



# Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development

## Palau Country Plan Summary

### Background

Through a 10-year commitment, Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development (*Pacific Women*) connects more than 170 gender equality initiatives supported by Australia and implemented by over 160 partners across 14 Pacific Island countries.

*Pacific Women* is one of the largest global commitments to gender equality. It partners with governments, local and international non-government organisations (NGOs), private sector, disabled people's organisations, coalitions and others to improve the political, economic and social opportunities of Pacific women and to end violence against women and girls. Its emphasis is on partnerships and locally-driven development.

Providing technical, knowledge sharing and convening support to the portfolio of partners is *Pacific Women's* Support Unit, working to improve the long-term impact of gender equality projects in the Pacific. The Support Unit's office is in Suva, Fiji, with a sub-office in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea.

*Pacific Women* was announced at the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders' meeting in August 2012. It commits up to AUD320 million over 10 years in 14 Pacific Islands Forum member countries.

*Pacific Women* initiatives respond to the commitments in the 2012 Pacific Leaders' Gender Equality Declaration, while also supporting Australia's Pacific Step-up and its Partnerships for Recovery approach of working together with Pacific partners to address COVID-19 impacts on women, girls and their communities.

The outcomes sought through *Pacific Women* are:

- **Ending Violence against Women:** Violence against women is reduced and survivors of violence have access to support services and to justice.
- **Economic Empowerment:** Women have expanded economic opportunities to earn an income and accumulate economic assets.
- **Leadership and Decision Making:** Women, and women's interests, are increasingly and effectively represented and visible through leadership at all levels of decision making.
- **Enhancing Agency:** Women in the Pacific will have a stronger sense of their own agency, supported by a changing legal and social environment and through increased access to the services they need.

Since 2012, an estimated 1.22 million Pacific Island women, men and children have been able to access services and information across 14 partner countries through initiatives supported by *Pacific Women*.



## Palau

Palau is a matrilineal society with the highest per capita income of the Pacific Island countries. Tourism continues to underpin the Palauan economy, followed by fishing and subsistence agriculture. Remittances are also important. Palau has achieved gender equality at primary and high school levels. Women are more successful in higher education than men but are underrepresented in science, technology, engineering and mathematics fields. Non-communicable diseases are the cause of 80 per cent of deaths in Palau.<sup>1</sup> Across all domains of disability, women and girls are more likely to have difficulties compared to the men and boys.

Palau has a declining population, especially in the working age group, and a general shortage of human resources. This is a result of both outward migration and falling birth rates. A large migrant workforce population comprises almost 27 per cent of the population.<sup>2</sup>

Palau has not yet ratified the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination of All Forms Against Women (CEDAW). But the strong position of women in Palauan culture provides an opportunity and entry point for gender-related activities. Mechesil Belau, a grouping of traditional women leaders, recently celebrated its 25th anniversary. The group has successfully advocated for 25 national laws, three constitutional amendments and one traditional law on culture, health, education and the environment.<sup>3</sup>

### ***Pacific Women Country Plan***

Through *Pacific Women*, the Australian Government will spend approximately **\$1.4 million over 10 years** (2012–2022) on initiatives supporting women's and girl's empowerment in Palau.

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

The first Country Plan for Palau outlined activities for 2015–2019. This is the second Country Plan which covers the period 2020–2022. It was developed on the basis of collaboration and consultation with key stakeholders. The second Country Plan builds on the achievements and lessons learned under the first Country Plan. It focuses on strengthening enabling environments and institutions for gender equality and social inclusion.

The second Country Plan includes activities that support the Division of Gender in the Bureau of Aging, Disability and Gender in the Ministry of Community and Cultural Affairs to progress implementation of the Palau National Gender Mainstreaming Policy 2018. Funding continues for a full-time gender analyst. The gender analyst works on sex-disaggregated data in partnership with the Office of Planning and Statistics and other relevant stakeholders. Short-term national consultants provide technical capacity to the Division of Gender to track progress against the gender mainstreaming policy.

