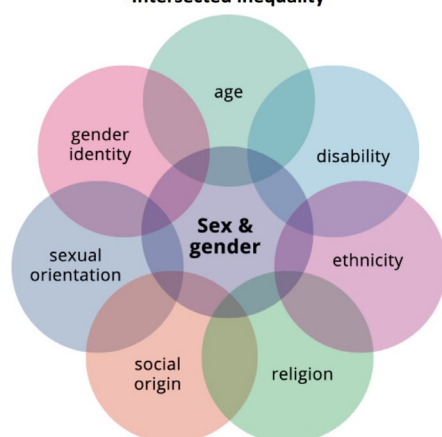
**It means supporting policies that address pay equity, workplace harassment, and gender-specific barriers, but also going beyond policies by fostering a culture that values diverse perspectives, treats people equitably, and actively promotes women's leadership.**

Since its commencement in August, two cohorts have successfully completed their first face-to-face training sessions in Suva. Participants included diverse male and female staff from across SPC divisions, promoting inclusivity and cross-organisational learning.

Looking ahead, the programme will continue to build upon these learning events, with further sessions planned to deepen participants' knowledge and skills. These upcoming trainings will focus on complex topics, such as gender-based violence and supportive practices for addressing abuse disclosures, aimed at fostering a safer and more equitable workplace environment. The WIL programme aims to rollout this support across divisions. The initiative is a crucial step towards positive organisational change and greater leadership opportunities for women within SPC.



### Intersected inequality



### Did You Know?

Not all women experience the same forms of discrimination and not all men enjoy the same privileges. Every person is unique and has multi-identities related to their age, (dis)ability, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, class, etc.

The intersection of gender inequality with other identities shows a variety of patterns of disadvantage and exclusion. Therefore it is important to understand and include this diversity among people for any strategy to achieving gender equality.



## Update on the Gender Equality Flagship

July-September, 2024



Consultations were conducted within SPC and its stakeholders in quarter 3 to inform the design of the Gender Equality Flagship. Stakeholders agree that the past two decades have seen progress and acknowledged that more transformational approaches are needed to ‘move the dial’ on gender equality. These include continued learning from analyses of barriers, tailored problem definition and standardisation of criteria to guide gender mainstreaming initiatives.

Through the consultations it was agreed that through sustained, collaborative efforts, the Flagship will help shape a future where gender equality is a cornerstone of social, political, environmental, and economic progress in the region.

The design process for the Gender Equality Flagship continues using the Futures Methodology to develop its governance and accountability structure. This work is done closely with the Strategic, Planning and Learning Division and the 3 SPC Flagships: Climate Change, Food Systems and Oceans. A Working Paper on the Gender Flagship design will be presented to the CRGA in its November meeting.

### Our Flagships are designed based on these characteristics:

#### Governance and Structure:

The placement of flagships within SPC’s governance structure requires further discussion, particularly regarding their positioning relative to divisions and their reporting lines. This is especially significant for the Gender Flagship, which may have a unique governance role.

#### Build on Existing Strengths:

Flagships should leverage and enhance the current capacities within SPC, building on established expertise and achievements.

#### Facilitate Transdisciplinary Innovation:

Flagships should enable innovation by bringing together capabilities from different divisions and thematic areas to tackle regional challenges effectively.

#### Catalytic Roles for Change:

There may be a need to introduce catalytic roles to drive the integration of flagship initiatives within existing structures and ensure successful implementation.

#### Clear Entry Points for Collaboration:

Flagships should provide clearer entry points for SPC members and partners to engage with the organisation’s work, promoting stronger partnerships and coordinated action.

#### Alignment with 2050 Strategy:

When fully operational, flagships are expected to play a crucial role in One CROP’s collaborative efforts to implement the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific.

### The “Women Empowerment” panel at Leadership Fiji 2024

23 September | Suva, Fiji



The “Women Empowerment” panel at Leadership Fiji 2024, featuring Mereseini Rakuita, served as a powerful reminder of the critical role women leaders play in driving social and organisational change. By sharing her journey and providing actionable strategies for overcoming gender biases, Rakuita inspired participants to challenge societal norms and embrace inclusive leadership.

#### Feedback from participant:

Another amazing female leader who has achieved so much! Ms. Rakuita shared insights on her journey as the youngest politician in 2014 and how she influenced meaningful change. I learned that leadership is about responsibility we carry to the people we serve, as a leader knowing your principles and values, and setting clear goals which are achievable.



