

Final Evaluation of Progressing Gender Equality in the Pacific (PGEP) Phase II

Evaluation report

Prepared for the Pacific Community (SPC), Human Rights and
Social Development Division (HRSD)

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Pacific
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HUMANITARIAN
ADVISORY GROUP



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Disclaimer: The views expressed in this publication are the authors' alone and do not necessarily reflect those of the Australian Government or the Pacific Community (SPC).

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	2
Abbreviations	4
Executive summary	5
Section 1: Introduction	6
Section 2: PGEP II – Background and context	10
Section 3: Findings	14
Finding 1: PGEP II’s design was, and is, fit for purpose	14
Finding 2: PGEP II contributed to institutional progress on gender mainstreaming	18
Finding 3: Some evidence suggests PGEP II interventions generated sustained change	24
Finding 4: Internal and external problems explain PGEP’s under-delivery on targets	27
Section 4: Looking forward	30
Annex 1: Evaluation questions	32
Annex 2: List of documents reviewed	34
Annex 3: List of stakeholders	36

ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
BPWP	Building Prosperity for Women Producers (SPC)
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
EVAW	Elimination of Violence Against Women
HRSD	Human Rights and Social Development (Division, SPC)
FAME	Fisheries, Aquaculture and Marine Ecosystems (Division, SPC)
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FSM	Federated States of Micronesia
GEDSI	Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion
GEM	Geoscience, Energy and Maritime (Division, SPC)
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPAM	Institute of Public Administration and Management, Solomon Islands
KIIs	Key Informant Interviews
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
KWCSC	Kiribati Women and Children Support Centre
LRD	Land Resource Division (SPC)
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MPS	Ministry of Public Services, Solomon Islands
MWYCFA	Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs, Solomon Islands
MWYSSA	Ministry of Women, Youth, Sports and Social Affairs, Kiribati
NSO	National Statistics Office, Kiribati
PEUMP	Pacific-European Union Marine Partnership Programme (SPC)
PGEP	Progressing Gender Equality in the Pacific
PIC	Pacific Island Country
PLGED	Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration
PPA	Pacific Platform for Action on Gender Equality and Women’s Human Rights
PROP	Pacific Islands Regional Oceanscape Programme
PWL	Pacific Women Lead
RMI	Republic of the Marshall Islands
SDD	Statistics for Development Division (SPC)
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SDP	Social Development Program (SPC)
SPC	Pacific Community
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
VAW	Violence Against Women
WDD	Women’s Development Division, MWYCFA, Solomon Islands

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Summary of findings and recommendations

This report outlines the findings from the evaluation of the Progressing Gender Equality in the Pacific (PGEP) phase II project, a five-year project (2018–23) funded by the Australian Government and implemented by the Pacific Community. The overall aim of PGEP is to enhance the capacity of 12 targeted Pacific governments (PIC) to advance gender mainstreaming in policy and across various sectors. Building on the foundations established by a first phase of PGEP (2013–18), PGEP II (2019–23) continued to work towards the priorities of the Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration (PLGED) and the Pacific Platform for Action on Gender Equality and Women’s Human Rights (PPA). This report details the contributions of PGEP II to the broader gender space in the Pacific. Key evaluation findings include:



Finding 1: PGEP II’s design was, and is, fit for purpose

The review of PGEP’s six ways of working and rationale concluded that it is a relevant and sensible approach to meeting PICs’ gender mainstreaming needs. There is evidence of a strong project design, building on the achievements of PGEP1, ties to international, regional and national commitments and policies on progressing gender equality, and continuous relevance to meeting current needs.



Finding 2: PGEP II contributed to institutional progress on gender mainstreaming

The evaluation collected a number of positive outcomes from PGEP II under both project outcomes, including evidence of progress against 1) *Gender mainstreaming* in line with PICs’ own priorities, supporting the development of government policies and implementation plans in close collaboration with National Women Machineries, and 2) *Accountability mechanisms*, including via the building of national statistic capacity, and the publication and/or gender technical support provided to a number of reports and studies presenting strong analysis of key gender issues in the region.



Finding 3: Some evidence suggests PGEP II interventions generated sustained change

The evaluation identified a number of enablers in relation to PGEP II’ attempts to promote sustainable change in the enabling environment for progressing gender mainstreaming. Whilst PGEP II contributed to an increase in gender policies and framework in the region, and successfully advocated for institutional change within SPC, further efforts are required in the area of policy implementation, accountability and securing political will.



Finding 4: Internal and external problems explain PGEP II’s under-delivery on targets

Despite PGEP II’s positive contributions described above, its overall delivery fell short of its plans and intention. PGEP II was implemented in a changing landscape, including COVID-19 (2020–21), changes within SPC and an increasing number of actors and programs focusing on gender mainstreaming in recent years.

Given this changed landscape in the gender space, the evaluation identifies key recommendations to support SPC’s positioning and framing of its broader role in the sector. This evaluation does not recommend for PGEP to continue into a third phase. There is however a strong case to progress with gender mainstreaming within SPC’s other areas of work in the gender space. Through the Gender Equality Flagship, there is an opportunity to understand the best ways to ensure that gender mainstreaming efforts can be strengthened to complements the work of other actors and beyond PWL.

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

Gender mainstreaming in the Pacific is increasingly recognised as a key way to reduce deeply rooted gender inequalities and to promote sustainable development in the region. Pacific Island Countries (PICs) continue to struggle with cultural norms that often perpetuate gender discrimination, high rates of gender-based violence, and too few economic opportunities for women. Responding to this context, Progressing Gender Equality in the Pacific (PGEP) was designed to provide targeted support to integrate gender perspectives into all areas of policy and program development by mainstreaming gender, increasing technical capacity, enhancing accountability and fostering government cultures that are more supportive of gender equity and equality. This approach aligns with the intended outcomes of the Australian Government program Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). PGEP II is also aligned with objectives for transformational change and strategic approaches endorsed by Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and detailed in the Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development Roadmap: human rights, do no harm, inclusion of marginalised groups, adapting country and socio-cultural contexts, and using multiple programming entry points for gender mainstreaming implementation.

The overall aim of PGEP phases I and II is to enhance the capacity of PIC governments to implement gender mainstreaming effectively. Building on the foundations established in PGEP1 (2013–18), PGEP II (2019–23) continued to work towards the priorities of the Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration (PLGED) and the Pacific Platform for Action on Gender Equality and Women's Human Rights (PPA) by increasing support to PICs, enhancing monitoring, evaluation, and learning systems, and promoting regional exchange and collaboration. The project's emphasis on tailored assistance, multi-entry programming, and strengthened partnerships aimed to create sustainable progress in gender equality and women's human rights across the Pacific.

PGEP II was implemented in a changing landscape, including COVID-19 (2020–21), changes within The Pacific Community (SPC) and an increasing number of actors and programs focusing on gender mainstreaming in recent years. Given this changed landscape in the gender space, the evaluation described in this report was designed to support SPC's positioning and framing of its broader role in the sector.

Evaluation scope and questions

The final evaluation of PGEP II aimed to assess the effectiveness of the project's approach and delivery in supporting PICs to progress gender equality as per their commitments. The evaluation reviewed the project's implementation against project design and plans and captured its key achievements and challenges. It also identified key lessons learned and recommendations to inform SPC's future gender work, both within its Human Rights and Social Development (HRSD) Division and more broadly across SPC and in the region. The specific evaluation questions of this evaluation were as follows.



Overarching evaluation question: What achievements were realised by PGEP II and what lessons can be learned from these achievements to inform the direction of gender programming within the HRSD Division of SPC?

- **Relevance:** To what extent has PGEP II met the needs and priorities to progress gender equality in PICs?
- **Effectiveness:** to what extent did PGEP II deliver on its articulated objective and intended intermediate outcomes?
- **Efficiency:** To what extent were PGEP II resources used effectively and strategically to progress gender equality?
- **Impact:** What outcomes have emerged from the interventions of the PGEP II project?

- **Coherence:** To what extent was PGEP II well situated alongside other efforts to progress gender equality across PICs?
- **Sustainability:** To what extent has PGEP II contributed to sustainable change in gender equality across PICs?

Audience

This report is primarily intended to inform:

- The HRSD team implementing the PGEP II project
- Other SPC staff overseeing projects and services under HRSD’s current business plan
- Other SPC staff overseeing projects and services designed to strengthen gender mainstreaming in their divisional programs/work
- Other SPC audiences as deemed appropriate
- DFAT.

Secondary audiences include PGEP II recipients (partner countries for Tier 1 and 2) and other actors working to progress gender equality in the Pacific.

Report structure

This report has four key sections.

Section 1 introduces the report and outlines its scope, methodology and limitations.

Section 2 provides an overview of PGEP II’s context, aims and approaches.

Section 3 outlines 4 key findings and supportive evidence behind each finding.

Section 4 concludes the report and provides a series of recommendations for gender approaches within The Pacific Community.

