



## **Women's political and administrative leadership in the Pacific**

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*Sheer bloody mindedness and the right timing is what is needed to advance policy reform and get laws passed... You need to be in there for the long haul and to have done your homework, and then make the most of the political moment when the stars align, recognising that the political moment is often short-lived (Ralph Regenvanu, Minister for Lands, May 2014)(Barbara and Haley 2014:44).*

## Executive Summary

Improving women's leadership and political participation has proved to be a key developmental challenge for Pacific Islands Countries, particularly the Melanesian countries (Barbara and Haley 2014:48). Since its inception the Australian Aid Program's flagship gender equity initiative – *Pacific Women* (AusAID 2012) – has supported a range of activities aimed at improving and better understanding women's leadership and decision making in the region (*Pacific Women* 2015).<sup>1</sup> Drawing upon this objective, and the available research and analytical work, this paper provides an overview of women's political and administrative leadership in the Pacific. It has been prepared to inform forthcoming design work being undertaken by *Pacific Women*. The paper incorporates and expands upon an earlier concept note we prepared to inform the original *Pacific Women* design (Haley and Zubrinich 2012), and considers women's leadership and participation as it relates to formal institutions and processes, including national and subnational government, the public sector and civic engagement (c.f. Domingo et.al. 2015; and McLeod's (2015) political, administrative and civil society leadership).

As McLeod (2002:43) rightly points out, women's political participation is often framed in terms of representation in parliament, but as she also reminds us grassroots women do not necessarily view political participation in this way (ibid:44) and as such it is "important that [their] political actions ... are recognised and promoted" (ibid:46). This paper considers women's leadership and political participation, broadly defined. Civic engagement is considered a key part of women's political participation.

*Pacific Women* has made significant investments in research and analytical work concerning women's leadership. Much of this research has been undertaken by scholars from the Australian National University's *State, Society and Governance in Melanesia* (SSGM) Program. In particular we have generated a sizeable corpus of new research concerning women's leadership and political participation across the region. This research not only lays the foundations for a more nuanced analysis of women's political participation in Melanesia and the Pacific more broadly, but has important policy and program development implications. Our *Improving women's leadership, political participation and decision making in the Pacific* research examines women's leadership and political participation at the national and sub-national level, through a number of discrete research activities. The project is very much a collaborative one, having involved 12 SSGM scholars<sup>2</sup> (including three PhD candidates) to date.

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<sup>1</sup> Improved women's leadership and decision making is one of seven "key result areas" for *Pacific Women*, formerly known as Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development.

<sup>2</sup> Current and former SSGM scholars been involved in this research, including: Nicole Haley (CI), Kerry Zubrinich (CI), Kerryn Baker, Julien Barbara, Priya Chattier, Jack Corbett, Hannah McMahon, Theresa Meki, Roannie Ng Shiu, Thiago Oppermann, Ceridwen Spark, and Almah Tararia.

### Key Findings:

Having examined the range of approaches being used to support women's leadership, we find, as outlined in Haley and Zubrinich (2015c:1) and Haley and Zubrinich (2015d), that:

- existing efforts around women's leadership have not resulted in the gains expected or desired; necessitating the need to find new ways of engaging and new modalities for support;
- existing initiatives have tended to focus on political representation at the national level; on their own these will not achieve a critical mass of women in leadership positions across all levels of decision-making;
- there is little systematic analytical work being undertaken at the grass roots level<sup>3</sup> and little is being done to foster community-level leadership, let alone women's leadership;
- there remains a paucity of credible analytical work around the strategies that do work for women who aspire to political office, or indeed around what makes a credible women's candidate, although this is something SSGM scholars are actively investigating;
- initiatives aimed at improving women's political representation must be informed by the emerging evidence, and must move beyond diagnostics that attribute women's poor performance at the polls to culture, custom or the lack of a level playing field. They must seek instead to learn from the experiences of women who are elected, and those who poll strongly but fall shy of being elected;
- across the Pacific women candidates who poll well are typically community-based; have deep connections to their electorates; are well educated; have strong males backers; are from high profile families; have often built good reputations as a local representative; have a strong constituency support base; have significant involvement in the church; and are recognised as serving the community or delivering benefits locally;
- many women who have unsuccessfully contested elections in the Pacific fail to satisfy these criteria, which undoubtedly has contributed to their poor performance;
- on the other hand, credibly contesting national level elections and finishing amongst the top-ranked losing candidates, is one pathway women in PNG have successfully used to enter local and provincial (sub-national) politics;
- civic engagement, involvement with the church and local peacebuilding efforts provide important proving grounds for women leaders;
- informal support networks and coalitions of intending women candidates, which involve seasoned campaigners supporting and mentoring younger women, are emerging in PNG. This is something to be supported and further encouraged;
- detailed research in PNG and Solomon Islands comprehensively demonstrates that men and women experience and participate in elections differently, and that women do not participate in elections as equal citizens;

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<sup>3</sup> This is currently being addressed through research being undertaken by Almah Tararia and Theresa Meki, two SSGM PhD scholars involved with our *Improving women's leadership, political participation and decision making in the Pacific* research project.

- notwithstanding the significant challenges facing women leaders and conservative leadership infrastructure (church and *kastom*) across the region, recent country scans undertaken for the Pacific Leadership Program demonstrate significant reform can be achieved through an opportunistic, issues-based approach, supported by issues-specific program support (Barbara and Haley 2014:vii).
- Timing matters (Domingo et.al. 2015:14). Those seeking to improve women's participation must be willing to work opportunistically, recognizing that "historical junctures provide the opportunities for reform (ibid:34).
- Material resources are also key to enabling women's political voice (ibid:14), particularly given the centrality of political gifting and money politics to formal politics in the Pacific.

The success or otherwise of initiatives aimed at improving women's political participation and political representation need therefore to be assessed in broader terms – not just in terms of the number of women elected to parliament. Because even when women's formal participation is secured (i.e. through special measures) their access to informal political spaces may remain constrained (Domingo et.al. 2015:11). Moreover, simply getting women into parliament, does not guarantee that they will be able to perform effectively, and is "not sufficient to address historically and culturally embedded forms of disadvantage that have been the focus of feminist politics" (Cornwall & Goetz 2005:783). Indeed women in government do not necessarily possess progressive political views, and even when they do they may feel too inhibited to express them, particularly if their personal views are at odds with party policies (Ferguson 2013:12, 25).

Women's empowerment activities must also recognize and look for the inter-relationship between different forms and levels of political participation, and give due regard to the gendered nature of political gifting and money politics, and to the intimidation women voters report experiencing on polling day, otherwise they are unlikely to be effective. What continues to be needed is a multi-faceted approach supporting women's leadership at the local, sub-national and national levels and across the public, private and civil society sectors. This is especially significant because as Quay (n.d.:20) points out women leaders often wear multiple hats and have leadership roles across a number of different areas "these roles are not seen as discrete silos but rather a way of separating out the complex strands of women's responsibilities" (ibid). Furthermore Quay also found, "leadership began at an early age and continues to be expressed across many areas of their lives, for example within their extended family or in their church." (ibid:36).

