

DISCUSSION PAPER

FALLING THROUGH THE NET?

Gender and Social Protection in the Pacific



No. 6, September 2015

**MARGARET JOLLY, HELEN LEE, KATHERINE LEPANI,
ANNA NAUPA AND MICHELLE ROONEY**

FOR PROGRESS OF THE WORLD'S WOMEN 2015-2016

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This paper has been produced for the UN Women flagship report *Progress of the World's Women 2015-2016* by Margaret Jolly, Helen Lee, Katherine Lepani, Anna Naupa and Michelle Rooney.

This paper is based on comprehensive literature reviews by the five authors, but grounded in extensive personal and research experience. Anna Naupa and Michelle Rooney are from Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea respectively and are accomplished researchers engaged in policy and development work. Dr. Katherine Lepani is a medical anthropologist who has spent several decades living, working and researching in Papua New Guinea. Professors Margaret Jolly and Helen Lee are both Australian anthropologists with long experience of research with Pacific people, concentrated on ni-Vanuatu and Tongans respectively.

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SUMMARY

Pacific women are hardworking, creative, resourceful and resilient. Yet, their predominant portrayal is one of vulnerable victimhood distinguished by limited opportunities for empowerment and intractable gender inequality and gender violence. Our discussion of gender and social protection in the Pacific starts with the recognition of women's agency while also acknowledging that pervasive structures and processes of inequality severely constrain their creativity and resilience in adversity. Pacific women are doubly devalued by masculinist structures that have their origins in both indigenous cultures and the introduced culture of a globalizing capitalism in both colonial and contemporary epochs. This discussion paper considers these dynamics in three countries of the region – Papua New Guinea, Tonga and Vanuatu – and explores how best to approach social protection so as to promote gender equality rather than risk reinscribing prevailing gender inequalities.

The paper emphasizes the need to move beyond bipolar divisions of customary and commodity

economies or informal and formal economies to consider the everyday realities of making a living. Women will 'fall through the net' if social protection is unduly yoked to the public sphere of the state and the formal commodity economy in which women are marginalised. Indigenous forms of social protection – safety nets grounded in kinship and collective relations to the land – are fraying with commoditization, especially in the context of extractive industries such as mining and logging as well as urbanization, tourism and real estate speculation. This is further diminishing the little influence women have over land as both resource and place of belonging. Hence, we suggest that efforts to ensure women's social protection in the Pacific need to be alert to the risks that women might 'fall through the net'. Women's own perceptions of their contemporary situation and their agency as both individuals and collectivities (articulated in church groups and civil society organizations) should be carefully heeded in finding creative solutions for gender equality in social protection for sustainable Pacific futures.

RÉSUMÉ

Même si les femmes vivant dans le Pacifique sont travailleuses, créatives, débrouillardes et résilientes, elles sont généralement présentées comme des victimes vulnérables ayant peu de possibilités d'autonomisation, faisant face à des inégalités de genre et des violences sexistes insurmontables. Notre débat sur les questions de genre et la protection sociale dans le Pacifique commence par la nécessité de reconnaître le pouvoir des femmes, tout en admettant que les structures et processus généralisés qui sous-tendent les inégalités entravent considérablement leur créativité et leur résilience face à l'adversité. Les femmes du Pacifique sont doublement marginalisées par des structures masculinistes qui trouvent leurs origines dans les cultures autochtones et émanent également du

capitalisme mondial apparu pendant les périodes coloniale et contemporaine. Le présent document de réflexion examine ces dynamiques dans trois pays de la région – la Papouasie-Nouvelle-Guinée, les Tonga et le Vanuatu – et étudie la meilleure façon d'envisager la protection sociale afin de promouvoir l'égalité des sexes au lieu de prendre le risque de perpétuer les inégalités de genre existantes.

Le document met en lumière la nécessité de dépasser les divisions bipolaires entre les économies traditionnelles et les économies axées sur les produits de base, ou économies informelles et formelles, afin de tenir compte de la réalité d'un quotidien marqué par la nécessité de gagner sa vie. Les femmes continueront d'être « reléguées aux oubliettes » tant

que la protection sociale sera indûment assujettie à la sphère publique étatique et à l'économie formelle axée sur les produits de base, au sein de laquelle les femmes sont marginalisées. Les formes de protection sociale communautaires – les filets de sécurité liés aux liens de parenté et aux liens collectifs avec la terre – sont sapées par la marchandisation, notamment en lien avec les industries extractives telles que les activités minières et forestières, l'urbanisation, le tourisme et la spéculation foncière. Cette situation réduit davantage l'influence minimale que les femmes ont encore sur les terres en tant que ressource et milieu

de vie. Ainsi donc, nous estimons que les démarches visant à assurer la protection sociale des femmes dans le Pacifique doivent tenir compte du risque de les voir « reléguées aux oubliettes ». La perception des femmes de leur situation actuelle et de leur pouvoir en tant qu'individus et collectivités (s'exprimant à travers des groupes religieux et des organisations de la société civile) doivent être soigneusement prises en considération pour trouver des solutions originales en faveur de l'égalité des sexes en matière de protection sociale, afin que les lendemains soient durablement meilleurs dans le Pacifique.

RESUMEN

En la región del Pacífico, las mujeres trabajan duro, son creativas y resilientes y se caracterizan por poseer multitud de recursos. Sin embargo, presentan un rasgo predominante: su cualidad de víctimas vulnerables debido a las escasas oportunidades de empoderamiento y a la prevalencia de la desigualdad de género y la violencia de género. En su análisis de género y protección social en el Pacífico, las autoras parten del reconocimiento de la incidencia política de las mujeres y de que las estructuras y procesos de desigualdad dominantes limitan gravemente la creatividad y la resiliencia de estas ante situaciones adversas. Las mujeres del Pacífico sufren una doble desvalorización por parte de las estructuras machistas, que tienen su origen tanto en las culturas indígenas como en la cultura de capitalismo globalizador introducida tanto en la época colonial como en la contemporánea. En este artículo se examinan estas dinámicas en tres países de la región –Papua Nueva Guinea, Tonga y Vanuatu– y se explora cuál puede ser el mejor enfoque en lo que concierne a la protección social, con el fin de promover la igualdad de género y no correr el riesgo de reforzar las desigualdades de género.

El artículo hace hincapié en la necesidad de superar las divisiones bipolares entre las economías tradicionales y de mercado, o de las economías formales

e informales, para estudiar las realidades cotidianas de las personas que tratan de ganarse la vida. Si la protección social se vincula incorrectamente a la esfera pública del Estado y a la economía de mercado formal, en la que las mujeres están marginadas, estas se “caerán de la red”. La economía de mercado está provocando la desaparición progresiva de las formas de protección social que aplican los pueblos indígenas –basadas en redes de seguridad que se apoyan en el parentesco y en relaciones colectivas de propiedad de la tierra–, sobre todo en el contexto de las industrias extractivas, como la minería y la tala, así como de la urbanización, el turismo y la especulación inmobiliaria. Esto reduce aún más la escasa influencia que tienen las mujeres sobre la tierra como recurso y como lugar de pertenencia. Por consiguiente, las autoras sugieren que las iniciativas encaminadas a garantizar la protección social de las mujeres en el Pacífico deben permanecer alerta ante el riesgo de que las mujeres se “caigan de la red”. Debería atenderse a las percepciones de las propias mujeres sobre su situación actual y su actuación, tanto individual como colectiva (articulada en grupos religiosos y organizaciones de la sociedad civil), con objeto de encontrar soluciones creativas para la igualdad de género en la protección social y de lograr un futuro sostenible para la región del Pacífico.

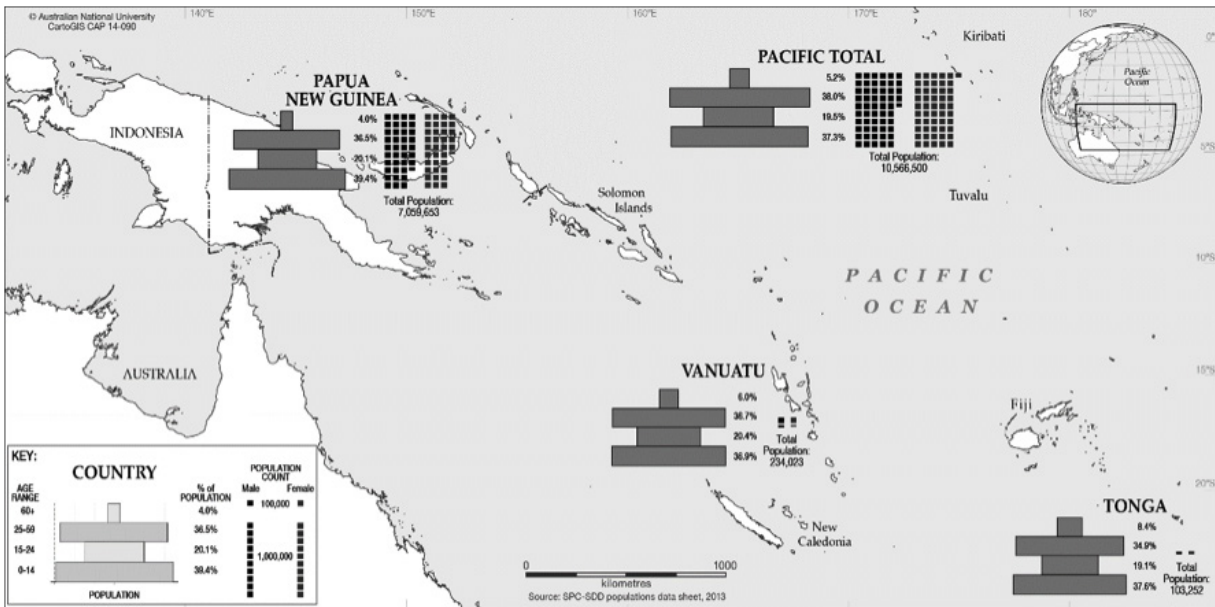
1.

