



Women and the Institution of Policing in the Pacific

Abstract Gender equality has increasingly been a focus for governments of Pacific Islands countries (PICs) and the international, regional, and local organisations working with them. As the most visible arm of governance, police organisations have attracted significant attention in terms of the gender agenda due to their role in responding to issues affecting women. This shift can be attributed to increased recognition of gender inequality in PICs and its association with high rates of crimes against women. This chapter discusses the changing place of women in highly gendered policing organisations internationally and in the Pacific. It considers influences on gender in Pacific policing associated with international, regional, and national frameworks, policies, and agendas aimed at improving women's circumstances. The chapter then explores how regional instability and gender-based violence have shaped female officers' participation in policing and provides examples of the impacts of their involvement in regional initiatives.

Keywords Inclusivity · Gender balance · Gender mainstreaming · International frameworks · Gender-based violence

INTRODUCTION

Rooted in the gendered societies of nineteenth-century England and the United States of America, police organisations have been largely populated by men and characterised by strongly masculine cultures (Loftus, 2008; Prokos & Padavic, 2002). The pathway to equality (and equity) for female police officers has been difficult. The opposition to women's involvement in the previously male domain of policing has been evident in a range of countries and contexts, including Pacific Islands countries (PICs). In the closing decade of the twentieth century, however, the Western liberalists' view that gender, as a social process, has a strong impact upon women's (in)security and (dis)empowerment began to gain support (Curth & Evans, 2011). Women's empowerment and equal participation came to be viewed as integral to their engagement with social structures and the creation of social norms in a process of reordering gendered power relations. This view was expressed in various international governance frameworks, conventions, and agendas. These include the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In the context of police or security sector reform, it has become widely accepted that women and girls experience crime and violence in particular ways because of gendered power structures, and that policing organisations should address this by striving for greater balance in the recruitment of women (Australian Federal Police [AFP], 2018; Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade [DFAT], 2016). This kind of violence and proposed response is evident in Pacific contexts where there is high dependency on international aid and the propensity to be guided by international and donor agendas.

The benefits of equity in policing encompass supporting the global mission to create genuine equality and independence for women (United Nations [UN], 2009). Policing can offer secure and stimulating work for women, with diverse career paths and increased opportunities for flexible employment. Additionally, there is a strong case that female victims should have access to female officers (Natarajan, 2008; National Center for Women & Policing, 2002). According to various UN-based bodies, women in policing can make a major contribution to improving security and prosperity in developing nations through participation in peace-keeping missions and as part of the professionalisation of Indigenous

policing (UN Development Programme [UNDP], 2007; UN International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women [UN-INSTRAW], 2007). It has been argued that female participation in policing will lead to reduced misconduct and complaints, and less reliance on the use of force (Corsianos, 2011; Lonsway et al., 2003; National Center for Women & Policing, 2002; Porter & Prenzler, 2017; Prenzler & Sinclair, 2013). However, policymakers need to guard against ‘gender essentialism’ and recognise variations in masculinities and femininities (Prenzler & Sinclair, 2013; Valenius, 2007). Equal opportunity should remain the primary rationale for promoting police careers to women.

In some contexts, improved numerical representation has been achieved through targeted recruitment campaigns, pre-application classes, career development courses, mentoring programs, gender-balanced selection panels, equity units, anti-harassment information and training, paid parental leave, flexible employment opportunities, childcare, and advisory and support services (Prenzler, 2002). While much has been done over recent decades to improve the gender ratio of law enforcement, women in policing in countries of the global North are still less likely to work in specialist roles, such as tactical response and drug squads (Curth & Evans, 2011). They are more likely to be restricted to particular roles, such as administrative, personnel, and communications units (Martin, 1990; Rabe-Hemp, 2008). Generally, women are poorly represented in senior police management (Guajardo, 2016; Prenzler et al., 2010). Researchers have documented how female police officers have been undermined by lack of support from colleagues, sexual harassment, and discrimination in deployment and promotion (Brown & Heidensohn, 2000; Elizabeth Broderick & Co., 2016; Hunt, 1990; South Australian Equal Opportunity Commission, 2016; Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, 2015).

The challenges faced by women in policing are more starkly evident in strongly patriarchal societies, such as those associated with PICs. Limited research has focused specifically on women’s involvement in policing in these countries, even though development assistance in the Pacific, including for justice and policing, is often linked with explicit gender equality initiatives (Dodge et al., 2011; Irving, 2009).

This chapter draws on published research, grey literature, and policing policy and strategy documents to sketch out a picture of the involvement of women in policing organisations across PICs. It begins by describing

the social context that surrounds women's work as police officers, highlighting some of the challenges of this environment, before providing details on the numbers of women working in policing and their roles. The chapter then documents factors that have influenced the growth of women in policing in the Pacific, discussing international, regional, and national frameworks and organisational arrangements. It considers how addressing the challenges of regional instability and gender-based violence have contributed to supporting women's inclusion, providing examples of the benefits and the challenges associated with so doing in the Pacific context.

THE SOCIAL CONTEXT

Although many policing organisations across the globe acknowledge the need for improved gender representation of women, the drive for more female officers has often been met with organisational barriers and societal resistance (Martin & Jurik, 2006). The gendered division of labour and perceptions about gender-appropriate policing roles continue to inform officer assignment and task allocation (Miller, 1998). Thinking that equates policing with physicality contributes to negative symbolic representations of women as unsuited to policing roles, or as posing a threat to the performance and public perception of police officers' capabilities (Heidensohn, 1992; Prenzler & Sinclair, 2013). In largely male-dominated societies with strong patriarchal traditions and customary practices, like those characteristic of PICs, the promotion of a gender equality agenda challenges not only hegemonic masculinities, but also the longstanding and uncontested male domination of power over the maintenance of law and order (Connell, 2006; Heidensohn, 1992).

Policing organisations face challenges in recruiting women in sufficient numbers. For various reasons, women may be reluctant to take up law enforcement as a career. This is true in countries with well-developed state policing agencies, supportive human resourcing policies, and strong industrial relations frameworks of workforces (Prenzler & Sinclair, 2013). In PICs, the institutional accommodation of women in policing agencies, and their role in service delivery, is further complicated by the intersection of gender norms associated with professional policing and those that exist in cultures typically characterised by patriarchal power relationships. For example, McLeod (2007) identified problems experienced by female police officers in Papua New Guinea (PNG) where they

became the target of broader social resentment regarding the changing role of women in society. Women's advancement in the organisation was undermined because husbands prevented their wives from engaging in work-related travel and female police officers were punished for career achievements (Curth & Evans, 2011). Research with Solomon Islands police identified similar gendered expectations and barriers for women in policing (Curth-Bibb, 2014).