Photo: SPC (PGEP II)



Methodology

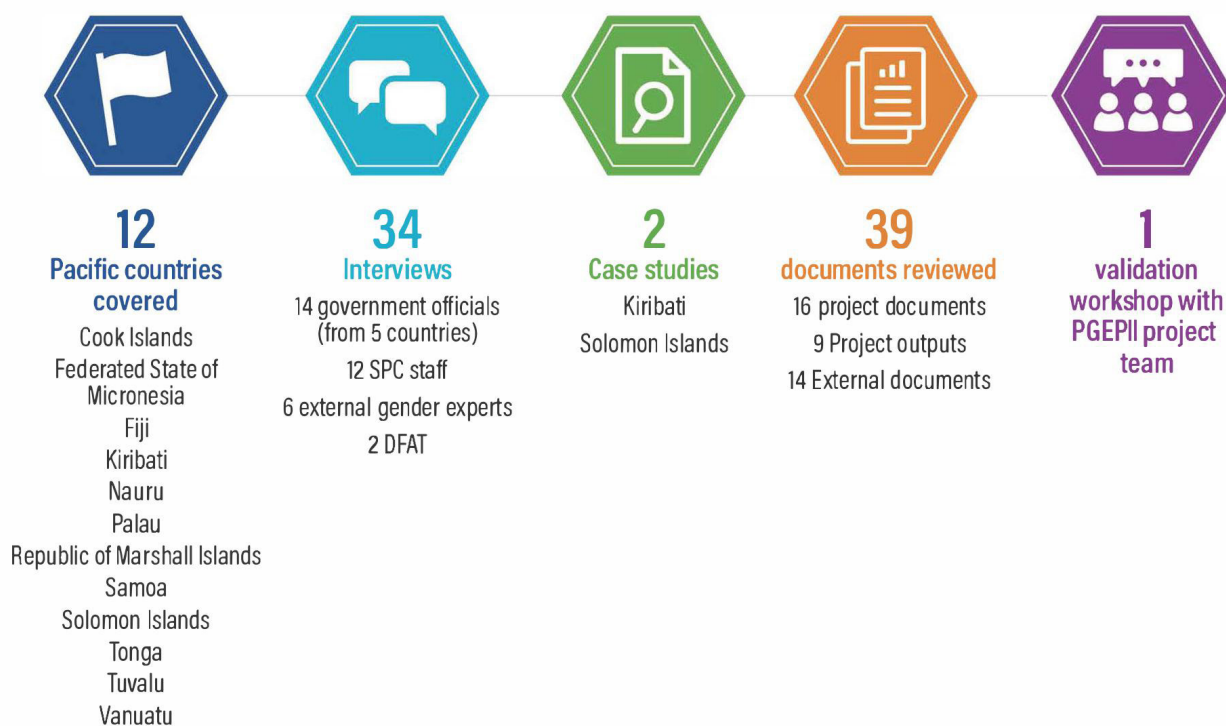
The evaluation used a mixed method approach, including a desk review of project and external documents, key informant interviews (KIIs), and case studies in two countries chosen to represent the range of program size and support provided under PGEP II. These were **Kiribati** (a Tier 2 country with ad hoc support provided) and **Solomon Islands** (a Tier 1 country with more intensive support provided). An evaluation survey was also designed to provide a quantitative picture of the project's performance across all 12 PGEP target countries, but low participation from 4 out of 12 PICs in the survey undermined its usefulness (see limitations below).

All data collected and reviewed was organised and analysed against the evaluation questions and framework in Annex 1. An internal analysis workshop supported the evaluation team's identification of emerging findings, which were then cross-checked with the project team during a validation workshop.

Data sources

Figure 1 below summarises the evaluation data sources, covering the 12 targeted PICs under PGEP II. Annex 2 and 3 contain the list of stakeholders interviewed and documents reviewed, respectively. A total of 34 stakeholders were interviewed, including 27 Women and 7 men.

Figure 1: Evaluation data sources



Limitations

The evaluation had four main limitations, as detailed below. Gaps in knowledge were acknowledged and handled with care, ensuring all findings were based on evidence about the project's achievements and challenges.

- **Timing and availability of key stakeholders:** Whilst the timeframe of the project (five years) was appropriate to its aims, some stakeholders could not be reached or did not remember details about early PGEP II activities. The lack of a mid-term review and loss of institutional knowledge due to staff turnover (both within PICs and SPC) meant that some knowledge about the project's activities, stakeholders and outcomes was lost. This has, in some instances, undermined the ability of the evaluation team to triangulate information as well as capture the depth of project outcomes.
- **Impact assessment:** The evaluation did not include direct interactions with communities, nor could it assess impact at the community level. Impact assessment was limited to the government level and for direct beneficiaries of PGEP II.
- **Representativeness and survey results:** Low participation in the survey by project recipients undermined the representativeness of its results. For this reason, in consultation with SPC, the evaluation team decided to disregard survey results. Three survey respondents were uncertain about what PGEP was and/or offered, confirming findings about the low awareness of PGEP II in general, and may explain the poor survey participation. Whilst disregarding survey results limited the ability of the evaluation to draw representative findings across all targeted countries, qualitative insights from KIIs and desk review were deemed sufficient to form recommendations for the future of SPC's gender mainstreaming work.
- **Attribution of results:** the evaluation team spent considerable time ensuring outputs and outcomes could reasonably be attributed to PGEP II. This task was particularly difficult at times given some respondents' low awareness of PGEP II's activities, confusion between PGEP I, PGEP II and SPC's other gender-focused programs, and the collective and co-funded nature of several PGEP II activities.

Photo: SPC (PGEP II)



SECTION 2: PGEP II – BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

[Evaluation theme: Relevance, Coherence]

By signing the Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration (PLGED, 2012) and endorsing the Pacific Platform for Action on Gender Equality and Women’s Human Rights (PPA, 2018–30), PICs committed to advance gender equality and women’s human rights. SPC is not alone in supporting PICs to advance their gender commitments; new regional funding is supporting multiple organisations seeking to meet gender needs. Figure 2 below provides a snapshot of these actors, demonstrating the crowded space in which PGEP II operated.

Figure 2: Gender programs and other key actors in the Pacific

Lead organisation	Project name	Timeframe	Funding value (million AUD)	Donor
UN Women	Ending Violence Against Women Pacific program	2018–22	44.7	EU, Australia and New Zealand
UNFPA	Transformative Agenda for Women, Adolescents and Youth in the Pacific: Towards Zero Unmet Need for Family Planning	2018–22	30	Australia
UN Agencies (UN Women, UNFPA, UNDP, UNICEF, IOM)	Pacific Regional Spotlight Initiative	2020–23	13.3	EU
SPC & women-led civil-society organisations	Pacific Women Lead	2021–26	60	Australia
Asian Development Bank	Enhancing Gender Equality Outcomes in Pacific Developing Member Countries	2024–29	4	ADB

In addition to the projects shown in Figure 2, SPC is in the process of designing the Gender Equality Flagship to align SPC’s gender equality efforts across the organisation. The lessons and recommendations from this evaluation will inform the design and direction of the Gender Equality Flagship.

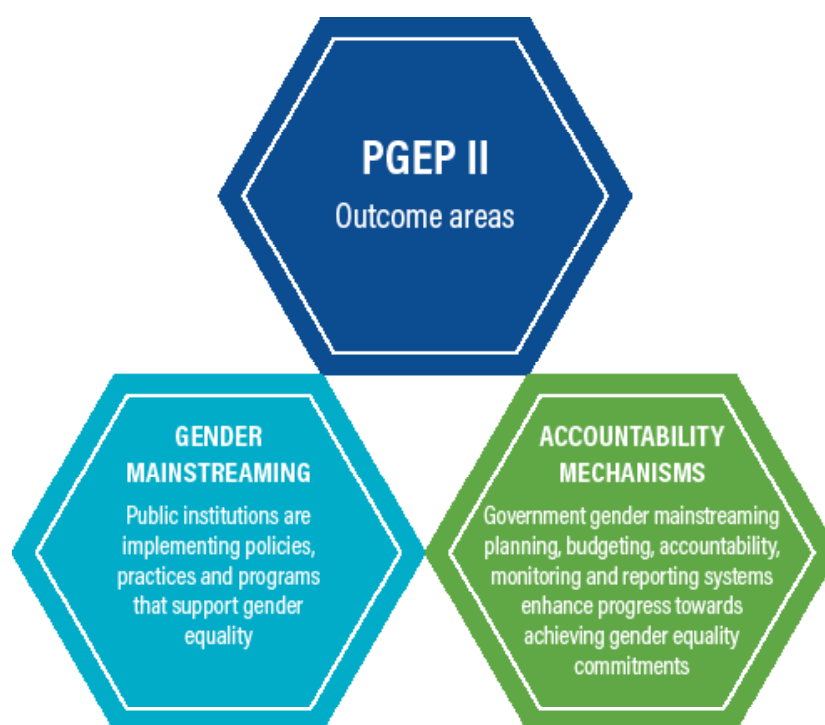
The above figure 2 does not include other sectorial projects which also incorporate gender mainstreaming as a key feature of the projects’ approach. For example, the Pacific-European Union Marine Partnership Programme (PEUMP), the Pacific Islands Regional Oceanscape Program (PROP) in the fisheries sector, and the Building Prosperity for Women Producers, Processors, and Women Owned Businesses through Organic Value Chains (BPWP) Project led by SPC’s Land Resource Division.

