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CSSF Women, Peace and Security Helpdesk

# Women, Peace and Security in the Pacific Region

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The Women Peace and Security Helpdesk, managed by Saferworld in partnership with Conciliation Resources, GAPS UK, University of Durham and Women International Peace Centre (WIPC), was established in December 2021 to increase capability across the UK Government on WPS policy and programming in order to make its work on conflict and instability more effective. If you work for the UK Government and you would like to send a task request, please email us at [wpshelpdesk@saferworld.org.uk](mailto:wpshelpdesk@saferworld.org.uk). If you do not work for the UK Government but have an enquiry about the helpdesk or this report, please email us at [enquiries.wpshelpdesk@saferworld.org.uk](mailto:enquiries.wpshelpdesk@saferworld.org.uk)

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# Abstract

This report provides gender-specific analysis that builds on findings provided in a Joint Analysis of Conflict and Stability (JACS) covering the Pacific region, which was recently commissioned by the UK Office for Conflict, Stabilisation and Mediation (OCSM). The countries included in the initial JACS analysis were Papua New Guinea (PNG), Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Fiji, Samoa and Tonga. This exercise aims to deepen the existing analysis and provide recommendations for the sub-region of the South West Pacific which includes PNG and the Autonomous Region of Bougainville, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Tonga and Fiji.

# Findings and Analysis

## Introduction

The report has analysed the conflict drivers identified in the JACS, which broadly align with our own, and provides further gendered analysis. To manage the broad scope of this task, three thematic areas were prioritised with OCSM for further analysis and identification of potential avenues for future UK Government programming. These are: **1) Strengthening and increasing women's leadership; 2) Gender, masculinities and violence; and 3) Climate change, conflict and gender.**

For Section Two, we have further examined and built on JACS findings around the lack of women in leadership roles, reframing the key opportunities to engage with women leaders at the local and community level, highlighting existing regional mechanisms, and exploring women's agency more broadly. In Section Three, we provide some additional analysis on other structural drivers identified in the JACS, most notably regarding the risks around male youth violence. Given the particular transnational threat of climate change, we have also provided additional analysis on the intersection of climate change, conflict and gender in Section Four.

## Methodological approach

This paper combines desk-based research with eight consultations with key Fijian, Papua New Guinean and Bougainvillean actors including: gender advisors in key Pacific institutions; faith leaders; peacebuilders working on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) issues; and key women leaders working on community-level peace and security. Consultations took the form of semi-structured interviews focusing on the thematic areas mentioned above, resulting in further insights of best practice initiatives in the region.

This paper makes a series of thematic and general recommendations to inform an approach for the UK Government in the region, underpinned by gender sensitivity and peacebuilding principles. The purpose of this report is to provide an analysis of the gender analysis of conflict and instability in the Pacific region based on and supplementary to the JACS report. The recommendations specifically respond to requests from FCDO to suggest innovative and transferable areas of research, learning and best practice which could be supported by CSSF, not yet being addressed by other actors in the Pacific, with potential for wider scale-up in the future.

These recommendations are further elaborated throughout the paper and were discussed in detail during a planned roundtable between the Helpdesk and UK Government officials in December 2022.

## Setting the scene: gendering conflict drivers in the Pacific

Gendered power-relations impact almost all of the major conflict drivers in the Pacific region. Gender dynamics are incredibly varied across the Pacific, which makes it challenging to identify

general trends. For many rural communities, gender relations are organised around kinship, land, and cultural and spiritual worldviews. Land and resources are often communally held; however, it tends to be men who hold power relating to land and resources, regardless of whether the land is from matrilineal or patrilineal practices of descent. Women are influential in family and community life. The role of 'mother' is respected and important in peace-making and peacebuilding. Yet, men make up most community leadership positions, most notably in cultural institutions (such as chiefs and village headmen) and the church (such as priests). Men also dominate in national political spaces (for example, in PNG and Solomon Islands, where traditions around the so-called community 'big man' – someone who distributes wealth to his people – shape how modern political power operates). Women, however, dominate civil society and are key agents for social change, influencing the social fabric and shifting gender and cultural norms over time.<sup>1</sup> Key women peacebuilders also play a significant role in mediating intergroup conflict due to their respected positions (for example, in PNG this includes members of Kup Women for Peace, Voice for Change and the Nazareth Centre for Rehabilitation).

In some regions of the Pacific, such as the PNG Highlands, intergroup violence over land, resources and political power is in part driven by particular forms of violent masculinities (though it is important to highlight that not all forms of Pacific masculinities are violent). At the family level, hegemonic masculinities<sup>2</sup> contribute to the high levels of violence that women experience in the home and within the community. These hegemonic masculinities tend to dominate over the rest and can marginalise other identities in families and communities. They often vary from context to context, yet there is a general acceptance or idealisation of the roles. Examples of the ways hegemonic masculinities manifest may include within political leader, peace-maker, feast giver, warrior, ritual expert, master artisan, trader or influential man roles. There have been decades of international gender interventions relating to economic empowerment, women's leadership and violence reduction. Gender interventions have made some incremental progress towards gender equality and the elimination of violence and discrimination; however, there has also been considerable backlash both from men and women who perceived these forms of intervention as foreign to their beliefs. Overall, there has been a challenge around how global normative gender and human rights frameworks align with and fit into different Pacific contexts.<sup>3</sup> Whilst there is a diversity of views held among women around this challenge, many female activists across the region are seeking to work within existing cultural frameworks, valuing and maintaining elements of their culture while transforming gender norms from within. They require time and resources to contextualise and embed gender transformative work within existing conflict and cultural systems.

The major conflict drivers identified in the JACS are relatively consistent with conflict drivers identified by the Helpdesk (with the exception of maritime security where the authors do not hold expertise). These drivers have highly gendered dynamics which shape conflict systems and individual and societal responses to these:

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<sup>1</sup> Sahlins, Marshall D. 'Poor man, rich man, big-man, chief: political types in Melanesia and Polynesia', *Comparative studies in society and history* 5, no. 3 (1963): 285-303; Allen, Michael. 'Elders, chiefs, and big men: authority legitimation and political evolution in Melanesia', *American Ethnologist* 11, no. 1 (1984): 20-41.