In Pacific Island contexts, gender expectations embedded in alternative forms of regulatory authority that function alongside—and at times in competition with, or in the perceived or actual absence of—the rule of law in these countries add further complexity (Bull et al., 2019, 2021). Customary approaches to dispute settlement that are common in PICs, for example, tend to involve public meetings, known regionally as 'custom courts', where complainants present their grievances against alleged offenders before the community. The matter is then deliberated upon publicly, and local tribal chiefs or elders come to a consensus about the validity of the complaint and an appropriate form of customary punishment. In these forums, powerholders in the community are typically older men, who tend to dominate the decision-making processes, and the participation of women and youth can be limited. Male family members represent and speak on behalf of female relatives who have been victims of crime or are suspected of being involved in an unlawful act. This works against the interests of women (Garap, 2000).

These realities present an important backdrop for considering the potential for increasing the number of women in policing in PICs. They are also likely to impact perceptions about women in policing, and directly influence public views about appropriate policing roles and responsibilities for female police officers. Gender norms and gender bias, both within policing organisations and across society more broadly, might act as a barrier to increasing numbers of women in policing. Nevertheless, there is a commitment to improving gender equality across the Pacific region.

PROPORTIONS OF WOMEN IN POLICING IN PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES

In PICs, most police services began to recruit women in the 1970s. For example, Eaton (2005) describes how the Tonga Police Force started to induct women at that time, reporting that the first eight female police officers were recruited in September of 1970. Faletau (2005 as cited in

Putt et al., 2018) estimated in 2005 that across the 19 island members of the Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police (PICP), approximately 10% of the then 1200 police officers were women, and the proportion of women in the police services ranged from 3% in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) to 20% in Tonga. Scant data currently exists on the numbers of women serving in policing organisations across the Pacific region. Figures are often not readily available in annual reports or other relevant administrative documentation. The Fijian Parliament's Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence (2019) review of the Fiji Police Force Annual Report for 2016–2017 noted that while female officers accounted for 20% of the force, no further detail or gender-disaggregated data was provided. Similarly, strategic initiatives such as the Tonga Police Development Program, while explicitly identifying improved gender equality through increasing participation by women as a goal, often do not include specific gender equality outcomes, indicators, or measures. This makes it difficult to monitor and evaluate any progress towards the development of gender-inclusive organisations and service delivery (Tennant & Bernklau, 2016).

Some indication of the numbers of women in Pacific Island policing organisations can be gleaned from various government and research reports. For example, Putt and colleagues' (2018) report on the legacy of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) for policing in the Pacific region helpfully details that in 2016 the percentage of women (including sworn and unsworn staff) in police services in the region ranged from 8% in FSM (of 266 officers) to 38% in Nauru (of 103). They list the proportions in larger police forces as Fiji 19% (of 3968), PNG 13% (of 6822), Samoa 23% (of 671), Solomon Islands 19% (of 1491, an increase from 14% in 2005), Tonga 24% (of 419), and Vanuatu 14% (of 675). In comparison, at that time, the proportions of female members in the New Zealand Police and the AFP were 31 and 35%, respectively. Both organisations had higher numbers of unsworn female staff than sworn female officers. This was not the case, however, for Pacific Islands organisations—where typically sworn female officers made up the majority of female staff (Putt et al., 2018), and even though many of these services were small they included women in the officer ranks.

According to the data available on the website of the Fiji Police Force, in 2012 there were 740 female officers (19% of 3875 officers)—28 female officers at Inspector rank, 35 at Sergeant rank, 65 at Corporal rank, and 612 at subordinate ranks (Prenzler & Sinclair, 2013). In addition,

69 female officers had been included in peacekeeping missions overseas. Earlier, Eaton (2005) reported that Tonga prided itself on leading the way with the highest proportion of women in policing in the Pacific region, with 36% of commissioned officers and 22% of the total sworn officers being women. In their evaluation of the Tonga Police Development Program, Tennant and Bernklau (2016) noted the high proportion of sworn officers—from a total of 419 sworn officers, 102 were female (24%), a number of whom were serving in senior roles, including two Deputy Commissioners. There were 11 female commissioned officers, 13 at Sergeant rank, 66 at Constable rank, and 12 in administrative roles (Tennant & Bernklau, 2016).

The Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF) 2017 Annual Report noted that women accounted for 23% of the force (343 of 1491). Female officers had increasingly taken on roles ‘in administration and operational areas including the Executive and supervisory roles in front line operational and General Duties including Acting Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner, Assistant Commissioner, Provincial Commander, Director and Deputy Director Roles’ (RSIPF, 2017, p. 29). In 2019, numbers of female officers in the Solomon Islands had increased slightly to 24% (365 of 1520) of all police—non-commissioned officers and other ranks—and women made up 13% of commissioned officers across the following ranks: Deputy Commissioner, Chief Superintendent, Superintendent, Inspector, Senior Sergeant, and Sergeant (RSIPF, 2019). By contrast, in 2017, just seven of 100 police officers in the Tuvalu Police Service were women and, of those, six were constables and one was a senior constable (Melei as cited in Howes et al., 2021).

While this limited data gives some indication of the distribution of women across ranks and demonstrates that across policing agencies the numbers are increasing, little detail is provided in relation to their spread across each organisation. The information available indicates uneven distribution of female officers, shaped by perceptions of women as lacking the necessary strength and skill to perform certain policing roles (see Bull et al., 2021). For example, Tennant and Bernklau (2016) described how in Tonga, while there were female officers present within most police units—except for Search and Rescue—they were overrepresented in areas such as management, administration, and training. Tennant and Bernklau’s (2016) evaluation was unable to determine whether women considered non-operational roles more appropriate for them, or whether such roles were the only ones available to them. Anecdotally, many of the

female police officers were vocal and active in their roles, and had ambition to move up the ranks in the force (Tennant & Bernklau, 2016). At the same time, however, views that ‘female police officers did not have “the skills or strength” to handle difficult situations’ were also expressed (Tennant & Bernklau, 2016, p. 34).