INTRODUCTION

Pacific women are hardworking, creative, resourceful and resilient agents. Yet their predominant portrayal is one of vulnerable victimhood distinguished by limited opportunities for empowerment and intractable gender inequality and gender violence. Our discussion of gender and social protection in the Pacific starts with the recognition of women’s agency while also acknowledging that pervasive structures and processes of inequality severely constrain their creativity and resilience in adversity. Pacific women are doubly devalued by masculinist structures that have their origins in both indigenous cultures and the introduced culture of a globalizing capitalism in both colonial and contemporary epochs. This discussion paper considers these dynamics in three countries of the region – Papua New Guinea, Tonga and Vanuatu – exploring how best to approach social protection so as to promote gender equality rather than risk reinscribing prevailing gender inequalities.

MAP 1-1

Map of Pacific region showing location and population data for Papua New Guinea, Tonga and Vanuatu



Source: CartoGIS, The Australian National University.

A number of important background papers and case studies on social protection in the Pacific have been produced over recent years to help guide the discussion

and development of relevant policy frameworks for state-based models of comprehensive, universal social protection (see Commonwealth of Australia 2012). This

discussion paper draws on this body of work but further contributes to the debate with an explicit focus on the gender dimensions and implications of social protection. We are guided by the operational definition by Anit Mukherjee, Marilyn Waring and Elizabeth Reid (2012), which identifies an inclusive range of social protection measures within a human rights framework:

All initiatives, both formal and informal, that provide: social assistance to extremely poor individuals and households; social services to groups who need special care or would otherwise be denied access to basic services; social insurance to protect people against the risks and consequences of livelihood shocks; and social equity to protect people against social risks such as discrimination or abuse.¹

The three country case studies presented here explore the gendered dimensions of both formal and informal modes of social protection in relation to rapid transformations in the globalizing economies in the Pacific region, with a focus on the significance of extractive industries in generating wealth in Papua New Guinea (PNG); the fragility of the remittance economy in Tonga; and the gendered effects of recent land leasing and real estate development near Port Vila, Vanuatu.

We argue that unless systems of state-based social protection are well designed, complement robust social services in health and education and do not further fray fragile informal networks of social protection, that women risk ‘falling through the net’. The interaction between gendered inequalities in

¹We endorse this definition of social protection as more inclusive than other definitions that are primarily focused on interventions by the state and are too often confined to the formal sector (see, for instance, Asian Development Bank 2001, pp. 1–2; International Labour Organization (2001), pp. 38–39; World Bank 2006, p. 1). In response to a reviewer, we are alert to the problems of not constraining a rights-based understanding of need by qualifications of poverty even though poor and indeed extremely poor people may be focal to social protection initiatives.

formal and informal economies threatens to compound women’s poverty and marginalization in the future. Following the three case studies, we consider both commonalities and differences among them and suggest ways in which social policy might promote positive synergies between state, churches, civil society actors and communities to afford greater social protection for women and hopefully translate such policies into practices that enhance gender equality and human rights.

Gender equality: The limits of indicators

Gender equality is the “equal rights, responsibilities of women and men and girls and boys.... [It] implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men.... Equality between women and men is seen both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centred development” (UN Women 2013). This is our shared vision of gender equality.

In operationalizing this vision, attention is often focused on those public dimensions of educational, economic and political capacity where women are seeking equality with men: equal access to education and comparable outcomes at all levels; equal employment, pay and conditions for waged and salaried work; equal representation in national parliaments, councils and legal institutions; and equal leadership in business, government, churches and civil society. Comparing the situation for women and men, through gender-disaggregated data, has generated indicators that are used in influential global tables such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) gender inequality index (GII), which not only compares women to men and girls to boys but also women across countries and regions. Some indicators of gender in/equality are predicated on women’s difference from men, as in rates of maternal and infant mortality.

Table 1-1 shows where PNG, Tonga and Vanuatu are situated on the UNDP human development index (156, 95 and 124 respectively) and PNG and Tonga on the GII (134 and 90 respectively), alongside other Pacific countries included in the GII (UNDP 2013a). The GII

TABLE 1-1

Human development index ranks and gender inequality index

Country (listed by HDI rank)	HDI rank	2012 GII rank	2010 maternal mortality ratio	Adolescent fertility rate	2012 seats in national parliament (% female)	2006-2010 population with at least secondary education (female)	2006-2010 population with at least secondary education (male)	2011 labour force participation rate (female)	2011 labour force participation rate (male)
Palau	52	--	--	12.7	6.9	97.5	98.8	--	--
Tonga	95	90	110	18	3.6	71.6	76.7	53.6	75
Fiji	96	--	26	42.8	--	57.5	58.1	39.3	79.5
Samoa	96	--	--	25.5	4.1	64.3	60	42.8	77.8
Kiribati	121	--	--	16.4	8.7	--	--	--	--
Vanuatu	124	--	110	50.6	1.9	--	--	61.3	79.7
Solo- mon Islands	143	--	93	64.6	--	--	--	53.2	79.9
Papua New Guinea	156	134	230	62	2.7	6.8	14.1	70.6	74.1

Source: UNDP 2013a.

includes maternal mortality ratios, adolescent fertility rates, female seats in the national parliament and gender-disaggregated data for educational levels and labour force participation rates where these are available (UNDP 2013b).

At the outset, however, we stress how a human rights approach to gender equality and social protection must also focus on questions of women's embodied experience and daily livelihoods, which perform transcend any bipolar division of public and domestic spheres, formal and informal economies. We must consider women's subsistence and unpaid work; women's relation to land both as an economic resource and a place of belonging; women's nutrition, health and well-being; women's relation to children both as bearers and carers; women's rights in relation to their intimate kin in marriage, divorce and inheritance; and women's status as legal subjects in both state and non-state justice. This is the broad vision of gender equality that we espouse in this paper.²

² Similar multi-dimensional approaches to gender equality have been espoused by others.

Such dimensions of gender relations are often far harder to quantify, enumerate and rank. For example, computing the value of women's unpaid labour in subsistence agriculture, domestic and caring work has been a chronic problem since it is both conceptually and technically difficult to translate the time and energy spent working or the value of the product or service into a commodity calculus. From the early debates in second wave feminist movements about 'wages for housework' to the most recent nuanced discussions about valuing informal as well as formal economies in developed and developing worlds, there has been some progress but persistent problems (Bjørnholt and McKay 2014; Gibson-Graham et al. 2013; Waring 1999). There are large, perhaps even insurmountable, difficulties in converting qualitative data into the quantitative data necessary for indicators.

Important as indicators are in any global comparison of how women stand in relation to men and to each other, they do have their limits. First, as even their proponents acknowledge, the reliability of indicators is often poor in the absence of good gender-disaggregated data, especially in those parts of the world where there is little capacity or political will to collect such data. In the

absence of reliable data, proxies are frequently used. For example, in estimating rates of gender or sexual violence, there is chronic under-reporting to police or other authorities and thus surveys of alleged frequency or attitudinal studies of legitimacy are used instead and rates extrapolated. This has too often been the case in the Pacific (Jolly et al. 2012).

Second, insofar as indicators are mapped onto countries and regions of the world, they tend to obscure the large differences between women on the basis of class, ethnicity and religion within such countries or regions. This is especially egregious when the Pacific is grouped with Asia and most particularly East Asia, a region that is vastly different in terms of population size, economic development, geopolitical prominence and cultural contours. Similarly, national indicators for Pacific women obscure large differences between urban and rural regions and between richer, well-educated urban women and poorer, less-educated rural women.

Third, in focusing on women, indicators tend to ignore the relational character of gender in households, kin groups and communities and rather compare women to men as populations of isolated individuals. This is a particular problem in the Pacific, where extended kinship groups remain foundational in rural and urban life and individualism is at most incipient.