Work will continue to strengthen the implementation of the *Family Protection Act* 2012. The second Country Plan provides for in-country first responder and trauma counsellor training, so that a number of counsellors can be upskilled. It also funds community awareness of the *Family Protection Act* through brochures printed in Palauan and English for wide distribution in the

<sup>1</sup> Republic of Palau, NCD Prevention and Control Strategic Plan of Action 2015–2020, p 10.

<sup>2</sup> Data from 2015 contained in the Statistical Yearbook, Ministry of Finance, Republic of Palau, 2017.

<sup>3</sup> Republic of Palau, 2019. Pathway to 2030, Voluntary National Review of the SDGs, p 49.



community. Two Australian volunteers<sup>4</sup> are supporting the Ministry of Community and Cultural Affairs to develop a strategy and implementation plan to carry out the recommendations from the 2017 review of the *Family Protection Act*.<sup>5</sup> They are also assisting to develop standard operating procedures and referral systems for survivors of violence.

The second Country Plan supports activities that enhance opportunities for women's economic empowerment, including a network of women business entrepreneurs. A further opportunity to advance women's economic empowerment in Palau is through the regional POETCom program, which is aimed at building prosperity for women producers, processors and women-owned businesses through organic value chains. It is expected that the POETCom program will be operational in Palau in 2020.

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

## Rationale for activities in the Country Plan

Palau is a matrilineal society; however, its cultural principles are based on a balanced relationship between men and women. Lineage and titles are inherited from the mother's side and traditionally men and women have clearly defined gender roles. In line with a strong emphasis on cultural values, the review of the first Country Plan heard from different stakeholders of a fear of the loss of language and changes of values.

### (a) Increasing women's leadership and decision making

There were no women in parliament before 2008. Since then, women have increasingly been involved in national-level politics and women now hold two out of the eight appointed cabinet positions (25 per cent) two out of 13 seats in the Senate (15 per cent) and two out of 16 of the seats in the House of Representatives (12.5 per cent).

There is high-level political support and increasing awareness within government of gender equality issues, which has led to endorsing the Palau National Gender Mainstreaming Policy. Implementation of this Country Plan will assist the Palau Government to implement this Policy.

### (b) Increasing economic opportunities for women

While Palauan women are active in the economy and own many businesses, they face a number of challenges. A 2017 scoping on women's economic empowerment<sup>6</sup> concluded that women in Palau undertake the bulk of community obligations and family care responsibilities. They are almost as likely to be in the workforce as are men but significantly less likely to be in business.

Women in Palau are significantly less likely to be employers than men (only 55 women employers compared to 109 men in 2015) and are just over one third of all self-employed (115 of 306).<sup>7</sup> Building and strengthening networks and groups is important for gender equality and social inclusion. Such groupings or networks can use collective voice to advocate for change through women-friendly business policies and programs. Mentoring, especially for new entrepreneurs and those who wish to expand, is also key.

<sup>4</sup> The volunteers are engaged through DFAT's Australian Volunteers for International Development program.

<sup>5</sup> The review of the implementation of the *Family Protection Act* 2012 was funded under the first *Pacific Women* Country Plan in 2017.

<sup>6</sup> The scoping study on women's economic empowerment in Palau was funded under the first *Pacific Women* Country Plan in 2017.

<sup>7</sup> Scoping Study on Women's Economic Empowerment in Palau, 2017.



The average monthly per capita income for Palauan households headed by men was USD800 compared to USD660 for households headed by women. This equates to a gender gap of 18 per cent.<sup>8</sup>

### **(c) Reducing violence against women and expanding support services**

Research reports that one quarter of women in Palau have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by a partner in their lifetime.<sup>9</sup> An integrated approach is required to address violence against women and children that involves both government and civil society.

The *Family Protection Act* 2012 provides a strategic gateway to mobilise stakeholders for maximum coordination, establish referral networks and educate all levels of society on striving for violence free communities. The review of the *Family Protection Act* found that essential services that respond to the needs of survivors of gender-based violence need to be strengthened. While there has been progress in issuing protection orders, there is not yet a coordinated referral system for survivors.

<sup>8</sup> Republic of Palau, 2019. Pathway to 2030, Voluntary National Review of the SDGs, p 24.