INTERNATIONAL, REGIONAL, AND NATIONAL FRAMEWORKS FOR WOMEN IN POLICING

A range of linked factors have influenced and shaped the increasing numbers of women and the drive for gender equality and equity in policing. These include the growing number of international, regional, and national agreements, protocols, and plans that have stimulated the introduction of strategies that work to ‘mainstream’ consideration of gender equality and ‘balance’ gender participation across all levels of social life.

International Frameworks

The imperative to address gender inequality and discrimination in policing and more broadly in Pacific Island community contexts began in the early 1980s, when PICs started to sign up to relevant UN conventions. Key among these was the CEDAW, which was adopted in 1979, instituted on 3 September 1981, and ratified by 189 states (UN General Assembly, 1979). This convention defines discrimination against women, introduces principles of gender equality and non-discrimination, and obliges state parties to promote, protect, and implement women’s rights. Its preamble refers to the importance of gender equality for enhancement of international security, stating that ‘the full and complete development of a country, the welfare of the world and the cause of peace require the maximum participation of women on equal terms with men’. The international commitment to gender equality as a global standard expressed in the CEDAW was reinforced at the UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, when 189 governments adopted the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (UN, 1995) as a global agenda for women’s empowerment and a ‘policy framework and blue print for action’ on gender equality (Mlambo-Ngcuka, 2014, p. 3).

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action ‘imagines a world where each woman and girl can exercise her freedoms and choices, and

realize all her rights, such as to live free from violence, to go to school, to participate in decisions and to earn equal pay for equal work' (UN Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women, 2015b). Signatories explicitly reaffirmed their commitment to:

The equal rights and inherent human dignity of women and men and other purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments, in particular the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women and the Declaration on the Right to Development. (UN, 1995, article 8)

The gender-sensitive guidelines created after the Beijing conference marked the UN's 'formal commitment to gender equality that includes a goal of achieving a 50/50 gender (male/female) balance' and 'of gender mainstreaming' (Hicks Stiehm, 2001, p. 42).

The strategy of achieving a 50/50 gender balance (referred to as 'gender balancing') is easy to understand and can be measured. It is often assessed with 'hard indicators', such as quotas that can demonstrate the efficacy of gender-focused initiatives. Simply increasing numbers, however, may not contribute to a sustainable change and can gloss over or disregard the perpetuation and regeneration of gendered power structures, even when the goal is achieving more gender equality. There is a real risk that reconfigured arrangements might provide the perception of new opportunities for women while giving rise to new power structures that obscure women's ongoing disempowerment (Curth & Evans, 2011).

It is well accepted that quantitative improvement in the representation of women alone will not necessarily increase sensitivity to gender issues. According to Hicks Stiehm (2001), gender balancing must be linked with effective 'gender mainstreaming'—an approach to policymaking that takes into account both women's and men's interests and concerns. She explains that gender mainstreaming is more complex, takes longer to implement, and can be difficult to comprehend. Even though mainstreaming addresses the concerns of both women and men, in practice such strategies tend to focus on women. This is because existing normative inclusion of men's needs and perspectives means that these are generally mostly well integrated into policies and programs. Women's

needs are more likely to require explicit recognition. Critiques of such gender equality reform measures underline the requirement that gender balancing and mainstreaming should be treated as complementary, and adopted simultaneously to achieve meaningful change.

The CEDAW and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action have continued to be reinforced. In 2000, a five-year review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action led to the publication of *Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the Twenty-first Century*—also known as ‘Beijing + 5’ (UN Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women, 2015a). This was the outcome document of the 23rd Special Session of the UN General Assembly. It recognised the need to overcome barriers to achieving women’s equality in twelve critical areas: women and poverty; education and training of women; women and health; violence against women; women and armed conflict; women and the economy; women in power and decision-making; institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women; human rights of women; women and the media; women and the environment; and the girl-child. Consistent with the sentiment of each of these preceding frameworks, Goal 3 of the global UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 2000–2015 (UN, 2000) promotes gender equality and the empowerment of women, and Goal 5 of the subsequent UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2015–2030 (UN General Assembly, 2015) aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

Regional Agreements and Accords

Since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995, most PICs have ratified the CEDAW, and there has been increasing recognition that gender equality is an important part of economic, political, cultural, and social development. Commitment to this progress is reflected in an important body of agreements, reforms, policies, and initiatives. The goals of the CEDAW, Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and MDGs and SDGs, for example, are repeated at the regional level in a number of agreements, including the 2005 *Revised Pacific Platform for Action on Advancement of Women and Gender Equality 2005–2015* (Secretariat of the Pacific Community, 2005), which identified targets for and indicators on women’s rights and gender equality, and was promoted as the reference point for ‘developing national gender equality policies and supporting the integration of gender concerns in

a broad range of sectors' (Secretariat of the Pacific Community, 2005, p. 1). This was followed by a stream of subsequent plans, declarations, and forums that sought to strengthen regional cooperation and integration through commitments to increasing the representation of women in legislatures and decision-making (42nd Pacific Island Forum) and bring about the eradication of sexual and gender-based violence (40th Pacific Island Forum).

Despite these repeated efforts (and some successes in relation to girls' education and positive initiatives to address violence against women) inequality has persisted, and in 2012 leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum expressed frustration with slow progress towards gender equality, restating their commitments in the Pacific Leaders' Gender Equality Declaration (Pacific Islands Forum, 2012). They explicitly renewed their pledge to implement the gender equality actions of the CEDAW, the MDGs, and the *Revised Pacific Platform for Action on Advancement of Women and Gender Equality 2005–2015* (Secretariat of the Pacific Community, 2005).

Pacific leaders also became party to broader regional accords, such as the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway (UN General Assembly, 2014), which represents commitments made by 115 Small Island Developing States (SIDS) leaders at the Third International Conference on SIDS held in Apia, Samoa, in September 2014. The outcomes of this conference were especially critical to signal to the international community the fundamental issues for SIDS to be included in the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals that were agreed in September 2015. Gender equality and the empowerment of women were clear priorities among these issues. Paragraph 76 of the SAMOA Pathway recognised that 'gender equality and women's empowerment and the full realization of human rights for women and girls have a transformative and multiplier effect on sustainable development and is a driver of economic growth in small island developing States', and acknowledged that '[w]omen can be powerful agents of change'. Additionally, para 86 committed SIDS leaders to 'the development of action plans in [SIDS] to eliminate violence against women and girls, who are often targets of gender-based violence and are disproportionately affected by crime, violence and conflict, and to ensure they are centrally involved in all relevant processes' (UN General Assembly, 2014).

The Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police Women's Advisory Network (PICP WAN) is a unique feature of women's policing in PICs. This network originated after recommendations from the Australasian Council

of Women and Policing conference held in Canberra in 2002. Acting Commissioner for the Fiji Police Force, Moses Driver, supported the constitution of a women's advisory body for the then South Pacific Chiefs of Police Conference (now the PICP). The first meeting of the advisory body was held in Suva in 2003, and a pilot women's advisory network comprising seven Pacific nations was approved. The South Pacific Chiefs of Police encouraged the network to report to them annually at their conferences (Eaton, 2005). The formation of the network, and its subsequent expansion, signalled recognition of the need to improve the representation and participation of women in Pacific police services. Strong networks of women have now developed within and across the 21 PICP member organisations, providing support to their membership at local and regional levels. The PICP WAN provides advice to the PICP in relation to issues impacting on women in policing in represented countries. It has a formal constitution (PICP WAN, 2020a), which provides a framework for its operation and interaction with the PICP, and regularly releases strategic documents that guide its activities.

For example, the *PICP WAN Strategic Direction 2020–2024* (PICP WAN, 2020b) commits to stronger and more meaningful partnership between the PICP WAN and the PICP. This is complemented by the *PICP Strategic Plan 2020–2024* (PICP, 2020), in which the PICP confirm their collective view that '[t]he recruitment, promotion and retention of women in policing is a high priority of the PICP' (p. 5), because—echoing Bastick's (2008) assertion on the importance of representation—'[p]olicing workforces that are diverse and reflect the communities they police are essential to gain and maintain the trust and confidence of Pacific communities' (pp. 4–5). The PICP WAN describes its mission as 'to strengthen policing across our Blue Pacific through the equal and full participation of women' (2020b, p. 4). This is to be achieved through an empowered network of women that works with police chiefs 'to share knowledge, solutions, resources and authority to make positive changes' for a safer Pacific (PICP WAN, 2020b, p. 6). According to *Strategic Direction 2020–2024*, this last goal can be achieved when '[m]anagement decisions are informed by WAN advice' and '[p]olicies and procedures support gender equity' (PICP WAN, 2020b, p. 7); for example, through the adoption of processes that serve to mainstream the perspectives of women and female police officers.

National Plans and Strategies

International and regional frameworks are reproduced at the national level. Across the Pacific region, various initiatives have been undertaken to build the capacity of public institutions and civil society in gender mainstreaming. *The Gender Mainstreaming Handbook of the Government of the Kingdom of Tonga* (Ministry of Internal Affairs, Women’s Affairs Division, 2019), for example, begins with a statement describing how the government in that country ‘recognises that sustainable development can only be achieved if gender considerations (i.e. the respective issues, concerns, and priorities of women and men) are factored into the work of the government, including service delivery, good governance and effective public service’ (p. 1). The handbook explains that the approach is part of the Tonga Strategic Development Framework 2015–2025 (TSDF II), which envisions ‘a more inclusive, sustainable and empowering human development with gender equality’ (p. 1). It notes that operationalising these principles ‘requires a system that supports a whole of government approach to gender mainstreaming’ (p. 1). It commits to progressing gender equality through a range of government policies and strategies for action, including:

- *National Women’s Empowerment and Gender Equality Tonga (WEGET) 2019–2025 Policy and Strategic Plan of Action*;
- *Revised Pacific Platform of Action 2018–2030*;
- UN Strategic [sic] Development Goals 2016;
- *Tonga Strategic Development Framework 2015–2025 (TSDF II)*;
- Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway 2014; and
- *Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration (PLGED) 2012*. (Ministry of Internal Affairs, Women’s Affairs Division, 2019, p. v)

Strategies of gender balancing and mainstreaming are a staple of security sector reform (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development—Development Assistance Committee, 2011). In the context of policing, eliminating gender imbalance within security institutions is intended to make them more representative and responsive to the needs of the community they serve. Bastick explains: ‘A process cannot be people-centred if the needs of half the people are not represented’

(2008, p. 155). Gender balancing is promoted as improving the performance of security institutions and contributing to the level of public trust, both in specific institutions and in the sector more generally (Bastick, 2008; Huber & Karim, 2018). This—together with regional and national governmental commitments—means that gender balancing and mainstreaming are prominent in policing organisations across the Pacific region.

Improving the gender balance is evident in the increasing numbers of women in Pacific police training. In Tonga, for example, the 2014 recruit training program had a gender equity objective and accepted equal numbers of men and women (Tennant & Bernklau, 2016). In Solomon Islands, the 2017 recruitment course comprised 70 probationary constables, of whom 35 were women; all graduated from the Police Academy after 20 weeks of intensive training (RSIPF, 2017).

The RSIPF Annual Report 2017 demonstrates how national policies of gender balancing and mainstreaming flow through to shape institutional/organisational goals:

Gender equity is one of the current Government's policy objectives to facilitate fair representation and equal participation of both genders in all areas of work. The RSIFP has therefore embraced the objective through its strategies including implementation in the areas of equal gender recruitment and engaging in roles and responsibilities in management, administrative operational duties. (2017, p. 29)

The RSIPF Commissioner's introduction to that organisation's Gender Strategy 2019–2021 described the aim underpinning the document as being to transform the RSIPF into a more inclusive workplace that offers fair and equitable opportunities for both women and men to make a difference, noting that '[a] fairer police force is a more capable police force' (RSIPF, 2019, p. 4). The mission of the strategy is: 'Improving gender equality to create a workplace that actively values and supports women in all aspects of policing to build a strong and professional police force for RSIPF officers' (p. 6). Here again, there is an appeal to the benefit that can be achieved by increasing the number of female officers. The strategy commits to having a higher representation of women across the organisation including in leadership roles. The desired outcome of this change is not just quantitative; rather, it is linked to a qualitative expectation that it will 'bring balance to the internal RSIPF decision

making processes as well as in communications between the police and community members' (p. 9).