## Background

As McLeod (2015:6) rightly points out, "the Pacific [already] boasts a ... rich legal and policy framework dedicated to the promotion of gender equality". Individually and collectively Pacific Island Countries (PICs) have committed "to promoting the advancement of women and to gender equality" and "all but two have ratified CEDAW" (Tavola 2014:2). The Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration, for example, affirmed articles four and seven of CEDAW through a commitment to accelerate women's full and equal political participation and their involvement in decision making at all levels (PIFS 2012). Nonetheless few Pacific countries have constitutional provisions which substantively address equality (c.f. Chatter 2015a:17).

It is also the case that despite the seemingly strong commitments from Pacific leaders, affirmative action campaigns for reserved seats or quotas, have failed in a number of countries. PNG and Solomon Islands being key cases in point (see Baker 2014a). Both countries have however sought to improve women's parliamentary representation through relatively weak incentives designed to encourage political parties to endorse more women candidates (see Haley et.al. 2015). These have seen the number of party-endorsed female candidates increase and the development of political party manifestos which include statements about gender equality and women's empowerment. In this sense parties act as "key gatekeepers to [women's] political participation" (Domingo et.al 2015:25), but as Chattier (2015a:26) points out in relation to Fiji, commitments by political parties seldom translate into action or even electioneering rhetoric,<sup>4</sup> and when they do it can be to the detriment of the candidate's campaign.

During the 2014 Solomon Islands National Elections, for example, SSGM scholars observed that popular and highly regarded female candidates lost support when they introduced talk of the UN Millennium Development Goals and international conventions concerning gender equality into their campaigns. These particular messages did not resonate well with voters and in Isabel Province, where civic engagement on the part of women is strong due to the work of the Isabel Mother's Union, they were seen to adversely impact upon Catherine Nori and Rhoda Sikilabu's popularity as the campaign period progressed (Haley et.al. 2015:45).

Across the Pacific, women continue to be:

- under-represented in decision-making at all levels of society;
- limited in their ability to influence due to structural and cultural constraints; and
- vulnerable to economic and physical exploitation.

Significantly those women who command power and influence often find it is mediated by male kin (particularly in matrilineal societies).

There is an extensive body of anthropological literature dating from the 1960s examining leadership in the Pacific.<sup>5</sup> It is focused almost exclusively on men. The most widely cited work is Sahlins' (1963) seminal piece which draws a distinction between "ascribed leadership" and "achieved leadership". The former is typically associated with chiefly societies whilst the latter is typically associated with the more egalitarian "Big Man" societies. Numerous authors have since pointed out however that Sahlins' description fails to adequately capture the nuances of Pacific leadership (Douglas 1979; Lindstrom 1981; Lindstrom and White 1997; White 2007). Nonetheless Sahlins' piece retains its ethnographic authenticity, being reflected in vernacular rhetoric throughout the Pacific.

Throughout much of the region (particularly Melanesia), formal institutions are weak and have limited reach (Nelson 2006; Cox et.al. 2007), while informal institutions are strong exercising influence on all aspects of people's lives. Indeed, as Cox et.al. (2007:47) point out in relation to

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<sup>4</sup> See also Morgan (2005:11) on the slow pace and limited efficacy of political party reforms and Wallace (2011:506) on the "empty rhetoric" of broader affirmative action policies.

<sup>5</sup> See McLeod (2007; 2008); McLeod (2015:7-8) and Eves and Koredong (2015:10) for recent surveys.

Vanuatu informal institutions, such as chiefs and the churches, “are seen as highly legitimate and far more relevant to people’s lives”. These institutions tend however to be highly conservative in nature, limiting the way Pacific countries engages with development challenges. The 11-year delay in passing the Family Protection Bill is a case in point.

*Chiefs and the churches were particularly opposed to the legislation and when it was finally passed, the Vanuatu Christian Council launched an unsuccessful campaign against the Bill, including lobbying the President not to sign the bill into law, arguing it had unconstitutional content and undermined the sanctity of marriage (AusAID 2009:93; Morgan 2013:30) (Barbara and Haley 2014:42).*

## What is the current State of Play?

### *Women’s Political Representation at the National Level*

Women are significantly under-represented in legislatures throughout the world. This is especially so in the Pacific. Indeed, although women account for around 20 per cent of elected leaders worldwide they account for only 3 per cent of elected leaders in the sovereign states of the Pacific, and in Melanesia (Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu), home to nearly eight million people, only 4 of the 213 parliamentary seats (1.9 per cent) are held by women.

Despite concerted donor efforts, especially in the area of candidate training and in support for the introduction of temporary special measures (TSM), only Samoa has legislated for TSM at the national level (see also Tavola 2014). Moreover the growth in women’s representation has been much slower in the Pacific than in other developing regions, even though the number of women holding senior positions in other sectors is seemingly growing (Liki 2010; Fraenkel 2006, 2009).

In some Pacific countries (e.g. PNG and Solomon Islands) women’s representation has fluctuated (c.f. Meki 2015), and in others has in fact diminished. Samoa, Vanuatu, Tuvalu, Tonga and Solomon Islands are all cases in point. Whereas five women were elected to the Samoan parliament at both the 1996 and 2006 elections, only two were elected at the March 2011 elections<sup>6</sup>. The October 2012 Vanuatu elections saw no women elected to the Vanuatu parliament, only one woman was elected in Tuvalu’s 2015 elections, and no women elected or appointed to the Tongan parliament at the 2014 general elections (Baker 2015a). In Solomon Islands, where there is only one woman in parliament, the overall percentage of votes received by women candidates dropped by 50 per cent in 2010 as compared with the 2006 elections. By contrast, women tend to be much better represented in the non-sovereign states of the Pacific, particularly in New Caledonia and French Polynesia, where the French “parity laws” have seen women’s representation increase markedly (Baker 2014b).

There is a widespread misconception that “women have equal chance to run for office and participate in decision-making but this is not accurate. There are numerous institutional, cultural, attitudinal and financial barriers” (Tavola 2014:1), and even when discrimination on the grounds

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<sup>6</sup> Although only two women were elected at the March 2011 elections, three women currently hold seats in the Samoan Parliament. Faimalota Kiki Stowers Ah Kau was elected in 2014 through a by-election after the incumbent passed away (Meleisea et.al. 2015:17).

of sex is constitutionally prohibited, appeals to custom and tradition are regularly used to usurp women's voice and their active participation in village governance (see Meleisia et.al. 2015:8). Moreover when women are excluded from local decision making "it is difficult for them to become – or be seen as – national leaders" (ibid:11).