Fourth, indicators can merely reflect the status quo of global inequalities, such as gendered rates of poverty, rather than creatively transforming them. Still, some would counter-argue that the prominence of indicators in global fora such as the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women does have the potential to name and shame particular countries and regions where gross gender inequalities persist, although often this is accomplished by comparing well-endowed countries with countries that have been marginalized by global inequities in economic development and resource distribution, such as our three case studies from the Pacific.

Fifth, it has been argued that such indicators privilege a monolithic capital-centric vision of development that manacles women's progress to the development of the commodity economy. This criticism is especially

relevant for contexts such as PNG, Tonga and Vanuatu where women's livelihoods are not primarily dependent on cash earnings but where women are creatively hard at work between customary and cash economies (see below).³

Sally Engle Merry has offered perhaps the most trenchant critique of 'indicator culture', ultimately suggesting that in seeing numbers as the privileged source of facts and truths about gender inequality we are often neglecting powerful sources of qualitative evidence that resist conversion into numerical values (Merry 2011, 2013). This is in part a call for more embodied ethnography and sensitivity to local particulars that perforce are eclipsed in comparisons at a global scale. Furthermore, Merry argues that indicators typically reflect the well-known geopolitical partitions of developed and developing countries, or in more contemporary parlance the Global North and Global South. Mapping indicators of gender in/equality onto the globe often seems uncannily close to earlier imperial cartographies of the world. This can occasion an anticolonial interrogation of how our notions of 'gender equality' might be projections of Western or Euro-American presumptions. It is important to acknowledge, as Merry has done in her influential works on gender violence (Merry 2006, 2009), that non-Western cultures have too often been seen as monolithic obstacles to gender equality and development.

This has certainly been true in the Pacific context, where some foreign observers of PNG in particular have offered stark adjudications of unmitigated male domination in that country. Paradoxically such monochromatic views (if not their values) are echoed by those indigenous men who staunchly defend their right to dominate women, enshrined in *kastom* (culture), they claim (Jolly 2000a, 2000b; Taylor 2008). Opponents of gender equality in the Pacific often argue that the concept is foreign, hostile to indigenous cultures and driven by the imperatives of donors.

³ In this distillation of critiques of indicators, we are indebted not just to the work of Sally Engle Merry but also to a presentation at the Australian National University on 20 May 2014 by Katherine Gibson, Michelle Carnegie and Katherine McKinnon apropos their research in Fiji and the Solomon Islands on monitoring gender and the economy in Melanesian communities.

Differences between Pacific women: Regional and cultural

But, we must ask, after Merry, 'who speaks for culture?' We should not concede that only powerful men have the right to do so. All cultures are created, contested and changing, and women should be seen as potentially powerful agents in that process. Yet Pacific women have often been credited with differential capacities to act on the basis of their country or region of origin. They have been divided and ranked in racial hierarchies with deep colonial origins. In 1832, Dumont d'Urville's distinction of Polynesia (many islands) and Melanesia (black islands) contrasted not just light- and dark-skinned peoples but their differential evolution towards European 'civilization'. In this and prior schema of the late eighteenth century, the higher status of Polynesian women relative to men was thought a clear index of their greater development, their elevation over Melanesian women. Such racialized distinctions have been internalized by Pacific peoples and can still occasion tensions in regional forums and cultural festivals. Despite the recognition of the colonial origins of such labels, identifications as Polynesians, Melanesians and Micronesians persist in the names of sub-regional organizations and more broadly. They have even proved pertinent in regional dialogues about the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The late Grace Mera Molisa, influential ni-Vanuatu politician and poet, and a powerful critic of male domination in her country and across Melanesia, criticized the failure of Tonga to ratify CEDAW and the justification of this on the grounds that women are elevated in Polynesian 'culture' (Jolly 2005). She suggested that the presence of high-ranking women did not belie male domination for the majority of ordinary women. So, in our three case studies we have expressly crossed over this sub-regional divide, including Tonga (Polynesia) alongside PNG and Vanuatu (Melanesia) to show both differences and commonalities in how gender matters in policies for social protection.

The higher status of Tongan women is often linked to the fact that some women are high-ranking, of noble or even royal ancestry and that women in general as sisters are seen to be sacred to and higher than their

brothers. While noting the persistence of the monarchy in Tonga and the continuing power of noble women, Helen Lee persuasively argues that Tongan men still assume precedence in royal and noble families, that the sanctity and power of women as sisters has declined with Christian conversion and the commodity economy, and that men dominate in the affairs of the church, the state and in access to land and formal employment. Lee thus echoes Mera Molisa's adjudication. Moreover, both indigenous rank and introduced wealth have created significant and increasing differences between women.

In a way similar to the regional division of Polynesia and Melanesia, there is often a strong contrast drawn within PNG between those parts of the country where matriliney and relative gender equality prevail (notably in Milne Bay Province) and those parts of the country where patriliney prevails and gender inequalities are more pronounced (canonically the PNG Highlands). Similar contrasts are drawn within Vanuatu between islands (e.g., Ambae versus Tanna) or even within islands (north versus south Pentecost). In very general terms, there is some truth in these contrasts as is attested by comparing recent ethnographies of the Trobriands in Milne Bay and Huli in the Highlands (Lepani 2012; Wardlow 2006). In the Trobriands, women exert autonomous agency in their sexual and reproductive lives, are not subject to routine gender or sexual violence and sustain a greater influence over land, as both resource and place of belonging, and over the products of their labour distributed in vigorous gift exchanges (crops, banana and pandanus textiles, commodities and cash).

Matriliney as a broad cosmology in Milne Bay offers an alternative vision of gender equality to that captured in UN indicators (Lawrence unpublished). In Huli territory, by contrast, women are much more 'fenced in' by men: at marriage bride price is paid and they move to live with their husbands; descent and inheritance are strongly patrilineal (on divorce children remain with the father); the products of women's labour are appropriated by men in ceremonial gift exchange; and women are subject to extremely high levels of gender and sexual violence (Médecins sans Frontières 2011).⁴

⁴ Médecins sans Frontières has declared the incidence of gender violence and assault an emergency warranting their intervention.

Yet even here women are capable of exercising agency, sometimes in quieter, quotidian acts of self-assertion, sometimes in palpable acts of resistance by *pasindia meri* (passenger women) who refuse the bride price system and marriage and choose rather to sell sex (Wardlow 2006).

Kastom ekonomi and commodity economy

Our case studies vividly reveal the relation between *kastom ekonomi* and the commodity economy, which is central to the lives of women in PNG, Tonga, Vanuatu and across the Pacific region. Navigating that relation is crucial to sustaining livelihoods and well-being and avoiding poverty and vulnerability. Interrogating that relation is central to our attempt to review gender and social protection in the Pacific. The relation between *kastom* and the commodity economy is usually seen as a binary or dual system, as is the distinction between the ‘informal’ and ‘formal’ economy, frequently adduced in scholarly and policy debates.

Of course economists have reasons to so distinguish diverse parts of the economy.⁵ However, we suggest that from the viewpoint of Pacific women these spheres are rather experienced as a whole. We are inspired by the image of the ‘floating coconut’ used in the recent action research of Katherine Gibson and her team working in Fiji and the Solomon Islands (Gibson et al. 2014). This is a Pacific transformation of an earlier image of the economy of an industrial society as a layer cake with icing, to stress what is not seen in the gross national product (GNP) calculations of a monetized economy (Waring 1999). The floating coconut graphic is even more compelling since it conveys the sense both of the integral whole and the ‘invisible economy’ of the coconut submerged below the water, known to locals who swim in the ocean but unseen by passing observers and outsiders.

On the basis of workshops run by local non-government organizations (NGOs) in both Fiji and the Solomon Islands, Gibson and her team designate several layers of a diverse economy. *Non-cash* activities include unpaid

⁵ The *kastom ekonomi* movement in Vanuatu is an attempt not so much to revive or celebrate the non-commodity economy but to revalue it and recalibrate its relation to the commodity economy (see Vanuatu case study).

work, voluntary work, community work, household work, reciprocal labour, family sharing and redistribution, church sharing and giving. *Informal economic* activities include paid domestic work and making, selling and on-selling products or services in self-employed or family businesses (e.g., cash crops, crafts, sewing, store-bought goods). *Formal economic* activities embrace wage or salaried work, producing goods or services for sale in a registered company, government job or family business. These diverse economies, which overlap and intersect, are crucial to formulating policies around social protection that will enhance rather than diminish gender equality.

Spheres of social protection, formal and informal?

Over recent years, discussion on formal social protection measures has gained momentum in the policy arena in the Pacific, primarily in relation to implementing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and addressing the increasing disparities in resource distribution, differential access to services and economic opportunities, and further marginalization of vulnerable and disadvantaged communities under the pressures of the global financial crisis.⁶ The current move to develop social protection policies is best viewed in historical context where formal state-based modalities to protect vulnerable groups from adversity – such as pensions, social insurance, child support grants, vouchers and cash transfers – were not a feature of government services in newly-independent Pacific countries, largely due to development priorities focused on principles of self-reliance and the equitable provision of basic health and education services across the population (see, for example, Government of Papua New Guinea 1976; World Bank 2006). But this historical policy gap also stemmed from the recognition of strong indigenous systems of support within communities, clans and extended families and the concern to protect the integrity of these systems in the context of economic development, rather than

⁶ The Commonwealth of Australia through its former agency, Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID), has published a series of papers on poverty, vulnerability and social protection across the dimensions of health and education, gender, social cohesion, economic growth and traditional protection networks in the Pacific Islands. See Commonwealth of Australia 2012. See also Mukherjee et al. 2012.

potentially eroding them through the introduction of state-sponsored modes of assistance.