The RSIPF Gender Strategy thus signals mainstreaming as an important driver of change. It outlines a framework for an organisation-wide approach, which includes changes to systems focused on attracting and supporting female personnel; inclusive leadership and workplace culture; capability building and skills development; and advocacy supporting women to develop in roles across the organisation. Male advocacy is particularly important for changing gendered institutional and social norms. The strategy aims to strengthen and maximise support mechanisms for female officers. Key components are maximising the capacity of the RSIPF Women's Advisory Network to influence organisational change, fostering the contribution of women in the RSIPF, and forming a male advocate network to promote awareness of, and support for, the Gender Strategy and the initiatives and objectives of the RSIPF Women's Advisory Network.

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS INFLUENCING INCREASED FOCUS ON WOMEN IN PACIFIC POLICING

Environmental factors beyond institutional change at the international, regional, national, and organisational levels have also influenced the participation of women in policing in the Pacific. Conflict and instability in the region have opened the door for security sector reform, that includes gender-sensitive police reform. In the past, women's security needs were overlooked, but they have increasingly been recognised as an essential component of the reform process. Ignoring these security needs and thus violating human rights can compromise the inclusiveness and sustainability of peace and efforts to build democratic governance after conflict (UN Development Programme, 2007). Adding to this is the growing recognition of the important role played by women police in responding to gendered violence, which is experienced at alarming rates in many PICs.

Regional Instability

Instability in the Pacific region has been a factor contributing to increasing the numbers of women in policing. While the CEDAW does not refer directly to women's security needs during conflict and in post-conflict periods, according to the interpretation of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, the Convention is applicable in such contexts and its regulations should be respected. Consistent with this assessment, in 2013 the Committee adopted General Recommendation No. 30 on Women in Conflict Prevention, Conflict and Post-Conflict Situations, which specifies that:

Protecting women's human rights at all times, advancing substantive gender equality before, during and after conflict and ensuring that women's diverse experiences are fully integrated into all peacebuilding, peacemaking and construction processes are important objectives of the Convention. (Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, 2013, p. 2)

Among other gender-related issues, this recommendation addressed such topics as women's 'participation' in the peace process (Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, 2013, pp. 11–12), as well as their engagement in the security sector throughout processes of 'reform, disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration' (Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, 2013, pp. 18–19).

In contrast to the CEDAW, in 1995 the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (and later the Beijing + 5) explicitly included the effect of armed and other types of conflict on women and girls as one of twelve critical areas of concern (UN Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women, 2015a). Subsequently, the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325, 2000) on women, peace, and security in 2000 drew attention to 'the interdependence of post-conflict gender equality, peacebuilding and security' (Bastick, 2008, p. 149). It highlighted 'the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace-building' and stressed 'the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, and the need to increase their role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution' (UNSCR 1325, 2000, p. 1). Since 2005, to ensure implementation at the national level, signatory states have begun to adopt National Action Plans

that are intended to provide context for the expression of the resolution and translate its objectives into national and local realities (Women's International League for Peace & Freedom, 2016). The adoption of UNSCR 1325 initiated a wave of gender-focused security sector reforms (PeaceWomen, 2020), which make up the UN's broader women, peace, and security agenda (PeaceWomen, n.d.), and stimulated the production of a range of resources and toolkits.

Over recent decades, instability has been a feature of the Pacific region. Some key events have led to the deployment of peacekeepers to Bougainville from 1998 to 2003, with peace brokered between PNG and Bougainville in 2001; the mobilisation of RAMSI in 2003 to quell civil unrest linked to fighting between ethnic and regional groups in 2003; and the joint taskforce of troops and police (from Australia and New Zealand) sent to Tonga following serious rioting in the capital Nuku'alofa in 2006. These types of missions and deployments have left their mark on policing the region. While the nuanced nature of the legacy left by them is subject to debate, according to Huber and Karim (2018) the presence of multi-dimensional peacekeeping missions in a post-conflict country have had a positive and statistically significant effect, in that such states are 22% more likely to adopt a gender balancing reform. This type of legacy is evident in the case of RAMSI. Moreover, it is arguable the benefits of increasing the numbers of women in policing and building their capability (i.e., gender balancing and mainstreaming in police) were felt in PICs beyond Solomon Islands.

RAMSI was a police-led mission that was supported as required by armed peacekeepers (see Chapter 5). Its key priorities were restoring law and order, the integrity and the capacity of the RSIPIF, and community confidence in national policing. The mission was in place for 14 years (2003–2017) and the Participating Police Force (PPF) included contingent members from 13 PICs: Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, PNG, Samoa, Tong, Vanuatu, Niue, Tuvalu, and the FSM. The size of the contingent from across these nations fluctuated over time, with the number of officers from each country varying depending on the overall size of the PPF, the size of the country's police force, and the numbers that particular forces could release from domestic duties. The size of the police organisations contributing to the Pacific Islands contingent ranged from PNG, with an estimated staff of more than 6800 in 2016, to Niue, which had only

15. During the second half of RAMSI, the largest numbers of contingent members were from Tonga, Samoa, PNG, and Vanuatu. While most members were male, between 2010 and 2016, 16% were female (Putt et al., 2018).

Initially RAMSI did not have a specific focus on women, but in 2009, the importance of including women was identified as a cross-cutting issue in the partnership framework between the Solomon Islands Government and RAMSI, and a gender advisor was appointed to provide advice across RAMSI programs and counterpart government agencies. RAMSI assisted the Solomon Islands Government to address gender inequality through measures including legislative reform and the collection of gender-based data. The Women in Government Program implemented through RAMSI focused on the removal of barriers to women's participation and representation in government by advocating change to policies, legislation, and employment terms and strengthening organisations that can foster women's leadership development (AusAid, 2012; Australian Civil-Military Centre, 2012).

In their report that investigated the legacy of RAMSI for policing in the Pacific region, Putt and colleagues (2018) described the experiences and views of Pacific Islands contingent members and assessed this multi-country police-led mission. Particular attention was paid to the lessons that could be learned about the role of women officers in the PPF, and the prevention of community violence and violence against women. Research participants—including former RAMSI leaders and current Pacific police commissioners—highlighted RAMSI's contribution to 'enabling and supporting regional policing cooperation, including in community engagement, women's empowerment and gender awareness, and complex investigations' and 'increasing engagement and involvement in regional networks, for example ongoing contact through the [PICP WAN], and the Pacific network of Transnational Crime Units' (Putt et al., 2018, p. 8).

