Research Consultancy: Adolescent Unplanned Pregnancy in the Pacific

Terms of Reference

Reports to: Pacific Women Support Unit, Deputy Team Leader (overall management) and Research Specialist (technical supervision)

Location: Homebase with regional travel

Duration: January–November 2019

ARF Classification: To be nominated for each team member as part of the tender

Program Background

Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development (Pacific Women) was announced by the Australian Government at the Pacific Island Forum Leaders’ meeting in August 2012. It commits up to $320 million over 10 years in 14 Pacific Islands Forum member countries. The program aims to improve opportunities for the political, economic and social advancement of Pacific women. Pacific Women will support countries to meet the commitments they made in the Pacific Leaders’ Gender Equality Declaration in 2012. The outcomes sought by Pacific Women are:

- Women, and women's interests, are increasingly and effectively represented and visible through leadership at all levels of decision making.
- Women have expanded economic opportunities to earn an income and accumulate economic assets.
- Violence against women is reduced and survivors of violence have access to support services and to justice.
- Women in the Pacific will have a stronger sense of their own agency, supported by a changing legal and social environment and through increased access to the services they need.

Pacific Women is managed by Australia’s Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and works with a wide range of implementing partners, including the 14 partner governments, multilateral organisations, international and national NGOs and civil society organisations.

The Pacific Women Support Unit provides the program with logistical, technical and administrative support and is in Suva, Fiji, with a sub-office in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea.
Overview of the Consultancy

Pacific Women wishes to engage a highly experienced research team (managed by a research organisation/contractor) to carry out two separate but inter-related and in-depth pieces of research on:

- unintended teenage pregnancy and motherhood
- experiences of traditional fertility limitation, including termination.

Focused on Vanuatu, Tonga and the Republic of the Marshall Islands, for the purposes of this work, the age range of adolescents is defined as the onset of puberty to 20 years. The research is driven by the need for women in the Pacific to have a stronger sense of their own agency, be supported by a changing legal and social environment and have increased access to sexual and reproductive health services. Integrated throughout the consultancy is also the objective of building the research capacity of early-career Pacific Island researchers.

Background

According to the World Health Organisation (2013) half of the population of the Pacific is aged below 21 years and approximately one third is aged less than 14 years. The latest research from the Pacific Community (SPC) indicates that rates of teenage pregnancy are high and increasing in some Pacific Islands countries.¹ Eight of the 14 countries where data is available show an increase in adolescent birth rates.² While rates of adolescent pregnancy are generally high across the Pacific region, very little is understood about the experiences of adolescent girls who experience unintended pregnancy and motherhood.

Data on the numbers of abortions in the Pacific is extremely limited.³ However, reporting to the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) indicates that access to safe abortion in the region is difficult .⁴ In some Pacific Island Countries and Territories, there is significant evidence to suggest that illegal abortion is common but there is little known about the details of where, when, and how abortion is conducted.⁵ We also do not know how many women travel from the Pacific to New Zealand, Australia or the US for termination.

There have been small studies looking at induced abortion in Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea. Research from Vanuatu reported that some women and girls who are not able to access contraceptives, and become pregnant, may resort to self-induced abortion or infanticide if they cannot access a safe and legal abortion.⁶ This research further reported that the most common method of self-induced abortion was seeking the services of a herbalist.⁷ In Papua New Guinea, induced abortions are not available in any public health facility.⁸ In a study comparing women who reported for post-abortion care for spontaneous abortion (miscarriage) and induced abortion, women reporting

² SPC. (2016) National Minimum Development Indicator Database. Note that the internationally accepted definition of adolescent birth rate is the annual number of live births to adolescent women per 1,000 adolescent women. The adolescent birth rate is also referred to as the age-specific fertility rate for women aged 15–19.
³ UNFPA, UNESCO and WHO 2015.
⁴ ARROW 2012.
⁵ IPPF 2017.
⁶ Tao, Ssenabulya and Van Dora 2015.
⁷ Tao, Ssenabulya and Van Dora 2015.
⁸ Vallely et al 2014.
induced abortion were significantly more likely to be aged 15–24 years (71 per cent), single (39 per cent) and a student (43 per cent).\(^9\)

**Phase One Research**

*Pacific Women* commissioned a study to better understand the contemporary context and realities of adolescents and young people in selected Pacific Islands Countries and Territories (PICT) in the area of sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR), in particular when facing unintended pregnancy. It included a mapping of existing knowledge, evidence and current programming on adolescent SRHR in the region as well as the development of an annotated bibliography. Interviews were also undertaken with SRHR specialists in the region to validate the information obtained during the literature mapping and to identify further gaps in research, service provision and programming to address adolescent and young people’s SRHR. The mapping indicated a wide range of research needs in the areas of SRHR, including understanding the experiences of girls and young women when faced with an unintended pregnancy and motherhood.