<sup>2</sup> A socially constructed, dominant ideal of masculinity in a given context.

<sup>3</sup> George, N., "Lost in Translation": Gender Violence, Human Rights and Women's Capabilities in Fiji'. In Biersack, A., Jolly, M., & Macintyre, M (Eds). *Gender Violence, Human Rights: seeking justice in Fiji, Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu*, (Canberra: ANU Press, 2016), pp 81-126.

- 1. Climate change:** As stated in the Boe Declaration, “climate change remains the single greatest threat to the livelihoods, security and wellbeing of the peoples of the Pacific...”<sup>4</sup> It is widely noted that beyond traditional security impacts, human security issues such as impacts upon health, habitats and livelihoods are already being felt in many Pacific contexts, and these insecurities have differently felt impacts among men, women and young people and at the same time have an impact on the capacity of women to contribute to conflict prevention. A framework of conflict risks associated with climate change<sup>5</sup> in the Pacific includes exacerbation of land and resource conflict (see below), violent conflict arising in the wake of extreme weather events, displacement from ancestral homes, external climate change interventions causing conflict (due to a lack of do no harm) and potential deterioration of governance as governments use “crisis management” to respond to climate crises.<sup>6</sup> This paper notes how these risks will affect inclusion and exclusion based on gender and other intersectional identities. We further examine these conflict risks and impact upon gender relations below.
- 2. Land and resource extractive conflict:** As noted in the JACS, governance challenges and resource contestation are major challenges for the region. The majority of the South West Pacific is organised around small communities, where the majority of land and resources are customarily owned. This can lead to small-scale conflict between different family groupings (in some areas, such as the PNG Highlands, this can turn violent). Consultations revealed that conflict tends to emerge across the region when extractive industries enter community settings – forestry and mining operations in particular. In many instances, men negotiate deals with foreign companies while relatives – including other men as well as women and youth – are not consulted appropriately. Regulations fail to account for the wishes and needs of communities and limit women’s participation in ensuring peace and security at the community level. Communities are disproportionately impacted by effects as environmental degradation impacts on livelihoods. This places economic and social stresses within families, which are contributing factors to the high levels of gender-based violence.<sup>7</sup> Inclusive governance is needed to mitigate the effects of resource conflict, with all members of communities given appropriate information to make informed consent and to participate in decision making.
- 3. Governance challenges including corruption:** While public services, state security and political leadership face serious challenges in resourcing, legitimacy, competing priorities and, in some instances, corruption (categorised in the JACS as ‘poor governance’), communities have their own evolving ways of governance – which often sit at odds with the introduced ‘Western’ style governance. Consultations revealed that, while men dominate ‘seen’ leadership positions nationally and in communities, women exercise agency through a variety of strategies; for example, through family and kinship relations, generating accountability strategies (particularly leveraged through church institutions), shuttle diplomacy, and drawing upon traditional and cultural roles to promote the management of resources, livelihoods and peaceful relations. Building on this to help evolve mechanisms in which women and youth, as well as other members of the (including excluded men) can play a central role can only improve the quality of governance.
- 4. Geopolitical competition and challenge to rules-based order:** On the one hand, geopolitical competition is undermining national governance as international actors continue to ‘race to the bottom’ for influence in the region. This may have the effect of reinforcing existing elite and patriarchal forms of political power, further entrenching

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<sup>4</sup> Pacific Islands Forum, ‘Boe Declaration on Regional Security’, (2018), accessed on 22 November 2022.

<sup>5</sup> Conciliation Resources, ‘Climate Change and Conflict Risks in the Pacific’, (2021), accessed on 6 December 2022.

<sup>6</sup> Rahman, Muhammad Habibur and Nejat Anbarci, Mehmet A. Ulubaşoğlu, “‘Storm autocracies’: Islands as natural experiments”, *Journal of Development Economics*, Volume 159, (2022).

<sup>7</sup> Minter, T. et al., ‘From happy hour to hungry hour: Logging, fisheries and food security in Malaita Report’, (2018) (Penang, Malaysia: WorldFish. Program Report: 2018-07), accessed on 22 November 2022.

cultures of corruption and creating additional barriers for women's participation. On the other hand, geopolitical competition is more of a concern for the international community than of Pacific Island communities and risks distracting and taking up space for advocacy on the pressing issues occurring in their daily realities.

Additionally, we note the absence of an important conflict driver in the JACS:

- 5. Dealing with the past legacies of conflict:** Violence occurs in cycles – the effects of unresolved justice and intergenerational trauma eventually resurface and risk a return to violent conflict. Violent conflict in the PNG Highlands, Bougainville and Solomon Islands, as well as the legacies of coups in Fiji, requires post-conflict justice mechanisms, including indigenous forms of mediation and reconciliation.<sup>8</sup> These mechanisms can be exclusive of women, and focus on justice for the group rather than the individual – so while they remain important, there is a need for transformation of these systems to be more inclusive and gender-sensitive.

The following sections explore potential gender-sensitive responses to these drivers through further analysis.

# 1

## Strengthening and increasing women's leadership in the Pacific

Challenges to peace and security in the Pacific are all driven by underlying conflict dynamics. Exclusionary governance dominated by male elites limits the participation of communities and, at times, civil society. There is a need to invest in ensuring the participation of communities and civil society, including women, to transform these dynamics so as to address issues of governance, land and resource management, and climate change. Whilst the current focus in this area tends to be in formal political spaces, what is required is a whole-of-society approach to changing gender and leadership norms – starting with the social fabric and influencing the nature of political leadership in the region over time. The existing gender and social orders are governed by patriarchy and limit the representation of women in political decision-making roles (such as in parliamentary representation or senior government positions); however, it is important to recognise that these are not the only spaces where women have been represented in Pacific societies, both historically and in current times.

