

Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development: The Cook Islands

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 \$3.9 million over 10 years (2012–2022) on initiatives to support women's empowerment in the Cook Islands.

Figures¹

Community awareness and outreach

- 65 aspiring women candidates from Rarotonga and remote Pa Enea participated in a parliament training through a project by the Gender Development Division, Ministry of Internal Affairs, partnering with UNDP.
- 115 businesses, including 104 women, were mentored to manage and grow their businesses on Rarotonga and Pa Enea.
- 2 women with disabilities successfully completed the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) STEP study program.
- 5 women with disabilities received permanent employment opportunities.
- More than 70 women leaders participated in the National Women's Conference, which included 29 National Council of Women member women's organisations.

Crisis support services

- 1,152 clients received 5,007 sexual and reproductive health and rights services and products delivered in 2017 through Cook Islands Family Welfare Association, an affiliate of International Planned Parenthood Federation.
- 3 dedicated family lawyers provided free support to women survivors of violence through Punanga Taturu Inc (PTI) in 2018.
- 56 survivor clients benefitted from PTI's referral mechanism from July–December 2018.
- 10 women accessed PTI's legal aid service to take legal action against their perpetrators from January–June 2018.

Achievements

Economic Empowerment

- Businesswomen, government and NGO representatives better understand the barriers and practical solutions available to overcome challenges for women in business, through support to the 2017 Women's Business Forum. The Forum also enabled members of the Cook Island Business and Professional Women Association to display their products in a trade fair.

Ending Violence against Women

- Enacted the *Family Protection and Support Act* 2017 supported through the Pacific Community (SPC) and its Regional Rights Resource Team (RRRT).
- Women survivors of violence are receiving specialist family law advice through support to PTI to open a legal aid centre. PTI operates the Punanga Taturu Women's Counselling Centre and its legal aid service established in 2018. It assists women with legal advice, maintenance order applications, custody and protection matters. PTI is reporting increased collaboration among government stakeholders, complementing each other in the provision of services to clients.

Enhancing Agency

- The Cook Islands Government increased its capacity to generate sex-disaggregated data and to use gender statistics to guide national policy and decision-making, evaluation and learning and human rights reporting. This resulted from support to SPC's Progressing Gender Equality in the Pacific (PGEP) project.

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



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- Support through PGEP to conduct a national consultation during 2018 enabled the Gender Development Unit of the Ministry of Internal Affairs to assess the impact of its Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy 2011–2016 and to help guide drafting of the country's next national gender policy and strategic plan.
- The Cook Islands Family Welfare Association continues to increase their outreach in schools and other community settings through working with partners like the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Youth and Te Kainga (a day care centre servicing elderly and mentally health clients).

Pacific Women Partners

Government of the Cook Islands: Cook Islands Police; Gender and Development Division, Ministry of Internal Affairs.

Cook Islands civil society partners: Punanga Tauturu Inc., Cook Islands Family Welfare Association

Other partners: Australian Department of the House of Representatives; International Planned Parenthood Federation (with local partner Cook Islands Family Welfare Association); the Pacific Community: Progressing Gender Equality in the Pacific (PGEP) and the Regional Rights Resource Team; and *Pacific Women's* regional partners.