There is also a misconception that Pacific women are afforded equal suffrage. But this quite simply is not the case (Haley and Zubrinich 2013; Haley and Zubrinich 2015a; Haley et al. 2015).

Pacific scholars have attributed the enduring under-representation of women in politics in the region to a multitude of factors, most notably culture or *kastom* (Kofe and Taomia 2006:211; Huffer 2006; Whittington, Ospina and Pollard 2006; Whittington 2008; Korare 2002), the pervasiveness of masculine political cultures (McLeod 2002), male prejudice (Douglas 2002); the perceived incompatibility between traditional societal values and modern state structures (Whittington 2008), the view that politics is men's work (Pollard 2003), the view that electoral systems are not gender neutral (Whittington 2008; AusAID 2012), the lack of a level playing field in relation to campaign financing (McLeod 2002; Whittington, Ospina and Pollard 2006); women's limited involvement in local or village governance (Meleisia et.al. 2015:15-16). Factionalism and divisiveness within women's organisations have also been identified as contributing to women's ongoing under-representation (Brouwer, Harris and Tanaka 1998; Whittington 2008). Most recently the detailed election research we have undertaken in PNG and the Solomon Islands (Haley and Zubrinich 2013; Haley et al. 2015) comprehensively demonstrates that men and women experience and participate in elections differently, and that women in PNG, Solomon Islands and possibly elsewhere in Melanesia, are not participating in elections as equal citizens.

Whilst there is merit in each of the arguments and explanations outlined above, it is time to move beyond simple diagnostics. We must seek instead to better understand women's political participation (c.f. McLeod 2002)<sup>7</sup> across all levels of society and across the electoral cycle. Specifically we must identify the characteristics both personal and institutional, of successful women at the national, sub-national and local levels and the pathways to and factors underpinning their leadership success (see Haley and Zubrinich 2012). This is consistent with development studies emphasis on "pockets of excellence" (see Leonard 2010; Leftwich 2010).

At its heart such research is predicated on the premise that in order to understand how to encourage increased participation on the part of women in critical decision making processes it is first necessary to explore the factor contributing to their success rather than continually reinvestigating barriers or indeed bolstering past failures or embarking on enterprises informed by untested hypotheses. As noted elsewhere (Haley and Zubrinich 2012) we must learn from the experiences of women who are elected, and those who poll strongly but fall shy of being elected (see also Baker and Oppermann 2015), in spite of increasingly aggressive electoral contests marred by heightened levels electoral malfeasance and the proliferation of money politics (Haley and Zubrinich 2013; Haley 2014; Haley and Zubrinich 2015a; McMurray 2012).

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<sup>7</sup> McLeod (2002) notes that while women are under-represented in national and local-level governments they are centrally involved in local politics.

In addition attention must be given to the performance and experiences of women once elected (see also McLeod 2015). Two former SSGM colleagues, Jack Corbett and Asenati Liki, have recently examined the experience of women parliamentarians in the Pacific (Corbett and Liki 2015). They find that female parliamentarians struggle with the double burden of work and family (ibid:335).

Interviews undertaken in 2014 with the women recently elected to Port Vila's Municipal Council also revealed that the performance expectations placed on women officials are greater than those placed on their male counterparts, and that once elected women often find they lack the technical expertise to fulfill their portfolio responsibilities well, reinforcing the widely held belief the politics is men's business. As such targeted technical assistance is of great benefit to women in government – either elected or appointed – as it not only helps them perform more effectively but also has a powerful demonstration effect (Barbara and Haley 2014:48,54). Apart from these particular pieces of research, there is an almost complete absence of research that examines the way Pacific women legislate (McLeod 2015:19).

What is known, however, is that women in government and those who aspire to political office are held to higher standards than their male counterparts. Take for example the scrutiny PNG MP Loujaya Kouza has faced in relation to her marital problems since being elected. In fact, female candidates consistently report facing high levels of scrutiny in relation to their private lives and marital status (Billy 2002; Semoso 2006; see also Haley et al. 2015).

Female candidates also report threats to their personal security (c.f. Sarah Garap's experiences in 2002 PNG National Elections (McLeod 2002:44)<sup>8</sup> and Margaret Parua's experiences during the 2012 PNG National Elections).<sup>9</sup> Typically female candidates are treated with little respect on the campaign trail and have been observed to suffer from heckling and abuse (Haley and Zubrinich 2013:49; Haley et.al 2015; see also McLeod 2015:10). For example /an democracy campaigner and women's rights advocate, Roshika Deo, was subjected to vicious verbal attacks, sexual taunts and threats of rape when she stood as a candidate in the 2014 Fiji elections (Chattier 2015a:42; Chattier 2015b:2). Men supporting and campaigning on behalf of women candidates are also subject to criticism. For example a chief in West Are'Are Constituency, publicly denounced another chief who had put his support behind Alice Pollard in the 2014 Solomon Islands elections, saying he should be removed of his chiefly title, while Rhoda Sikilabu's husband received threats for openly supporting and assisting with his wife's campaign (Haley et.al 2015).

### ***Women's Political Representation – Sub-National Level***

Just as women are under-represented in formal political processes at the national level, they are also under-represented in formal and informal leadership processes and decision making at all levels of society (McLeod 2007). Even more so in the case of young women who are "discriminated against due to both their age and their gender" (Tavola 2014:20; see also Eves and Koredong 2015).

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<sup>8</sup> See also Robyn Slarke, "It is not an Easy Road", which documents the experiences of women candidates during the 2002 PNG National Elections, and *Foreign Correspondent*, 21 August 2002.

<sup>9</sup> See "PNG Candidates Arrested for Illegal Firearms, Abusive Behaviour: Police charge 2 Candidates for violations", *The National* 15 June 2012.

Nevertheless, as we note elsewhere (Haley and Zubrinich 2012), women’s leadership and decision-making in the Pacific is most visible at the local level, and it is here that leadership gains have been the greatest (see also Tavola 2014; Clarke 2014). For instance women have been elected to all but two of the Solomon Islands provincial assemblies (see Quay n.d.:8) and in 2013 some 32 women were elected as Local Level Government (LLG) councilors and 3 as LLG Presidents in PNG (Clark 2014:135). In addition quotas which are in use, in some form or another, in 110 countries around the world,<sup>10</sup> have been used successfully to increase women’s representation at the sub-national level in our region. Papua New Guinea, Tuvalu, Samoa and Vanuatu are all cases in point. For example:

- the Autonomous Region of Bougainville’s unicameral parliament has three regional seats reserved for women (Baker 2014c);
- Papua New Guinea’s *Organic Law on Provincial and Local-Level Governments 1995* (OLPLLG) provides for a nominated women’s representative on each Provincial Assembly (Section 10(3)(e)) and each Urban Local-Level Government (LLG) (Section 29 (1)(c)(iii)) and two such representatives on each rural LLG (Section 29 (1)(d));
- PNG’s Motu-Koitabu Assembly has two reserved seats for women. Both positions are elected by women (Section 11 (1)(c), *Motu Koita Assembly Act 2007*);
- Samoa has had provision for a women’s representative for every village since 2004;
- Tuvalu has a provision female representation on *Kaupule* (Huffer 2006:12; Kofe and Toamia 2006), the working or executive arm of the *Falekaupule* – Tuvalu’s island councils (see Molotii, Baker and Corbett 2014); and
- Vanuatu recently introduced reserved seats for women at the municipal level in 2013 (Barbara and Haley 2014).

