



Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development

Tuvalu Country Plan 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*.



Tuvalu

Tuvalu is a group of nine small islands and atolls in the western Pacific with a population of 11,315. Tuvaluans place high value on their cultural heritages and identities. The small size and low-lying geography of the islands of Tuvalu makes the population at immediate risk from natural disasters including cyclones and tsunamis, as well as highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Tuvalu faces major economic development constraints given the country's small size, isolation from world markets, population dispersion, high cost of transport, limited natural resources, lack of agricultural land, limited industry, high import dependence and trade imbalances.

Tuvalu is a patriarchal society which means land is inherited through male lineage. One of the challenges in raising awareness on gender issues is the limited number of words in the Tuvaluan vocabulary and the difficulties this creates in explaining 'foreign' concepts.

Pacific Women Country Plan

Through *Pacific Women*, the Australian Government will spend up to **\$1.8 million over ten years** (2012–2022) on initiatives supporting women's empowerment in Tuvalu.

Country Plans are the mechanism through which *Pacific Women* outcomes and activities are planned and agreed between DFAT and counterpart governments, following extensive national consultations. They provide detail on what will be funded and how these funding decisions are made.

The first Tuvalu Country Plan supported the Government of Tuvalu to research ways to increase women's political representation at national and island council level. It supported counselling services and the implementation of the *Family Protection and Domestic Violence Act 2014*. A Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Adviser based in the Gender Affairs Division worked with relevant organisations that coordinate and promote gender equality and social inclusion in Tuvalu. The first Country Plan also supported the inaugural Tuvalu National Disability Study in 2017. The results of the study are being used to inform policy decisions and increase public understanding of the needs and rights of people with disabilities.

Building on the work of the first Country Plan, the second Country Plan seeks to strengthen women youth and disability machinery organisations to improve effectiveness, efficiency and coordination. It extends the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Adviser position for a further two years; and provides technical assistance to the Department of Community and the national disabled persons' organisation Fusi Alofa Association to develop the national disability policy.

Research has shown that the most successful organisational model for counselling in the Pacific is one that combines counselling services with community outreach aimed at redressing the common 'forgive and forget' approach, which obstructs reporting and discourages survivors of gender-based violence from seeking support.¹ The second Country Plan funds a local Counselling Coordinator position and a Psychosocial Counsellor Adviser who will, amongst other things, support the establishment of a Counsellors' Association. Diploma level counselling training through the Australia Pacific Technical College and short courses in counselling will be provided to increase the pool of skilled counsellors.

Women's economic empowerment will be supported through work that improves value chains for organic producers.

¹ Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2017. *Review of Counselling Services in the Pacific Final Report*, Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development.



The second Country Plan will support the personal and political empowerment of women by working with the Tuvalu National Council of Women, island councils and Falekaupule. Support for a National Women and Youth Forum will allow women and youth to assess the implementation of the National Gender Policy in their own communities, discuss challenges and enabling factors, and identify their priorities moving forward.

In addition to *Pacific Women*, DFAT makes an important contribution to gender equality in Tuvalu through mainstreaming gender outcomes in the aid program, as well as through political, diplomatic and corporate activities.

Rationale for the activities in the Country Plan

The Government of Tuvalu formally established its commitment to gender equality by forming the Department of Women in 1999. It has endorsed of several regional obligations including the Asia-Pacific States Declaration to Advance Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in November 2014. Tuvalu ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1995, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1999.

This country plan is aligned with key Government of Tuvalu policy directives. It responds to the priority needs of both service providers and beneficiaries and seeks to build on existing initiatives that are showing good results.

(a) Increasing women's leadership and decision making

Since independence in 1978, only three women have been elected to parliament. The *Falekaupule Act* 1997 decentralised authority for island affairs to the Falekaupule (the island council decision-making body). However, the Falekaupule is generally dominated by men, namely matais (heads of each clan) and chiefs. While some women do get elected to the Kaupule (the working or executive arm of the Falekaupule), they represent a small minority and only on some islands.