## Update on Micronesian Gender Equality Framework

July-September, 2024

Consultations across states to inform the design of the Micronesian Gender Equality Framework (GEF) over 3 months concluded on 6 September. Led by the Micronesia Islands Forum's (MIF) Gender Equality Committee (GEC), these consultations brought together voices from government, civil society, and development partners to ensure that the framework reflects the unique societal and cultural dynamics of Micronesian communities.

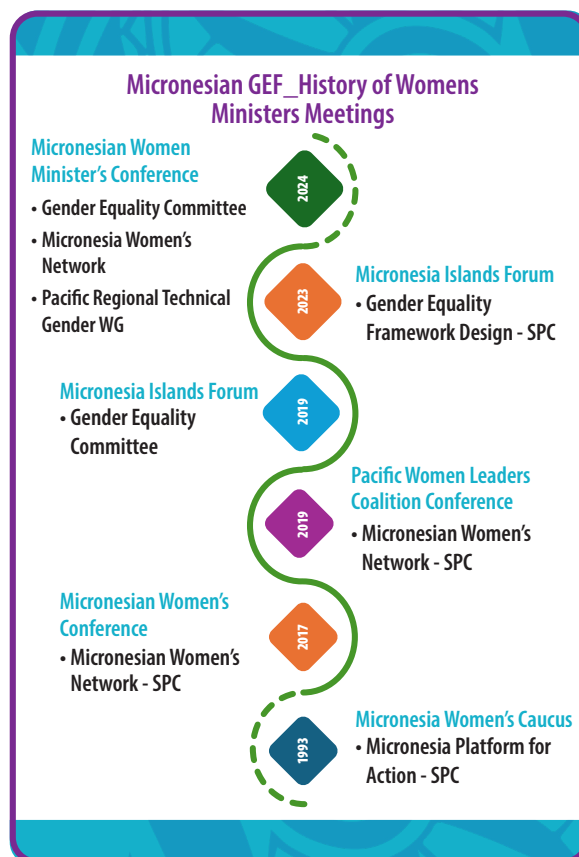
Priorities emerging from the consultations include:

1. Contextualising gender equality
2. Economic empowerment
3. Political representation and leadership
4. Addressing violence against women and girls
5. Resource mobilisation and support securing sustainable funding for gender equality initiatives is crucial.
6. Building implementation capacity

Meetings with traditional leaders were specifically organised to explore the nexus of gender and culture/tradition and how to best incorporate Micronesian 'matrifocal' cultures. These are defined here as women-led or-centric kinship (clan) networks, including matrilineal ownership and transfer of custom status and property rights to land (traditional and/or legal).

The consultations underscored the need for a culturally sensitive, adaptable framework for Micronesia that promotes women's roles in leadership, economic activities, and social inclusion.

A GEC meeting is marked for January 2025 to review the draft GEF before it is finalised for the next MIF meeting.



### The Pacific Women Lead Annual Reflection and Analysis Workshop

9-13 September | Suva, Fiji

The workshop provided stakeholders of Pacific Women Lead (PWL) a space to connect, reflect on progress of the programme and strategise on approaches to support its implementation.



The WIL Programme Coordinator was invited as panellist in the discussion titled, **'Women leading the way – cross sector perspectives of leadership in the Pacific'**. Questions to the panel included: **"What are the key barriers that women face in accessing leadership roles in your sector? and How are women leaders addressing these barriers?"**

Strategies discussed regarding potential support to women in leadership roles include: (1) leadership training that focuses on adaptive and transformational leadership; (2) integrating gender equality targets into institutional policies; and (3) creating leadership pathways that recognise and value diverse experiences and perspectives.



**We need to recognise that leadership is not about the title, but about the ability to inspire and create meaningful change**



## PNG CEDAW State Report Writeshop and Networking

2-6 September | Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea

In September, the PSL and the WIL Programme Coordinator collaborated with PWL at SPC on a mission to Papua New Guinea for the CEDAW State Report Writeshop. The writeshop provided an opportunity for the SPC Principal Strategic Lead to open the session, observe discussions, and offer guidance when needed. It was a valuable platform for networking, identifying gaps, and planning future actions. The WIL Programme Coordinator played a key role in moderating group discussions and offering support throughout the writeshop.



**We need to work as a collective – as one PNG – support each other, our development partners including civil society and faith-based organisations**

Secretary Jerry Ubase



**Political will is critical to shift the dial on gender equality. By involving male leaders as champions, we can drive transformative change that benefits not just women and girls but strengthens the entire Pacific community**

Mereseini Rakuita at the opening of the writeshop

The visit to Port Moresby was more than just the workshop. It created space to meet with key stakeholders, discuss future opportunities, and strengthen partnerships for ongoing collaboration.