There are a range of formal and informal civil society relationships which bring women leaders together across the peace-development-humanitarian nexus across the Pacific region. These include the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), wider feminist networks in the region, such as the Shifting the Power Coalition, and climate justice networks, such as the Pacific Island Feminist Alliance for Climate Justice. Such networks and coalitions are essential in providing leadership platforms as well as spaces for solidarity, information and ideas exchange among women who are working actively to transform gender inequality and violence in their governments and societies, including mobilising resources to tackle intersecting crises. The aims of the WPS agenda need to move beyond rhetoric, but in ways which resonate

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<sup>8</sup> Conciliation Resources, 'Reconciliation in focus: Approaching reconciliation in peacebuilding practice', (2021), accessed on 6 December 2022.



within the Pacific Island context and are grounded in local initiatives being undertaken by these networks. They continue to offer contextualised recommendations in forums such as to the Global Civil Society Action Groups on UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 (2010),<sup>9</sup> the Global Study on UNSCR 1325 (2015),<sup>10</sup> as well as the development of the Generation Equality Forum WPS - Humanitarian Compact.<sup>11</sup> These leaders should be a first port of call in any peace and security policy and programme development undertaken by the UK Government as they bring a wealth of on-the-ground experience of issues faced by men and women in communities across the region.

Historically, much of the agency and leadership exercised by women in the Pacific has not been documented because women were hidden from narratives constructed by colonialism and missionisation<sup>12</sup> – themselves highly patriarchal. Yet, there is evidence of women displaying political and social consciousness. For example, in PNG, the Tolai women of East New Britain Province organised religious demonstrations. In Fiji, indentured Indo-Fijian women formed committees to fight against the oppression and repression that they experienced throughout the indenture period (1879–1920). In some areas of the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, female chiefs were key to managing resources; however, these positions were suppressed by colonial and missionary systems. There are historical parallels with today's discourse on women's political representation in the Pacific. The simplistic focus on seeing women's leadership in terms of the numbers of women in parliament is a continuation of a view which obscures the leadership roles women play in families and societies.

Literature shows that in many Pacific societies, women do exercise a degree of decision making over land and resources, despite dominant external narratives often portraying them as powerless.<sup>13</sup> Where women do not own land, they tend to be invested in the community mechanisms which govern land and resources so as to safeguard them for their children. In rural areas, this is often where leadership priorities lie – yet these are not reflected or accounted for as part of Western 'women's empowerment' interventions (women's economic empowerment programming has sought to recognise this to an extent, but tends to be centred on individual women's behaviours and capabilities). Community governance issues intersect across a range of conflict drivers, including land and resource disputes.<sup>14</sup>

A key leadership role women play is in violence prevention, peace-making and peacebuilding. In Bougainville and Solomon Islands, women-led peace movements contributed to minimising (Solomons) and bringing an end to (Bougainville) armed violence. However, in post-conflict peacebuilding stages, women's participation has often been limited to 'women's issues' such as gender-based violence, rather than the conflict system itself. Similarly, global frameworks

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<sup>9</sup> United Nations Security Council, Women, Peace and Security S/2010/498, (2010), accessed on 6 December 2022.

<sup>10</sup> United Nations Women, 'Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A global study on the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325', (2015), accessed on 6 December 2022.

<sup>11</sup> United Nations Women, Women, Peace & Security and Humanitarian Action (WPS-HA) Compact, accessed on 6 December 2022.

<sup>12</sup> The work carried out by missionaries. Christianity was introduced to the Pacific region by missionaries from Western Europe as early as 1660s, with the Spanish Roman Catholic priests starting their base in Philippines.

<sup>13</sup> Dickson-Waiko, Anne, 'Women, nation and decolonisation in Papua New Guinea', *The Journal of Pacific History* 48, no. 2 (2013): 177-193; Dickson-Waiko, Anne. 'Civil society and nation building', Kavanamur, C., Yala, Q., Clements.(Ed.). 'Building a nation in Papua New Guinea, views of the post-independence generation', (2003): 247-268.

<sup>14</sup> Gurney, Isabelle. 'From participation to power—Pacific approaches to women's economic empowerment', *Gender & Development* 30, no. 1-2 (2022): 177-200; Fairbairn-Dunlop, Peggy. 'Gender, culture and sustainable development—the Pacific way', *Culture and Sustainable Development in the Pacific* (2005): 62.

which seek to increase women's participation can often be exclusionary as they do not account for "age, social rank and kinship relations that may enhance women's standing and gendered power relations".<sup>15</sup> Women are thus 'framed and contained' within a 'woman's space' (tick box participation) rather than being invited to participate in broader political processes. Civil society in particular provides an important space for diverse women's participation in public life, and plays an essential role in peacebuilding and conflict prevention – both at community and national levels across the region.

While there may be a general lack of representation at national and provincial levels, women in the Pacific do hold leadership positions in community and local level governments. Globally, there tends to be a disproportionate focus on gender parity and quantifying numbers of women in national parliaments, rather than accounting for women's leadership in political decision-making spaces which can have a direct impact in people's lives (often at a community level). This can lead to portrayals of women as powerless and without decision-making opportunities, which can limit entry points to working within the existing strengths and agency that women have in a variety of public and private arenas. Treating women as the 'problem' (suggesting, for example, a lack of confidence or empowerment) rather than focusing on introduced and manipulated political systems which can exclude different women, many men, youth and a range of other intersectional identities is also limiting. A sole focus on leadership in parliament or politics as the indicator of inclusion fails to account for the ways in which a large number of dynamic women leaders work both in national civil society and grassroots movements, which is essential for peace and governance in Pacific Island nations.

In Tonga, for example, some women and men see traditional gender roles as under threat by 'outside' gender equality agendas. These actors seek to safeguard the traditional roles in which women exercise power, such as the *Mahekitanga* and the *Fahu*. The *Mahekitanga* is a term related to the father's sisters, whereas *Fahu* is given to the father's eldest sister by her brother's children. During important events, it is the *Mahekitanga* and the *Fahu* who are acknowledged, including through being given the 'best' of all presents or money. Tonga's social and gender norms can help to explain the backlash from women against political participation and other forms of representation seen as foreign. For example, controversy emerged over the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). A march opposing the ratification led to a protest of 500 people and a petition signed by 15,000 people, the majority of which were women.<sup>16</sup> Dialogue addressing the relationship between forms of cultural agency as complementary to, rather than in opposition to, formal or state-based political leaderships can address these tensions and contribute to a more legitimate evolution of women's political participation.