As a component of phase one, a workshop of researchers and stakeholders was convened with an understanding of adolescent pregnancy, abortion and SRHR in the Pacific in Suva. The meeting identified the need to:

- better understand how young women and girls manage unintended pregnancy and motherhood;
- build evidence about the existence and use of abortion in order to develop multi-entry point programming and policy options to reduce unsafe abortion and improve adolescent sexual health in the Pacific.

The findings from phase one of this research have been used to inform the development of this request for tender and will be made available to the successful Tenderer.

**The Purpose and Objectives of this Research**

The issues facing adolescent girls with regard to sexual and reproductive health are particularly relevant to social, cultural and economic development in the Pacific Islands region. Young women in the Pacific navigate sexual decision making in increasingly complex social and cultural contexts. These community contexts do not generally enable young women to speak openly about sexual health nor do they provide young women with useful advice to empower them to make informed decisions on sexual activity or unplanned pregnancy. Given this context, with funding through DFAT’s Gender Equality Fund, *Pacific Women* is undertaking research to better understand the contemporary context and realities of young women and adolescent girls in selected Pacific Island countries when facing unplanned pregnancy and motherhood, including access to information on sexuality and options for contraception. We also want to understand, traditional and contemporary knowledge around abortion practices, including from the viewpoints of older women.

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\(^9\) Vallely et al 2014.
From the mapping and the recommendations of the workshop *Pacific Women* wishes to engage consultants to carry out research in Vanuatu, Tonga and the Republic of the Marshall Islands on:

- how young women and girls (15-19 years old) manage unintended teenage pregnancy and motherhood
- knowledge and practice of traditional methods of fertility limitation including termination of pregnancies.

The research is intended to explore constraining and enabling factors for the empowerment of Pacific Islands young women and will include themes such as:

- **Adolescent pregnancy and motherhood**
  - the social and structural factors impacting young women that lead to unintended pregnancies
  - contraception knowledge, accessibility and use (including where they obtain advice – e.g. peers, social media)
  - negotiation of sex with her partner
  - experiences of the (domestic) healthcare system - the quality and accessibility of healthcare services and treatment by staff
  - possibility or consideration of abortion including through international healthcare services
  - the experience of pregnancy and motherhood
  - acceptance of her pregnancy by family, her peers and wider community including church
  - was there pressure to marry the father
  - issues around completion of schooling (if in school)
  - the role of the sexual partner/child’s father during her pregnancy and afterwards

- **Traditional use and practices of pregnancy limitation including termination**
  - investigation of the role of older women\(^{10}\) in relation to young women’s experience of abortion, unintended pregnancy and motherhood
  - traditional medicines and herbs for fertility limitation
  - cultural understandings about fertility limitation
  - fertility limitation practices

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\(^{10}\) The research team is required to define ‘older women’ as part of the methodology and dependent on cultural and country context.
changes to these traditional practices and whether they are still used today.

Noting the sensitive nature of this research, the research team will be required to propose methods for the ethical collection of data, suitable to country and cultural contexts.

**Methodology**

It is proposed that the research employs ethnographic methods and in-depth interviews with a range of adolescent girls who have experienced unintended pregnancy and motherhood, and older women, who may have knowledge or experience in traditional means of limiting family size, in order to access rich data on the experiences of these two groups. Given the sensitive nature of this project the researchers must apply a ‘do no harm’ lens.

The research organisation engaged to manage the research team is required to propose a detailed research methodology as the first deliverable of this assignment. The role of the research organisation/contractor will be to lead and coordinate the research and to work with locally-based organisations in each country. It is essential that Pacific Island early-career researchers are an integral part of the research team from design through to dissemination of the research and that adequate time be spent building their capacity as researchers. The proposed approach may be a collaboration between a research institution and an in-country or regional organisation, however the research organisation as the lead contractor will be responsible for ensuring overall coherence and the delivery of milestones and outputs.

Due to the limited timeframe of this research, it may be necessary to carry out fieldwork in each of the two countries concurrently. It is envisaged that the fieldwork will take place as soon as all ethical approvals are in place, in early 2019.