Papua New Guinea’s *Organic Law on Provincial Governments and Local Level Governments* also provided for women’s representatives on each Joint District Planning and Budget Priorities Committee, these being the committees which determined how District Services Improvement Program funds were expended in the period 2005–2014. There are similar provisions for women’s representatives on the new District Development Authorities (DDAs).

International evidence and from our region shows women elected to reserved seats find gaining re-election difficult, regardless of how well they have performed. This is particularly so for women who seek reelection in an open seat (Ferguson 2013:12). The experiences of Francesca Semoso, Deputy Speaker of the Bougainville House of Representatives, are pertinent in this regard.

The experiences of Pacific women involved in sub-national politics and decision making differ considerably. This is certainly consistent with the broader international literature which finds that quotas and other special measures “do not guarantee influence of women’s voice in shaping political outcomes, or that women politicians will prioritise gender equality agendas” (Domingo et.al. 2015:13; Ferguson 2013:12,25). For example Moleti, Baker and Corbett (2014) find numerous barriers to active participation for women involved in Tuvalu’s Island Councils, while a

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<sup>10</sup> See <http://www.quotaproject.org>

recent survey of women's participation in village governance in Samoa found that only 76% of traditional villages actually have a women's representative (Meleisea et.al. 2015:30). The same survey found that most village women's representatives "did not participate in village council meetings unless they were summoned to provide information on a particular matter" (ibid:31), and that although village councils are comprised of *matai* title holders, few women with *matai* titles actually have a say in village decision-making (ibid:28-29). In fact, 36 of Samoa's 240 traditional villages and sub-villages (15%) exclude women from village decision making (ibid:27),<sup>11</sup> and even in villages that recognise women with *matai* titles, few in practice sit on village councils (ibid:41).

By contrast Haley (2010) found that women's representatives appointed to PNG's JDP&BPC could in some circumstances effectively influence the local development agenda and were in such cases afforded more power than the elected LLG presidents. Koroba-Lake Kapiago district provides an example of this. One LLG President, interviewed as part of the 2010 study, expressed considerable frustration about the workings of the Koroba-Lake Kapiago JDP&BPC and described his involvement in the committee in the following way:

*The President for Awi-Logaiyu and myself we just have to sit on our hands and keep our mouths shut in the meetings or we don't get anything. We are just there to rubber stamp decisions. We are small boys and if we behave we get some small crumbs. We both get an allowance of PGK 1000 for attending the meetings* (Haley 2010:11).

He also compared his role to that of the appointed members, reflecting disdainfully on the relative power they, and in particular the appointed women's representative, command.

*The appointed reps provide strong support for the MP. They give him support and they benefit. It is not fair. The women's representative has more power than us. She has lots of projects in her area... She was not even elected. We [the President for Awi-Logaiyu and myself] are just small boys and can't oppose the MP or we will get nothing. I have to sit down good in order to help my people* (ibid).

This particular electorate is ethnically divided, and in this case the women's representative was both related to and from the same ethnic group as the sitting MP.

A series of joint District assessments recently undertaken for CARE PNG by SSGM scholars (Wiltshire, Eves and Tararia 2015; Wiltshire and Oppermann 2016; Wiltshire and Meki 2016) point to a somewhat more ambiguous and indeed contentious role for appointed women's representatives. In one district the influence of the appointed DDA women's representative was seemingly diminished by the absence of church and youth representatives, and the appointment of additional male representatives from each LLG. In another district the appointed DDA women's representative (who had unsuccessfully contested the 2012 PNG national elections, finishing 39<sup>th</sup> out of 43 candidates) was working alongside the MP to deliver projects but in a highly charged political context where the female governor faces concerted opposition from the eight male MPs, she was vilified as undermining women's leadership more broadly. It was said that she did not consult with existing women leaders or the Eastern Highlands women's council network.

<sup>11</sup> Meleisea et.al (2015:27) specifically found that 21 of Samoa traditional villages or sub-villages do not recognize or bestow *matai* titles on women on the grounds of tradition, while a further 15 villages exclude women with *matai* titles from village council meetings.

A somewhat similar situation was encountered in the third district where the appointed DDA women's representative had little or no involvement with the District Council of Women. At interview, she described her role as simply endorsing projects put forward by the Chairman (Open MP) and District Administrator prior to the meeting. In return she reported receiving K150,000 from the District's K15 million DSIP allocation to put toward projects of her choosing. In provinces where there is an existing women's leadership infrastructure, appointed women's representatives are placed in an impossible position, as it is highly unlikely that women's collective interests will align with those of the District MP.

As we have noted previously (Haley and Zubrinich 2012:11), there is merit in considering a small grants program focused specifically on women's leadership at the local/sub-national level. Such a scheme could provide women councilors (either elected or appointed) and women's representatives appointed to DDAs and Provincial Assemblies, with access to modest funds to address local developmental and service delivery challenges. Unlike their male counterparts these women rarely have access to funds to implement small-scale projects. As such they often appear ineffective by comparison. Such a scheme would make women leaders more visible and make evident that they can be effective leaders.

### **Women's Administrative Leadership**

The issue of women's administrative leadership in the Pacific has attracted little scholarly attention, with the only substantive studies, to date, having been undertaken by SSGM scholars. The research and analytical work concerning women's administrative leadership in the Pacific includes Haley and Zubrinich's (2009) multi-country study examining the experiences of women in the public sector across the Pacific; Liki's (2010; 2013) examinations of women leaders in the public sector in Samoa and Solomon Islands; and most recently Haley's (2015) analysis concerning the gender profile of the PNG public sector.

The public sector is the largest single employer of women across the region, and without exception, women are well represented overall. However they are significantly under-represented at senior management levels and tend to be concentrated in service professions (Haley 2015; McLeod 2015:4). Tavola (2014:12) for instance points out that although more than half of Fiji's teachers are women they "do not achieve positions of responsibility at the same rate as men". The situation in PNG is much the same, where women account for 54% of all health workers and 42% of teachers (Haley 2015:1).