In summary, UK Government should reconceptualise how it understands and approaches the WPS Participation pillar, as well as how it defines and measures the success of this for the Pacific context. Recognising the different roles women place within society – and not just at the national level – can shape gender and political norms over time, including political norms around exclusionary national governance systems. Women play leading roles in their local community, church, charity, sports and other groups. It is important to (re)define the spaces in which we categorise women as leaders. This is not to discount the important work that needs to go into

<sup>15</sup> Morgan Brigg, Nicole George, Kate Higgins, 'Making Space for Indigenous Approaches in the Southwest Pacific? The Spatial Politics of Peace Scholarship and Practice', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* (2022).

<sup>16</sup> Helen Lee, 2017 'CEDAW Smokescreens: Gender Politics in Contemporary Tonga', *The Contemporary Pacific*, Vol 29, University of Hawai'i Press, [https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/26407844.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A9a4888ff863c8e8ed94f85b54b65b759&ab\\_segments=&origin=](https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/26407844.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A9a4888ff863c8e8ed94f85b54b65b759&ab_segments=&origin=).

advocating for more women to be represented in government positions. It is more the case that this needs a whole of society approach which starts by giving recognition to the leadership roles that women hold at the community level and in sub-national, national and regional civil society. There is a need to diversify and reach women beyond the political level, to include women who lead at other levels. Efforts should also consider bridging generational gaps between older and younger women by enhancing networks of older women leaders to support young women as mentors, especially in instances where traditional intergenerational support mechanisms have broken down. This will require working with the community to build a more conducive environment where leadership roles can flourish. Furthermore, widening analysis to consider women's agency rather than focusing on leadership takes into account the various platforms and spaces where women are influential, independent and making an impact.

### Programming recommendations related to strengthening and increasing women's leadership:

- i. **Convening space to build women's leadership:** UK Government can convene neutral, open-ended informal spaces for a diverse range of women from different levels of society– including through identifying women leaders at community, island, provincial, national and regional level – to generate strategies for women's inclusion in leadership within society. For example, convening a series of conversations around peace and security issues, inviting women's and peacebuilding networks, and sharing comparative examples of the work that women are doing in other areas of the world.
- ii. **Supporting existing networks:** UK Government can support existing women's networks to build knowledge, confidence and strategies for increased political participation and conflict prevention in the region. These include regional networks such as GPPAC Pacific and Shifting the Power Coalition. However, nationally and provincially, this can include women's church leaders' and community based organisations networks which bring women together to discuss peace and security issues.
- iii. **Support cross-gender dialogue:** Connecting networks between supportive men (such as male advocates) or male-led organisations to women's networks can be a productive space for the UK to support. By doing so, such dialogues can assist with building forums that are conducive for women's leadership which may further lead into alternative spaces being opened up by male allies in other arenas.

## 2

### Gender, masculinities and violence: how to work with men to transform violent behaviours

Two of the WPS pillars, Prevention and Protection for women and girls, require engaging with both men and women, as well as engaging with the gender norms that influence interaction with partners, children, families, communities, as well as a range of sub-national, national and regional institutions (such as governments, churches and civil society organisations). For the increased security of women, men also need to be made aware of the gains of gender equality

in their own lives. Despite significant investment by the government and donor community in preventing sexual and gender-based violence in the Pacific region, the problem is worsening.<sup>17</sup> The WPS agenda has tended to focus on women; however, while this approach can be women-led, it must also work within the structural and systemic responses which includes men and people with a range of intersectional identities. Aid projects directed at reducing violence often fail to confront the structural inequalities between men and women. There is an assumption of widespread acceptance of human rights and a tendency to ignore the deeply ingrained cultural attitudes and economic relations that naturalise female disadvantage and male entitlement. Many interventions are also women-centric – and while supporting women is essential, challenging harmful social and gender norms to prevent violence must involve men and boys and challenge their beliefs, values and behaviours, especially of those in power.

In the Pacific, violence against women largely takes place in the home, yet intimate partner violence (IPV) is downplayed in many societies because it is considered a ‘private or domestic’ matter, which officials then are reluctant to treat with urgency. The lack of interference by police officials, even when domestic or IPV is experienced first-hand by family or community members, is a concern. The lack of involvement by state agencies and community members is also a grave concern. Evidence suggests that women and children who experience violence from their male partners or family members tolerate gender violence and view it as culturally acceptable.<sup>18</sup> As such, domestic violence is often justified by both men and women as reflecting men’s traditional authority. Considering this, the involvement of men and boys in violence prevention work is crucial in dealing with the way men and women tolerate violence. Men’s roles in preventing violence against women have been increasingly studied globally since the late 1990s, and large-scale research on men’s reasons for using violence is now taking place.<sup>19</sup> However, as of yet there is little known about men’s engagement in violence-prevention work in the Pacific region. Understanding and analysing masculinities provides an opportunity to understand at a deeper level men’s complex, plural and dynamic gendered experiences which are constantly being shaped and reshaped through history and culture. At the same time, there is a need to involve men in addressing their own violent behaviours.

Barriers that men face to being part of the solution largely stem from the fact that masculinity is represented as a ‘problem’ in the Pacific – a result of unmet desires and needs within a gender order that is culturally unstable due to historical and globalised processes. This has resulted in resistance and expressions of negative masculine behaviour which often lead to violence. In almost all situations of resistance or violent conflict, women, children and other men in society become victims. The lack of voice, views and participation of men in the Pacific in dealing with issues of violence and negative masculine behaviour is a gap that needs to be addressed. There is a call by academics and practitioners to include the voices of men as perpetrators and not just women as victims in framing our understanding of gender violence in the region.<sup>20</sup>

Beyond the home, the role of gender and masculinities in intergroup violence is also a critical area for work to be developed. Typically, where major threats to peace and stability have

<sup>17</sup> Eves, R., ‘Men, masculinity and development in the Pacific’, *State, Society and Governance in Melanesia*. Briefing Note 2/2009. (Canberra: Australia National University, 2009).