Traditional forms of social protection in Pacific societies are anchored in indigenous knowledge systems, kinship ties, exchange relationships in the gift economy and a strong sense of belonging through attachments to land and language. All of these forms of support involve redistributive obligations and strategies to ensure collective and individual well-being so that every member of the community is provided with adequate sustenance and care. Reciprocal exchange entails ongoing flows of material and in-kind support through various social channels and networks. However, obligatory relationships are not always in balance nor do they necessarily reflect equal exchange between two parties. Such forms of social support based on reciprocity require continual reactivation, often in response to pressing needs or unforeseen circumstances or – more strategically – as the way to maintain links within various sets of relationships as a form of anticipatory support. The central role of the church in the lives of people throughout the Pacific also provides an important indigenized structure for social support through active membership and outreach as well as through established church-run health and education services. But women and men are often differentially and unequally situated in such informal forms of social protection, as we argue below and is evidenced in all three case studies.

Informal social protection systems generally are not captured by standard definitions, which emphasize income security and monetary mechanisms within the formal economy.⁷ Neither do these definitions account for the gendered practices of daily livelihood strategies that are outside of the formal economy. Furthermore, the informal/formal categorization does not adequately recognize the formalized dimension of traditional social protection, where obligations and practices are defined by rank, clan and gender in complex sets of social relationships (Amosa and Samson 2012). Women's strategic interests are often valued and negotiated at the collective level and tied to kinship

⁷ See Mukherjee et al. 2012 and Reid et al. 2012 for analysis of the definitions of social protection used by the World Bank, Asian Development Bank and International Labour Organization.

and extended family relations. Many women seek economic opportunities not for individual gain but to make stronger contributions to collective well-being and social cohesion.

These differences in meanings and priorities underscore the importance of developing “textured policies and practices” (Reid et al. 2012, p. 292) responsive to the range of social measures already in place within communities, and ensuring that introduced formal social protection instruments mutually reinforce and interact positively with, rather than undermine, the strategies people value and practice in their everyday lives (Ellis 2012). Additionally, the means to measure the range and effects of social protection – those already practiced in people's lives as well as new formal mechanisms introduced by the state – should aim to incorporate interpretive and reflective forms of assessment that illustrate shared values and relations of mutual accountability.

The material presented in each of the studies, including some best (and worst!) practice stories highlighted in text boxes, touch on a number of issues that we have identified as significant for understanding gender and social protection in the Pacific. First and foremost is the recognition that land is the crucial foundation of social protection for the region, underpinning subsistence and exchange, food security, identity and social relations. Yet in these three countries, the predominant (but not universal) pattern is that women have little independent access to land but secure it in diverse ways through their male kin, thus making the situation of single, divorced and widowed women especially parlous. Moreover, this fundamental foundation is challenged by the development of extractive resource industries, especially in PNG; migration to urban settlements in major towns, which can result in displacement and tenuous relations to home communities; and burgeoning gender inequalities in the context of increasing land commodification, diminishing both the collective character of tenure and women's already unequal access to land rights and use.

Second, we are concerned about the ‘state-centric’ and ‘donor-driven’ character of some policy approaches and what this means for gender equality in terms of

ensuring appropriate and equitable implementation of policies without further marginalizing women. Social services and social protection initiatives are not solely state-centred in the Pacific but involve non-state actors, churches, NGOs, civil society and communities. The policy move to formalize national social protection systems may have the effect of displacing local capacity to provide responsive support services and widen the gap between state and non-state actors and between policies and the actual provision of services. We witness the challenges of not eviscerating pre-existing forms of social protection inherent in customary land tenure and kinship systems and influential church communities.

Third, we question how some modalities of social protection, such as insurance schemes and pension funds that focus primarily on income security in the formal employment sector, fail to encompass women's informal economic activities and their crucial social contribution as care providers, and we caution how this oversight may actually have an exclusionary effect due to women's limited access and eligibility through formal employment opportunities (Reid et al. 2012). Other modalities, such as vouchers or conditional cash transfers, might be socially divisive through selection processes and inadvertently increase women's vulnerability due to redistributive obligations within households and communities. We are also mindful of the problematic language of vulnerability and victimhood in defining the beneficiaries of social protection policies, as contrasted to language that emphasizes strategies for creative survival and women's empowered agency in the process of securing social protection (ibid.).⁸ New forms of social protection should avoid the stigmatization, diminution of dignity and reinscription of gender stereotypes associated with means-tested social assistance programmes elsewhere.⁹

The policy debates to date have generated broad consensus that the effectiveness of formal social protection modalities for alleviating hardship is contingent on improved coverage and quality of existing health and

educational services while ensuring people's access to such services, including addressing specific gender needs and imbalances with respect to service provision (Commonwealth of Australia 2012; Ellis 2012). The focus on improved service delivery as an essential component of social protection highlights operational issues, and especially the implementation capacities of Pacific governments to manage national systems of enrolment, regulation and funds transfers that ensure all members of society who qualify for social protection are identified and receive their benefits. Implementation constraints are different across the Pacific and vary according to population size and diversity, communication and transportation infrastructure, and geographic remoteness, as is revealed in our three case studies that follow (and see section 5. Comparisons and Conclusions below). Moreover, there are potentially perverse distorting effects due to the underlying urban and monetary bias of social protection modalities that might not have equitable reach, or relevance, everywhere.

Apart from these implementation challenges, the incorporation of formal modalities of social protection such as social transfers in the provision of existing health and education services do offer prospects for improving accessibility and service quality (Kidd 2012). This potential is particularly significant for addressing gender inequalities that manifest in poor maternal and child health outcomes and restricted educational opportunities for girls and women. These are especially acute in PNG, where maternal mortality rates and educational access for girls and women are the worst in the region. Examples of social transfers include transportation vouchers to facilitate access to services and workplace incentives to improve outreach and enhance standards and quality of services. Such forms of social protection draw positively on the cultural values of reciprocal obligation that underpin social relations in the Pacific, activating an exchange relationship between the users and providers of services (McKay and Lepani 2010). The initial acceptance and appropriate utilization of social transfers are likely to be reinforced if they are introduced through church networks and church health and education facilities, where relations of trust are generally well established and service provision more reliable, and through existing community-based development programmes (ibid.).

⁸ See also Kapur 2002 for a critique of the victim subject in the international women's human rights movement.

⁹ See UN Women 2015, Chapter 3: Making Social Policy Work for Women.

2.

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

CASE STUDY

Country profile

Papua New Guinean women are powerful, resilient, innovative and industrious actors in a country that is abundant with natural resources and experiencing a recent and projected strong economic outlook. Yet they face significant challenges such as high levels of gendered violence, poor market access, poor maternal and child health outcomes, inequitable access to educational opportunities, and cultural and social impediments to equitable access to land and other resources. These challenges mean that key to enabling progress for PNG women will be to advocate strongly for a gender-equitable, inclusive and efficient distribution of the windfall incomes derived from extractive industries.

PNG's population is 7.3 million and there are 108 males to every 100 females. The population growth rate is 3.1 per cent (National Statistical Office 2013). Around 87 per cent of the population live in rural areas and just under half of these (49 per cent) are women and girls (National Statistical Office 2003). Females below the age of 20 years comprise around 24 per cent of the total population. Half the female population is below the age of 20 and, of the total population below the age of 20 years, 47 per cent is female (ibid.). Most women living in rural areas are dependent on agricultural incomes and informal market trading of surplus produce. Around 50 per cent of the urban population (or 7.5 per cent of the total population) live in informal urban and peri-urban settlements that lack basic services and utilities (Connell 2011; Jones 2011). Many women living in settlement conditions have very limited access to land for farming and very low incomes comprised of a combination of low wages and income earned in the informal trading sector.

PNG has over 800 distinct socio-linguistic groups. Politically, it is comprised of four regions and a total of 22 provinces and has a Westminster democratic system of governance with national elections that take place every five years. There are, in 2014, only three women out of 111 elected members of the national Parliament.