<sup>9</sup> Palau Ministry of Health, 2014. Belau Family Health and Safety Study: National Research Project on Violence Against Women in Palau.



**Table 1: Bilateral Activities**

PROJECT NAME AND PARTNER	DESCRIPTION	BUDGET
<b>Outcome: Ending Violence against Women</b>		
Review of the Implementation of the Palau <i>Family Protection Act</i> 2012 (Consultant and Government of Palau)	Supported the Ministry of Community and Cultural Affairs with a consultant to review progress of the implementation of the <i>Family Protection Act</i> 2012 five years after it was enacted and develop a draft implementation plan.	\$21,749 (2017–2018)
Regional support on male advocacy (Fiji Women's Crisis Centre and Government of Palau)	Supported two Palauan participants to attend the Regional Fiji Women's Crisis Centre's month-long Regional Training Program on gender awareness and eliminating violence against women.	\$18,018 (2016)
<b>Outcome: Enhancing Agency</b>		
Support to the Ministry of Culture and Community Affairs to implement the second Palau Country Plan 2020–2022	Strengthening enabling environments and institutions for gender equality and social inclusion through: assisting the Division of Gender to implement the 2018 Palau National Gender Mainstreaming Policy; strengthening the implementation of the Family Protection Act 2012; and supporting the Ministry of Culture and Community Affairs' network for women entrepreneurs.	\$338,561 (2020–2022)
Support for implementation of the Government of Palau's gender mainstreaming policy and strategy (Gender Division, Ministry of Culture and Community Affairs, Government of Palau)	Funded a national Gender Analyst position based in the Ministry of Culture and Community Affairs to support the development and implementation of a gender mainstreaming policy. Supported the Division of Gender with International Women's Day events.	\$91,956 (2017–2019)





**Table 2: Regional Programs with Activities in Palau**

PROJECT NAME AND PARTNER	DESCRIPTION	BUDGET <sup>10</sup>
<b>Outcome: Leadership and Decision Making</b>		
Pacific Women's Parliamentary Partnerships (Australian International and Community Relations Office, Department of the House of Representatives)	Supported building the capacity of Pacific women parliamentarians and their staff to ensure gender equality issues are better addressed in parliament.	\$2,850,037 (2013–2018)
<b>Outcome: Economic Empowerment</b>		
Building prosperity for women producers, processors and women owned businesses through organic value chains (Pacific Community POETCom)	Identifying and supporting organic value chains that benefit women as producers, suppliers, processors and entrepreneurs whilst also enhancing their capacity for inter-regional organic trade within the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Palau and Kiribati.	\$3,884,100 (2018–2022)
<b>Outcome: Ending Violence against Women</b>		
Support to the Pacific Community Regional Rights Resource Team (The Pacific Community (SPC))	Supporting work on ending violence against women, human rights and good governance with Pacific Island governments and civil society organisations. Providing technical assistance and training. Advocating for women and girls to have increased access to justice for domestic violence and to promote and protect human rights commitments.	\$5,750,000 (2015–2020)
UNICEF Pacific Child Protection Program (UNICEF)	Worked across 14 Pacific Island Countries to strengthening protection of children from violence, abuse and exploitation.	\$7,000,000 (2014–2018)
<b>Outcome: Enhancing Agency</b>		
Gender Adviser for the North Pacific (Pacific Community)	Supported the work of the Pacific Community's Gender, Culture and Youth Programme and supported implementation and monitoring of <i>Pacific Women</i> activities in the North Pacific.	\$391,740 (2015–2018)
Progressing Gender Equality in the Pacific (The Pacific Community (SPC))	Phase one (completed) conducted stocktakes of Pacific Island governments' capacity to integrate gender equality and women's empowerment into policies, legislation and programs and strengthened the collection and analysis of data to better track outcomes. Phase two is supporting Pacific Island countries to adopt evidence-informed policies and legislation that promote gender equality and women's human rights.	\$3,941,712 (2013–2018) \$5,494,203 (2019–2023)

<sup>10</sup> This allocation is not for Palau alone but for multiple countries under *Pacific Women*.