<sup>18</sup> Macintyre, M., ‘Gender violence in Melanesia and the problem of Millennium Development Goal No. 3’. In M. Jolly, C. Stewart, and C. Brewer (Eds.). *Engendering Violence in Papua New Guinea* (Canberra: ANU e-Press, 2012), pp. 239-266.

<sup>19</sup> Mercy Masta, ‘Pacific masculinities: exploring men’s perspectives and experiences of masculinity, and efforts to engage men and boys in preventing violence in Papua New Guinea and Fiji’, (2019) accessed 6 December 2022.

<sup>20</sup> Kelly-Hanku, A. et al., ‘Transgressive Women Don’t Deserve Protection: Young Men’s Narratives of Sexual Violence Against Women in Rural Papua New Guinea’, *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, Volume 11 (2016).

occurred in the Pacific, mobilised groups of young men have been at the centre. For example, in Fiji, gangs of young indigenous men were recruited by Speight's coup in 2000 to threaten Indo-Fijian families who owned farms and businesses during the violence.<sup>21</sup> In Bougainville, the Bougainville Revolutionary Army consisted of multiple and localised groups of young men, mobilised to fight against the PNG Defence Force, in a conflict over a disparity in the distribution of resources between villages and clans, environmental degradation, land alienation and negative reaction due to the undertaking of migrant labour.<sup>22</sup> In Solomon Islands, groups of young men led civil unrest where buildings were set ablaze and shops looted, due in part to a lack of outlets for expressions of dissatisfaction with government corruption and unmet needs such as employment and housing.<sup>23</sup> Regrettably, in these conflicts and unrests, women and children experience suffering, and properties and assets are destroyed.

The gender dimension of intergroup conflict is not only driven by men or young men, but by the web of gender relations in any given society. For example, in Hela Province in PNG, masculinities are passed down across generations, and women play a role in continuing conflict.<sup>24</sup> The current generation of young people in Hela have grown up in a context of heightened levels of intergroup violence, where warfare is a part of storytelling to young children who learn about past intergroup fights so that it becomes normalised. Young boys are named to remember vengeance, through the giving of names of ancestors that need avenging. Names such as *tipaja* (translated as 'they cut him'), *tipule* ('I will cut him'), *parikuopele pole* ('if you kill me, I will kill you') are given to boys to remind them of the vengeance they owe to their kin.<sup>25</sup> In Hela Province, women play a key role in maintaining the link between masculinity and violence by ritualistically demanding retaliation from men during conflicts. Women generate support for fights by taunting men and demanding that they join in battle. Women use ceremonial actions such as face-painting and singing songs with messages such as "*I am in pain, I am hurting, I am angry, and you are not doing anything about it. Are you a woman so you cannot fight back?*" to promote continued support for male involvement in violence.<sup>26</sup> This is an extreme demonstration of the way in which women can play a role in encouraging intergroup violence, but also demonstrates that working with men and women on how masculinities are constructed (rather than a sole focus on femininities, women's agency and empowerment) is fundamental to shifting norms around violence, both within the home and within armed intergroup conflict.

Therefore, in order to support the Protection pillar, both in terms of addressing violence at a family level and at a broader societal conflict, there needs to be a continuation of work with women peacebuilding leaders and gender activists. However, there is a simultaneous need to work with men, particularly vulnerable young men, to positively reframe their understanding of masculinities within specific cultures and work towards generating norms of non-violence. This area receives very little support or attention in comparison to women-centric approaches, yet it is fundamental to engage men in order to transform male behaviours and reduce violence and conflict in the region. This could be a specific thematic entry point and niche for the UK Government's programming. Applying a masculinities lens in peacebuilding can assist practitioners to analyse why violent conflict occurs and to identify strategies for preventing

<sup>21</sup> Markus Pangerl, 'Notions of Insecurity Among Contemporary Indo-Fijian Communities', *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology*, Volume 8 (2007).

<sup>22</sup> Patrick Regan, 'Choosing to Intervene: Outside Interventions in Internal Conflicts', *The Journal of Politics*, Volume 60 (1998).

<sup>23</sup> George, N., 'Solomon Islands deployment: Australia must meet obligations to women', *The Interpreter*, Lowy Institute (2021), accessed 6 December 2022.

<sup>24</sup> Conciliation Resources, 'Conflict Challenges and Opportunities for Building Peace in Hela Province, Papua New Guinea' (2022).

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

violence, in support of the Prevention pillar. Forms of masculinity play a role in driving conflict. Systemic analysis which identifies how masculine identities are deeply entangled with systems of power and influence political, economic and social outcomes in the Pacific would help to find new entry points for intervention.

### Programming recommendations related to gender, masculinities and violence:

- i. **Research and analysis on violent societal norms and linkages between masculinities and group violence:** Building on existing programmes, we propose a two phased research process that could be conducted on the forms of masculine power within and between structures and systems to look for new entry points for conflict-sensitive responses. While there has been an assessment on forms of violent masculinities<sup>27</sup> and work that involves engaging men and boys,<sup>28</sup> there is no available research on group violence. In the first phase, research and analysis could be carried out to understand male group or peer violence in the Pacific, especially in the way that it relates to youth. As part of this, a particular focus on group violence among young Pacific men in contexts of conflict and violence would be helpful, given the pressure they encounter whilst dealing with multiple conflicting discourses from their families, communities and society in general. In the second phase, research could focus on how to engage with traditional and religious institutions and structures to explore opportunities to transform the behaviour of individuals and groups of men and boys. This can be supported by creating spaces or platforms where men can analyse their own traditional and cultural ideals and practices. This research could inform the work of peacebuilding actors who are working to transform gender relations from within, and also inform the work of policymakers across the region.
- ii. **Invest in approaches that support working with men and boys:** Men can sometimes feel excluded from initiatives that empower women, which risks leading to backlash or resentment. Therefore, programmes that improve women's economic, social or political empowerment or prevent violence ought to embrace ways of working with men. It is important to recognise that women are not a separate or disjointed category from men but are interconnected in complex relations. It is important for initiatives to understand the relations between men and women in societies and the consequences of empowering women. Efforts that concentrate on men and women as separate entities fail to address the need for a community cohesiveness – which then fails to build and maintain strong constructive and cooperative communities. Equally, it is also important to help women to understand the importance of working with or alongside men.

