

Background Note
Briefing to the Executive Board
2nd Regular Session 2019

Operational Response at Sub-Regional Level: Fiji Multi-Country Office

Summary

The briefing on the UN-Women Fiji Multi-Country Office operational response in the Pacific will undoubtedly be of interest to the Board due to the scope and complexity of its work and the scale of the response. The Fiji MCO is one of the largest UN-Women offices in the world with 57 staff and a budget of 15.1 mil in 2019. The 14 Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs) covered by the Fiji MCO differ in geography, size, history, culture, economy, and political system. Geographic isolation translates to high operational costs and increased challenges in reaching the most vulnerable populations. The Pacific is a region with the highest recorded prevalence of violence against women and girls in the world, the lowest levels of women in parliaments, and at an aggregate level, PICTs are estimated to have the second highest rates of vulnerable workers (in the subsistence economy, working for family, own account workers, and in the formal economy) of all developing country groups. The Pacific region is among the most vulnerable in the world to the effects of climate change, extreme weather events, and natural disasters, exacerbating the situation of women and girls.

UN-Women's sub-regional level operational response in the Pacific

The UN-Women Fiji Multi-Country Office (Fiji MCO) covers 14 PICTs: Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu. The Fiji MCO works to progress gender equality and women's empowerment through four key programmatic areas - Women's Economic Empowerment, Ending Violence Against Women and Girls, Women's Political Empowerment and Leadership, and Gender and Protection in Humanitarian Action. Normative and intergovernmental support is mainstreamed across all pillars.

1. Women's Political Empowerment and Leadership

To address the chronic under-representation of women in politics in the Pacific and to strengthen the voice of women leaders in governance issues, the Fiji MCO ensures transformative programming in the areas of women's political empowerment and leadership through two projects, *Consolidating Peace, Stability and Social Cohesion in Solomon Islands* and *Women in Leadership Samoa (WILS)*. In line with lessons learned, UN-Women partners with UNDP to implement comprehensive programming along the entire electoral cycle, modelled on UN-Women's WPEL Flagship Programme. With UNDP leading the work in the region on electoral frameworks and arrangements, political party strengthening, and political institutions and parliamentary support, the MCO is building on its programmatic experience in the region to support a cadre of women leaders interested in running for office and/or leading at the community level, as well as working to change the social norms determining how women are perceived as leaders. The MCO supports women leaders, candidates and aspirants to engage in political life and organisations to engage in community awareness programmes and national campaigns.

- Consolidating Peace, Stability and Social Cohesion in Solomon Islands, funded by UN Peacebuilding Fund, multi-donor trust fund (\$786,006 USD from Dec 2017-June 2019);
- Women in Leadership Samoa, funded by the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), (\$1,039,500 USD from 2018-2021);
- Through the Markets for Change project, Outcome One, funded by DFAT (see below).

2. Women’s Economic Empowerment

Although extreme poverty is declining, hardship and vulnerability are on the rise in the region, with one in five Pacific islanders continuing to live in poverty UN-Women recognizes that to advance women’s economic empowerment, programming must address the intersections between women’s economic empowerment, safety and discrimination, leadership and participation, disaster preparedness, and livelihoods. Marketplaces are a critical space in which these interrelated factors come into play. Between 75-90 per cent of vendors working at Pacific marketplaces are women and their earnings often make up a significant portion of the incomes of many poor households. Despite this, women are often excluded from market governance and decision-making. UN-Women’s response works towards improving working conditions for women market vendors in Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, with its Markets for Change (M4C) Project, a multi-country initiative that aims to ensure marketplaces in rural and urban areas are safe, inclusive and non-discriminatory, promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment.

The project is underpinned by the following strategies: (i) creating and supporting representative marketplace groups that claim the rights and represent the interests of market vendors; (ii) supporting improved socio-economic security of market vendors, including rural farmer vendors, through access to appropriate services, training and interventions which respond to their financial, business and agricultural needs; (iii) building the capacity of local government and market management to implement policies, laws and budgets that ensure gender responsive marketplaces; and (iv) improving marketplace infrastructure to make them safer, more sustainable and accessible. Across all strategies, M4C ensures a continued focus on supporting women vendors specifically from the rural areas and those with disabilities. M4C is a solid example of inter-sectional programming that supports women economic empowerment through leadership, improved governance, infrastructure and disaster risk reduction, and support to gender responsive planning and budgeting at local government level; it is therefore being implemented in close partnership and coordination with other MCO programmes.