By learning from PNG's unique context and sharing ideas, we can move closer to making real progress on gender equality, fostering lasting change not just within the country but across the region. The insights gained from these exchanges will play a critical role in shaping the strategies for long-term impact and success.





To mark International Literacy Day, the Women in Leadership Programme Coordinator emphasised the intersection between literacy and gender equality. She highlighted the challenges faced by women and girls in the Pacific, including gender-based violence and limited access to education.

“When girls have access to education and are literate, they grow up to be empowered women. Empowered women are better equipped to make informed decisions, access economic opportunities, and advocate for their rights as well as others around them.

More information: <https://bit.ly/472ragU>

## 10th Asia-Pacific Futures Network Conference

4-5 September | Bangkok, Thailand

The WIL programme sponsored Vuki Buadromo, Principal Adviser to the DDG's Office at SPC, to attend the 10th Asia-Pacific Futures Network Conference in Bangkok. Vuki participated in a panel on "Becoming a Feminist Futurist," sharing SPC insights and her personal journey. The session explored gender inequality and alternative futures.

**Current metaphor for feminist futures of the Asia Pacific: *the kitchen is my world to the world in my kitchen - we are all welcome, come eat, be nourished***



The Gender COP convened for the second time in 2024, offering members a platform to share their projects, methodologies and key learnings. It provided an opportunity for Josphine Kalsuak, the HRSD Team Leader for Mainstreaming and Capacity Building to discuss how the People Centred Approach can be a driver for the Gender Equality Flagship.

Bringing together Gender Advisers and advocates from across SPC, the Gender COP fosters collaborations and amplifies gender initiatives. Notably, it has successfully fostered collaboration and integration, breaking down barriers that once limited gender equality efforts within SPC.





### Addressing GBV at the 4th PIPG Conference

15 August | Palau

The presentation at the Pacific Islands Parliaments Group's 4th Conference addressed gender-based violence (GBV) in the Pacific, emphasising its socio-economic costs and what parliaments can do to address it. GBV, affecting up to 60% of women in the region, has severe consequences on health, productivity, and family well-being.

The Principal Strategic Lead highlighted successful regional initiatives, such as the Regional Working Group, and emphasised the need for parliamentary oversight, better law implementation, and engagement of male MPs to challenge harmful norms. A case study on Papua New Guinea showcased the impact of the Coalition of Parliamentarians to End GBV, which achieved significant progress, including the organisation of a National GBV Summit. A call to action urged parliamentarians to make a meaningful impact during their term to help reduce GBV.

### PSL at Australian Indigenous Event – Garma Festival

2-5 August

Remote Northeast Arnhem Land, Australia



In August, the Principal Strategic Lead joined the 'Panel of International Voices' at the Garma Festival in remote Australia. She shared how SPC integrates traditional knowledge with scientific approaches to address climate change, highlighting efforts in Tuvalu and Vanuatu across water management, agroforestry, and ocean conservation. In addition to her panel role, the PSL observed the intersection of gender, culture, and tradition within the Yolngu community. This provided deeper understanding of how cultural practices can both empower and challenge gender equality. The festival also allowed her to engage with Indigenous leaders and expand networks.

These reflections are essential for advancing SPC's Gender Equality Flagship, particularly in recognising the resilience of Yolngu women. to explore how PCA can be a driver for the Gender Equality Flagship. Bringing together Gender Advisers and advocates from across SPC, the Gender COP fosters collaborations and amplifies gender initiatives. Notably, it has successfully dismantled silos that previously hindered gender equality work within SPC.

## Opening of the Regional Training Programme led by Fiji Women's Crisis Centre

29 July | Suva, Fiji

In July, the Principal Strategic Lead opened the 44th edition of the flagship Regional Training Programme on Gender, Violence Against Women and Girls, Human Rights and Development organised by the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre.

The programme gathered 42 participants from across the Pacific, including eight sponsored by Pacific Women Lead at SPC, supported by the Australian Government. The four-week training, enhanced regional efforts against gender-based violence, fostering a network of empowered advocates.

About the RTP: <https://bit.ly/3Yo8dDc>

PSL's speech: <https://bit.ly/4dljyrH>



Photo Credit: FWCC



**As you unpack and learn about the many facets of addressing gender-based violence you will be faced with some confronting truths about the social, religious and cultural spaces that we live in as Pacific people...don't be afraid to ask questions and push boundaries of what you know to be true in the knowledge that you are learning not only for yourselves but more important for the women and girls that you serve in your different jurisdictions.**

## 15th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women & the 8th Meeting of Pacific Ministers for Women

22-24 July | RMI



The 15th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women and the 8th Meeting of Pacific Ministers for Women, hosted by SPC in July in the Republic of Marshall Islands, provided a pivotal platform for amplifying the voices and agency of women across the Pacific.