Throughout the report there were many examples of the benefits of deployment through RAMSI for women in the Pacific Islands contingent. In relation to the mission objective of rebuilding community confidence in police, former Pacific Islands contingent members gave examples of where they had been able to take on leadership roles in community interactions and assist fellow RSIPF and PPF officers, usually as part of a small team based in police outposts. The report uses the example of a

female police officer from Tonga (deployed in 2006–2007) to highlight the impact of female officers from PICs:

She was working in general duties in Honiara on night shift when she and others were called out to a domestic violence incident. When they arrived, the women wouldn't open the door and told them to go away. The female police officer stepped forward and convinced her to open the door and work with them to solve the problem. The officer was of the view that the door would not have been opened if she had not intervened. Hearing from her voice that she was a woman and from another PIC, the female officer believed that the victim felt safe enough to let the rest of the police into her home. (Interview #50; 2006–2007 as cited in Putt et al., 2018, p. 43)

Putt and colleagues (2018) describe RAMSI's impact on gender equity, noting that most of the female members of the Pacific Islands contingent who were interviewed reported increases in their confidence, skills, and abilities as a result of their deployment to RAMSI. This confidence was linked to the presence of positive female police role models. For example:

A PNG policewoman attributed her increased confidence in large part to the Australian women police officers with which she worked. She admired and was inspired by their attitudes, confidence and professionalism, and claims to have become more proactive and assertive since her return home. (Interview #47; 2008–2009 as cited in Putt et al., 2018, p. 51)

Prior to the intervention there were relatively few female police officers in the RSIPF. Putt and colleagues (2018) describe how this changed dramatically in the early recruiting rounds following RAMSI's arrival. Newly recruited Solomon Islands policewomen needed role models, confidence building, and supportive networks—some of which was provided by RAMSI. This was confirmed by women PPF members who reported that they helped female officers in the RSIPF during their deployment and in later years were able to provide ongoing support through the professional friendships that had developed. For example, one Fijian policewoman helped RSIPF women officers gain additional training on gender-based violence in Fiji at the Women's Crisis Centre (Interview #31; 2009 as cited in Putt et al., 2018, p. 51).

Not all participating female police officers made the same assessment of gender equity and opportunities within RAMSI. These varied depending on comparisons with their home police force. Putt and colleagues (2018) report that many Fijian and Tongan women police officers perceived that their home force already had opportunities for women. In contrast, according to a Kiribati woman, there were few female officers in her home country. For her:

RAMSI was challenging and new. We were treated the same as men; we did all the same work – arrests and patrolling. We often were paired up with men, and that was good; it was safer ... Really enjoyed RAMSI; it was like real policing, especially for the women. (Interview notes #93; 2004 as cited in Putt et al., 2018, p. 52)

This reflected the sentiment expressed by women participants in Putt and colleagues' (2018) study that both they and their male counterparts had benefited from seeing women members of the PPF involved in training and policing duties that were typically done by men in their home countries.

The other key contribution of RAMSI in relation to women was '[i]ncreasing the reach of regional networks: for example, ongoing contact through the PICP Women's Advisory Network' (Putt et al., 2018, p. 65). Female RAMSI deployees 'were able to utilise the [PICP WAN] to stay in touch and support each other in professional development' (Putt et al., 2018, p. 61).

With the end of the RAMSI deployment, the post-conflict context had an enduring impact on the development of policing policies in the Solomon Islands. The RSIPF Gender Strategy 2019–2021 (RSIPF, 2019) is explicitly framed in relation to UNSCR 1325 (2000), and provides a structure for the operationalisation of RSIPF responsibilities under the Solomon Islands National Action Plan. The strategy notes that it addresses the National Action Plan, which has four high-level outcomes linked to the agreed pillars of the UN Women, Peace, and Security agenda. These are:

- Women's participation, representation and decision making in peace and security are expanded at all levels
- Women's human rights are protected, and women are secure from sexual and gender-based violence

- Solomon Islands actively prevents conflict and violence against women and girls; and
- Women and girls' priorities and rights are reflected in development and peace building. (RSIPF, 2019, p. 8)

Repeating the sentiments expressed by Bastick (2008) and the *PICP Strategic Plan 2020–2024* (PICP, 2020), the RSIPF Gender Strategy explains that '[i]ncreasing and extending the role of women in the RSIPF can be expected to improve confidence, build trust and enhance the legitimacy of police within the Solomon Islands' (RSIPF, 2019, p. 9). The strategy states that '[w]omen often hold the position of neutrality within a conflict situation and there is evidence of women playing the important role of peace-keepers during and post-conflict in the Solomon Islands' (p. 9). This claim is further supported in the strategy as follows:

Indeed, Melanesian women have a long history of intervention in conflict to prevent violence through invoking customary norms and taboos specific to women, as well as traditional perceptions of women as 'peacemakers'. Christian teachings – a pillar of shared Solomon Islands cultural identity – also provide a number of examples of women as peacemakers during times of conflict, arguably bestowing further legitimacy and acceptance of women's involvement in peacemaking. (Brigg et al. 2015 as cited in RSIPF, 2019, p. 9)

These factors contribute to the message that female officers have strengths in communication and peacemaking skills that result in less use of excessive force, fewer complaints, and more de-escalation of violent confrontations (Lonsway et al., 2002 as cited in RSIPF, 2019, p. 9). However, caution should be exercised in relation to the essentialising potential of these types of assessments. Mobekk (2010) rightly criticises the essentialist tendency of perceiving women in the context of security sector reform as peaceful and men as aggressive. Such oversimplification not only strengthens gender stereotypes, but also overlooks changes in traditional gender roles (such as those expressed by the female contingent member from Kiribati, above) that happen during conflict. Further, it has the potential to promote the false assumption that women are better equipped to tackle security issues that are traditionally identified with 'women's concerns', such as domestic and family violence and sexual violence, as discussed in the following section. And finally, it can

contribute to the construction of police responses to such important and challenging problems as lesser than other policing activities. Adopting an approach of seeing women as ‘different from men’—‘[i]t is not about making everyone the same’ (RSIPF, 2019, p. 9)—as a means of bringing women into the formal security sector as providers of additional ‘soft’ security services can reproduce socially constructed gendered differences, and consequently reinforce rather than dismantle or (at least) disrupt the traditional gendered protector–protected dualisms (Kunz, 2014).