About PGEP II

PGEP II was a five-year project (2018–23) originally implemented by the Pacific Community’s Social Development Program (SDP), and since SPC’s restructuring in 2020, the HRSD Division. DFAT funded PGEP II to meet the Australian Government’s objective of supporting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in the Pacific. The project’s budget was AUD 5.5 million.

PGEP II was intended to improve gender equality outcomes identified in the SDGs, PPA, PLGED, and national gender policies relating to women in decision-making, Elimination of Violence Against Women (EVAW), and women’s economic empowerment. PGEP II has two specific outcome areas: (1) to strengthen gender mainstreaming in public institutions, and (2) strengthen accountability mechanisms to advance government gender mainstreaming in planning, budgeting, monitoring and reporting against gender equality commitments. The project’s outcome areas are summarised in Figure 3.

Figure 3: PGEP II outcome areas



Building on PGEP I achievements

PGEP II built directly on the achievements of PGEP I, which included greater political will to achieve gender equality, improved technical capacity and organisational culture for gender mainstreaming, and systems and capacity to support collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data. Some elements continued between PGEP I and PGEP II, including:

- Strengthening political will, organisational culture and technical capability
- Expanding the use of accountability mechanisms for gender mainstreaming
- Supporting the catalyst roles of national women’s machineries and strengthening their skills in gender analysis
- Supporting national statistics offices to collect data and analyse evidence on gender equality.

New priority areas and new ways of working were also established, catalysing the six ways of working adopted by PGEP II, being:¹



1. **Tiered approach** - PGEPII works across 5 PICs supporting the ongoing implementation of national gender mainstreaming initiatives. PGEPII supports remaining PICs by responding to specific requests for assistance.



2. **Multiple entry points** - PGEPII works with national gender focal points across a range of sectors and with a variety of partners to mainstream gender including in statistics, agriculture, fisheries, maritime, energy, water, education, climate change as well as disaster risk reduction and management.



3. **A tailored approach responding to country priorities** - PGEPII regularly consults with gender focal points to finalise work plans and deliverables specific to national priorities and incorporating regional commitments as far as practical.



4. **Regional pool of gender mainstreaming expertise** - PGEPII is supporting PICs to establish communities of learning and practice and networks to create a pool of expertise that can support governments, communities and regional organisations to develop improved and sustainable approaches to gender mainstreaming.



5. **Support for MEL** - Countries requested PGEPII have a focus on supporting them with monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning frameworks and reporting.



6. **Strengthening communications** - Countries requested PGEPII support them to increase the visibility of their gender mainstreaming results, as well as more strategic communications to engage a wider range of stakeholders through disseminating information.

1 Extract from PGEP II design document.

Photo: SPC (PGEP II)



PGEP's approach to impact

The conceptualisation of gender mainstreaming impact under PGEP II was based on six enabling environment areas. It is understood that change in the enabling environment falls under the responsibility of PICs, and that PGEP can only offer supportive resources.

The framework of enabling environment areas (Figure 4) was used in PGEP I as a structural guide for gender stocktake analysis. This provided a valuable baseline and informed the initial identification of Tier 1 and Tier 2 countries for PGEP II.

A rubric tool was also specifically developed for PGEP II to collect evidence, demonstrate change, and inform the identification of the support PIC needed to effectively progress an enabling environment for gender mainstreaming. The rubric tool includes three levels to progress each enabling environment area, allowing for an assessment of the situation and progress in each country.

Figure 4: Enabling environment for progressing gender mainstreaming.



SECTION 3: FINDINGS

This section details the four key findings from the evaluation:

- **Finding 1:** PGEP II's design was, and is, fit for purpose
- **Finding 2:** PGEP II contributed to institutional progress on gender mainstreaming
- **Finding 3:** Some evidence suggests PGEP II interventions generated sustained change
- **Finding 4:** Internal and external problems explain PGEP II's under-delivery on targets



Finding 1: PGEP II's design was, and is, fit for purpose

[Evaluation theme: Relevance, Efficiency]

The review of PGEP's six ways of working and rationale concluded that it is a relevant and sensible approach to meeting PICs' gender mainstreaming needs, despite the under-delivery of planned outputs (refer to Findings 2 and 4 below). There is evidence of a strong project design, building on the achievements of PGEP I, ties to international, regional and national commitments and policies on progressing gender equality, and continuous relevance to meeting current needs.

This finding details the relevance of each PGEP II way of working, and other important factors built into the design.



1. Tiered approach

A tiered approach was designed to help PGEP II prioritise support amongst the 12 targeted PICs and build on the achievements of PGEP I.

Tier 1: comprehensive support	Tier 2: supported with specific actions, or ad hoc requests
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Federated States of Micronesia (FSM)• Kiribati• Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI)• Tonga• Tuvalu	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cook Islands• Solomon Islands• Palau• Nauru• Vanuatu• Fiji• Samoa

In practice, however, this evaluation found that a range of factors drove a more fluid approach. These factors included changes in national priorities, a tendency to be guided by countries' requests, changes in context (e.g. operating environment shifts due to COVID), and changes in country capacity to engage in the project. These shifts led to some countries unofficially changing their Tier, notably Solomon Islands, a Tier 2 country that ended up receiving more support than some Tier 1 countries. In contrast, Cook Islands (a Tier 2 country) did not receive support for three of the five years of the project.² The reasons for disparate delivery across countries are discussed under Finding 4. Despite inconsistent application of the Tier approach, the rationale for using such a system remains relevant and justified in its original aim to support the project team's prioritisation of requests.

² From a review of PGEP annual progress reports and activities per country.



2. Multiple entry points

The mobilisation of multiple and multi-sectorial entry points by relying on networks of national gender focal points in PICs was a promising strategy of PGEP II. The Solomon Islands case study outlined both the potential and challenges of this approach. On one hand, stakeholders outlined an effective strategy to progress mainstreaming across multiple sectors, ‘planting as many seeds as possible’ and seizing opportunities that arose as a result.³ On the other hand, the Solomon Islands experience suggests that better results could be achieved by embedding the approach into existing systems (e.g. via formal recognition of the role of gender focal points) and ensuring minimum resources are in place to keep the network engaged.⁴

Case Study: Gender Focal Points in Solomon Islands

In Solomon Islands, 14 gender focal points were identified across 14 government ministries and departments. These focal points were tasked with supporting the continuous identification and monitoring of gender mainstreaming actions identified as part of specific training and workshop initiatives.

However, stakeholders reported insufficient recognition of the gender focal points’ work, which was presented as an ‘extra’ task and missing from their job descriptions. Poor mobilization and follow-up with focal points by a leading entity (whether the national women machineries or PGEP II) also meant their role was progressively deprioritised, staff who left were not replaced, and any monitoring activity completed was never consolidated or used to inform further actions within the Solomon Islands’ Ministry of Public Services.

Overall, the multiple entry-point approach was found to be worthwhile, but requires better embedding into national systems and the resources to coordinate and maintain an active network.



3. A tailored approach to responding to countries’ priorities

Nearly all interviewees mentioned PGEP II’s alignment and co-design of activities with national women machineries and other gender focal points as a key strength. This approach was said to be critical to ensure strong buy-in and in-country leadership by PICs themselves. The ability of technical advisers to spend time in country (face-to-face interactions outside of COVID-19 lockdown period) was also raised as a key enabler of strong relationships and trust.⁵ Finally, the ability of the program to contextualise training and communications, including via the mobilisation of SPC in-country focal points, supporting with translation of training/communication content and sometimes direct follow-up, demonstrate the value of SPC’s presence and staff expertise. All interviewees praised the quality of technical advisory support provided under PGEP.

However, both Tier 1 and Tier 2 countries raised their concerns and certain frustrations with the interrupted communications in the later years of the project, and the delays in follow-up on their requests (including requests for technical support and grants from the Pacific Women Lead [PWL] at SPC programme).⁶ Government stakeholders from two countries also expressed their preference for more formal agreements that clarify the support available, greater accountability and commitment of resources from HRSD.⁷



4. Building a pool of gender mainstreaming expertise

Through training, sectorial gender assessments and networking activities, PGEP II aimed to build a pool of gender mainstreaming experts and communities of practice to support the work in country and at the regional level. The need for more gender expertise is underlined by the reported increase in demand for gender technical support received by HRSD— often exceeding the division’s capacity to respond.

We don’t need to search for work; we receive more requests for support in the gender space than we can handle. (SPC staff)

3 KIs 4, 5, 7 & 31.

4 Solomon Islands case study.

5 KIs 1, 2, 4–7, 12, 26 & 42.

6 KIs 24, 34 & 39, from three of five countries from which government recipients were interviewed.

7 KIs 24 & 34.

Progress has been made through an increase in gender expertise within SPC more broadly.⁸ Training of key national actors in statistics, along with SPC's co-chairing (with UNWomen) of the Pacific Gender Statistics Coordination Working Group to progress the Pacific Gender Statistic Roadmap, contributed to enhanced capacity at the national level. This is illustrated by the Kiribati case study, which demonstrated evidence of increased statistical capacity, and noticeable benefits from bringing multiple actors together (refer to Box 6 on page 23). However, whilst SPC increased its overall number of gender advisers to provide gender expertise to PICs, demand and needs continue to exceed its capacity to respond.