- Markets for Change, funded by UN Women core funds (\$1,200,000 USD); DFAT (\$20,199,533 AUD¹ from 2014-2020); Government of Canada Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development (DFATD) (\$3,350,000 CAN² from 2018-2021), with UNDP as a key implementing partner.

3. Ending Violence against Women and Girls

To address the high levels of violence against women and girls in the Pacific, and to ensure a robust, coordinated response to the violence they face that includes accessible, high-quality essential services and comprehensive, transformative prevention programming across all levels of the socio-ecological model, the Fiji MCO has modelled its Ending Violence Against Women (EVAW) programme on UN-Women’s global EVAW Flagship Programme. The programme

¹ (USD 10,834,692)

² (USD 2,578,906.85)

leverages and contextualises the best global evidence on prevention of VAW to transform the social norms that perpetuate gender inequality and violence against women and girls, leading to a reduction in violence in intervention sites, and strengthening services for survivors of violence.

The MCO is supporting national Government and civil society partners in Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Tonga to adopt a comprehensive and evidence-based approach in developing and implementing contextualized community-based prevention programmes that integrate faith and sports and strengthen access to quality multi-sectorial services for a transformative social change. The research component generates concrete evidence of what works in transforming harmful attitudes, beliefs and norms towards the acceptability of violence against women and girls. This research will advance the field of violence prevention programming and be catalytic in identifying prevention interventions effective in the Pacific context, and that can subsequently be taken to scale in the region.

The MCO also works with national partners to develop capacity and best practice standards and guidelines to ensure that women and girls who experience violence, including women with disabilities and members of the LGBTQI community, have access to quality essential services to recover; this includes supporting the development of decentralised service delivery to ensure those living outside the main urban areas are able to access services and supporting the coordination of service delivery across sectors.

- Pacific Partnership to End Violence Against Women and Girls, funded by the European Union (EU) and DFAT (\$19,593,024 EUR or \$22,790,536 USD for the entire action. UN Women's allocation is \$16,090,525 USD, Jan 2018 - June 2022). Additional funds from Australia on mapping of faith-based initiatives on primary prevention of EVAW. Current negotiation on donor agreement with New Zealand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) for the expansion of the programme in Vanuatu from July 2019 with approximately 2.7 million USD (2019-2022).

4. Disaster Preparedness, Resilience and Humanitarian Response

To ensure the full integration of gender and protection in humanitarian action, and so that Pacific women can lead and fully participate in humanitarian preparedness and response, UN-Women's Humanitarian programme focuses on two streams of work: ensuring that humanitarian planning, response frameworks and programming are gender and protection inclusive; and supporting Pacific women and women's civil society organizations (CSOs) to lead preparedness for and response to natural disasters. The programme focusses on three strategies: (i) leveraging UN-Women's role as chair of the Pacific Humanitarian Protection Cluster and co-lead of regional work on gender-based violence in emergencies (GBViE) to support the Pacific Humanitarian Team and national protection clusters to implement gender and protection into humanitarian planning and action. This includes capacity building, support for data collection, knowledge sharing and deployment of humanitarian personnel for surge support in emergencies; (ii) addressing the gender inequality of disaster risk in the Solomon Islands and building community resilience through capacity building in gender responsive DRR; (iii) localisation through supporting CSOs to build the capacity of women and girls in humanitarian planning, programming and response that promotes resilience, under the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (currently funding eight grantees across five Pacific countries).

- Gender and Protection in Humanitarian Action (GPiHA), funded by UN-Women Australia National Committee (\$625,871 USD for 2019);

- Addressing the Gender Inequality of Risk and Building Community Resilience in the Solomon Islands, funded by DFAT (\$2,030,000 AUD from 2018-2023);
- Women’s Peace and Humanitarian Fund, funded by Women’s Peace and Humanitarian Fund, multi-donor trust fund (\$1,994,095 USD from 2016-2019).