PNG's economy has expanded strongly in recent years, with gross domestic product (GDP) growth rates of 11.1 per cent in 2011 and 9.2 per cent in 2012 (Asian Development Bank 2013a). This growth was driven by the construction industry, which grew by 24 per cent in 2012 largely as a result of the construction phase of a major liquefied natural gas (LNG) project (Table 2-1). With the onset of the LNG production phase, it is anticipated that PNG's GDP will substantially increase from around K13,700 million in 2012 to an estimated K22,500 million in 2016. Thus, the profile of export earnings will change, with the extractive industries sector expanding significantly (Table 2-1). Although employment in the extractive industries has grown substantially in recent years, women comprise only around 10 per cent of this workforce. Furthermore, such employment has deeply gendered dimensions, with women's career paths influenced by age, children, marriage and skills. Importantly, women working in the industry are more likely to be younger and to have worked on average fewer numbers of years in their current job than their male counterparts (Filer et al. 2013).

Although agricultural exports will fall from around 20 per cent to 10 per cent of total exports by 2016, in actual value terms it will remain the main source of livelihood for the majority of women. In 2012 agriculture made up around 30 per cent of GDP (Table 2-1).

TABLE 2-1

PNG: Exports of major commodities (in Kina)

	Agriculture	Forest products	Marine products	Crude oil	Gold	Copper	LNG and condensate	Other minerals	Total minerals	Exports
2012 actuals (a)	2694.5	627.1	329.5	2134.3	5202.8	2071.5	0	662.7	9523.5	13837.3
2016 estimates (b)	2164.7	662.4	233.7	835.8	5345.6	1059.6	10230.7	1700.3		22232.8

a. Source: Department of Treasury 2013 Budget, vol. 1 p. 14. Includes the 2012 figures for 'other minerals' (see note b).

b. Source: Bank of Papua New Guinea 2014b. Statistical tables for all export figures except 'other minerals', which comprise nickel, cobalt and refined petroleum products.

Oil palm is the largest agricultural product exported and makes up 38 per cent of total exports. In 2010 it was estimated that the oil palm industry directly employed 23,000 people while smallholder oil palm blocks support between 180,000 and 200,000 people. In oil palm growing areas, most food is locally grown and sold (Orrell 2011). Coffee exports make up 18 per cent of agricultural exports and the industry involves nearly 400,000 households and is the largest cash crop in terms of the number of people involved (Coffee Industry Corporation Limited 2008; CSIRO 2012). Although they are not exported, fresh agricultural food produce, livestock, marine products and betel nut generate a significant proportion of domestic product (Bourke and Harwood 2009).

Given this profile PNG's economy is often described as dual, with a formal sector dominated by extractive industries and large-scale agricultural cash crops with limited formal employment and an informal sector of agriculturally based subsistence, together with small-scale or household trading activities. As discussed below, despite the importance of agriculture for the livelihoods of most women, its gendered dimensions create disproportionate labour and time burdens for women.

PNG's recent strong economic performance conceals high levels of hardship and inequality, especially for women and girls. It has a GNI per capita income of US\$1,790, and in 2012 it was classified as a lower middle-income country by the World Bank (World Bank 2014a). In 2013, PNG had a human development index of 0.466 and was ranked 156 out of 187 countries (UNDP 2013c).

Hardship is defined as a situation where a person or household is unable to meet their basic needs. The food poverty line for PNG in 2010 was US\$1.5 per day; the total poverty line (food plus basic needs) is US\$2 per day. Just over a quarter of the population live below the food poverty line and 39.9 per cent live below the total poverty line (World Bank 2014b). This suggests a worsening of poverty from 30 per cent below the poverty line in 1996 (World Bank 2000). The richest 20 per cent of the population accounts for 48 per cent of consumption, while the poorest 20 per cent accounts for only 5 per cent. The GINI index for PNG is very high at 43.9 per cent (World Bank 2014a). Hardship is more prevalent in rural areas. Females have lower enrolment rates in formal primary education (Table 2-2) and lower cohort retention rates at the primary level (Table 2-3), which have negative implications for employment (see below). The reasons why females have lower school participation rates relate to factors within and outside the education system. For example, distance to schools or lack of sanitation facilities means female students are more likely to be withdrawn from school. In some areas tribal fighting is another major reason why children do not go to school (Department of Education 2009). Furthermore, many schools in rural areas do not have adequate boarding facilities and girls are usually kept from attending because of fears for their security (Menzies and Harley 2012). Even with a free education policy, families incur education costs such as transport, uniforms, books, stationery and boarding school expenses. For poorer households, such costs are a key reason why children are withdrawn from education (Paraide et al. 2010). As girls are more likely to contribute to household work,

childcare and production, they are more likely to be withdrawn than boys. Women, especially younger women, are less literate than men (Table 2-4).

TABLE 2-2
PNG gross enrolment at primary school 2004 to 2007, by sex (%)

	Total	Males	Females
2004	78.4	81.9	74.5
2005	76.8	80.9	72.3
2006	77.3	81.4	72.9
2007	74.4	78.2	70.2

Source: Government of Papua New Guinea and United Nations in Papua New Guinea 2010, p. 81.

TABLE 2-3
PNG cohort retention at primary school 2000 to 2007, by sex (%)

	Total	Males	Females
2000–2005	61.5	62.8	60.0
2001–2006	64.4	67.0	61.3
2002–2007	61.8	64.3	58.9

Source: Government of Papua New Guinea and United Nations in Papua New Guinea 2010, p. 82.

TABLE 2-4
PNG youth and adult literacy (2000)

	Total	Male	Female
Youth (age 15–24) literacy ratio (%)	61.7	64.4	58.9
Adult literacy (age 15 and over) ratio (%)	49.2	55.2	43.9

Source: Government of Papua New Guinea and United Nations in Papua New Guinea 2010, p. 82.

Unlike some other Pacific countries, PNG does not depend on international remittances. However, households are affected by global economic influences such as the prices of cash crops, oil and food. Urban households are more affected by price fluctuations in international food commodity prices as they are more likely to depend on purchased food, especially

imported rice. Rural households grow much of their food but are more affected by changes in the prices of cash crops (World Bank 2014b).

Traditional social networks and systems that exist to support those who fall into hardship or are vulnerable to hardship are based on access to land and cultural systems of reciprocal support. However, in most parts of PNG women generally can only access land through fathers or husbands. Even though they may have control over their particular gardens (usually produce for domestic consumption) as contributors to customary exchange or as participants in the household farming of cash crops, the control over land resources and its products is usually dominated by men. These traditional systems of social protection are under rapid transformation largely as a result of an increasing need for cash to meet household needs and the realization by many households that they cannot afford to extend support to others for long periods of time. Urbanization usually means that people are alienated from their land and sometimes from reciprocal support systems, so that conventional forms of social protection are under increasing pressure (Monsell-Davis 1993; Barber 2003; Storey 2010).

The inequality in socio-economic indicators outlined above is also indicative of gender inequality on several fronts. Culturally women have lower status than men in most of PNG and gendered norms mean that women remain in subordinate positions in relation to men and face immense structural and cultural impediments to their progress. The 2012 UNDP gender inequality index (GII) ranks PNG at 134 out of 148 countries. A far lower percentage of women (6.8 per cent) attain higher levels of education compared to men (14.1 per cent). The number of women who die for every 100,000 live births as a result of pregnancy and childbirth complications has actually increased since 1996 and is currently unacceptably high. Estimates using different methodologies range from 230 in 2010, in the UNDP Human Development Report 2014 based on statistical modelling, to 733 as estimated by the National Department of Health, 2011–2020, based on the national demographic and household survey. There is a high adolescent fertility rate (62 per 1,000 births). As discussed in the

next section, women’s economic engagement takes various forms including formal waged employment, informal employment and horticultural production. Women’s labour force participation relative to men’s is characterized by lower participation in formal waged employment and higher labour and time burdens in terms of subsistence horticulture, agricultural labour and informal labour inputs in economic production activities.

Changing norms and values about the respective roles of women and men as a result of modernization have transformed gender relations and the status of women, but not always in positive directions. These changes often reinforce notions and values of male dominance. In particular, gender violence is a serious issue facing women in PNG (Government of Papua New Guinea and United Nations in Papua New Guinea 2010; Government of Papua New Guinea et al. 2012; Jolly et al. 2012). Gender violence also fuels the spread of HIV in ways that disproportionately impact on women (Seeley and Butcher 2006; Lepani 2008; Jolly 2012). The country lacks adequate facilities to treat victims of gender violence, most of whom are women and children (Médecins sans Frontières 2011). Moreover, gender violence has huge economic as well as human costs, inhibiting women’s participation in the cash economy and formal employment. Lack of secure transport and safe marketing facilities limits broader economic engagement especially for women.

The Autonomous Region of Bougainville (AROB) will hold a referendum under the Peace Agreement signed with PNG in 2001, after ten years of violent conflict. Many of the issues discussed in this case study also pertain to AROB, and its particular status as a post-conflict region will need to be taken into consideration, especially in relation to gender violence (Fulu et al. 2013).

Religion, especially Christianity, plays an important – albeit ambiguous – role in the lives of women and men. Christianity has been intimately appropriated into nearly all aspects of PNG’s social and cultural life and women’s lives often strongly reflect such influences. In many ways it has reinforced the cultural norms of male dominance; men predominate in the hierarchies

of most churches, although women’s groups are also strong. Some use the Bible to legitimate male domination and even gender violence, but others resist such readings, drawing attention rather to messages of women and men being one in Christ (Hermkens 2012; Jolly 2012). Moreover, for most women, it is the churches that deliver significant levels of health and education services.