5. Support for Monitoring Evaluation and Learning

PGEP II was designed 'to strengthen monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) practices within both PIC governments and the project'.⁹ However, the evaluation found no evidence that PGEP II delivered MEL services to countries, and the absence of dedicated MEL staff within SDP and after the project shifted under HRSD's management, prevented the project team from meeting expectations set in the project MEL plan.¹⁰

Most PICs have gender policies and frameworks, but little has been done to demonstrate their outcomes and/or understand barriers to their effective implementation. For example, recently approved EVAW and gender equality policies in Solomon Islands would benefit from monitoring and review systems to support their implementation and possible revisions. In Kiribati, the National Statistics Office (NSO) and Ministry of Women, Youth, Sports and Social Affairs reported collaborating closely on the development of gender mainstreaming indicators as part of the four-year Kiribati Development Plan,¹¹ an area that could perhaps benefit from learning initiatives between countries.



6. Strengthening communications

PGEP II's design includes ambitious objectives for strengthening communications, summarised as:

- i. Promote increased understanding of recurrent and emerging gender inequality issues in the region and promising practices for progressing gender equality
- ii. Foster more acceptance within organisational cultures of government, communities and the private sector of gender-responsive services
- iii. Publicise analysis of evidence-based findings on how gender-responsive programs and systems benefit families, communities and countries.¹²

In 2021, a communication strategy for the project was developed and a communication officer hired to support its implementation. However, under the new HRSD structure meant the communication officer's workload was mostly redirected to support other divisions.

A few stakeholders raised the question of what SPC should do in the communication space, noting the large need for awareness-raising on gender issues from the community level to the political decision-making level. They suggested in-country actors are best positioned to lead and carry out larger media outreach campaigns, whereas SPC can work to secure high-level political will to progress gender mainstreaming (see also the 'Impact and enabling environment' section below).

8 Five divisions of SPC have hired gender experts.

9 Project design document.

10 PGEP II MEL plan describes several activities that have not taken place, for reasons outlined in section 4. This includes a mid-term review, periodic impact monitoring using the rubric tool, and periodic country surveys.

11 Kiribati case study.

12 PGEP II project design document.

Additional enabling factors

In seeking to identify the enablers of success within PGEP II, the evaluation uncovered factors additional to the six ways of working outlined above. These additional factors are linked to the intentional design and operating model of the program.



In-House Gender Technical Expertise

The provision of high-quality technical expertise is central to PGEP II's theory of change and was the factor most cited as enabling the project's achievements. This was also identified as strongly connected to maintaining good reputation for SPC's broader capacity and mandate in progressing gender mainstreaming in the region.¹³



Sectoral approach

The sectoral approach (including the use of focal points and internal mainstreaming within SPC), allowed for a greater uptake of gender-sensitive approaches by targeted sectors and the development of tailored approaches. While the development of this sectoral gender expertise can take time, it is a worthwhile way to create lasting change, as illustrated by several SPC divisions' increased commitment to gender.



Co-financing of initiatives

Engagement and joint planning with other development actors, and coordination with other SPC divisions, were key activities and inputs of PGEP II's theory of change.¹⁴ In practice, PGEP II was used to co-fund initiatives with other SPC programs, divisions and external actors. For example, SPC's gender and inclusion regional officer based in FSM is 50% funded by PGEP and HRSD programmatic funding. PGEP II's project manager's and MEL adviser's time are also funded outside of PGEP II. This co-funded approach was raised by two interviewees as something that anchors gender mainstreaming as a core service and mandate of SPC more broadly. This was confirmed somewhat by external stakeholders demonstrating low awareness of PGEP II while recognising the work of SPC in the gender space.



Contextualisation of services and relationships building

Relationships with member country government and civil society was a key input of PGEP II's theory of change.¹⁵ One of the key enablers was the project's ability to allow a certain proximity and for technical advisors to spend time in country to develop understanding of the context and needs and truly co-develop strategies and plans to address gender mainstreaming priorities with local actors.¹⁶ This allowed advisers to build trust and relationships, increasing the provision of informal coaching and mentoring beyond one-off training, something that was found to lead to greater chances of lasting impact.¹⁷



Funding of permanent positions

Funding regional, sub-regional or national permanent positions for gender advisors was found to be a worthwhile way to overcome in-country government staff turnover and the need for contextualisation of services. Permanent positions can ensure continuity in the work being carried out, with key individuals developing an understanding of multiple efforts and gaps in context and allow the building of contextualised expertise and relationships essential to carry out the work.



Balancing individual change and system change

PGEP II's theory of change reflects a dual strategy targeting both change in systems (e.g. via policy change) and stakeholders' behaviours (e.g. via strengthened communications). This reflects an understated, but central, relationship between individual and system change to advance gender mainstreaming. For example, in Solomon Islands, leadership commitment to progressing gender mainstreaming in the Ministry of Internal Affairs was essential to the development of a gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI) policy and securing funding for a GEDSI position and policy implementation. Meanwhile, the introduction of key performance indicators (KPIs) in staff management reviews of permanent secretaries was found to have ensured broader support and engagement throughout the Ministry, leading to culture change across the institution.¹⁸

13 See finding 4 on internal challenges and how the loss of technical advisers under PGEP II has affected this reputation.

14 See PGEP II's MEAL Plan, theory of change.

15 See PGEP II's MEAL Plan, theory of change.

16 KIIs 2, 4, 5, 12, 36 & 39, and the Solomon Islands case study.

17 From the comparison of outcomes from one-off trainings (e.g. in communications) with areas of support with greater interactions and community of practice (e.g. statistics). International evidence also demonstrates the benefits of mentoring and accompaniment in practice compared to training only.

18 Solomon Islands case study.



Finding 2: PGEP II contributed to institutional progress on gender mainstreaming

[Evaluation theme: Effectiveness]

Despite the difficulty of presenting a comprehensive picture of PGEP II’s achievements (see the limitations section), several useful outputs and related outcomes can be confidently attributed to PGEP II. Key achievements of the project are summarised for two project outcomes below.

OUTCOME 1: Gender mainstreaming – public institutions are implementing policies, practices and programs that support gender equality

Key achievements of the project under Outcome 1 are summarised in the table below.

Key activities	Outcomes
1. Tailored support to National Women Machineries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5 countries supported to develop their own policy implementation plans for advancing gender equality 10 countries supported with requested technical advice on gender mainstreaming
2. Support to institutional gender mainstreaming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rollout of training in the Solomon Islands Effective advocacy and technical support for mainstreaming of gender within SPC
3. Support to policy review or development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6 countries benefited from technical advisory support and/or funding to carry out policy review/development
4. Organisation of the 2021 Triennial and ministerial conference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the identification and public acknowledgement of PICs’ priorities and commitments Endorsement of the Pacific Beijing +25 Review of Progress Report by PICs

1. Tailored support to National Women Machineries

In 2019–23, PGEP II supported five countries – Palau, Kiribati, FSM, Tonga and RMI – with the development of policy implementation plans related to advancing gender mainstreaming in several government ministries and sectors. Specific support varied from technical review of plans to the facilitation of workshops and/or funding to develop and advance the plans with specific sectors. PGEP II also responded to requests for support from national governments from 10 of 12 PICs (all but Nauru and Cook Islands), as well as requests from international actors such as UN Women, FAO, UNDP and UNFPA.

Case Study: Gender Mainstreaming Implementation Plan in Palau

In Palau, the implementation plan for the National Gender Mainstreaming Policy 2022–25 describes four actions:

1. Establishment of a high-level committee to support gender mainstreaming across government
2. Integration of gender perspectives in national legislation, policies and programs
3. Development of a monitoring, evaluation and learning process, and an accountability mechanism to assess progress towards gender equality
4. Encouragement of an organisational culture responsive to gender mainstreaming.

Each action is followed by a list of more specific actions, targets, people in charge, and a timeframe for the completion of each sub-action.

Whilst the extent to which policy implementation plans have been implemented is unknown, there is some evidence of PGEP supporting discussions and engagement between national women machineries and various government offices across sectors such as agriculture, fisheries, public administration, health, statistics, climate change and education.¹⁹ The PGEP II project team and advisers also outlined one of their priorities was to ensure women machineries were not left behind, and are instead supported in taking the lead when engaging with other sectors, with the aim of increasing their recognition and strengthening gender expertise and capacity in country.²⁰

2. Support for institutional gender mainstreaming

Support for institutional change occurred in two areas under PGEP II: internally to SPC, and via its engagement with and services provided to PICs.

Internally, all SPC interviewees recognised the role PGEP I and II played in building a case for internal mainstreaming of gender throughout the organisation and key sectorial divisions. This was done via engagement with several SPC divisions, internal advocacy for resources to be allocated to advancing gender equality, and a series of assessments in the fisheries and agricultural sectors in collaboration with SPC Fisheries, Aquaculture and Marine Ecosystems (FAME) Division. As a result, SPC divisions display an increased capacity to produce gender assessments and provide sectorial gender expertise.