<sup>27</sup> Fulu, Emma, Rachel Jewkes, Tim Roselli, and Claudia Garcia-Moreno, 'Prevalence of and factors associated with male perpetration of intimate partner violence: findings from the UN Multi-country Cross-sectional Study on Men and Violence in Asia and the Pacific', *The Lancet Global Health* 1, no. 4 (2013): e187-e207; Fulu, Emma, Stephanie Miedema, Tim Roselli, Sarah McCook, Ko Ling Chan, Regine Haardörfer, Rachel Jewkes et al., 'Pathways between childhood trauma, intimate partner violence, and harsh parenting: findings from the UN Multi-country Study on Men and Violence in Asia and the Pacific', *The Lancet Global Health* 5, no. 5 (2017): e512-e522.

<sup>28</sup> Malungahu, Gemma, and Vili Nosa. 'Family violence initiatives and Pacific men: literature review', 2016; Regional Pacific Women's Network Against Violence Against Women and UN Women, 2020.



### 3

## Climate change, conflict and gender: addressing climate change in gender-sensitive ways

Climate change will transform conflict and environmental systems in which political and social relations are embedded, generating new challenges for the WPS agenda pillars. In particular, addressing the relationship between climate change and peace and security will be a key priority for Pacific communities and governments in terms of ensuring ongoing conflict prevention into the future. Communities, including women, have a key role to play in conflict prevention as the climate and environment changes around them. There is a developing body of research and programming which explores the interaction between environmental and climate risks and responses, and existing conflict drivers, actors and structures. Whilst this acknowledges that climate threats and interventions which are not locally designed may further exacerbate conflict, it also highlights potential opportunities for peace through joint responses to these challenges which are often shared across conflict lines.

Gender is one of the key variables that can help us to better understand how these risks, impacts and responses shape peace and conflict dynamics. Women, men and people of diverse gender identities and sexual orientations experience the impacts of climate change in different ways. They face distinct risks and vulnerabilities. They also face greatly varying social expectations and have access to different levels of power, which determine their ability to adapt and withstand the impact of climate change. As a result, such groups adopt different responses to environmental stresses caused by climate change. These 'gendered responses' play a central role in influencing peace and conflict dynamics. While research on the intersection between climate change, conflict and gender exists, it is nascent<sup>29</sup> and fails to take a holistic approach to understanding how all three aspects interrelate. The WPS agenda – including Security Council Resolutions and National Action Plans – has also been slow to recognise climate change as a specific threat to women and girls.<sup>30</sup>

The existing evidence base also predominantly focuses on the vulnerabilities of women and girls in relation to climate change and how these should be addressed, particularly regarding livelihoods and economic opportunities. One particular gap that Conciliation Resources has identified in the literature is a further examination of how gender norms, roles and power systems shape the coping mechanisms and responses of different groups to climate risks, which can in turn exacerbate tensions and undermine efforts to prevent and resolve conflict. There is also a gap in understanding on how expectations around masculinity influence responses to climate-associated conflict risks, and how this interacts with existing, and creates new forms of, conflict dynamics.<sup>31</sup>

In different Pacific contexts, there are a broad range of conflict risks associated with climate change that intersect both with women's leadership as well as changing gender roles and

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<sup>29</sup> Smith, E. S., 'Gender Dimensions of Climate Insecurity', SIPRI Insights on Peace and Security, No. 2022/4, (2022).

<sup>30</sup> Duncanson, C. 'Rearranging the deckchairs on the Titanic? The UK Government and the WPS agenda at a time of climate crisis', (2022), accessed on 29 November 2022.

<sup>31</sup> Smith, E. S., 'Gender Dimensions of Climate Insecurity', SIPRI Insights on Peace and Security, No. 2022/4, (2022).

expectations. The following conflict effects have implications for gender relations, creating opportunities and barriers for different groups.

**Extreme weather events:** Increased severity of extreme weather events caused by climate change is having a profound impact on communities. Cyclones, floods and droughts can create immediate resource scarcity, placing community leaders and governments under strain. Consultations revealed that this strain is further tested where disasters affect already vulnerable and under-serviced areas, such as informal urban settlements, increasing the potential for already excluded groups, in particular urban youth, to engage in violence due to increased competition over resources and grievances towards service providers. Women, children and people with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics experience more pressure when in evacuation centres. In Fiji, the Shifting the Power Coalition found that women's human security is affected more than that of men in times of extreme weather events, especially as women are held responsible for meeting family and community needs – for example, food and water – during these events. Regional peacebuilding organisation Transcend Oceania found that this affects masculinities, as men become too paralysed with trauma to fulfil leadership roles during traumatic climate events. Some progress has been made in terms of making humanitarian aid more gender-sensitive; however, contextualised responses to trauma and preventing conflict are required to support ongoing recovery.