5. Global Norms

PICTS are increasingly coalescing and engaging on normative platforms, including those related to gender equality and the empowerment of women, such as CEDAW and the CSW, with the support of the United Nations, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS).

The MCO implements its normative mandate by leveraging its convening role and technical expertise to strengthen the capacity of Pacific governments and CSOs to engage with regional and global normative processes, and to use global and regional norms and standards in implementing the SDGs at national level. In close collaboration with the Pacific Community Regional Rights Resource Team (SPC-RRRT) and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the MCO strengthens capacity of both governments and CSOs to engage with CEDAW monitoring and reporting, as well as to incorporate CEDAW into national legislation and policies. The MCO also supports, in partnership with PIFS, SPC and other regional partners, the meaningful engagement of PICTs in the CSW, Beijing 25th year anniversary review (B+25) and other processes, including the Triennial Conference of Pacific Women and the Pacific Feminist Forum, through support for preparatory platforms and consultations.

- Normative and intergovernmental support funded by UN-Women core funds (\$309,944 USD for 2019).

6. Partnerships

Strategic partnerships are key to the Fiji MCO’s success and have been developed and maintained at all levels. At the *regional* level the MCO collaborates closely with the Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP agencies), more specifically the Pacific Island Forum Secretariat (PIFS) and the Pacific Community (SPC) to support wider gender coordination in regional and global intergovernmental processes and human rights treaty reporting. At *national and local* level, the MCO maintains programmatic partnerships with a broad range of ministries, departments, provincial and local authorities. National women’s machineries are key partners across countries and all programmatic areas, but the Fiji MCO also engages closely with Ministries of local governments, provincial governments, municipal councils, and Ministries of Agriculture for M4C, with Ministries of Internal Affairs, Justice, Police and Health for EAW programming, and National Disaster Management Offices (NDMOs) for gender and protection in humanitarian action. The Fiji MCO is starting to engage with Ministries of Finance towards gender responsive budgeting exercises.

The Fiji MCO maintains strong relationships with civil society across its programmes, and partners with private sector organizations particularly through the M4C programme. The EAW programme is developing innovative partnerships with *non-traditional actors*, specifically in the faith-based and sport sectors, such as with Oceania Rugby, and with academic/research institutions, such as the Equality Institute for evidence generation around VAW prevention.

To fully enable the implementation of its Strategic Note and of the gender components of the UN Pacific Strategy (UNPS), the Fiji MCO works jointly with other *UN agencies* in the Pacific

in all its programme areas. UN-Women co-chairs Outcome Group 2: Gender Equality within the UN Pacific Strategy and participates in all 5 other Outcome Groups, plus the Data Monitoring and Evaluation Group (DMEG) and UNPS Coordination Group. Alongside PIFS and SPC, UN-Women co-chairs the Pacific Gender Taskforce, the joint UN/regional organization/donor/CSO gender coordination mechanism, plus participates in the CROP Gender Working Group. UN-Women is one of the four largest UN agencies in the Pacific, and participates fully in the UN Country Team, with contribution to the UN Joint Presence Offices in the Pacific. UN-Women has supported the establishment of the Resident Coordinator Offices (RCOs) under the UN reform, with full participation with both the Samoa and Fiji RCOs.

Finally, the MCO works closely with *donor partners* in the region including the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and their support unit, *Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development*, the European Union (EU), the Canadian Government, and New Zealand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT), to ensure programmes are well resourced and that the MCO's programmatic interventions are coordinated as much as possible with other donor-supported initiatives in specific countries and at a regional level.

7. Budget

As of the start of the Strategic Note, the total budget for the 2018-2022 programme is **USD 52 million** out of which 48 million (5 million IB, 9 million core and 34 million non-core) is available or in hard pipeline, and **4 million (7.7%) is to be mobilised**. The resulting management ratio projected is under 10%.

As of the start of 2019, the 2019 budget was USD 13 million; however, resources in 2019 have increased for EVAW (USD 2.76 mil, Vanuatu), M4C (USD 1.4 mil, extension), and GPiHA (USD 600,000, pilot).