Outside SPC, there is evidence of PGEP II supporting institutional change in Solomon Islands' Ministry of Public Services (MPS).²¹ This was the result of direct engagement and support to MPS' Institute of Public Administration and Management (IPAM) in collaboration with in-country women machineries (the Women's Development Division [WDD] of the Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs [MWYCFA]). PGEP provided financial and technical support for development of the five modules of the Gender Mainstreaming for Public Servants training rolled out for MPS and for the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands. The inclusion of KPIs into the contracts of Permanent Secretaries (under PGEP I) was also cited as a key factor for ensuring interest in and attendance at mainstreaming training by high-level public servants, including the Chair of the Public Service Commission, the Permanent Secretary of the MPS and the Director of IPAM. Respondents within IPAM and MPS reported that gender equality had become a stronger priority within MPS, including the securing of budget for gender mainstreaming, the creation of a GEDSI position, and the development of an MPS GEDSI policy.

3. Support for policy review or development

PGEP II supported six countries in policy-related review or development. This included facilitation of discussions, technical support and/or financial resources to coordinate inputs from regions and bring key in-country stakeholders together (whether in person or virtually during the COVID-19 pandemic).

The list of policies and related action plans supported is provided in the below table.

Country	Policy development supported by PGEP II
Kiribati	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation plan for National Policy for Gender Equality and Women's Development (GEWD) (2019–22)

19 From the review of all PGEP II activities reported in annual reports. For example, in 2020–21 UNDP country offices in the FSM and Palau requested PGEP II's support to develop and facilitate tailored gender awareness and analysis workshops in enhancing disaster and climate resilience.

20 From KIIs 7, 26, 31 & 41, the Solomon Islands case study, and the desk review of activities involving women machineries in sectorial discussions.

21 Note that other countries may have allocated funding and human resources to progress gender equality and mainstreaming, but the evaluation was unable to collect such evidence, for reasons outlined in the limitations section.

Country	Policy development supported by PGEP II
Solomon Islands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gender Equality and Women’s Development (2021–27) Elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls (2021–27)
FSM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women’s Council Strategic Plan 2019 Gender and Climate Change in FSM Policy Brief, supported in 2020 Gender action plan for the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change processes 2020
RMI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation Strategy for <i>Gender Equality Act (2019)</i>, supported in 2022
Fiji	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gender in the Agriculture Sector Policy and laws (with FAO) (2022–27)
Palau	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation Plan for the National Gender Mainstreaming Policy 2022–25

Whilst the evaluation team did not see written evidence of PGEP II’s specific contributions to each policy listed above, all interviewees stressed the high quality of technical expertise provided under PGEP II, and the fact that these policies and implementation plans exist is a significant step forward.

4. Organisation of the 2021 Triennial and ministerial conference

SPC (supported by PGEP II) convened the 14th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women from 27 to 29 April 2021, hosted and chaired by French Polynesia. The event took place online due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, and included over 1000 participants from Pacific island country and territory government delegations, civil society representatives, development partners, academia, private sector representatives, and other international stakeholders.²² The conference was followed by the 7th Meeting of Pacific Ministers for Women on 4 May 2021. These events supported the identification and public acknowledgement of PICs’ priorities and commitments, keeping key gender equality issues at the forefront of political and media debate and raising awareness.²³ A few stakeholders pointed to the lack of understanding of the extent to which key actions and recommendations from the triennial conference have been implemented, in the absence of monitoring and follow-up.²⁴ Box 3 provides more information about the conference and its outcomes.

22 From the 14th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women and 7th Meeting of Pacific Ministries for Women, Outcomes and Recommendations (endorsed on 4 May 2021).

23 KIIs 2, 31 & 40, and desk review of PGEP II communication strategy and over 20 media releases.

24 KIIs 2 & 42. Most interviewees could not remember the conference or its outcomes. HRSD also reported ongoing efforts to ensure the next triennial conference in 2024 includes stronger monitoring and follow-up mechanisms for implementation.

Photo: SPC (PGEP II)



Case Study: The 14th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women, April 2021

In 2021, the theme of the 14th Triennial Conference was ‘Our Ocean, Our Heritage, Our Future – Empowering All Women in the Blue Pacific Continent’. The Conference and following Ministerial Meeting focused on three priority areas:

1. Women’s economic empowerment
2. Gender-based violence
3. Gender-responsive climate justice.

It also included four cross-cutting themes:

1. Women in leadership and decision-making
2. Crises and disasters
3. Sex, age and disability-disaggregated data and statistics
4. Intergenerational dialogue to ensure the perspectives of Pacific youth are heard.

The facilitation of such public commitments and acknowledgement of gender issues by PICs were achievements given the sensitivity of those issues and the cultural and political barriers often denying or minimising gender inequality and gender-based violence in these countries. The launch at the conference of SPC’s (under PGEP II) Beijing+25 Pacific Regional Progress Review Report also directly informed the commitments and recommendations endorsed by the 19 participating PICs on the 4th of May 2021, supporting well-informed and ambitious commitments (see the section below on outcome 2 for further details of the report).

Outcome 2: Accountability mechanisms – government gender mainstreaming planning, budgeting, accountability, monitoring and reporting systems enhance progress towards achieving gender equality commitments

Key achievements of the project under outcome 2 are summarised in the table below.

Key activities	Outcomes
1. Publications and gender statistics analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2021, ‘Beijing + 25: Review of progress in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action in Pacific Island countries and territories’• 2020, ‘Kiribati Gender Statistics Abstracts’• 2019, ‘Gender Equality: Where do we stand? The Kingdom of Tonga’• ‘A Guide to Undertaking National Gender Assessments of the Fisheries Sector’• Sectorial information and data available for 5 countries (<i>Peer review of COVID-19 assessments and sectorial assessments and/or additional support to socialisation</i>)
2. Statistic technical support and training in gender statistics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contributions to the Pacific Gender Statistics Roadmap (regional)• Evidence of statistic and reporting capacity built at national level (Kiribati)• Improved reporting into international reporting processed on gender (2 countries)
3. Awareness-raising and communication training	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 28 media releases and press conference by trained journalists at the triennial conference• Increased awareness for reporting gender related content

1. Publications and gender statistical analysis

PGEP's research and publications were the most widely cited achievement across all interviews. While interviewees may have been referring to some publications completed in PGEP I, including 11 Gender stocktakes and three 'Gender Equality: Where do we Stand?' publications, PGEP II also generated three gender analysis publications, including a significant contribution under the 'Beijing + 25: Review of progress in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action in Pacific Island countries and territories'. Box 4 provides more detail about this influential publication.

Case Study: The importance of Beijing + 25



The [Beijing + 25 report](#) reviews progress in gender equality in the Pacific region since the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 25 years ago. The report is a key reference point for measuring progress during future reviews, including for the 30th Anniversary of the Beijing declaration in 2025 or triennial conferences. It also supports initiatives related to the implementation of the PPA and the revitalised PLGED and links to the seven thematic areas of the Implementation Plan for the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent, SPC's Gender Flagship, and the Micronesia Gender Equality Framework.

The two other publications, one for Tonga (in partnership with the Women Affairs Division of the Tonga Ministry of Internal Affairs) and for Kiribati (in partnership with the Kiribati NSO) support visibility of the state of gender equality and priority issues in each country and are appreciated for the quality data and analysis they provide.²⁵ However, little evidence shows how these publications have been used to influence decision-making and/or policies.

[Data from the Kiribati Gender Statistics Abstract] helps us challenge prejudices on the topic of violence against women [...] we now have for the first time numbers to refer to. (Kiribati government representative)

PGEP II also provided technical support and reviewed assessments led by other agencies, national governments and/or SPC divisions such as FAME and the Pacific-European Union Marine Partnership (PEUMP). Technical assistance with methodologies and/or peer reviewing of reports contributed to quality information being produced across the fisheries and agriculture and rural development sectors. Examples of technical assistance to external knowledge generating initiatives is provided in the box below.

Case Study: Technical assistance with external publications

PGEP II provided support for two COVID-19 gender rapid assessments in Solomon Islands and Samoa (led by UNWomen), one regional analysis of Gender Equality and Sustainable Energies (led by UNWomen), four gender assessments in the agriculture and rural development sector in Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, and Vanuatu (funded by FAO), and one national gender and fisheries assessment in Kiribati.

PGEP II also developed a guide to conducting national assessment of fisheries, used by SPC's FAME division.

Whilst PGEP II's contributions to these assessments have been relatively small, or at least part of a collective effort with other funding programs, there is evidence of these assessments filling important knowledge and accountability gaps and thus progressing gender equality in strategic and economic sectors.

25 KIs 2, 7, 12–14, 30, 32, 33, 34, 41 & 42.

2. Statistic technical support and training in gender statistics

PGEP II invested significant effort into the development of statistical capacity. This included training on VAW data collection (as part of Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys) and analysis for four countries (in partnership with UNFPA), the provision of ad hoc technical support to national statistics departments and service providers (e.g. National referral system for victims of gender based violence Safenet), and the co-development of the Gender Statistic Roadmap in collaboration with UNWomen, which included co-facilitation of regular meetings of the Pacific Gender Statistics Coordination Working Group.