An alternative interpretation of these types of strategies is that in strongly patriarchal societies they can provide a ‘back door to equality’ (Natarajan, 2008), and this can be valid in those traditional cultural settings that call for a rigid separation of women and men in daily life. Growing evidence from research focused on women and policing in the global South adds weight to this claim (see Bull et al., 2021; Carrington et al., 2019). Strategies that work through existing gender relationships in these types of settings can provide a ‘foot in the door’ to change social and institutional views and expectations in relation to women in policing (see Bull et al., 2021 on attitudes to women in policing in Tuvalu). This is pertinent in the Pacific region where, for example, the RSIPF Gender Strategy 2012–2021 acknowledges that ‘cultural and social traditions may present some challenges for women’s participation in decision-making and leadership roles in the RSIPF’ (2019, p. 9). In this context, the differences between the policing styles of male and female officers and the types of authority they can exercise are seen as a ‘great opportunity to use the traditional authority and respect afforded to women and elders to influence community tolerance of violence, especially which is perpetrated against women and children’ (RSIPF, 2019, p. 9).

Researchers have identified primary challenges to women’s engagement in security sector reform as patriarchal culture and entrenched gender norms, economic and social barriers, and women’s potential participation being significantly curtailed by societal expectations and perceptions (Justino et al., 2018). Erzurum and Eren (2014), for example, point to the significance of pervasive gender norms of the given post-conflict society as hindering women’s involvement in peacebuilding. A lack of status and the stereotypical perception of women as weak or vulnerable are sources of their systematic exclusion from decision-making processes, and this leads to women’s needs being overlooked.

In addition, researchers highlight specific inequalities that present impediments to active participation in security sector reform by women.

These include unequal access to education; social norms that enhance restrictive gender roles; poverty and limited access to financial resources; high levels of gender-based violence; the double burden of women who are caregivers and work to generate income; and the rejection of women's skills by national governments, international community, and women themselves as relevant in peacebuilding. Even though gender equality norms are almost universally accepted at governmental levels (Kang et al., 2018), these assessments highlight the risk of relying on various international, regional, and national plans alone as vehicles for change, and alert us to the challenges and complexities that are associated with working with or through traditional gender roles and norms. The systems of particular institutions and organisations designed to operationalise these conventions, agreements, and plans often do not reflect the level of support needed, or they struggle to successfully translate them into practice; and the uneven implementation of the various standards and requirements results in their limited effectiveness (UNSCR 1325, 2000).

Experiences in Tonga, as part of the security sector reform process following the 2006 riots, for example, demonstrate the importance of committing to both organisational systems and monitoring to bring about change. The Tonga Police Development Programme (TPDP)—is a trilateral partnership between the Governments of Tonga, Australia, and New Zealand, implemented by Tonga Police, the AFP and the New Zealand Police in 2014. It aimed to reduce crime and increase public confidence in Tonga Police through professional, legitimate, and accountable policing. A cross-cutting theme of the evaluation of the TPDP was the extent to which it had 'appropriately addressed gender and human rights' (Tennant & Bernklau, 2016, p. 13). It found that the TPDP worked towards improved gender equality through increasing the participation by women in Tonga Police and through the implementation and enforcement of laws that seek to reduce criminal offending against women, specifically domestic violence, via the Tongan Family Protection Act 2013. However, the TPDP did not include specific gender equality outcomes or indicators, so improvements were difficult to measure. The evaluation identified some organisational shortfalls in relation to initiatives to improve gender mainstreaming and equality, identifying the need for:

- Targeted support to female officers in undertaking their duties through further training, including in areas that are non-administrative and are viewed as ‘core policing’ such as criminal investigations, responding to calls, general ‘active duty’ functions and forensics;
- Further training – from a range of providers, including civil society, on key gender issues not limited to domestic violence. Understanding of gender equality principles through further training and exposure would benefit the entire police force, and should be integrated into a range of training opportunities[;]
- Development and implementation of systems to monitor and report on the degree to which female officers are provided with the same opportunities and role responsibilities as male officers[;]
- ... ensuring that gender equity is considered in all performance appraisals. (Tennant & Bernklau, 2016, pp. 8–9)

Gender-Based Violence

Initiatives to promote gender equality have been augmented by conditions associated with regional instability that have seen international deployments, capability building, and security sector reform, such as those associated with RAMSI. These interventions have had positive outcomes for the inclusion of women and their role in policing across the region. The imperative to increase the number of women in policing is also associated with preventing and addressing the high rates of gender violence across the region (see Chapter 3). In many of the international, regional, and national frameworks referred to above, the promotion of gender equality is linked to the prevention of violence against women.

Survey data indicates that lifetime prevalence rates for physical and sexual violence (by intimate partners and non-partners) among Pacific Island women are between 60% and 80%, which is twice the global average (UN Children’s Fund [UNICEF], 2017). Because the police response to crimes of violence against women is so critical, it is worth noting that in the global North, female officers have long been viewed as more effective in this area than male officers (Chan et al., 2010; Schulz, 1995). This is a perception shared by the community (Breci, 1997), police training instructors, and female officers themselves (Beck, 2002; Martin et al., 1986). It is also supported by research on the value of female police officers in the context of international deployment. In

peacekeeping environments, shame and related experiences around sexual violence mean that women are more comfortable reporting and seeking help from women (Bleckner, 2013; Mazurana, 2003; Pillay, 2006; Pruitt, 2013). Research reports that increasing the numbers of female police in peacekeeping and stabilisation missions has led to improved security outcomes for women and children, and increased reporting of and reductions in violence against women and children (Furnari, 2014; Greener, 2009; Harris & Goldsmith, 2010; Van der Spuy, 2011).

Interviews with female members of the PPF (Putt et al., 2018) on the legacy of the RAMSI deployment provided evidence that this also was the case in Solomon Islands. Many believed that their presence had helped with community policing in general, and responses to domestic violence incidents in particular. The women who were part of the RAMSI contingent reported that they were able to contribute to the prevention of violence against women through community-based policing work ‘including police visits to schools, churches and villages’ (Interview #39; 2012 as cited in Putt et al., 2018, p. 52). A PNG female officer described how in her view ‘the women officers were better at communicating with local people than the men’ (Interview #47; 2008–2009 as cited in Putt et al., 2018, p. 52). Several referred to the ‘calming’ effect their presence had. And a Tongan female officer noted how ‘important it was to have female officers at provincial outposts as most incidents reported to the police involved domestic violence, and female officers were better placed to deal with women victims’ (Interview #50; 2006 as cited in Putt et al., 2018, p. 52).