**Resource scarcity:** Climate change contributes to a range of environmental impacts including long-term damage left by extreme weather events, reduced land for settlement and livelihoods due to sea level rise, storm surges, increased salinity, erosion and loss of biodiversity.<sup>32</sup> Other factors which drive environmental degradation include ongoing resource misuse, including the impacts of extractive industries. Given the way formal, informal and 'non-cash' economies are gendered across the Pacific, there are different impacts of environmental degradation on food and water security for men, women and a range of intersectional identities.<sup>33</sup> Women tend to be responsible for providing food, which is increasingly a challenge as climate change impacts food and water security and is fast changing local subsistent economies. In the cases of the medium-term impacts of extreme weather events as well as environmental degradation, women are forced to travel further for food and water supplies. This can lead to increased vulnerability and exacerbate existing behaviours around gender-based violence. Although many community-based climate change interventions are centred around 'resilience', many women peacebuilders are sceptical of this 'introduced' idea as they see it as a further burden they must bear; that is, that they are responsible for building more resilience and empowerment. This overshadows the systemic changes which need to occur, including transforming gender roles and responsibilities, in a way that works more productively with the environment.

**Displacement, relocation and urbanisation:** Many communities are facing displacement – including entire villages in several countries within the region – as well as increased individual and family movement due, in part, to pressures caused by climate change impacts. Urbanisation is increasing in Pacific Island Nations, as are forms of urban insecurity.<sup>34</sup> Displacement, relocation and urbanisation hold different outcomes for men, women and children. In cases

<sup>32</sup> Conciliation Resources, 'Climate Change and Conflict Risks in the Pacific', (2021), accessed on 6 December 2022.

<sup>33</sup> Carnegie, M; Rowland, C; Gibson, K; McKinnon, K; Crawford, J; Slatter, C., 'Gender and economy in Melanesian communities: A manual of indicators and tools to track change', University of Western Sydney, Macquarie University and International Women's Development Agency, (2012), accessed 23 November 2022.

<sup>34</sup> Conciliation Resources, 'Climate Change and Conflict Risks in the Pacific', (2021), accessed on 6 December 2022.



where communities have had to relocate, governance processes employed have not always been inclusive of different voices. Consultations in Fiji revealed that women have been inadequately consulted around relocation plans, leading to shock and trauma at the time of resettlement. In one particular community, women often still return to the original site to mourn. In another, a lack of formal consultation led to new settlements being built without kitchens. This is partially due to the way the traditional leadership was engaged, but also due to the ways in which consultations are designed within externally led projects, where top-down 'information' sessions are delivered to communities, and due to cultures of respect, community members engage in 'head-nodding' but where truly informed consent contextualised to Pacific worldviews is not obtained.<sup>35</sup> It is in urban environments, where fast-paced urbanisation is occurring due to pull factors, such as increased employment opportunities and education, and push factors, such as growing populations, that people are settling in climate vulnerable areas, increasing insecurity for women and marginalised community members.

**Increasing exclusionary forms of governance:** The management of climate change impacts, particularly after extreme weather events or in cases of relocation, can have a significant effect on leadership and governance. For example, up until now Fiji has been a global leader on the need for urgent climate change action; however, internally authoritarian forms of governance have limited the ways communities can participate. A change in government may give momentum to improve the relationship between community and the state. Given the authoritarian or centralised forms of political power – highly masculine in nature – that exist, climate change, especially extreme weather events, can provide political leaders with a reason to employ emergency, crisis management responses to reinforce existing political power, further entrenching patterns of marginalisation for vulnerable groups, including women and youth.

**Climate change interventions:** Climate change interventions tend to be based on the scientific and economic dimensions of life. Ignoring cultural and spiritual worlds – including women's participation in local church organisations – limits opportunities for women to engage with the forms of intervention (for example, climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction, relocation programmes, environmental conservation) that are addressing climate change in communities. Consultations revealed that, in one case of relocation in Fiji, communities asked for further adaptation measures, however the government advised relocation before proper assessments could be carried out. The relocation largely failed as a response and the community were left to undertake their own adaptation measures. Without adequate consultation and full consent ensured within the existing community cultural frameworks, climate change responses can fail and drive further insecurity. Furthermore, more time and effort are required to engage with community structures in a way that allows women and youth to participate. This requires time (for example, in Fiji, operating within and respecting the *vanua* approach requires taking time to engage in culturally appropriate ways and understand how communities operate, and indigenous *Talanoa* methods of dialogue can open up safe spaces for excluded groups to engage<sup>36</sup>), but short timeframes and bureaucratic project designs often do not allow for this. If they are not made inclusive, climate change interventions risk failing or only benefiting those with power in communities.

As mentioned at the start of this section, climate change cuts across all conflict systems, thus this particular risk to regional security is of relevance for all of the WPS pillars. There is a clear need to better link and understand climate change and WPS priorities, which is a potential entry

<sup>35</sup> Anisi, A. 'Addressing Challenges in Climate Change Adaptation: Learning from the Narikoso Community Relocation in Fiji', Toda Peace Institute Brief 84, (2020).

<sup>36</sup> Conciliation Resources and Transcend Oceana, 'Peacebuilding Approaches to Climate Change in Fijian Communities', (2022).

point for the UK Government. Climate change and its associated environmental impacts can particularly be addressed through the Prevention pillar, for example by strengthening local conflict resolution and climate mechanisms and responses to cope and adapt with pressures, whilst ensuring that responses to climate-related crises are conflict- and gender-sensitive. In addition, it is particularly vital to ensure that women are engaged in efforts under both the Participation and Relief and Recovery pillars, maximising on their expertise to respond to extreme weather events and ensuring that their voices are heard in appropriate forums and included in this emerging new thematic area from the outset.