Concrete outcomes from these initiatives include:

- Increased national statistical capacity, such as the ability to design quality data collection methods for capturing and analysing VAW data (see box 6 below);
- New connections between women’s machineries, statistic officers and services providers (see below case study);
- Increased ability to report quality data into international processes such as CEDAW and UPR (for example, PGEP II’s preparatory work on the ‘Where do we stand?’ publication for Tuvalu (not yet published) informed a presentation to the CEDAW committee in Tuvalu in 2022.²⁶

Case Study: Building in-country statistics expertise and community of practice in Kiribati

Kiribati representatives from the Kiribati NSO, the Ministry of Women, Youth, Sports and Social Affairs (MWYSSA) and a civil society service provider – the Kiribati Women and Children Support Centre (KWCSO) – joined training on collecting, analysing and reporting VAW data, conducted in partnership between PGEP II, the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology and UNFPA.

Two training participants reported gaining valuable knowledge about how to plan the collection of sensitive data and design survey questions about VAW. Both interviewees detailed new precautions and strategies they could employ since the training, such as:

- Sensitively inserting domestic violence questions into larger surveys
- Developing ‘do no harm’ strategies when collecting sensitive data, such as finding the right moment to interview women under the cover of other health-related activities and questions
- Conducting body language training for enumerators
- Paying greater attention to the well-being of enumerators
- Ensuring all data reported is sex disaggregated
- Being able to gain trust and respond to people questioning data reported, by demonstrating how the data is collected, processed and analysed.

Both interviewees also reported stronger links between the three agencies were created as a result of the training, including a formal partnership involving KWCSO in the data collection work of MWYSSA and NSO. These government agencies realised they needed to partner with a service provider used to working with women and children victims of violence.

“We selected KWCSO because the organisation provides support to women and children victims of violence and conducts training and specialized GBV counselling for survivors. Their role is very important. (Kiribati NSO representative)”

26 PGEP II 2022 annual report.

3. Awareness-raising and communication training

As part of the 2021 Triennial Conference, PGEP II supported a four-week training program with 20 journalist/media contributors from nine PICs, focussing on gender equality and women's economic empowerment. PGEP II provided technical assistance with gender equality concepts and communications. As a result, 28 media items were produced across social media, radio and newspapers about the key gender gaps and achievements emerging from the conference. It is not clear to what extent the training led to outcomes over and above visibility of gender issues.

Another communication training was delivered in Kiribati in 2019, this time targeting the engagement of youth, by involving the Youth Development Division of the Ministry of Women, Youth, Sports and Social Affairs. The five-day workshop was originally planned for eight people but attended by 19 (12 women, 5 men). The participants, who ranged in age from 18 to 70 years, learned to plan, develop and produce their personal stories using video. The evaluation was unable to connect with participants due to staff turnover, but one interviewee reflected that such a workshop might lead to greater outcomes if targeting women's representatives from local organisations, more likely to use the newly acquired skill.



Finding 3: Some evidence suggests PGEP II interventions generated sustained change

[Evaluation theme: Impact, Sustainability]

As articulated in section 2, PGEP's ability to support shifts in the enabling environment is a key indicator of its impact. The lack of updated gender stocktakes to measure progress and impact in specific countries limited the ability of the evaluation to comment on changes in the enabling environment overall. In assessing progress towards an enhanced enabling environment, it is important to consider – as some interviewees noted – that not all enabling areas play an equal role.²⁷ However, a few observations and findings emerged from the analysis of PGEP II's achievements around impact, both with respect to the six areas articulated shift in the enabling environment (see Figure 4 on page 14) and other areas.

A necessary shift towards policy implementation

There is evidence of PGEP II contributing to progress in legal and policy frameworks: most PICs now have national gender policies and frameworks in place. However, evidence of a focus on removing barriers to implementation of these policies is scarce.²⁸ SPC staff interviewed recognised the importance of budgeting to effective policy implementation, whilst acknowledging that this is not something SPC can do. Other actors, such as ADB or the World Bank, were regarded as better placed to support state budget committing to financing gender policy implementation given their ongoing work with Ministries of Finance.

There are also budgetary challenges. Gender becomes a lesser priority when there is unavailability of funds. [SPC staff]

The centrality of political will

An increase in political will was found to be vital in ensuring adequate resources and policy development for gender mainstreaming. In Solomon Islands, close working relationships with PGEP advisers and the involvement of Ministry's senior management staff in regional discussions was reported to have led to a change in behaviour from the Director of IPAM and the Permanent Secretary of MPS, who then pushed for institutional change to happen. Whilst other PGEP II efforts such as the Triennial and Ministerial Conferences led to an increase in political leaders publicly committing to advancing gender equality and articulating well-

27 KIs 2, 12, 31 & 40.

28 PGEP II did not deliver activities in relation to budget and MEL as originally planned under Outcome 2.

informed priorities and key issues, the evaluation team did not interview senior political leaders so could not assess its impact.

Where there is political will there are resources. (Gender Expert)

Stronger accountability mechanisms

Whilst PGEP II was particularly active in supporting the availability of gender data and analysis, there is little evidence of how this data feeds into decision-making, closing the loop of accountability.²⁹ Interviewees often stressed that more could be done with the data available, as well as in following up on countries' international, regional and national commitments.³⁰ In particular, there was a sense that much of the effort put into generation of statistics and key actions from the Triennial Conference remained underused, despite representing a great opportunity for influencing decision-making.

Despite the lack of a comprehensive review of PGEP-induced changes in the enabling environment, the evaluation found several instances of links between PGEP II contributions and sustained change.

A demand for gender mainstreaming

The funding, number of projects and interest in gender mainstreaming has increased significantly over the last decade, shifting PGEP from being a lead initiative in the area to a relatively small player by the end of phase II.³¹ HRSD staff also reported receiving an overwhelming number of requests for support in the gender mainstreaming space, exceeding their capacity to respond. This increase in demand for technical expertise and support with implementation of gender policies is an indirect testimony to PGEP's efforts in building momentum for advancing gender mainstreaming in the region.

Findings of the agriculture gender assessment [led by the Land Resource Division with technical support from PGEP II] were presented at the Agriculture Week in Samoa in 2019. Gender or women's work in agriculture is not often discussed at this key regional event. [...] Subsequently, Samoa discussed women and agriculture in their second voluntary review in the implementation of SDGs. (PGEP II Adviser)

Internal change at SPC

Since the beginning of PGEP, SPC has significantly increased its focus on gender and gender mainstreaming, as illustrated by the number of new gender advisers hired by specific divisions. Five gender adviser positions have been created since the beginning of PGEP, supporting gender mainstreaming across SPC's Fisheries, aquaculture and Marine Ecosystems (FAME) division, Geoscience, Energy and Maritime Division (GEM), Statistics for Development Division (SDD), Land Resource Division (LRD) and the PEUMP Program. Several interviewees said this change was indirectly related to PGEP's 'constant advocacy for greater allocation of resources to progress gender mainstreaming internally'.

PGEP made it clear that if you are serious about progressing gender mainstreaming, you need to have resources and people in place. (SPC staff)

PIC Institutional Change

The case study in Solomon Islands demonstrated that institutional change is possible with political will, resources and technical expertise. The evaluation found evidence of PGEP II providing significant support

29 KIIs 2, 31 & 32, Kiribati case study, and the lack of delivery of PGEP II under the building of accountability mechanisms planned in its MEL framework.

30 KIIs 2, 4, 5-7, 9, 30-32 & 40, and the Kiribati case study.

31 For example, PWL has 34 times the funding of PGEP II.

at the beginning of the project to ensure the right set-up existed, targeting individual capacity (training of trainers and focal point systems) and system change (introduction of KPIs).

IPAM as an institution became gender sensitised so that in any IPAM activity, including leadership trainings, must include gender balanced number of participants. (Solomon Islands government representative)

Promote synergies between actors

The Kiribati case study outlined PGEP II's value in creating and promoting synergies between government ministries and between governmental and civil society entities (see Box 3 for more details). In addition, the multiple collaborations and contributions of PGEP II to other programs and external actors, including various SPC divisions as well as UN agencies, demonstrate PGEP II's coordinated efforts for collective impact. By linking regional gender mainstreaming expertise to multiple sectors and regional development programs, PGEP II supported a broader coordinated approach to mainstreaming in the region. However, informants cited coordination and connection between actors and between national, regional and international initiatives as requiring more dedicated focus.³²

32 KIs 8, 9, 2, 31, 40 & 42.

Photo: SPC (PGEP II)





Finding 4: Internal and external problems explain PGEP’s under-delivery on targets

[Evaluation theme: Effectiveness, Efficiency, Coherence]

Despite PGEP II’s positive contributions described above, its overall delivery fell short of its plans and intention. This finding explores this under-delivery and its causes.

Case Study: A snapshot of under-delivery

A review of PGEP II’s indicator framework shows underachievement against nearly all targets, from outputs to short-term and medium-term outcomes.³³ This aligns with reports from most interviewees that the project went ‘dormant’ from 2021, the reasons for which are explored below.