These views are consistent with community and police perceptions of the role of women in policing in other Pacific contexts. In Tuvalu, participants in a study that explored attitudes towards increasing the number of women in policing expressed views that align closely with those reported by Putt and colleagues (2018). Female police officers were perceived as more likely to adopt a community-oriented style of policing, and it was suggested that they were more effective at handling domestic violence incidents and crimes of violence against women (Bull et al., 2021). In Bull and colleagues’ (2021) study, support for increasing the number of women in policing was explained in terms of their ability to deal with women-related issues, including customary matters. For example:

[Women] understand the ladies’ problems due to our traditions and cultures ... Sometimes when there is a lady found drunk and they send

a police[man] but they are cousins or related and so [he] cannot do a thing because they are related ... [I]t is better for male officer to counsel male and for female to counsel female it would be better that way. (Bull et al., 2021, p. 400)

Bull and colleagues (2021) concluded that according to their participants, female officers could navigate gendered social norms dictated by customary and religious authority, while still exercising the authority of the state to protect women, in ways male police officers could not. This suggests that both community members and police officers who supported increasing the numbers of women in policing valued the contribution that female police officers could make within the complex hybrid regulatory environment that is typical in PICs.

The benefits for policing gender-based violence that flow from including women in RAMSI have been felt beyond Solomon Islands. Female PPF members reported gaining experience in relation to gender violence issues during their deployment and then translating this into their local environment when they returned home (Putt et al., 2018). In recent years Family and Sexual Violence Units have been established in police stations in various PICs—in some cases, with direct input from officers who gained practical skills while deployed with RAMSI. In Kiribati, a Family and Sexual Violence Unit was headed by a former female RAMSI deployee, while Fiji strengthened its Family Protection Unit and developed training and reform initiatives led by a former PPF member (Putt et al., 2018). The transfer of skills and knowledge was not one-way (i.e., from Solomon Islands to the home state). Complementing these examples, a PNG female officer who was deployed in the final phase of RAMSI told how she was able to draw on her policing experience in PNG in training local police and raising community awareness about the newly introduced Family Protection Act 2014 in the Solomon Islands. Similar legislation had been introduced in PNG several years before. Having undertaken training in Fiji on the creation and maintenance of a family-based violence database as part of a New Zealand-run project, the police officer helped implement the system in Solomon Islands and later in PNG when she returned home (Interview notes #43; 2013–2015 as cited in Putt et al., 2018, p. 53).

In other security sector reform contexts in the Pacific region, instability has stimulated capability building targeting the prevention of violence against women. The 2014 TPDP supported the rollout of the Tongan

Family Protection Act 2013 training package, which was designed by a joint agency team involving Tonga Police, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Information, as well as Tongan Crisis Centres and advocacy groups. The training package was delivered to 161 police officers—27 women and 134 men—across all police districts. However, security sector reform is not always smoothly integrated into everyday policing practice. Tennant and Bernklau (2016) explained that while most officers participating in the evaluation of the TPDP stated that they had received training and understood the new Family Protection Act, a small number expressed the view that the police should not interfere in domestic affairs and that the new law ‘is bad’ and against Tongan culture. The authors acknowledged that these beliefs may be more widely held among police; nevertheless, they were encouraged that only a few were prepared to openly express them. Research with police officers and community members in Tuvalu found explicit support for police involvement in domestic violence matters from both groups, even though such involvement was a relatively new development (Howes et al., 2021).

A final and important consideration in relation to the value of female police officers in responding to cases of domestic violence is the high rate of such violence committed by police officers themselves. Particularly high rates of domestic violence have been documented in police families in the global North (Neidig et al., 1992). In the global South, research conducted by ethnographers working within the PNG constabulary argued that members of this force were highly likely to be perpetrators of gender violence in their own conjugal relationships (McLeod & Macintyre, 2010). Further, they were frequently accused of perpetrating violence against women in the course of their professional duties, or when women approached them for protection from other sources of violence (Chandler, 2014; McLeod & Macintyre, 2010). It is short sighted to discuss the police response to violence against women without addressing the possibility that responding officers have committed these crimes themselves. Violence against women is much more likely to be committed by men than women, so increasing the number of female law enforcement professionals has the potential for lessening the chance that crimes of violence against women will be handled by an officer who has perpetrated such a crime (Tjaden & Thoennes, 1999).

Complexities arise not only due to competing forms of authority—state, *kastom* and religion—in PICs, but also because of gender norms in these contexts. Research has described how women officers may emulate

the masculine gender norms that pervade police agencies generally, and thus they may police gender violence cases in ways no different to their male colleagues (Parsons & Jesilow, 2001). This suggests that in Pacific Island contexts, despite progress to date, existing gender norms—both within policing organisations and across society more broadly—can act as a barrier to increasing the numbers of women in policing. Moreover, such gender norms can limit the expected positive impact of increased numbers of women in policing on the reporting, prevention and reduction of violence against women and children.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has aimed to address the gap in knowledge about the role and experiences of women in policing in PICs. Little is known about their participation because they account for a small number of personnel in organisations across the region, with limited detail available in published data. The chapter has drawn together the information available from a range of sources, including published research, annual reports, evaluations of police development programs, research reports, and other grey literature. On the basis of these documents, it can be concluded that numbers of women police in the Pacific region are growing, and women are actively taking on operational roles across all areas of policing. This is apparent even when women's willingness to participate in policing may not always be matched by wider community support in strongly patriarchal societies. It is notable that in contrast to the gender breakdown of policing agencies in Australia and New Zealand, the information available indicated that the majority of women in policing in PICs are working in operational rather than administrative roles and have made some inroads at the executive levels of their organisations, working as commissioned officers.

The increase in numbers and the growing diversity of roles performed by women in policing have been aided by factors outside and beyond the initiatives of policing agencies within individual PICs. International frameworks such as the CEDAW, Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, MDGs, and SDGs have supported the introduction of regional and national policies and practices that balance and mainstream gender inclusivity. Environmental factors, including civil unrest and alarmingly high rates of violence against women and girls, have also played a role. This is evident in the legacy of RAMSI, which delivered benefits to