Livelihoods and the continuum of work

Given PNG’s economic and demographic profile, the majority of its labour force is located in rural areas and engaged in agriculture. Acknowledging the central contributions of the agricultural and informal sectors where women are concentrated, the Government has introduced legislation that recognizes the informal sector as part of total employment (UN ESCAP 2007). The sex-disaggregated employment rates for urban and rural areas reflect this legislation (Table 2-5). It is estimated that women’s total labour force participation, including subsistence horticulture, agricultural cash cropping and informal employment, is around 70.6 per cent, which is lower than men’s at 74.1 per cent (UNDP 2013b). Data on formal wage employment is not readily available and only a fraction of women work in this way. In 2000 only 10 per cent of the 2.4 million employed people were working in the formal waged sector, while most of the rest were engaged in subsistence agriculture (Government of Papua New Guinea et al. 2012).

TABLE 2-5
PNG employment by sex in urban and rural areas (2000)

	Male	Female	Total
Rural	1,084,687	1,072,813	2,157,500
Urban	118,546	68,688	187,234
Total	1,203,233	1,141,501	2,344,734

Source: United Nations Economic and Social Council 2008, p. 3.

Employment rates are around parity in rural areas, reflecting past and contemporary roles of women and men in agricultural production although, as discussed below, women generally have less control over the economic returns of their labour. The lower employment levels of women in urban areas, where formal labour

employment is the dominant form, reflect their lower participation in the formal labour force overall. It is estimated that they comprise only around 18 per cent of the formal labour force (Seeley and Butcher 2006). However, when considering only those employed in wage employment, disparities between women and men are far more pronounced, with just 5.3 per cent of the total female population in wage employment in 2000 compared to 15.2 per cent of men (Table 2-6).

TABLE 2-6

PNG percentage of population engaged in wage employment

Year	% of total population engaged in wage employment	Males (%)	Females (%)
1990	14.7	20.9	6.2
2000	10.4	15.2	5.3

Source: Government of Papua New Guinea and United Nations in Papua New Guinea 2010.

In 2010, the extractive industries sector employed around 30,000 people, of whom roughly 10 per cent were women (Filer et al. 2013). For policies and programmes to contribute to tangible progress in women’s economic engagement and ultimately their social protection, this skewed profile of women and men’s work must be constantly kept in view. In part this derives from educational differences.

As previously noted, females have lower enrolment rates in primary education (Table 2-1) and lower cohort retention rates (Table 2-2) compared to males, and this disparity between the sexes is evident at all levels of education (Department of Education 2004).¹⁰ This means that fewer women, relative to men, will graduate through the formal education system annually and enter the labour force, and relatively more women reaching employable age will be entering the labour force from outside the formal education

¹⁰ More recent data, and in particular gender-disaggregated data at secondary levels, proved difficult to obtain and available data are not further disaggregated by age or grade levels. National ratios also obscure regional differences. With these limitations in mind, the analysis on education in this case study draws on a number of different sources and aims to highlight the pertinent issues relating to gender and how these have implications for women’s economic participation.

system. Approximately 80,000 young people leave the formal education system annually and enter the labour force and only around 4,000 of them find formal employment (Government of Papua New Guinea et al. 2012). Given the data on education, most of these young people will be males.

Overall women make a significant contribution to the PNG economy but only benefit in limited ways from the formal cash economy due to a gendered division of labour and socio-cultural factors (Hedditch and Manuel 2010a). Furthermore, it is households, characterized by some as ‘micro-informal enterprises’ (ibid.) that are the central economic and social unit for most of the population. They “supply all domestically produced food, about 70% of coffee, 65% of cocoa and copra, and 35% of palm oil. They also dominate the livestock sector – mainly pigs and chickens’ (ibid., p. 11). Households have a diverse range of income sources beyond the formal economy. The gender relations within households are thus crucial in influencing women’s livelihood strategies and economic participation.

Women’s livelihoods derive from diverse sources, and their economic strategies are complex and often pursued within the context of their overall household and familial strategies, especially if they are married or young and living in the home of parents or other relatives. Women earn incomes in a variety of ways such as selling surplus horticultural produce, trading other goods at local markets, participating in household cash crop production or engaging in formal wage employment. Women’s income, if it is not the main source of income, tends to be fully utilized for household expenses and costs of childcare, education, food and other social obligations. Women deploy a variety of social networks including family, friends, churches and colleagues to access needed resources, such as cash and food during times of hardship. This networking can occur independently of husbands or jointly, depending on the situation. Men also utilize similar social networks but most likely in different ways for different reasons, which may or may not complement those of women. In urban areas money-lenders are playing an increasingly important role for women to access cash when in

need, but they are very costly, with interest rates as high as 50 per cent. Although analysts often make a strong division between the formal and informal sectors, most women straddle the informal and formal economies in their everyday life, balancing family incomes and subsistence between both realms, juggling the demands of subsistence and cash.

Gendered labour divisions in the household often mean that women's access to productive resources such as land is gained primarily through their relationships with men: husbands, fathers, brothers and sons. For example, in the coffee-growing areas of the PNG Highlands, their access to land for both coffee production and subsistence is through their husbands. Coffee production is accorded a higher value but only their labour inputs are considered; men own the land and coffee resources and reap most of the profits (Overfield 1998).

Although women contribute substantially to the production of commercial cash crops (coffee, oil palm, betel, etc.), men dominate the sale of crops especially for export while women focus on the sale of small surplus subsistence agricultural produce. This generates significant inequalities as women carry a far higher burden of labour in cash crop production, subsistence production and household work but at the same time earn much less than men in the same household (Overfield 1998; Curry et al 2007; Wilson et al. 2010).

Social moral valuations of what constitutes a 'good woman' (sharing and generous) are also important factors determining women's motivations for economic activities in production and consumption and their allocation of time and resources. Indeed, a woman's economic efforts to meet social expectations may bring considerable prestige (Zimmer-Tamakoshi 2012). Moreover, this can be a strategy for potential support during hard times (Koczberski 2002; Andrew 2013). Women are far more likely than men to spend time on unpaid caregiving for ill family members. The time spent on care, community and other unpaid work can have debilitating consequences for women's ability to engage in both formal and informal economic activity. Caregiving often involves little choice and the foregoing of livelihood pursuits, including the

expansion of livelihood options through furthering education. These negative outcomes of care work are intensified by the spread of HIV and TB, which often occasion social marginalization (Reid et al. 2012; Waring et al. 2013).

If a woman is more economically successful than others she may be subject to jealousy or resentment and be vulnerable to forms of violence or marginalization. Resentment may come from her husband or brothers over her access to land that they perceive as theirs, especially if she is resourceful but seen to be not sharing the value she generates in accordance with social expectations. Women employed in the formal sector often face hostile or discriminatory behaviour from male colleagues, attract accusations of being impudent or 'big-headed', and may suffer jealousy, resentment and violence from intimate partners (Macintyre 2011).

In urban areas, where 50 per cent of the population lives in settlement conditions, women's contributions through either wage employment or informal trade are key to providing livelihoods for most low- to middle-income households (Storey 2010; Filer et al. 2013). Women dominate informal trading in urban areas, which may involve market and street sales of an array of items from fresh food, manufactured imported goods, drinks, betel nut, fish, second-hand clothes, crafts, etc. (UN Women 2012). In rural areas it is also predominantly women in a household who market surplus food produce (Koczberski et al. 2001; Curry et al. 2007; Wilson et al. 2010; Wang 2014).

Whether in rural or urban areas, marketplaces provide an important avenue to sell produce or resell imported goods. This is an area where gendered dimensions in household economic activity can be clearly seen. While men dominate the sale of cash crops to exporters and companies, women tend to be the majority of vendors at marketplaces where they sell their surplus garden fresh food produce or other goods such as cooked foods, crafts or imported goods. Although women will usually be supported in this endeavour by their male relatives (husbands, sons, brothers) they often face significant challenges marketing produce, either as direct vendors or as participants in the value chain. Ethnic

differences, community violence and inadequate facilities mean women face large obstacles in selling fresh food produce. The exchange and trade that occurs at marketplaces are important links between women in the rural agricultural and informal sectors and the

formal wage-earning sector and broader economy. Promoting women's economic engagement entails ensuring improvements in market facilities (UN Women 2012; Wang 2014). An example of such innovation is the Safer Markets Programme in Port Moresby (see Box 2-1).

BOX 2-1

Making Port Moresby markets safer for women and children

Port Moresby is ranked as one of the five least livable cities in the world and its markets, while being an important avenue for livelihoods for many women, including from surrounding rural areas, present particular challenges. Waste management and facilities such as sanitation and water are virtually non-existent. The sale of drugs and alcohol, commercial and transactional sex and gambling create social problems.