**Outputs and Timeframes**

The timeframes listed below are indicative and subject to amendment in the work plan and during the contract negotiations. The research Team Leader will be responsible for preparation and submission of all documentation, drawing on relevant team members as needed. The activities below will be the basis for payments to the contractor excluding reimbursable costs. The breakdown of payments and reimbursable costs will be finalised in the contract.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Indicative Number of Working days</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work plan and methodology</td>
<td>(Number of days to be proposed by tenderers)</td>
<td>January 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethics approval and field work</td>
<td></td>
<td>Feburary–June 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation of draft full report, and an abridged, easy-to-read version</td>
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<td>July 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reporting workshops</td>
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<td>August 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Workshops in countries</td>
<td></td>
<td>September 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Reports</td>
<td></td>
<td>November 2019</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Deliverables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deliverable</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Means of Verification</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work plan</td>
<td>The workplan will include:</td>
<td>Submission of work plan and approval by <em>Pacific Women</em> Support Unit and DFAT.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Timeline</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Number of days for respective key deliverables (up to an estimated 160 days total), timelines and schedule of travel or meetings.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Methodology</strong> (maximum 10 pages)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ proposed analytic research framework</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ methodology</td>
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<td></td>
<td>▪ draft interview schedule</td>
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<td>▪ data gathering plan</td>
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<td>▪ data analysis plan</td>
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<td></td>
<td>▪ plan for research capacity building of Pacific researchers</td>
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<td></td>
<td>▪ key stakeholder consultation plan</td>
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<td></td>
<td>▪ perceived challenges of doing the research</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ proposed plan for presentation of final report and recommendations. Agreement of this deliverable by the Research Specialist required before next steps.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fieldwork Completion</td>
<td>▪ Copies of ethical approvals</td>
<td>Submission of report including ethics approvals, summary of consultatations, interviews and research capacity building undertaken and approval by <em>Pacific Women</em> Support Unit and DFAT.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summaries</td>
<td>▪ Summary of consultations with stakeholders, including meeting with DFAT post</td>
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<td></td>
<td>▪ Summary of interviews completed in each country</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Research capacity building undertaken.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Draft reports | A full draft report of no more than 30 pages per country. The report to contain:  
| |  
| | ▪ Executive Summary  
| | ▪ Aims and objectives  
| | ▪ Literature review of both peer-reviewed and grey literature to synthesise relevant research on adolescent unintended pregnancy and abortion, particularly in the Pacific  
| | ▪ Methodology  
| | ▪ Results and discussion  
| | ▪ Conclusions (including issues in doing the research)  
| | ▪ Research capacity building  
| | ▪ Recommendations  
| | ▪ Annexes.  
| | An abridged easy-to-read report of no more than 5 pages per country for use in-country. | Submission of full draft report, abridged report and approval by Pacific Women Support Unit and DFAT. |
| Presentation of Results | Presentations of the draft to Pacific Women, including the Pacific Women Advisory Group on Research, and to DFAT. | Presentation completed and approval by Pacific Women Support Unit and DFAT. |
| Draft reports | Ten days after receiving written feedback:  
| | ▪ detailed written report  
<p>| | ▪ the abridged easy-to-read report (4 pages) delivered in both hard copies and in electronic form. | Submission of draft report and approval by Pacific Women Support Unit and DFAT. |
| Dissemination workshops | Workshops to be held in Vanuatu, Tonga and the Republic of the Marshall Islands to discuss results and recommendations and collaboratively devise innovative approaches to tackling the issues identified. | Workshop completed and workshop report approved by Pacific Women Support Unit and DFAT. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Approval</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Production of a short report from each workshop.</td>
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<td>Submission of final report and approval by Pacific Women Support Unit and DFAT.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final report</td>
<td>Incorporate feedback from dissemination workshops. Ten days after dissemination workshops: • final written report • final abridged easy-to-read report (4 pages) delivered in both hard copies and in electronic form.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communications/dissemination plan</td>
<td>Development of a communications/dissemination plan that outlines strategies and mediums to communicate the findings of the research in accessible formats. Including: • journal articles; conference presentations; posters and flyers.</td>
<td>Review and approval by Pacific Women Support Unit and DFAT</td>
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**Research Team**

Tenderers must propose the composition of the research team, including proposed Pacific Island researchers. The team should consist of, at least:

- **Team Leader.** The Team Leader must have:
  - extensive experience in carrying out qualitative research on sensitive topics in the Pacific;
  - experience in leading teams of researchers;
  - experience in supervising early career researchers and building research capacity;
  - ability to carry out complex research projects in a limited time-frame;
  - experience with applied research that can be utilised to inform policy and program in the Pacific context;
  - ability to write reports aimed at Pacific women, DFAT and for members of communities;
  - experience undertaking applied research that informs policy development and program delivery; and
understanding of the aims of the Pacific Women program.

- Skilled qualitative researchers (one of whom may be the Team Leader). They must have:
  - extensive experience in carrying out qualitative research on sensitive topics in the Pacific; and
  - ability to supervise early career researchers.

- Early-career Pacific Islands researchers. They must have:
  - an undergraduate degree in health, social sciences, gender studies or similar research experience.