According to Tavola (2014:11) there is also a "growing number of women at middle-level and senior management in many civil services" across the region (see also Maetala and Pollard 2009; Liki 2010; 2013). Indeed, Liki (2013:141) for instance found that "6 of the 24 government ministries" in Solomon Islands and "6 of the 18 ministries and 8 of 13 government corporations" in Samoa were headed by women. Importantly she also found that this includes non-*matai* and women from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds (*ibid*), including we would add the diaspora. Brenda Heather-Latu, Samoa's former Attorney General and now the British Honorary Consul to Samoa is one such example. She grew up and was educated in New Zealand and at 35, as a single and untitled woman, was appointed as Samoa's first female Attorney General (Barbara and Haley

2014:37). Nonetheless, Liki's (2013) research cautions "that improvement at the upper levels may not necessarily reflect development at the broader societal level" (ibid:141). Again this is consistent with the broader international literature which finds: "there is no automatic link between women's presence and voice in public life and transformative change" (Domingo et.al. 2015:85).

Haley's (2015) examination of women's participation in the PNG public sector reveals a complex gender profile, which may well be mirrored elsewhere in the region. As at June 2014, women accounted for 38% of all public sector employees, but only 18% of all senior management appointments and 7% of all executive appointments (ibid:1). On the face of it then PNG's goal of having women in 30% of public service leadership positions by 2017, looks a long way off, but progress towards the 30% target has been uneven. Indeed some agencies and regions performing considerably better than others. For example women already account for more than 30% of senior management appointments in several of the larger central government agencies. And key departments, such as Personnel Management, Treasury, Finance and Labour and Industrial Relations are fast approaching the 30% target. By contrast women fare poorly at the provincial level and in the uniformed services, with very few occupying critical decision-making positions (ibid:1-2). At the sub-national level no executive appointments and only 6% of senior management positions are held by women, while women account for only 2% of senior officers within PNG's combined services.

Across the Pacific, women in the public sector report experiencing a range of challenges in the workplace (Zubrinich and Haley 2009). Three in five (63%) of those who participated in our 2009 survey felt they work harder than male colleagues (ibid:12), get less support from senior management and fewer professional development opportunities (ibid:14). Our study also revealed that female public sector employees are exposed to a range of abuses in the workplace, including verbal abuse, threats of violence and sexual harassment, as well as harassment from the wives and girlfriends of male colleagues (ibid:17). They also experience difficulties at the interface of home and work. Many find that travelling to and from work safely is an issue and many reported having experienced domestic violence. Those surveyed also struggled with the "double burden" of balancing work and household responsibilities (ibid:23; see also Corbett and Liki 2015; McLeod 2015), noting that their work outside the home did not diminish their household responsibilities. Some felt the need to overcompensate. Eves and Koredong's recent study concerning young women in Bougainville, similarly found that household responsibilities, particularly child-care responsibilities are a barrier to young women's participation and leadership roles (2015:11). This is consistent with the broader international literature which finds that "women's roles as wives and mothers, while providing a focal point for both formal and informal collective action, are often the largest impediment to their participation" (Domingo et.al 2015:37).

Despite the challenges, our study also identified several factors which contributed to women's success, not least scholarships and professional mentoring. Specifically 90% of those surveyed had "held scholarships for tertiary study abroad or [had] attended donor-funded workshops or short courses overseas" (Zubrinich and Haley 2009:9), making evident that overseas scholarships are of

considerable importance with respect to women's careers. Liki (2013:141) similarly found that 60% of those involved in her surveys had completed tertiary studies abroad and that many had also benefited from professional mentoring.

### **Women's Civil Society Leadership**

Throughout the Pacific civic engagement, involvement with the church and local peacebuilding efforts provide important proving grounds for women leaders (see for example Douglas 2000; Hopkos 2000; CLGFP 2013; Eves and Koregong 2015). Indeed "a vibrant, largely indigenous literature shows the depth of women's participation in civil society, and the relative ease with which they can gain prominence as leaders within the less male dominated non-state realm" (McLeod 2015:4). Yet, as McLeod also points out, "the claim that participation in civil society provides women with a stepping stone to participation in state institutions [remains] under-explored" (ibid).

There were and are, as Semoso (2006) and Quay (n.d.:21) point out "pre-existing spaces for women's leadership in both traditional and contemporary Bougainville". The *Bougainville Young Women's Research*, recently undertaken by the Bougainville Women's Federation (BWF) in conjunction with the International Women's Development Agency (IWDA) and SSGM, identified two key leadership pathways for Bougainvillean women namely: involvement in church organisations and the Bougainville crisis (Eves and Koredong 2015:22).<sup>12</sup> They write:

*The Bougainville crisis was the context in which many current women leaders began their leadership journey. As noted earlier, one legacy of the Bougainville conflict was an increase in women's activism, which produced several vibrant organisations addressing peace, conflict and gender issues... The conflict was instrumental in galvanising women in a "developmental leadership" sense, because as peace and stability were restored women turned their attention to issues more directly concerned with gender inequality (Eves and Koredong 2015:22-23).*

These same key pathways are evident in a recently published collection of women's leadership stories concerning political and administrative leaders in Bougainville (CLGFP 2013).

Throughout the region, women have played a key role in bringing an end to conflict. Bougainville, Solomon Islands and the PNG Highlands are all cases in point (see Hakena 2000; Saovana-Spriggs 2003; Charlesworth 2008; George 2014; Garap 2004; Rumsey 2000; Quay n.d.; McLeod 2015). Internationally peace processes have been shown to a "window of opportunity" for women to shape and renegotiate political settlements (Domingo et.al. 2015:13). However as Charlesworth (2008) and McLeod (2015:4) point out, Pacific "women's involvement in informal peacebuilding has not always led to their participation in formal peacebuilding processes". Moreover developmental gains secured on the back of violent conflict are often "fragile and uncertain" (Domingo et.al. 2015:13).

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<sup>12</sup> As Eves and Koredong (2015:13) point out, "the crisis [also] allowed men who otherwise would not necessarily have been leaders to obtain leadership roles through their military prowess" (see also Regan 2000:294).

It should also be noted that women in the region have also been observed to play key roles as instigators of intergroup violence, through a range of activities designed to shame their menfolk into exacting revenge in relation to perceived wrongs. They are also reported to be arming themselves and involving themselves in inter-group fighting as combatants (Macdonald 2015). This sort of political activity should not be under-estimated – nor too the enduring impacts of political acts such as suicide. Indeed women in PNG have historically used suicide to great effect, using it to orchestrate significant shifts in the local political landscape.

Nevertheless, it remains the case that conflict in the region has spurred a number of key women’s organisations including: Leitana Nehan Women’s Development Agency, Bougainville Women for Peace and Freedom, the Haku Women’s Collective; the Bougainville Women’s Federation (Eves and Koredong 2015:23); and Kup Women for Peace (Garap 2004) and Meri Kirap Sapotim. Such groups have been powerful advocates for change across the region (see also George 2014), and have opened up public spaces for the expression of women’s leadership and women’s activism. Women’s involvement with civil society organisations is invariably, as McLeod (2015:17) observes, “less openly contested” than other forms of political participation, in part because it tends also to be “fragmented and undervalued” (Ferguson 2013:iv) and “easily dismissed” (Morgan 2005:11).