Women comprise 80 per cent of vendors in the markets, and although all vendors experience multiple forms of violence, women are more impacted. A scoping study conducted in six markets (Gerehu, Gordons, Tokarara, Malauro, Waigani and Hohola) found that 55 per cent of women vendors had experienced some form of violence in the markets in the past year. Violence includes sexual harassment, rape, robbery, intimidation, stalking and extortion. Extortion involves payments to males in return for security or safekeeping and storage of produce.

Most women did not report or seek justice for the violence they experienced. Police and security personnel are often not trained or may even be perpetrators of violence. Community leadership structures that usually operate around the wantok system or ethnic divisions can exacerbate conflict.

The Port Moresby Safe City free from Violence against Women and Girls Programme is focused

on making several of the city's markets safe for all who use them, especially women and girls. The Programme is part of UN Women's Safe Cities Free of Violence against Women and Girls Global Programme in collaboration with UN Habitat and leading women's organizations.

The Port Moresby Programme works directly with the city's National Capital District Commission (NCDC), as well as the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary, UN agencies, market vendors and customers, and other community stakeholders, and aims to prevent and reduce sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence through a comprehensive, evidence-based approach.

Bylaws on local markets now include articles which address women's safety. Following a first phase of social and physical infrastructure improvements, women vendors are returning to the markets and reporting increased feelings of safety. One innovative outcome of the Programme has been a partnership between the NCDC and financial institutions to enable the collection of market fees via the use of mobile phone technology. This has reduced women's exposure to extortion as they no longer have to pay their fees in cash. At the same time, it is increasing revenue collection by the NCDC.

Source: UN Women 2012

Historically, violent conflict played a role in balancing social, economic and political relationships. Fuelled by contemporary factors such as alcohol, drugs, disenfranchisement caused by urbanization and unemployment, levels of violence and crime, including sorcery-related violence, are high and often

unpredictable (see below). This has a bearing on how economic activity and business are conducted and the costs of carrying them out (Lakhani and Willman 2014). Although the impact of violence is felt by all parts of society, it is a major factor in how women engage in economic activity.

In the agricultural sector the challenges women face include disease, natural disasters and global price fluctuations, which mean that households generally diversify incomes by engaging in multiple activities. These include growing food for subsistence and sale, growing different cash crops, raising pigs and cattle, fishing, informal trade and waged labour. For example, in the cocoa-growing regions smallholders engage in several activities including oil palm production. This means that initiatives implemented by cash crop industries to support women, or which have an industry focus on increasing export crop production, need to be aware of the social dimensions underlying and motivating women's and families' diverse livelihood and economic strategies. Crop production may be only one of several livelihood activities as households seek to diversify to protect themselves against crop price fluctuations. They may also vary production in response to various social and cultural obligations such as bride price, anticipated school costs and other social obligations. Hence, income diversification, strengthening capacities for independence, expanding household choices, food security and social cohesion are as important as export crop production. Industry-based initiatives need to complement such strategies rather than undermine or impose on them (Koczberski et al. 2001). Providing savings mechanisms to help smooth out irregular flows of income and consumption may assist in maintaining industry production targets while at the same time enabling women to meet personal and household commitments. Moreover, when such programmes are successfully introduced, women's economic empowerment and enhanced livelihood options can lead to reduced gender violence and HIV (Seeley and Butcher 2006).

In resource development areas in PNG, where mining or logging is ongoing, host communities are meant to be involved in negotiations of benefits such as royalty payments stemming from projects. In these contexts, women have little say over the distribution of benefits, have little representation in negotiations, receive fewer benefits and tend to suffer the costs of development more than men (Filer and Macintyre 2006; Jolly 2012; Menzies and Harley 2012; Zimmer-Tamakoshi 2012). In the case of the Community Mine Continuation Agreement (CMCA) for Ok Tedi negotiated in 2007,

women affected by the mine won an international milestone by negotiating for core components in the CMCA to be projects specifically targeting women and children including, inter alia, that 50 per cent of all educational scholarships funded by the benefits would go to women and girls in host communities to enrol at various levels in educational institutions. However, although the negotiation process that achieved this offers useful lessons for wider host communities, there are implementation issues such as the lack of banking facilities available in communities to access funds (mobile phone banking may offer solutions in future) and the cultural impediments facing girls' access to the scholarships, with the consequence that less than 50 per cent of scholarships go to females because very few apply.

Social policy for gender equality

From the above we witness pervasive male domination in social, political and economic spheres and gendered divisions of labour from the household to the national levels that favour men. Moreover, men dominate policy- and decision-making positions in politics, public offices and business. Women are under-represented and their concerns tend to be marginalized. The Equality and Participation Act was passed in 2011 to introduce 22 reserved seats for women in the national Parliament – one seat per province and one seat for the National Capital District. However, the Bill to amend the Constitution for the Act to be implemented did not receive the necessary number of votes in early 2012, and consequently reserved seats for women were not introduced before the 2012 national elections. Nonetheless, three women were elected as members of Parliament, two of whom were appointed as Cabinet members while the third won the regional seat that makes her governor of her province. This represents the highest number of women ever to be elected to Parliament during the same term apart from the first national election in 1977 following Independence, which also elected three women members. Although the 2012 election result marks progress for women in politics, and to some extent reflects a sustained period of lobbying and advocacy from women's groups in PNG and the international community, many challenges remain. There are different views on the Equality and Participation Act, including

among women themselves, and it is uncertain at this stage whether or when the Bill will be moved for a second vote. The issue of women's political representation has not been as prominent in PNG media and other forums since the elections (Chandler 2013).

The masculinism of the state and formal economy also has profound implications for social policies. In 1995 only 9 per cent of senior public servant positions were held by women. An even lower percentage holds senior positions in the business sector (Hedditch and Manuel 2010a). In the policy-making arena, therefore, this means that social policies focused on women's empowerment and gender equality, often with significant support from foreign donors or international agencies, are reliant on the political will of predominantly male leaders.

Furthermore, given the continuing significance of kinship and customary forms of social protection, and the nature of PNG politics, it is not clear yet whether a broad collective desire for social protection is emerging and indeed whether leaders are held to account during elections based on their performance on delivering equitable and inclusive social policies. In fact, the political economy of PNG has been increasingly characterized by forms of money politics where ideological considerations are generally absent and election promises by candidates and flows of money in effect buy votes (Haley and Anere 2009). Party policy platforms are usually ad hoc and pragmatic, motivated by election results rather than values and political ideologies. For example, politicians have recently announced free education policies during election periods as a part of their platform but have not always followed through on this promise when elected to Parliament.

PNG's framework for human rights, gender equality and development is contained in its national Constitution, which states that: "We declare our second goal to be for all citizens to have an equal opportunity to participate in, and benefit from, the development of our country, [and accordingly,] equal participation by women citizens in all political, economic, social and religious activities" (Independent State of Papua New Guinea 1975).

All development aspirations as articulated in various policy and strategy instruments since independence have drawn from this founding framework. At present the overarching national framework for development and social policy is captured in the 'Papua New Guinea Vision 2050: Strategic Policy Directions and Expected Outcomes', under which sits a 20-year plan and the recurrent medium-term development plan, which provides a five-year framework for aligning annual budget appropriations to thematic and sector priorities set by the broad national aspirations.

In 2012, the Government together with development partners – the World Bank, United Nations, Government of Australia and Asian Development Bank – undertook a country gender assessment that provided a comprehensive overview of the key challenges facing PNG women and the gendered aspects of development (Government of Papua New Guinea et al. 2012). This assessment is important not only for its broad stakeholder engagement but because it outlines the key government policy frameworks with respect to women and gender equality, the main challenges in implementation of these policies and some recommendations for the way forward. The report covered gender and development and access to resources through the themes of: (i) education, health and entrepreneurship; (ii) rights through legal and social empowerment (including gender violence); and (iii) participation in the political and decision-making arena.

In general, PNG has a good legislative and policy framework for development and human rights. A comprehensive overview of the legal and policy framework and key issues is contained in Annex 1. What is clear is that the introduction of the social protection policy needs to be positioned in the context of both existing informal, albeit increasingly fragile, social support systems and the existing, albeit highly problematic, legal and policy framework. While a broad-based and universal social protection system is ideal, within the PNG context considerable innovation and locally anchored initiatives may be needed initially.

One such innovation in a remote area and involving a collaborative partnership between the private sector,

communities, international development agencies and the Government is the social entrepreneurship project called Marasin Stoa Kipas (MSK) (Tok Pisin for medicine store-keepers). MSK is an initiative of the Oil Search Limited Health Foundation and operates in remote areas of the Southern Highlands and Gulf provinces. It aims to address malaria mortality through improving diagnostic and treatment facilities and increasing local knowledge about prevention and treatment. The programme involves providing locals, mainly women, with malaria diagnostic and treatment kits and training them on how to use these. The trainees, known as MSKs, charge a basic fee, largely to help sustain their service, and they also sell other health products. The fee creates a valuation of treatment and thereby increases the likelihood of treatment being completed. Key results have been significant reductions in malaria prevalence within these communities. The programme is now being introduced in other parts of PNG under the endorsement of the Government (McKay and Lepani 2010; Oil Search Health Foundation 2014).