Snapshot of progress against PGEP II’s medium term outcomes indicators³⁴

INDICATOR	TARGET	ACHIEVEMENT
Evidence that PICs are progressing on enabling environment areas of gender mainstreaming	9/12 of PICs are progressing on enabling environment areas of gender mainstreaming	Partly achieved <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 33% reported (4 countries including Tonga, FSM, Solomon Islands, RMI).
Countries where a mechanism is in place with gender mainstreaming oversight	5/12 PICs have a high-level multi-stakeholder committee overseeing GM policy implementation	Partly achieved <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 country reported- Solomon Islands.
Use of gender data in policy, planning, and reporting processes, with the support from PGEP	8/12 PICs using gender data in at least 2 out of 3 processes (policy, planning, reporting)	Partly achieved <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 countries reported, including FSM, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Samoa.
Proportion of countries with systems to track and make public allocations for gender equality and women’s empowerment	5 PICs meet criterion	Not achieved <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0 - No significant progress
Evidence of coordinated accountability, monitoring, and reporting systems related to gender equality	8/12 PICs	Not achieved <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0 - No significant progress

Project expenditure against budget also presents a picture of under-delivery. Of a AUD 5.5 million budget, only 4.5 million was spent (~20% underspend).

A combination of internal and external challenges lies behind this under-delivery, along with a few external challenges in relation to maximising outcomes and impact.

33 PGEP II Result Summary, internal document.

34 Adapted from PGEP II Result Summary, internal document.

Internal challenges

Internal challenges were the major reason for PGEP II's under-delivery. This section explores four key internal challenges identified during this evaluation.



SPC restructure and disrupted project leadership

The divisional restructure that took place in 2020 to form HRSD, and the aligned shift in the project's leadership, was cited as a major disruption to the project's management and implementation by many interviewees (both current and former SPC staff). The lack of proper handover,³⁵ and team members finding it difficult to adjust to their new and often extended role in HRSD,³⁶ were cited as detrimental to the continuity and delivery of PGEP II. The restructure also led to PGEP II's initial team being redistributed across SPC divisions, reducing its ability to maintain a coordinated approach and respond swiftly as a team to new requests from PICs.³⁷



Availability of new duplicating funding for gender mainstreaming

Two major SPC projects on gender equality and EAW overlapped with PGEP II's gender mainstreaming approaches and activities. The EU and UN-funded Spotlight Initiative started in 2020, and the DFAT-funded PWL at SPC began in 2021. Both projects exceed PGEP II's value and contributed to the deprioritisation of PGEP II within SPC (PWL at SPC is 12 times PGEP II's funding size and the Spotlight Initiative is more than double PGEP II's funding size).³⁸ SPC's internal resources were re-directed to progress these new and bigger initiatives over PGEP II, with the perception that these overlapped.

With the Pacific Women Lead and Spotlight Initiative, there were more than enough financial resources to deliver on the gender mainstreaming work, resulting in an underspend for PGEPII. (SPC email to DFAT)



Insufficient human resources to deliver PGEP

Following the divisional restructure, several gender advisers left the organisation and were not replaced. Most interviewees from SPC current and former staff, and some external stakeholders, claimed this meant SPC lacked the human resources and gender expertise to implement the program.³⁹ For example, work on the 'Where do we stand' publications for FSM and Tuvalu began in 2021 and is yet to be completed. Moreover, the project's new leaders (a project manager and MEL and communication managers) have been supporting multiple other initiatives under HRSD, reducing their time to focus on PGEP II.⁴⁰ Two government stakeholders also specifically reported a drop in communication from SPC since key advisers left, which created frustration.

The core of PGEP is to provide technical expertise which is delivered by people but [after the restructure] there was no one to follow through or pick up some of the work started. (Gender expert)



Overlapping responsibilities of technical advisers and project management

Dual expectations and overlapping responsibilities among PGEP II's management staff (including project management, MEL and communication functions) were described as counterproductive.⁴¹ Given the low availability of gender mainstreaming technical advisers in the region, this specific skill is likely to be better used for the actual delivery of services rather than project management duties. The MEL and communication areas were also mentioned as lacking dedicated resources that could enable expertise to be built over time and

35 KIIs 2, 42, 8, 9, 10, 4, 31 & 40.

36 KIIs 2, 6 & 42.

37 KIIs 2, 4 & 6. Other divisions of SPC also reported not being across PGEP II work (KIIs 8–10).

38 KIIs 9 & 12, and review of email from SPC to DFAT on the question of PGEP II's underspend.

39 KIIs 2, 4, 6, 8–10, 12, 25, 26, 31, 40 & 42.

40 KIIs, 2, 6, 31, 40 & 42. This is also supported by a report from one gender adviser that her services were not requested under PGEP II for the entire last year of her contract with SPC, despite clear need and requests from PICs.

41 KIIs 2, 6, 40 & 42, and the evaluation team's own observations and experienced of delays with contracting and coordination for the present evaluation.

delivery to the project's expectations.⁴² Whilst no specific country requests were formulated in the MEL area, opportunities and needs were raised with the evaluation team in both case study contexts.



Slow systems and processes

A few interviewees from PICs mentioned SPC's slow responses to their requests for support.⁴³ This was likely to be due to the low management capacity mentioned above, as well as slow administrative processes within SPC. However, the evaluation team realised that some of these complaints actually related to funding delays under PWL at SPC programme rather than PGEP II.

External challenges

External challenges affected both the delivery of PGEP II activities and SPC's ability to sustain and deliver outcomes from some project outputs. These included restrictions related to COVID-19, rapid turnover of staff in PICs, and inadequate resources for implementation.



COVID 19

The COVID-19 pandemic and associated travel restrictions not only meant some planned activities (especially in-person meetings) had to be postponed, but required redirection of in-country resources and priorities to the pandemic response.⁴⁴ Whilst PGEP II showed some adaptability by delivering technical support online, including organising the 2021 Triennial Conference remotely, the impact of COVID-19 on already stressed resources in country meant that some project activities had to be put on hold altogether. The impact of COVID-19 on government staff was also highlighted as a major problem; for example, the disease killed two project stakeholders in Kiribati.⁴⁵



Low retention of staff and institutional memory in PICs

High turnover of staff in government ministries⁴⁶ was cited as an ongoing challenge to advancing gender mainstreaming in the Pacific. It undermined the project's capacity building efforts and disrupted continuity in delivery of activities. For example, in Solomon Islands, the departure of MPS staff in charge of Gender Mainstreaming Training for Public Servants meant plans to update the training based on feedback received from its first launch and to deliver the training to other ministries were put on hold.⁴⁷ The evaluation team also found the project directory of key stakeholders in country to be outdated: nearly half of government counterparts could not be reached.



Insufficient in-country human and financial resources for implementation

Inadequate in-country human and financial resources were found to affect the delivery of outcomes and impact from PGEP II. For example, in Palau the Gender Mainstreaming Implementation Plan (supported by PGEP II) was not progressed due to key staff leaving the institution and not being replaced.⁴⁸ In Solomon Islands, concerns were raised about the availability of resources for the implementation of two new gender mainstreaming policies.⁴⁹ Synergies with programmes like PWL at SPC that provide implementation funding could overcome some of these problems.

42 No MEL officer was hired as originally planned in the project design to support the delivery of project outputs. The communication officer hired under PGEP II, was re-directed to support other project post restructuring.

43 KIIs 24, 34 & 39, from 3 of 5 of countries from which government recipients were interviewed.

44 PGEP II annual reports and email from SPC to DFAT on the question of PGEP II's underspend.

45 Kiribati case study.

46 KIIs 2, 8 & 42. this was also observed by the evaluation team, which struggled to identify stakeholders in governments that participated in PGEP II activities.

47 Solomon Islands Case study.

48 KII 5.

49 Solomon Islands case study.



SECTION 4: LOOKING FORWARD

Despite a challenging period for PGEP II, the project marks a cornerstone and transition to an increased focus on and funding opportunities for gender mainstreaming in the Pacific. Future work on gender mainstreaming should build on PGEP II's ways of working by, firstly, learning from approaches that have demonstrated strong potential and can be strengthened further.



PGEP II's achievements are diverse, in line with an ambitious theory of change. In a space that is increasingly crowded with international actors, there is a need for clarity about SPC's ability to add value. Acknowledging that SPC cannot be everywhere or do everything, and that other actors are working to meet the vast needs for gender mainstreaming in the region, means strategic repositioning is advisable. Learning from PGEP II's internal challenges and feedback from PICs outlines the importance of strong internal technical advisory capacity being readily available to address needs in a proactive manner. SPC's ability to align its programs and initiatives and to develop internal flexibility to respond swiftly to emerging needs will enable it to seize new opportunities and maximise impact in progressing gender mainstreaming.

Recommendations

This evaluation does not recommend for PGEP to continue into a third phase. There is however a strong case to progress with gender mainstreaming within SPC's other areas of work in the gender space. Through the Gender Equality Flagship, there is an opportunity to understand the best ways to ensure that gender mainstreaming efforts can be strengthened to complements the work of other actors and beyond PWL. To continue to progress gender mainstreaming in the Pacific region, SPC should:

-  1. **Retain and resource gender mainstreaming as a core competency** and service of HRSD, and SPC more broadly. Core funding from SPC will ensure continued prioritisation of the issue beyond project cycles and project funding availability in the longer term.
-  2. **Allocate sufficient human resources** internally to maintain strong communication channels and relationships with PICs to adapt to changes in context and priorities as well as size up emerging opportunities.