Research Ethics Requirements

DFAT subscribes to the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) Guidelines for Ethical Research and Evaluation in Development. All research activities funded by Pacific Women will be required to meet the ACFID guidelines and national research ethics requirements where relevant and applicable. Pacific Women may require research submissions to complete its own ethics and quality assurance process. At a minimum, Pacific Women commissioned research should:

- meet local country or institutional research requirements, including obtaining research permits if required
- be sensitive to and show respect for communities and individuals involved in the research
- demonstrate contextual relevance and cultural appropriateness
- include culturally appropriate feedback loops to groups and communities involved in the research
- identify risks that may arise through the conduct or release of research findings and present ways to mitigate them.

For this project, ethical approvals (and research permits, if necessary) must be obtained from the research team’s home university and from the Ministries of Health or similar in-country prior to any data collection.
Other Requirements

Child protection

The research team must comply with DFAT’s Child Protection Policy. All team members must provide evidence of recent police clearances and comply with all other applicable aspects of the Child Protection Policy. The safety and protection of girls and other children must be paramount, and the team must ensure that any research and related activities in no way makes adolescent girls and other children more vulnerable to harm.

Quote Format and Selection Criteria

Technical Proposal

Tenderers are required to submit technical proposals of up to five (5) pages addressing Evaluation Criteria A–D below. Tenderers should also submit a CV of no more than three (3) A4 pages for each Contractor Personnel nominated in the proposal.

**Criterion A: Research expertise and team composition – Weighting 40 per cent**

- Demonstrated experience undertaking qualitative or ethnographic social research to inform policy and/or the design of development interventions.

- Experience undertaking ethnographic or social research in the Pacific Islands, preferably experience in oral history, and in partnership with local/regional organisations.

- Outline the research team’s skills and experience. The research team must have strong skills in the following areas: gender inequality and women's and girls' empowerment in the Pacific; research on sexual and reproductive health and rights; research on sensitive research topics; working in developing country contexts.

**Criterion B: Approach – Weighting 40 per cent**

- An outline of the tenderer’s proposed approach to the research:
  
  - a description of the analytical framework, methodologies, Technical Work Plan and approximate timeline
  
  - a brief description of the key considerations, questions and anticipated challenges of undertaking the research described in the Terms of Reference.

**Criterion C: Demonstrated skills and experience in research capacity development – Weighting 20 per cent**

- Demonstrated experience in building research capacity of early-career Pacific Islands researchers.
Price Proposal

Tenders are required to provide a quotation for undertaking the research consultancy, comprising:

- Personnel fees, within the range specified in DFAT’s Aid Adviser Remuneration Framework for the Job Level and Professional Discipline Category specified for each proposed position proposed. Personnel fees will be payable on approval of deliverables.

- Management costs, including direct overhead costs, insurances, and supervision. Management costs will be payable on approval of deliverables.

- Activity costs (including travel and accommodation). Activity costs will be determined at actual cost with no mark up fee allowed. Costs will be paid in tranches to be agreed with the successful tenderer.

- Detailed Financial Plan that is clearly cross referenced to the activities and outputs within the Technical Work Plan. All costs associated with delivering the research consultancy against the terms of reference must be detailed within the Financial Plan.

*Pacific Women* will apply the following 80-20 scoring methodology:

- 80 per cent will be based on the technical proposal, with the breakdown of scoring reflecting the weighing allocated to each criteria

- 20 per cent will be based on the price proposal, including competitiveness of fee rates, economies of scale and financial risk/contingency costs (if deemed relevant).

Once each bid has been evaluated and scored both the technical and commercial scores will be totalled to determine the most economically advantageous and quality tender. Bidders will then be notified of the outcome.

Applications and enquiries should be sent to recruitment@pacificwomen.org.fj. The deadline for submission is 6.00pm, Suva Time, 16 December 2018.
Key References


Burnet Institute 2016, Sexual and Reproductive Health of Unmarried Young People in Asia and the Pacific: Review of knowledge, behaviours and outcomes UNFPA, Bangkok, Thailand.


International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) 2014, *Youth and Abortion: Key strategies and promising practices for increasing young women’s access to abortion services*, IPPF, London, United Kingdom.


Regional Rights Resources Team (RRRT), Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) 2015, *Bridging the Gap: Eight perspectives on SRHR in the Pacific region* 2015, SPC, Suva, Fiji.


UNFPA 2013a, *I am not a lost cause! Young Women’s Empowerment in the Pacific*, UNFPA (Pacific Sub-Regional Office), Suva, Fiji.

UNFPA 2013b, *The Deeper Silence: The unheard experiences of women with disabilities and their sexual and reproductive health experiences: Kiribati, the Solomon Islands and Tonga*, UNFPA (Pacific Sub-Regional Office), Suva, Fiji.