### **Addressing Under-Representation: What is working and where are the gaps?**

Despite over two decades of “gender-equality advocacy” in the Pacific (Liki 2013:140), existing efforts to strengthen women’s leadership and political participation, which have included providing technical support for temporary special measures (TSM); women’s candidate training, and programs to build the leadership skills of individual women, have not resulted in the gains expected or desired. Key programs such as CDI’s women’s candidate training and UN Women’s Gender Equality and Political Governance Program (2008-2012) generated mixed results, and were not informed by credible analytical work around the strategies that do work for women candidates, or indeed around what makes a good women’s candidate. Indeed McLeod (2015:19) writes: “there is a notable absence of empirical evidence on the efficacy of the many existing efforts to support women’s leadership”.

It is also the case, as noted previously (see Haley and Zubrinich 2012:3):

- there is little articulation between existing programs and initiatives and it is unclear what they are achieving individually, let alone collectively.
- even where there is evidence or emerging evidence it is not being effectively incorporated into programs and initiatives;
- there is little or no relationship between levels of decision making (e.g. the national, sub-national and local); and
- there is a paucity of programs at the local/village/community level that encourage the movement of women into wider arenas of influence.

In addition existing programs have tended to include leadership in a general rather than specific way and very few specifically target women. Those that do, tend not to have a leadership focus (Tavola 2014:1) and many in fact reinforce traditional gender roles (Vakaoti and Mishra 2009).

And even when women are involved in community level decision making, as in the case of Community Driven Development (CDD) initiatives, broader ‘spillover effects’ and women’s leadership gains are not guaranteed (Wong 2012). Indeed improving women’s leadership, voice and agency requires direct investment on a number of fronts (Ferguson 2013).

Notwithstanding the research and analytical work currently being supported by *Pacific Women*, there continues to be a clear need for a broad and comprehensive program of analytical work concerning women’s leadership - one that directly supports and provides the analytical underpinnings of policy, programs and initiatives aimed at increasing women’s representation and women’s involvement in all levels of decision making, but particularly at the local level (c.f. Pacific Gender Equality Initiative Key Result Area 1 AusAID 2012:27). Moreover even as systematic work is being initiated at the grass roots level little is being done to foster community level leadership, let alone women’s leadership. A notable exception to this is CARE’s Integrated Community Development Project which has been operating in the Highlands since 2011.

Likewise there is a lack of support for local, national and regional women leaders caucuses (PIFS 2012:3) and a paucity of programs at the local/village/community level which encourage the movement of women into wider arenas of influence. Such programs need to stand alone because leadership programs are vulnerable to incorporation into programs which deal with other facets of women’s inequality (Haley and Zubrinich 2012). Moreover programs which specifically deal with the economic empowerment of women or ending violence against women do not necessarily ensure women’s access to leadership roles or that their voices are heard across the social spectrum. Nor do they necessarily translate into broader empowerment.

In order to foster the growth of a pool of women leaders for the future, there is a need for more work at the local and sub-national levels (Haley and Zubrinich 2012:6). Indeed the emphasis for future investment must be on women community leaders and women in local government. What continues to be needed is a multi-faceted approach supporting women’s leadership at the local, sub-national and national levels and across the public, private and civil society sectors. Such an approach should be premised on the fundamental assumption that women’s leadership must be grown at the local level in the first instance. Past experience has shown that on their own activities focused at the national level will not achieve a critical mass of women in leadership positions across all level of decision making, and as Tavola (2014:25) points out, “getting women in parliament is not an end in itself. Women need ongoing support in such positions”.

Programs that show promise include the *Commonwealth Local Government Forum Pacific* (CLGFP), which “provides mentors to women who are already in local government” (Tavola 2014:8) and the *Pacific Women’s Parliamentary Partnership Project*, which seeks to build the capacity of women MPs in the Pacific through annual forums and other activities such as parliamentary exchanges, mentoring, and broader networking.

Perhaps more than any other program, the *Pacific Leadership Program* (PLP) has made “an important contribution to nurturing prospective developmental leaders in the Pacific countries in which it works ... [and] has made a significant and important investment in the region’s leadership

infrastructure” (Barbara and Haley 2014:51). Another program contributing to developmental leadership in the region is the *Emerging Pacific Leadership Dialogue*, whose alumni have seeded Leadership Samoa, Leadership Vanuatu, and Leadership PNG amongst others. Leadership Samoa, in particular, as (Barbara and Haley 2014:37) point out, “has been actively working to change the traditional definition of leadership and to broaden the constituency of Samoan Leaders. Many of its members are returned diaspora (including scholarship holders) and a good number have political aspirations. They see the forums Leadership Samoa convenes as providing the skills or ‘weaponry’ to enter formal politics. As well as seeking to broaden local notions of leadership the group has been active in advocating for stronger gender equity”. Indeed as noted above 21 villages spread across 16 of Samoa’s 47 constituencies (see Meleisea et.al. 2015:39) do not allow women to hold *matai* titles, and as such prevent women’s candidature.

With support from PLP and the *Regional Rights Resource Team* (RRRT) developmental leadership coalitions are burgeoning across the region. Key developmental leaders in Vanuatu, for example, identified the RRRT’s Legislative Lobbying Course as the catalyst to their respective reform endeavors (Barbara and Haley 2014:46). By adopting an issues-based approach, leadership coalitions are effecting developmental reforms concerning gender equality and women’s political participation across the region. The Vanuatu Christian Council’s (VCC) adoption of a gender policy in 2014 and the successful adoption of Reserved Seats for women on Vanuatu’s Municipal Councils being key cases in point. Both case studies are outlined in detail by Barbara and Haley (2014:45-47) are reproduced herein (see also *Pacific Women* 2015:21).

#### Vanuatu Christian Council

The Vanuatu Christian Council (VCC) is the peak body representing the established churches in Vanuatu, namely the Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian, Churches of Christ and Apostolic Church, with the Seventh Day Adventists as observers. As noted above the VCC actively campaigned against the introduction of the Family Protection Bill. Under the leadership of the VCC’s Women’s Desk Officer, Ruth Doro, the VCC has been working to integrate concepts such as Human Rights and Gender Equity into Church policy and broaden the constituency of church leaders, through the development of a Gender Policy. This work was undertaken in collaboration with the Department of Women’s Affairs, UN Women and the Vanuatu Council of Women.

The Chiefs and Church leaders were initially quite resistant, opposing public discussion of issues such as gender-based violence, family and sexual violence and women’s leadership, arguing that while the Church respects the role of women as mothers, there is no place for women in church decision-making.

Ruth realised that promoting a version of gender equality that was not perceived as in accordance with *kastom* was unlikely to attract much support, from either men or women. As a consequence she urged UN Women to support the process but to take a back seat, providing regular advice and technical assistance without being actively involved in the church forums that were organised to discuss the issues. This was considered important as local ownership was held to be crucial for success.