#### Programming recommendations related to climate change, conflict and gender:

- i. Flexible funding for women-centred organisations to respond to extreme weather events:** There is a need for a small pot of flexible funding for women-centred organisations and networks such as Shifting the Power Coalition to respond when extreme weather events occur. Women peacebuilding actors can complement existing humanitarian approaches with approaches that deal with a range of issues that are often ignored. These include a lack of gender sensitivity and lack of conflict sensitivity while employing approaches which address psycho-social challenges such as trauma that emerge in the wake of violent conflict. However, issues of accessing funds need to be addressed, and onerous bureaucratic measures removed as women meet challenges in the aftermath of an event. Whilst women should be given access to funding to support responses to extreme weather events as experts in peacebuilding and community mobilisation, it is important to note that they should not be burdened with the expectation that they will solve everything, and proportionate measures of success, particularly in the midst of extreme weather conditions, should be applied.
- ii. Promote inclusive governance of projects which address climate change:** Promote project design approaches which are community led,<sup>37</sup> where consultation processes with external actors are clear to communities, cultural protocols are respected prior to engagement, and full informed consent is gained. By promoting such approaches, intersectional spaces for varying identities to lead projects which address climate change can be formed and fostered.
- iii. Analysis of transnational gendered dynamics and responses to climate change in the Pacific:** There is a need for further in-depth analysis of the gendered dynamics and responses to climate change in this region, and the intersection between climate change, conflict and gender. This will allow for a greater understanding of the complex dynamics and systems which influence the behaviours of individuals and societies, and how these key factors interrelate, which is necessary ahead of substantive interventions by UK Government which could cause further harm. In particular, further examination of how gendered coping mechanisms and behaviours manifest in response to climate change (most notably extreme weather events) would be particularly useful, linking to the aforementioned issue of violent masculinities and gender-based violence.

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<sup>37</sup> Transcend Oceania, 'A Just Peace Vanua Engagement. Peacebuilding Approaches to Climate Change in Fijian Communities', (2022).

## 4

### Broader recommendations for approaching programming in the Pacific

As the analysis above sets out, the varied and complex dynamics linked to conflict across the Pacific region present numerous opportunities for the UK Government to support a gender-sensitive approach to strengthening regional peace and security. The three main entry points linked to the thematic areas identified in this paper are:

1. Opportunities for strengthening and increasing women's leadership;
2. Understanding how to work with men to transform violent behaviours; and
3. Addressing climate change risks and impacts in gender-sensitive ways.

In addition to these specific entry points for programming, the UK could also consider the following broader recommendations for its engagement in the Pacific. This advice is based on the understanding that UK Government funding is relatively limited for this region, with suggestions focusing on issues which other actors are not significantly addressing, in order to have the greatest impact whilst supporting UK policy aims.

#### **Strengthening the capacity of CSSF and other UK Government actors working on the Pacific:**

It is vital that any future UK Government interventions aimed at promoting regional stability and peace incorporate a gender-sensitive approach to understanding conflict systems. This requires a broader understanding, not limited to often-siloed WPS activities, but across all peace and conflict work. As evidenced throughout this paper, of particular importance is effective gender-sensitive conflict analysis to allow for greater comprehension of conflict actors and structures. A gender-sensitive conflict analysis<sup>38</sup> can provide guidance and tools for comprehensive analysis which can be used to inform programme business cases and Theories of Change, and built into project inception stages. Further capacity strengthening of staff, including of partners in the region on gender and conflict sensitivity, can increase the uptake of a gendered lens within peace and security programming, provided there is an opportunity to review staff capacity development in the future. Capacity development activities such as trainings and refresher workshops should be specific to particular contexts, exploring some of the key gender norms, dynamics and behaviours identified in this paper, and build on knowledge from experts based in the region.

#### **Promoting narratives that do not 'catastrophise' the position and experiences of women in the Pacific:**

Another important action is to avoid the reproduction of potentially oppressive discourses which in themselves have the potential to limit the agency of women in the region. High levels of violence against women and girls in a number of Pacific contexts often mean that discussions around the role of women in conflict prevention and resolution efforts can often side-line them and minimise their impact. The nexus of climate change and gender in particular tends to further catastrophise the position of women or unfairly position or burden them as 'sustainability saviours' or likewise to suggest that the issue can be addressed through 'increased resilience'. To avoid repeating such limiting narratives, the voices of key women peacebuilders and leaders in the Pacific need to be brought to the forefront, included in analysis and showcased in international policy spaces, as well as being supported to define and

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<sup>38</sup> Conciliation Resources, 'Gender and conflict analysis toolkit for peacebuilders' (2015); Conciliation Resources and Saferworld, 'Gender-sensitive conflict analysis facilitators guide' (2020).

strategise responses to conflict and security risks within their own contexts. This requires a sustained and non-extractive investment in relationship building between UK Government actors and civil society, faith-based and customary leaders within the context to ensure programming is meaningful, non-tokenistic and reflects the needs of communities across the Pacific.

**Centring gender relations within the UK's conflict prevention work in the Pacific:**

Working to understand and navigate gender relations in the Pacific should be an essential component of any programming by the UK Government. By adopting a comprehensive gender approach, with a scope that complements support for women's participation including in their role as peacebuilders, to also work with men to better understand masculinities and how to support the transformation of structures which harm both men and women. This could involve opening up or supporting spaces for women and men to collaborate on peace and security issues, ensuring tensions are not further exacerbated and responses to violent conflict are localised and led by all sectors of the community.

**Strategically engaging diverse women in peace processes at all levels:** In addition to ensuring that women continue to play a pivotal role in leading and responding to conflict and insecurity at the local level, and that community or sub-national level responses incorporate their perspectives, international actors can use their networks and geopolitical power to open up spaces for diverse women to participate in national and international political processes. This can be done by creating and resourcing genuinely accessible and inclusive platforms for women from across the Pacific to share their experiences and engage in global discourses.

**Taking a holistic approach to the intersecting issues of climate change, conflict and gender:** As a significant driver of conflict and insecurity across multiple contexts in the region, it is fundamental to better understand how climate change interacts with existing conflict drivers and responses, and how climate change impacts people from different identity groups in distinct ways. Given the interrelated nature of climate change across different Pacific contexts and common experiences of groups in different countries, there would be particular value in carrying out further research at the transnational level to better understand and address this interaction and identify opportunities for shared interventions and learning, helping to contribute to solidarity among key civil society groups.

**Identifying and promoting existing local responses to climate change and conflict:**

Building on the necessity for comprehensive analysis, there is a need to focus on existing solutions to transnational threats to security and adapting local mechanisms to meet these threats rather than imposing external solutions which may not be culturally relevant. Whilst this is applicable across the range of conflict drivers discussed in this paper, it is particularly relevant to the threat of climate insecurity.