This includes allocating technical and managerial resources separately (i.e not expecting project managers to provide technical advisory, and vice versa) and ensuring internal resources match the ambitions of the organisation.

-  3. **Address needs of PICs through proactive engagement** with countries that are ready to engage in a continuous process to advance co-defined gender mainstreaming priorities. Ensure that support is:
 - Contextualised and accompaniment approaches are taken to ensure continuity of outcomes in the face of changing country-level staff.
 - Focuses on women's machineries, ensuring they remain at the forefront of gender mainstreaming efforts, including across sectors
 - Leverages multiple entry points and targets specific sectors, including health, climate change and economic development
-  4. **Ensure internal systems and processes are flexible enough** to respond to countries' requests rapidly and size up rising opportunities. This includes addressing issues of delays in responding to requests for grants under PWL, as well as internal technical and managerial capacity to respond (see recommendation 2 above).

5. **Take the lead on coordinating** gender mainstreaming efforts, including identifying gaps. This includes consolidating SPC's approach to gender mainstreaming internally, as well as reaching out to and communicating with key external actors. Mapping current needs and response efforts is a good place to start.
6. Continue and increase national and regional communities of practice and the development of a regional pool of gender experts to meet the growing demand, including sector-specific demand.
7. **Undertake periodic strategic reviews** to enable learning from progress and strategy to adapt to changing environments.
8. **Continue statistical and gender analysis work**, including updating key reference documents on the state of gender data such as the Beijing progress report and gender stocktakes
9. Investigate possible synergies and gaps with leading external actors with respect to **state budgeting and gender financing and building accountability systems**.
10. Continue support to policy development whilst increasing efforts to support **policy implementation and monitoring**. Strengthen complementarity between technical assistance, grants and other approaches for gender mainstreaming budgeting and implementation. Without such complementarity, support for policy implementation can be lost.
11. **Balance individual change and system change** by identifying ways to anchor change into systems and institutions, in parallel with raising awareness and building individual capacities for change.⁵⁰ For example:

System change:

- internally, by the development of gender equality targets for all SPC divisions, sub-regional offices and flagships.
- externally, the set-up of gender focal points could be accompanied by a discussion on ways to valorise the role and recognise the additional responsibilities in job descriptions.

Individual change:

- Strengthening the advocacy work of SPC (as part of the broader communication work) to secure political will for gender mainstreaming and increase impact.

50 This also aligns with the Rao Kelleher 'Gender At Work' Framework that highlights interrelationships between systemic and individual change.

ANNEX 1: EVALUATION QUESTIONS

Evaluation questions were developed by considering [OECD-DAC Standard evaluation criteria](#) and the specificity of the PGEP II project and purpose for this evaluation. The following questions will guide the evaluation:

OVERARCHING EVALUATION QUESTION: What achievements were realised by PGEP II and what lessons can be learned from these achievements to inform the direction of gender programming within the HRSD Division of SPC?

Relevance: To what extent has PGEP II met the needs and priorities to progress gender equality in PICs?

- How closely do the project's objectives and the design of the intervention match the needs of the PICs, national priorities, and global agendas?
- What ways of working delivered the greatest results? Which ways of working did not progress results?
- What existing/other ways of working should be applied in future to progress gender equality?

Effectiveness: to what extent did PGEP II deliver on its articulated objective and intended intermediate outcomes?

- Has the project been successful in generating results (particularly outputs) that credibly contribute to attaining the desired outcomes and impact?
- What key results were achieved under the two program outcome areas?
- What challenges did the project face in achieving objectives? What was done to overcome/mitigate these challenges? What lessons can be applied moving forward?

Efficiency: To what extent were PGEP II resources used effectively and strategically to progress gender equality?

- How effectively has the project converted its inputs (including financial resources, time, and expertise) into outputs, and outcomes in relation to the costs?
- Has the project been managed efficiently, adhering to value for money principles to realize the intended investment outcomes?
- What lessons can be applied moving forward to best optimise resources?

Impact: What outcomes have emerged from the interventions of the PGEP II project?

- What progress has been achieved to date against the project's outcomes and overall objective?
- What significant changes or effects have occurred as a result of PGEP II intervention (including key intended and unintended outcomes)?

Coherence: To what extent was PGEP II well situated alongside other efforts to progress gender equality across PICs?

- How effectively does the intervention/s align with other initiatives carried out by the PGEP II project, including those other initiated by HRSD (e.g., PWL, WiL, SDD, etc.), and other stakeholders?
- What other support or interventions exist to progress gender equality within PICs? To what extent did PGEP II complement these initiatives?
- How can SPC best ensure that gender equality efforts moving forward best complement other initiatives?

Sustainability: To what extent has PGEP II contributed to sustainable change in gender equality across PICs?

- How effectively has the PGEP II project incorporated and guaranteed the continuation of positive impacts beyond the project's duration?
- What strategies were developed to promote sustainable change from the project, with what results?
- How could sustainability be enhanced going forward?

ANNEX 2: LIST OF DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

Project documents

1. PGEP II Annual report 2019
2. PGEP II Annual report 2020
3. PGEP II Annual report 2021
4. PGEP II Annual report 2022
5. PGEP II Financial Reports
6. PGEP II Results Summary (Monitoring Report 2019-22 internally compiled for the Evaluation)
7. 2023 activities - Kiribati HRSD Activity report
8. 2023 activities - Tonga workshop trip
9. 2023 activities - HRSD activity report - Tonga
10. PGEP II project design document
11. PGEP II MEL Plan
12. PGEP II Communication Strategy
13. Project grant agreement
14. HRSD Annual report
15. HRSD Business Plan
16. Solomon Islands IPAM training modules to outputs

Project outputs

Kiribati Statistic Office & SPC, Kiribati Gender Statistics Abstracts, 2020.

17. SPC & UNWomen, Pacific Roadmap on Gender Statistics, Women Count
18. Tonga Gender Statistics Workshop Report
19. SPC and The Kingdom of Tonga, [Gender Equality Where do we stand? The Kingdom of Tonga](#), 2019
20. SPC, A Guide to Undertaking National Gender Assessment of the Fisheries Sector, 2021.
21. SPC, [Beijing +25](#): Review of progress in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action in Pacific Island countries and territories, Fiji, 2021.
22. SPC, 14th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women and 7th Meeting of Pacific Ministers for Women, Outcomes and Recommendations, 2021.
23. Triennial Conference, Press conference talking points
24. Triennial Conference, internal log and recordings of media releases (x28)

External documents

25. [Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls](#)
26. [The Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration](#)
27. Pacific Platform for Action for Gender Equality and Women's Human Rights 2018–2030

28. Asian Development Bank, [Enhancing Gender Equality Outcomes in Pacific Developing Member Countries](#)
29. Australia's [Women Together Initiative](#)
30. Solomon Islands, Gender Equality and Women's Development Policy (2021-27)
31. Solomon Islands, National Policy to Eliminate Violence Against Women and Girls (2021-27)
32. SPC, Pacific Women Lead Project Design.
33. SPC, Pacific Women Lead, project logics (draft).
34. 2019 Country Gender Assessment of Agriculture and the Rural Sector in [Samoa](#)
35. 2019 Country Gender Assessment of Agriculture and the Rural Sector in [Fiji](#)
36. 2019 Country Gender Assessment of Agriculture and the Rural Sector in [Solomon Islands](#)
37. 2019 Country Gender Assessment of Agriculture and the Rural Sector in [Tonga](#)
38. 2020 Country Gender Assessment of Agriculture and the Rural Sector in [Vanuatu](#)

ANNEX 3: LIST OF STAKEHOLDERS

Thirty-four stakeholders from the agencies listed below were interviewed. Names were removed to protect their anonymity, in line with evaluation commitments and ethical standards.

Type of stakeholder	List of organisations	Country
PIC government agencies	Ministry of Internal Affairs	Cook Islands
	Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resource Development	Kiribati
	Ministry of Women Youth Sports and Social Affairs	Kiribati
	National Statistics office (NSO)	Kiribati
	Kiribati Women and Children Support Centre (KWCS)	Kiribati
	Ministry of State	Palau
	Women's Development Division (WDD) of the Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family (MWYCFA)	Solomon Islands
	Ministry of Public Service and Institute of Public Administration and Management (IPAM)	Solomon Islands
	National Statistics Office (NSO), Ministry of Finance, Solomon Islands	Solomon Islands
	Ministry of Internal Affairs	Tonga
Pacific Community	SPC management staff	RMI, Fiji
	SPC PWL	Fiji
	HRSD PGEP II staff and regional focal points	Fiji, FSM, RMI
	SDP and HRSD	Fiji
	PGEP II ex-staff	Fiji, Tuvalu, Vanuatu
Donor	DFAT	Canberra, Fiji
Others	FAO based within the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands	Solomon Islands
	Forum Fisheries Agency	Solomon Islands
	University of Melbourne	Australia
	Consultant	Kiribati