Another key concern was the identification of culturally sensitive entry points. Specifically UN Women supported the process by providing funds, engaging a Ni-Vanuatu gender expert – Dr Andrina Thomas – to work with the VCC and by reviewing documents on behalf of the VCC and Department of Women’s Affairs. Importantly UN Women stayed in the background and supported from afar, which was held to be a key determinant of success. Indeed it was reported that Chiefs and Church leaders alike saw the initiative as locally owned and driven.

As a consequence of extensive consultation process undertaken by the VCC-led coalition, the VCC has now adopted a Gender Policy, and in early 2014, both the Presbyterian and Anglican Synods elected women to their Church decision-making bodies for the first time. The Presbyterian Church, Vanuatu’s largest church, also supported the introduction of reserved seats for women in Vanuatu’s municipal councils. (Barbara and Haley 2014:45).

### **A case of successful policy reform: Reserved Seats for women on Vanuatu's Municipal Councils.**

In late 2013, Vanuatu enacted legislation establishing reserved seats for women on Vanuatu's Municipal Councils. The reform was championed by the Director of Women's Affairs Dorosday Kenneth. In effecting the reform she needed to distance herself from the National Council of Women, which is seen to have atrophied due to its own internal politics, and from donors and international women's agencies. She also had to work around local groups comprising failed women candidates, as she felt such groups would be seen as pushing a personal agenda. At one stage early on in the process she had the Minister for Justice and Internal Affairs direct the police to close down a workshop being run by UN Women, arguing that they were interfering in local politics and that their actions would compromise local reform efforts. She felt that UN Women did not sufficiently understand how to think and work politically in a Vanuatu context. Before embarking on her push for reserved seats Kenneth undertook a comprehensive stakeholder mapping and identified the people and groups she would need to work with the effect the desired reform. She then approached them individually.

Given that civil society had lobbied unsuccessfully for reserved seats for more than a decade, Kenneth decided that timing and the right support would be critical. Following a change of Government on 23 March 2013, which saw Moana Carcasses Kalosil elected Prime Minister, Kenneth approached the Director of the Vanuatu Women's Centre and the Minister for Land, Ralph Regenvanu, for support. In consultation with Regenvanu she determined that a window of opportunity had presented itself, because the new PM was open to reform and in fact had announced a 100-day plan for political reform and was the leader of a party that had a stated gender equity policy. Collectively they agreed that Vanuatu was not yet ready for reserved seats at the national level and that reform at a lower level would prove more palatable and less threatening in the short term. It was also felt that a staged approach, introducing the measure amongst the most educated in the first instance would prove most effective. Kenneth then convened a small coalition including local academic Howard Van Tresse, Vanuatu's principle legislative drafter and the principle electoral officer and work with them to make the necessary changes to Vanuatu's Municipalities Act. She then went to the Secretary of Parliament to have the legislation listed for debate. It was only then that she called a meeting of Vanuatu's women leaders to alert them to what was happening behind the scenes. Once the legislation had been passed she used her networks and connections to walk the legislation through the process of gaining Presidential assent. (Barbara and Haley 2014:47).

What these case studies demonstrate is the importance of thinking and working politically within the specific country context. Successful examples of recent developmental reform in Vanuatu have been locally driven, eschew overt donor involvement and have capitalised on opportunistic political openings. (Barbara and Haley 2014:46). In both the Vanuatu Christian Council's case and the one concerning the introduction of reserved seats for women on Vanuatu's Municipal Councils, direct involvement of donors and international women's groups was actively resisted, as was vocal lobbying. Vanuatu's women leaders agreed that high profile TSM campaigns of the kind employed in PNG and Solomon Islands would have also failed in Vanuatu. As Barbara and Haley (2014:54) note:

*The successful introduction ... of reserved seats for women in Vanuatu underlines the importance of a strategic approach to developmental leadership, and the need for a more nuanced approach to coalition formation (in this case very small and bespoke, and changing according to the point in the policy cycle) and the type of technical assistance provided.*

Developmental leadership coalitions advancing issues-based reform not focused directly on "gender" also provide strategic entry points (c.f. Domingo et.al. 2015:14) for women's leadership. For instance, the Women in Leadership and Advocacy (WinLA) Group which was established in Samoa in 2010 (Barbara and Haley 2014:38) and the Solomon Islands Young Women's Parliamentary Group (ibid:54; see also Spark 2014a) have progressed key developmental reforms.

WinLA, which comprises all current and past women Parliamentarians and female Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) from across Samoa's public sector, was originally founded to champion health promotion in the country but has since expanded its remit to include broader issues including education reform and the development of women's leadership in both the public and private sectors (Barbara and Haley 2014:38). In recent years they have successfully lobbied to increase teacher salaries. The Young Women's Parliamentary Group has likewise effected change by focusing on issues of importance to women and the broader community, specifically bus routes and public transport (ibid:54). As these examples collectively demonstrate, supporting developmental leadership enhances women leadership.

### What does the research tell us?

Internationally there is, as Domingo et.al. (2015:91) observe, "a dearth of empirical or theoretical work on the qualities and pathways to women's leadership in the academic literature. This is also true for the grey literature". They advocate for "more empirical work on the trajectories and quality of women's participation ... and the pathways through which presence becomes influence" (ibid). In this section we outline what the research from the Pacific is telling us.

There is growing evidence, as outlined in *Improving Women's Political Representation in the Pacific* (Haley and Zubrinich 2015c), that the social capital of urban elites (male and female alike) does not translate into votes at the ballot box. Instead, women who perform well at the polls are "of the people", i.e. either community based or have deep connections to their electorates (Haley and Anere 2009; Kama 2010; Sepoe 2013; Susub 2013); have strong male backers<sup>13</sup> - powerful fathers, brothers, or husbands<sup>14</sup> (Crocombe 2008; Corbett 2012) - or as the 2012 PNG elections demonstrated male supporters who maintain control over polling booths and coordinate the process of 'assisted voting' (Haley and Zubrinich 2013); are from high-profile often political families (Baker, Ng Shiu and Corbett 2013; Baker 2014c; Corbett and Liki 2015); have built good reputations as a local representative (Fraenkel 2006; Kama 2010); have a solid constituency support base (Whittington et al. 2006; Meleisea 2015; Baker 2015b:7); have significant involvement in the church (Baker 2014c); and are serving the community or delivering benefits locally (Baker, Ng Shiu and Corbett 2013; Kama 2010; Sepoe 2013; Morgan 2005).

A recently published collection of women's leadership stories concerning political and administrative leaders in Bougainville (CLGFP 2013) makes evident that these same characteristics apply to women leaders at the sub-national level. Historically few of the women who contested recent national elections in Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu fit this description.