Convened every three years, the Triennial Conference has, for 45 years, served as a key mechanism to assess progress and address challenges to gender equality. This year's theme, *An Piliñliñ Koba Kōmman Lometo* – for a Resilient and Sustainable Pacific, translated to “droplets of water creating an ocean,” symbolised the collective effort necessary for sustainable, impactful change.

Key outcomes of the Triennial included commitments to strengthen regional partnerships, develop gender-responsive policies, and support women's leadership across all sectors. These discussions reaffirmed that addressing women's health, climate justice, and GBV is essential to realising the Pacific's broader development goals.

Acknowledging the challenges of implementing these commitments, Pacific governments emphasised the need for collaboration and partnership among all stakeholders, including governments, civil society organisations, organisations of persons with disabilities, academia, the private sector, traditional and faith leaders, youth, and communities. This collective effort is crucial for achieving sustained progress on gender equality.

The 16th Triennial Conference will be held in Papua New Guinea in 2027.



## Pawa Meris of SPC

**Florence Rahiria**

Deputy Director, Land Resources Division

### Rooted in Heritage: Florence Rahiria's Journey of Leadership

Growing up in Papua New Guinea in a matrilineal society, Florence was taught by her grandfather that her role as a landowner came with the responsibility of leadership. This early foundation deeply shaped her values of respect, trust, and cultural heritage.

Florence began her career in banking and finance before moving into international development, gaining over 15 years of experience across various sectors. She worked with the Australian Aid Programme and the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research, which eventually led her to Fiji and then to SPC's Land Resources Division. In 2021, she joined as Manager of Operations, and by 2023, she became the first Deputy Director of the division, committed to enhancing agricultural and forestry outcomes for the Pacific.

Recently, Florence was awarded the U.S.-Pacific Institute for Rising Leaders Fellowship, recognising her dedication and passion for continuous learning. She is particularly focused on strengthening food systems in the region, stressing that "food systems are everyone's job."

Her advice to aspiring women leaders is to "focus on your strengths" rather than dwelling on weaknesses. Florence's story of leadership, rooted in cultural heritage and resilience, inspires women to embrace their strengths and lead with confidence.

**Leadership is not something I learned along the way - it was instilled in me at an early age**

### Empowering Change: Leading with Pacific Values

As a mother and proud Pacific Islander, Sonia Schutz-Russell views representation as crucial. In her role as Senior Advisor to the Director General, she carries the weight of her *kainga* - her roots and culture - with pride, striving to create meaningful change for the region she calls home.

With experience from her early career in Kiribati's national government, Sonia is motivated by a desire for new challenges and impactful leadership. She believes that having a seat at the decision-making table allows her to ensure that Pacific voices are heard and their needs addressed.

Describing her role as both "*the runner*" and "*the strategist*," Sonia collaborates with the Senior Leadership Team to guide the organisation's vision. She values relationships across the Pacific, believing they are key to achieving meaningful outcomes.

To aspiring female leaders, Sonia's message is clear: "Go for it." She encourages women not to let doubts hold them back and stresses the importance of empathy, resilience, and learning from failure. Sonia's journey is a powerful reminder of the importance of representation and determination, and she advocates for women's inclusion in decision-making to shape a brighter future for all.

**Sonia Schutz-Russell**

Senior Advisor to the Director General

**For any woman or man aspiring to take on a leadership role, know that it's not just about the title - it's about staying true to who you are, supporting those around you, and always striving to grow**

## Male Advocates



**Miles Young**

Director, Human Rights and Social Development Division

### Leading by Example: Miles Young on Male Allies and Gender Equality

For Mr Miles Young, Director of the Human Rights and Social Development (HRSD) Division at the Pacific Community (SPC), gender equality is a commitment that guides his leadership every day. With over 25 years of experience in human rights and development, Miles advocates for inclusive, gender-equal environments.

The HRSD team at SPC has made significant strides in supporting gender equality through various initiatives. “In the six years I’ve been here, including four as Director, I’ve seen more women taking leadership roles at SPC- they are making meaningful contributions,” Miles emphasises.

Miles acknowledges that while progress has been made, more work is needed to mainstream gender across SPC programmes and influence the region. A key focus for him is encouraging male allies to engage in gender equality. “We need to reach out to men and understand how we can better engage them,” he says.

