

# Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development: Kiribati

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. 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 Australian Government, through *Pacific Women*, has committed approximately \$9.9 million over 10 years (2012–2022) on initiatives to support women's empowerment in Kiribati.

## Figures<sup>1</sup>

### Community awareness and outreach

- 74 Village Activists, 60 village leaders and 26 church leaders trained in strategies to change community and individual behaviours to prevent violence and encourage safer homes through the Strengthening Peaceful Villages (SPV) project.
- 310 people surveyed in Betio and South Tarawa documented behaviour change relating to violence, gender relations and power arising from the SPV project.
- First Year 9 Respectful Relationships syllabus is endorsed by the Ministry of Education.

### Crisis support and prevention services

- 162 clients supported since 2018 by Kiribati Women and Children Support Centre (KWCS), Kiribati's first rights-based counselling service.
- First CEDAW report compiled by Kiribati in 2019, including analysis of Kiribati's crisis support policies and services, with KWCS leading the shadow CEDAW reporting.
- More than 60 male advocates joining the Ministry of Women, Youth, Sports and Social Affairs (MWYSSA) Male Advocates Program since its launch on White Ribbon Day in 2013.

## Achievements

### Leadership and Decision Making

- Aia Maea Ainen Kiribati (AMAK) is being revived as the coordinating body for gender equality and women's groups in Kiribati. A major achievement was the National Expo which brought together AMAK women members from across Kiribati to strategise about market access while showcasing and selling handicraft and cultural products.
- The Kiribati Women Practice Parliament has proposed a Constitution (Amendment) Bill 2019 seeking to include the terms disability and gender in the Kiribati constitution; prohibit discrimination on grounds of sex, disability and gender; seek to replace the term 'women' with 'person' in the marriage section to ensure gender neutrality and to give the same rights to all spouses of Kiribati citizens. The government led event was held in October 2019 in partnership with UNDP and with support from UN Women and funding through *Pacific Women*.
- Two women from Kiribati participated in the Australia Awards Women's Leadership Initiative with scholarship recipients studying at Australian tertiary institutions to develop their leadership skills and capabilities.

### Economic Empowerment

- MWYSSA's women's economic empowerment program that directly guides financial literacy, business development and product development activities, is informed by the feasibility study into strategies responding to women's low income and decision-making autonomy funded by *Pacific Women*.
- Support for AMAK is helping link women handicraft producers in South Tarawa to markets and strengthening AMAK's capacity to secure funding support for handicrafts and microfinance training for women, such as from the Taiwan Embassy.

<sup>1</sup> Information collated from *Pacific Women* implementing partner reports cumulative to June 2019 unless otherwise stated.



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## Ending Violence against Women

- Support for the start-up of Kiribati's first crisis centre, KWCSO, enabled it to open its doors to clients in 2018 and contributed to it becoming independent in July 2019. KWCSO provides free, confidential counselling, legal information, case management and community awareness. It continues to expand its services outside the capital through referrals from outer islands. UN Women, Fiji Women's Crisis Centre and *Pacific Women's* Support Unit provide technical support and training to KWCSO to ensure safe and quality services for women.
- MWYSSA's four-year SPV project, implemented in partnership with UN Women through the Pacific Partnership to End Violence Against Women and Girls, takes a unique village-led approach encouraging safe villages and homes without violence, demonstrating that government is a key partner to prevent violence against women. There are 18 Peaceful Villages in South Tarawa and Betio, reaching half the country's population (approximately 56,385 people). The SPV project was formally launched in 2019 by His Excellency Taneti Maamau, President of the Republic of Kiribati.
- For the first time, prevalence data is available in Kiribati on men's perpetuation of violence against women and girls. Preliminary data was collected through the SPV project on attitudes and behaviours on violence against women and girls in South Tarawa.
- The Kiribati Police Domestic Violence and Sexual Offences office in Betio and a gynaecological room in South Tarawa's hospital were extended between 2014–2017 to improve shelter, comfort and access for women.

## Enhancing Agency

- MWYSSA launched Kiribati's first Gender Equality and Women's Development Policy 2019–2022, with support from partners including *Pacific Women*.
- Central to AMAK's revival as the coordinating body for gender equality and women's groups in Kiribati, is its work with civil society organisations and other partners to submit Kiribati's first Stakeholder Report to the United Nations Human Rights Council Periodic Review of Kiribati in 2019.
- Overcoming entrenched social and cultural taboos, Kiribati Family and Health Association increased its outreach services to rural and remote areas through formal agreements with nine governing Island Councils to provide sexual and reproductive health (SHRH) products and services in their communities. These agreements increase access to SHRH to 75 per cent of the I-Kiribati population.
- The Pacific Community's (SPC) Progressing Gender Equality in the Pacific (PGEP) project has improved the Kiribati Government's capacity to produce and use gender statistics to directly guide national policy and decision making including for human rights. MWYSSA and the National Statistics Office produced the first ever Kiribati Gender Statistics Abstract in 2017.

## Pacific Women Partners

**Government of Kiribati:** Kiribati Police Domestic Violence Unit; Magistrates' Courts; Ministry of Education; Ministry of Health; Ministry of Women, Youth, Sports and Social Affairs – Women's Development Division (MWYSSA).

**Kiribati civil society partners:** Kiribati Family Health Association; Kiribati Women and Children Support Centre (KWCSO); Aia Maea Ainen Kiribati (AMAK).

**Other partners:** Australian International and Community Relations Office, Department of the House of Representatives; Developmental Leadership Program, La Trobe University; Fiji Women's Crisis Centre; International Planned Parenthood Federation; UNICEF; UnitingWorld Church; UN Women; the Pacific Community: POETCom, Progressing Gender Equality in the Pacific and the Regional Rights Resource Team; Women's Leadership Initiative; and *Pacific Women's* regional partners.