<sup>13</sup> Dr Jiko Luveni, Fiji's first female speaker, is reported in Chattier (2015a:35) to have formed a network of men campaigned on her behalf and who did all of the groundwork for her campaign events. Vika Lusibaea, the sole female MP in the Solomon Islands parliament from 2012-2014 relied on a similar strategy to gain election.

<sup>14</sup> A number of women who currently or recently held parliamentary seats in the Pacific, were elected to seats previously held by a family member. Indeed, all three serving women MPs in Samoa "originally 'inherited' their electoral base from close family members" (Meleisea et.al. 2015:18), while Pelenike Isaia who served in the Tuvalu parliament (2011-2015) was elected following the death of her husband and Vika Lusibaea who served in the Solomon Islands parliament (2012-2014) was elected after her husband, former militant leader Jimmy "Rasta" Lusibaea, lost his seat due to a criminal conviction. He reclaimed the seat at the November 2014 parliamentary elections.

For example four out of five female candidates who unsuccessfully contested to the 2006 Solomon Islands elections were “Honiara-based, highly educated and economically empowered, ... [but] did not reside in their electorates” (Whittington, Ospina and Pollard 2006:3), and “failed to build a constituency support base” (ibid:18). This undoubtedly contributed to their poor performance.

Interestingly the annual RAMSI Peoples Survey (2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011) has consistently found that the vast majority (more than 85 per cent) of Solomon Islanders are generally supportive of the idea of women in politics, want more women in parliament, support the concept of special reserved seats for women and would vote for a good woman candidate. Citizen surveys conducted as part of SSGM’s 2014 Solomon Islands election observation delivered broadly consistent findings, with 73% of those surveyed expressing the view that there should be more women in parliament (Haley et.al. 2015:46). That said men and women alike agreed that there were few good women contesting the election. Taken together this suggests Solomon Islands’ voters are not rejecting women candidates per se, but those they consider to be poor candidates.

Notwithstanding the above, our research also shows that many of the women appointed to PNG’s Provincial Assemblies were amongst the better performing unsuccessful candidates in the 2012 national elections. Indeed these women have successfully parleyed their national election losses into positions of influence at the sub-national level. As such, credibly contesting national level elections and finishing amongst the top-ranked losing candidates, is a novel pathway to local and provincial (sub-national) leadership. The experiences of this particular group of women differ from those of Local Level Government nominees who report numerous barriers to active participation – consistent with the findings from our Tuvalu research concerning women on the Island councils (see Moleti, Baker and Corbett 2014).

Our research in PNG (Zubrinich 2016-forthcoming) also reveals the formation of informal support networks for intending women candidates, with seasoned campaigners supporting and mentoring younger women. Chattier (2015c:2) makes similar observations with respect to the women candidates who contested the 2014 national elections in Fiji. This runs counter to the general assertion that inter-generational competition and antagonism are constraining young women’s political participation (see for example Spark 2014b).

SSGM’s *2013 Political Gifting Survey* and our detailed election research in PNG comprehensively demonstrates that men and women experience and participate in elections differently (Haley and Zubrinich 2013). The observation work undertaken during the 2014 elections demonstrates this is also the case in Solomon Islands, where women tend to play mainly support roles during the campaign period (Haley et.al. 2015). Twelve per cent (79/664) of Solomon Islands women interviewed during the campaign period expected to experience intimidation when casting their vote, and many more in fact did so. This was borne out in the post-polling survey where close to a third of all women voters surveyed (13%-45% depending on constituency) self-reported having experienced intimidation during voting (Haley et.al. 2015:47-48). Typically a greater proportion of women in each electorate reported experiencing intimidation compared to their male counterparts. Even so a quarter (25%) of male voters (159/626) also reported having experienced intimidation when voting.

Just as voting experiences are gendered, so too is money politics (Haley and Zubrinich 2015b). In Solomon Islands, as in PNG, men typically receive cash and gifts more often than women and in larger amounts (ibid). Nearly two-thirds (64%) of those who elicited cash from candidates during the 2014 Solomon Islands elections were men (Haley et.al. 2015). In addition, men reported receiving 20% more than women in exchange for their vote, and were far more likely to have personally elicited cash or gifts in return for their votes. They also reported a greater confidence to decline gifts or cash when offered to them, and less bound to honour such commitments.

### **Why are these findings important? What are the Policy Implications?**

Firstly there has been much investment on the part of donors in activities for which empirical evidence on the efficacy is lacking (see also McLeod 2015:19). Generic Women's candidate training is one such activity. Much of what is taught in these courses is not directly relevant to the Pacific context, and much of what is relevant is not substantively addressed – for example these courses would do well to consider how to campaign in highly charged and increasingly volatile contexts where money politics prevails. Campaign handbooks are likewise silent on these issues (Zubrinich 2016 forthcoming). See for example: Kelly 2013; Morgan and Clarke 2015; and Morgan 2015). Similarly the content of these training courses is often imbued with moral overtones, and it is also the case that in a context where many women do not even cast their own votes, a campaign that speaks to gender equality and women's issues, or seeks to secure a women's vote, will likely have little currency.

Donor support for women's candidates needs to be better targeted towards women who are likely to poll strongly. As such, selection processes that prioritise the characteristics common to women who have performed well in past elections should be applied to future training courses. Put simply, women selected to receive women's candidate training and support need to be drawn from a different pool.

Beyond this the success or otherwise of initiatives such as women's candidate training need to be assessed in broader terms – not just in terms of the number of women elected to parliament at any given election. Rather such assessments must also recognize and look for the inter-relationship between different forms and levels of political participation (i.e. the women who have parleyed credible election performance into positions of influence at the sub-national level). Because whilst existing initiatives focused on political representation at the national level will not on their own, achieve a critical mass of women in leadership positions across all levels of decision making, the contribution they are making on this front must not be overlooked.

Moving forward, efforts to support women's leadership should be informed by lessons learnt from contexts where women's leadership gains have been the greatest (often at the sub-national level) and from successful reform initiatives – of which there are a growing number in our region. Collectively these examples demonstrate “the need to work opportunistically and to seize the political moment when it arises” (Barbara and Haley 2014:44). Timing matters (Domingo et.al. 2015:14). These examples also suggest a broader notion of what developmental leadership

coalitions looks like is needed. Indeed our PLP research demonstrates “the importance of individual developmental leaders who can mobilise a small but effective coalition that can fly under the radar” if needed and do the necessary legwork for successful reform (Barbara and Haley 2014:44). This research also demonstrates that significant reform can be achieved through an opportunistic, issues-based approach, supported by issue-specific program and technical support (ibid:vii).

Whatever strategies are adopted, they must take account of the increasing violence and intimidation women experience in the context of elections. Across the Pacific, from Samoa to PNG women are not participating in elections as equal citizens. If women’s voice is to be heard and its influence felt, attempts to improve women’s political participation must give due regard to the gendered nature of political gifting and money politics, and to the intimidation women voters report experiencing on polling day, otherwise they are unlikely to succeed.

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