At the policy level, the Strategic National Plan for Sustainable Development, Te Kaakega III 2016–2020, commits the government to legislative reform to enable two extra parliamentary seats to be reserved seats for women.

(b) Reducing violence against women and expanding support services

Comprehensive statistics on domestic violence are over a decade old. The 2007 Tuvalu Demographic and Health Survey reported that four in 10 women have been subjected to some type of physical violence, with their current husbands or partners being the main perpetrators.² In particular, women and girls with husbands and boyfriends who drink alcohol excessively are far more likely to experience physical, emotional or sexual violence than those whose partners do not drink. It is estimated that around half of all reported acts of physical violence were reported by women aged 25–29 years. The government passed the *Family Protection and Domestic Violence Act* 2014 and is starting to implement it.

(c) Enhancing women's agency

The critical catalytic and coordinating role that national women, youth and disability 'machinery organisations' play in creating an enabling environment for gender equality and social inclusion is widely recognised. In Tuvalu, the Gender Affairs Division, the national disabled people's organisation Fusi Alofa Association and Department of Community Affairs play a central role in reform, planning and advocacy efforts. These organisations require enough human and financial resource capabilities to carry out their respective roles effectively and efficiently.

² Central Statistics Division, Funafuti, 2007. *Tuvalu Demographic and Health Survey*.



Table 1: Bilateral Activities

PROJECT NAME AND PARTNER	DESCRIPTION	BUDGET
Outcome: Ending Violence against Women		
Psychosocial Counsellor Adviser (Community Affairs Department, Ministry of Home Affairs and Rural Development)	Supported the Community Affairs Department to establish referral and follow-up protocols in view of legislative requirements, improve counselling services by developing policies and guidelines and an overall framework for counsellors to operate and develop a pool of local counsellors.	\$420,554 (2018–2019)
Outcome: Enhancing Agency		
Gender and Social Inclusion Adviser (Gender Affairs Department, Ministry of Health, Social Affairs and Gender)	Supporting institutional strengthening of the Gender Affairs Department with outreach to the Tuvalu National Council of Women and other government agencies requiring gender mainstreaming support. Providing capacity development for established institutional coordination mechanisms including the National Coordinating Committee, the Domestic Violence Committee and the United Nations Universal Periodic Review Committee.	\$503,496 (2019–2021)
Tuvalu National Women and Youth Forum (Gender Affairs Department, Ministry of Health, Social Affairs and Gender)	Bringing together women and youth in Tuvalu to assess the implementation of the National Gender Policy in their own communities, discuss challenges and enabling factors, and identify their priorities moving forward.	\$30,000 (2019–2020)
Support for Presentation at Universal Periodic Review (Gender Affairs Department, Ministry of Health, Social Affairs and Gender)	Funded two delegates to present the Tuvalu Universal Periodic Review to the Human Rights Council in Geneva.	\$25,750 (2018)
Support for Gender Reporting	Supported the Gender Affairs Department to research, develop, validate and sign-off of the Tuvalu National Report on Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action as part of Tuvalu's commitments to contribute to the Asia-Pacific and global Beijing 25+ Report by the Commission on the Status of Women.	\$16,500 (2018–2019)
Gender and Social Inclusion Adviser	Provided mentoring and training to support capacity strengthening within the Gender Affairs Department. Supported gender mainstreaming initiatives, temporary special measures for women's political participation and the implementation of the <i>Family Protection and Domestic Violence Act 2014</i> .	\$289,145 (2016–2018)
Tuvalu Study on People with Disability (Community Affairs Department, Ministry of Home Affairs and Rural Development and Consultant)	Conducted the first national study on people with disability, which collected data and information from all nine islands. Created a better understand the situation of people with disabilities and identified strategies to improve the support provided to them.	\$103,680 (2016–2017)



Table 2: Regional Programs with Activities in Tuvalu

PROJECT NAME AND PARTNER	DESCRIPTION	BUDGET ³
Outcome: Leadership and Decision Making		
Pacific Women Parliamentary Partnerships (Australian International and Community Relations Office, 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)

³ This allocation is not for Tuvalu alone but for multiple countries under *Pacific Women*.

