



Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development

The Cook Islands Activities Summary

Background

Through a 10-year commitment, Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development (*Pacific Women*) connects more than 170 gender equality initiatives supported by Australia and implemented by over 160 partners across 14 Pacific Island countries.

Pacific Women is one of the largest global commitments to gender equality. It partners with governments, local and international non-government organisations (NGOs), private sector, disabled people's organisations, coalitions and others to improve the political, economic and social opportunities of Pacific women and to end violence against women and girls. Its emphasis is on partnerships and locally-driven development.

Providing technical, knowledge sharing and convening support to the portfolio of partners is *Pacific Women's* Support Unit, working to improve the long-term impact of gender equality projects in the Pacific. The Support Unit's office is in Suva, Fiji, with a sub-office in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea.

Pacific Women was announced at the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders' meeting in August 2012. It commits up to AUD320 million over 10 years in 14 Pacific Islands Forum member countries.

Pacific Women initiatives respond to the commitments in the 2012 Pacific Leaders' Gender Equality Declaration, while also supporting Australia's Pacific Step-up and its Partnerships for Recovery approach of working together with Pacific partners to address COVID-19 impacts on women, girls and their communities.

The outcomes sought through *Pacific Women* are:

- **Ending Violence against Women:** Violence against women is reduced and survivors of violence have access to support services and to justice.
- **Economic Empowerment:** Women have expanded economic opportunities to earn an income and accumulate economic assets.
- **Leadership and Decision Making:** Women, and women's interests, are increasingly and effectively represented and visible through leadership at all levels of decision making.
- **Enhancing Agency:** 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.

Since 2012, an estimated 1.22 million Pacific Island women, men and children have been able to access services and information across 14 partner countries through initiatives supported by *Pacific Women*.



The Cook Islands

Consisting of 15 islands and two reefs, the Cook Islands is home to around 21,000 people. Over the years, women in the Cook Islands have seen improvements in their status. An increasing number of women are involved in political affairs and decision making, economic activity and accessing police and counselling services. There have been improvements in maternal health and gender parity in primary and secondary level education.

Nevertheless, there is significant income disparity between women and men, with no change recorded in 2011 when compared to the 2006 census. In particular, there are still significant challenges for women on the outer islands (known as the Pa Enua) where gender roles are stricter and their relative isolation and dependence on natural resources makes them more vulnerable.

The Cook Islands Government articulates its approach to gender equality in its National Policy on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment and Strategic Plan of Action 2011–2016. Since 2014, the government's focus has been on ending violence against women and improving women's economic empowerment.

Rationale for activities

Australia provides aid to the Cook Islands through a delegated arrangement with New Zealand, aligned with the development priorities identified in the Joint Commitment for Development between New Zealand and Cook Islands. Australia's assistance to the Cook Islands focuses on increasing access to clean water and support for education and gender.

The Cook Islands also receives support from *Pacific Women* through regional and multi-country activities that include the Cook Islands. Details of the activities are provided in the tables below.



Table 1: Bilateral Activities

PROJECT NAME AND PARTNER	DESCRIPTION	BUDGET
Outcome: Economic Empowerment		
An enabling environment for full participation of women in economic development (Gender and Development Division, Ministry of Internal Affairs)	Strengthened the capacity of the Cook Islands Government to identify new economic opportunities for women, promote and support women's businesses in the formal and informal sectors and support women's access to financial services.	\$590,000 (2013–2017)
Outcome: Ending Violence against Women		
Eliminating violence against women through training, advocacy and support services (Punanga Tauturu Inc.)	Supported Punanga Tauturu Inc. women's counselling centre to provide counselling, legal aid and conduct advocacy activities focused on ending violence against women.	\$130,000 (2017–2018)
Strengthening capacity towards the elimination of violence against women (Punanga Tauturu Inc., Gender and Development Division in partnership with the Cook Islands Police)	Strengthened the capacity of the Cook Islands Government to improve legal frameworks, law enforcement, justice systems and services to prevent and respond to violence against women.	\$190,000 (2013–2017)
Outcome: Enhancing Agency		
Increasing capacity to deliver on the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy (Gender and Development Division, Ministry of Internal Affairs)	Increased the capacity of the Cook Islands Government to progress their Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy and provided secretariat support to the National Steering Committee through a national consultant and project funds.	\$70,000 (2017–2018)



Table 2: Regional Programs with Activities in the Cook Islands

PROJECT NAME AND PARTNER	DESCRIPTION	BUDGET ¹
Outcome: Leadership and Decision Making		
Pacific Women's Parliamentary Partnerships (Australian International and Community Relations Office, Australian Department of the House of Representatives)	Supported building the capacity of Pacific women parliamentarians and their staff to ensure gender equality issues are better addressed in parliament.	\$2,850,037 (2013–2018)
Outcome: Ending Violence against Women		
Support to the Pacific Community Regional Rights Resource Team (The Pacific Community (SPC))	Supporting work on ending violence against women, human rights and good governance with Pacific Island governments and civil society organisations. Providing technical assistance and training. Advocating for women and girls to have increased access to justice for domestic violence and to promote and protect human rights commitments.	\$5,750,000 (2015–2020)
UNICEF Pacific Child Protection Program (UNICEF)	Worked across 14 Pacific Island Countries to strengthening protection of children from violence, abuse and exploitation	\$7,000,000 (2014–2018)
Outcome: Enhancing Agency		
Partnerships for Health and Rights: Working for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights for all in the Pacific (International Planned Parenthood Federation)	Supporting the expansion of access to sexual and reproductive health services in the Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu and, from phase two, Papua New Guinea.	\$3,000,000 (2015–2022)
Progressing Gender Equality in the Pacific (The Pacific Community (SPC))	Phase one (completed) conducted stocktakes of Pacific Island governments' capacity to integrate gender equality and women's empowerment into policies, legislation and programs and strengthened the collection and analysis of data to better track outcomes. Phase two is supporting Pacific Island countries to adopt evidence-informed policies and legislation that promote gender equality and women's human rights.	\$3,941,712 (2013–2018) \$5,494,203 (2019–2023)

¹ This allocation is not for the Cook Islands alone but for multiple countries under *Pacific Women*.