Miles also stresses the importance of dispelling the misconception that gender equality discriminates against men. “Gender equality is about fairness,” he explains, aiming to create an environment where everyone has equal opportunities.

Through his leadership and commitment, Mr Miles Young inspires others - showing that gender equality is a collective mission where men play an essential role as champions for change.

**Gender equality is about ensuring that everyone- men, women, and all members of our community- has the opportunity to achieve their full potential**

Shane Harrison recently moved on from SPC after serving as the Gender Adviser at the Geo-Science, Energy and Maritime Division (GEM), where he promoted gender and energy as an important aspect of sustainable development in the Pacific.

Shane's journey into becoming a gender adviser began during his master's studies when he was introduced to feminist and queer theory. This transformative experience opened his eyes to the influence of gender dynamics in his own life, particularly understanding the hierarchies of masculinity and their effects on his identity and behaviour. Over time, he expanded his expertise across different roles, including humanitarian support, GBV prevention and the protection of vulnerable groups.

**Gender inequality does not only affect women, it affects all of us, including men**

Shane advocates exploring gender through the lenses of masculinity and power. Understanding how gender dynamics shape our behaviours can lead to more empathetic, informed actions, fostering development and equality both personally and professionally.

We thank Shane for his contributions at SPC and in the region, and wish him all the best in his next endeavours.



**Shane Harrison**

Gender Adviser



## CROP Women of the Wave



### Meet Judy Yuen from Pacific Power Association

Judy Yuen serves as the Accountant at the Pacific Power Association (PPA), where she manages the financial activities of the organisation, including invoicing, receipting, and the management of donor funds. Her work is pivotal in supporting PPA's mission to assist Pacific utilities through training and capacity building, with a strong focus on sustainable energy and innovative technology.

With a background in finance and a deep commitment to the Pacific energy sector, Judy has thrived in her role at PPA. She notes the unique challenges faced by women in this traditionally male-dominated field, but recent progress, such as increased female participation at PPA's annual conference, signals a promising shift towards greater inclusion. Judy has also observed male CEOs actively encouraging female colleagues to take up leadership roles, including nominations to the executive committee—a positive step towards gender equality.

Judy is a strong advocate for gender equality in the energy sector. She acknowledges that while cultural norms can sometimes present barriers, they can also be integrated into the workplace as enablers of positive change. "It's crucial to provide equal opportunities for women to contribute their skills and leadership," she affirms, pushing for a more inclusive and diverse workforce across the Pacific's power industry.



**It's crucial to provide equal opportunities for women to contribute their skills and leadership**

## Coming up next!

- |            |   |            |  |
|------------|---|------------|--|
| 1 Oct:     | 7th MELNET workshop. Suva, Fiji   | 13-14 Nov: | PWL@SPC Governance Board Meeting. Nadi, Suva                           |
| 4 Oct:     | Women in Energy Conference, Nadi, Fiji  | 18-22 Nov: | HRSD Annual Reflections. Suva, Fiji                                    |
| 14 Oct:    | PWL@SPC Investments Oral Update with DFAT. Suva, Fiji   | 25 Nov:    | 16 days of Activism  |
| 15-17 Oct: | Regional Speakership on Pacific Island Oral Statements to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) Advisory Proceedings. Nadi, Fiji | 27 Nov:    | Women in Leadership Taskforce meeting. Suva, Fiji                      |
| 21-26 Oct: | Commonwealth Women's Forum 2024. Apia, Samoa  | 28-29 Nov: | SPC Annual Learning and Results Workshop (LRW). Suva, Fiji             |
| 28-29 Oct: | Priority setting for Gender Equality at SPC. Suva, Fiji   | 28-29 Nov: | Second EVAW Symposium. Nadi, Fiji                                      |
| 5-6 Nov:   | PC 54th Committee of Representatives of Governments and Administrations (CRGA 54). Papeete, French Polynesia                        | 28-29 Nov: | SPC Annual Learning and Results Workshop (LRW). Suva, Fiji             |
| 7 Nov:     | SPC, DFAT, and MFAT – High Level Consultations. Papeete, French Polynesia   | Nov (TBC): | CROP WOW Convening   |
| 13 Nov:    | Women in Tourism Talanoa, Pacific Tourism Organisation. Suva, Fiji  | 2-6 Dec:   | RWG 5th Annual Meeting. Nadi, Fiji                                     |
|            |   | 3-5 Dec:   | 2024 Australasian AID Conference (AAC2024). Canberra, Australia        |
|            |   | 3 Dec:     | DFAT, SPC and PWLES Partnership Brokering meeting. Canberra, Australia |

### For more information:



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