As Annex 1 shows, cutting across the spectrum of PNG's legislative and policy frameworks for development and human rights are challenges in implementing policies, including ensuring adherence to budget processes and financial accountability mechanisms, which are weakened by low capacity and also systemic corruption. With the country's recent economic success, perhaps the most pertinent challenge for policy makers will be to ensure that the existing array of policies is translated into the lives of the people, in particular women, children and other marginalized groups. This may require rethinking policy-making processes and spaces and increasing policy capacity to formulate workable policies in the national context.

Such policies include the formulation of the Sovereign Wealth Fund to guide the processes of sharing the anticipated revenues from the LNG project (see Box 2-2). Workable social protection policies must take into consideration PNG's social, cultural and political landscape and include financial, targeting and monitoring mechanisms to ensure equitable and sustainable implementation. A National Task Force

on Social Protection was established in 2010 to investigate and report on an appropriate policy model for introducing formal social protection measures. In 2013, the Prime Minister announced through the media the Government's intention to introduce aged and disability pensions at the national level by 2016 (AAP 2013). New Ireland is the only province that currently has an old age pension scheme. The Department for Community Development and Religion is currently working to implement the Alotau Accord and has set the establishment of a 'Social Protection—Pension for the Elderly and Disabled Persons' as one of its three priorities.¹¹

The Government also has a free education policy, although it is not clear how this translates into the efficient delivery and quality of education. The community response to the policy has been very positive and has seen an increase in student enrolments, which has placed new burdens on existing human resources and facilities. The Government has also recently introduced a Family Protection Act and repealed the 1971 Sorcery Act, widely reputed to be ineffective in reducing sorcery-related violence. Some observers argue that, on its own, the repeal of the Sorcery Act will not be enough to reduce sorcery-related acts of violence against women (Davis 2013). The sociocultural dimensions of sorcery are very much engrained in people's lives, and often the most violent acts are performed in very remote areas with very limited police presence (Radio New Zealand International 2013). Moreover, more nuanced understandings of this issue within the policy arena, including within international human rights agencies, are needed to formulate necessary interventions. For example, the distinction between sorcery and witchcraft at local levels is an important one in terms of localized responses and understanding but is often missed when subsumed under the general heading of sorcery in policy discussions (Eves 2013). Recent research also calls for deeper understanding of the perpetrators of sorcery-related acts of violence. Evidence suggests that perpetrators

¹¹ The Alotau Accord is the agreement reached between political groupings in the capital of Milne Bay province that led to the formation of the O'Neill-Dion Government in 2012. The agreement sets out government goals and objectives for the next five years.

are often men who may be under the influence of drugs or troubled by other social factors, including local power dynamics (Eves and Kelly-Hanku 2014).

The key issues inhibiting the implementation of policies in PNG (see Annex 1) relate to inadequate resources, both financial and human, lack of political will, low levels of capacity and inadequate communication. People require critical awareness of policies to be able to ensure their rights under policies are met. Another implementation issue with respect to women's empowerment and gender equality is the lack of resources dedicated to programmes specifically directed at women.

Access to financial services such as credit and savings is an important way to enable women to support livelihood efforts such as accessing cash in times of need or savings to assist in meeting financial commitments. In recent years progress has been made to increase financial inclusion and improve micro-level financial services to low-income earners, with a focus on understanding women's financial literacy. Women account for only 30 per cent of formal bank accounts in the country (Bank of Papua New Guinea 2014a). Research was conducted in 264 low-income households in three provinces with the aim of enhancing understanding of the gendered dimensions of access to and engagement with both formal and informal financial services. A key outcome of these efforts – spearheaded by a partnership involving the Pacific Financial Inclusion Programme, the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), AusAID¹² and UNDP – is high level political and policy support, with

¹² AusAID, the Australian Agency for International Development, was the Australian Government's development agency from 1995 to October 2013, when it was integrated with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

the Bank of Papua New Guinea releasing a National Financial Inclusion and Financial Literacy Strategy, 2014–2015 (Bank of Papua New Guinea 2014a).

Making economic policy work for women

The above discussion shows that PNG will have a substantial financial resource envelope in the coming years but is at the same time facing daunting challenges of gender parity on all fronts – economic, social, political and cultural. Not only do women face universally recognized disadvantages, but in the national context these are reinforced by a ubiquitous bias towards male dominance that perpetuates gendered disparities, often with deliberate practices aimed at maintaining the status quo. It is within this context and the existing suite of social policies that PNG's nascent 'social protection' agenda currently sits. For the social protection agenda to work for women, it must be embedded in their social, cultural and political realities and at the same time empower them. Importantly, apart from achieving a sea change in cultural and social attitudes, profound shifts in policy and financial management will be required to finance the suite of policies currently in place and anticipated in order to redress the gendered imbalances that PNG women face (see Annex 1). This will include applying the wealth generated by the extractive industries sector towards social policies that address gender equality and women's empowerment while simultaneously addressing implementation capacity. A major challenge for women will not only be to advocate for this but also to ensure that adequate funds are actually applied to budgets and that implementation incapacity is redressed to achieve equality. The PNG Sovereign Wealth Fund enacted by Parliament in 2012 is a key to harnessing the wealth of the resource boom (see Box 2-2).

BOX 2-2

The PNG Sovereign Wealth Fund (SWF): An opportunity to make macroeconomic policies work for gender equality and women's empowerment

In May 2014, PNG started exporting gas to Asia under the LNG project. This historical event portends a quantum growth in government revenue from around K10.5 billion to over K15 billion by 2017 (Department of Treasury 2013). In order to address the macroeconomic and management risks associated with this resources boom, the Government has been considering for some time the establishment of a PNG Sovereign Wealth Fund (SWF) (ibid.). In principle the SWF is a response to past challenges in managing the impact of resource booms on macroeconomic indicators such as the exchange rate and inflation. A major concern is that the LNG exports will result in the 'Dutch disease', where the appreciation of the PNG Kina will reduce the international competitiveness of other exports. Women in PNG are particularly vulnerable to the impact of Dutch disease given their heavy reliance on income generated from the exported agricultural cash crop sector, such as coffee, oil palm and cocoa. In addition, it is hoped the SWF will address financial management challenges including weak accountability and governance and the lack of independence of fund managers that in the past have led to the undermining of national budgetary and fiscal processes.

The operationalization of a SWF that is in line with international best practice will require concerted political will from PNG leaders and policy makers. Its success, once it is established, will require diligence and prudence. It can also be a financing option for implementing and sustaining social policies that address the challenges faced by women in PNG, including financing social protection policies.

The ideal situation would have been for the fund to be established when the LNG export shipments commenced so that revenues could be immediately channelled through it. However, this has not happened because the legislation and management framework are yet to be finalized. In the absence of a functioning SWF, the substantial revenue flow from the LNG exports poses challenges for policy makers and citizens. It will adversely impact the agriculture sector on which the majority of people, especially women, depend. In addition, within the context of weak financial management capacity, there is a significant risk that funds will be mismanaged. Some commentators have raised concerns about the commitment of PNG leaders to the SWF, and in particular note that heavy current borrowings may impact negatively on the objectives of the fund if future resources are committed to repaying loans (Barker 2014). The International Monetary Fund (IMF 2013a) has highlighted the need to avoid any diversions of funds from the SWF as this may result in spending that is outside the scope of development goals that are funded through its fiscal framework.

The SWF is an opportunity to finance existing policies that relate to women's empowerment and gender equality. If it is channelled through the national fiscal framework, its success in terms of translating wealth into development for the broader population will hinge on these policies being equitable and inclusive. Ensuring female representation on the board of the SWF, and ring-fencing funds to be dedicated explicitly towards implementing policies for gender equality, may provide an avenue for advocacy for such policies.

3.

TONGA CASE STUDY

Country profile

Unlike other Pacific countries, the Kingdom of Tonga was never formally colonized, although it was a British Protectorate from 1900 to 1970. The 1875 Constitution established a three-tiered hierarchical social order, comprising the monarchy, nobility and commoners, which persists today. Tonga remains a constitutional monarchy in which the king has executive power. A woman can become queen, although only if the male line has ended; noble titles can only be inherited by males. Very few women have been members of the Tongan Parliament, with only four elected and three appointed throughout its history.

A pro-democracy movement began in the late 1980s and slowly led to some constitutional reform, supported by the late King Tupou V and former Prime Minister Feleti Sevele (Powles 2014). The elections of November 2010 were the first time a majority of the seats in Parliament (17 of 26) were elected by the people. The 33 nobles elect nine of their peers to hold seats and up to four additional seats can be appointed by the Prime Minister. Prior to 2010 only nine of thirty seats were elected by the people, so this marked a significant move towards democratic government. Few women outside the royal family have had formal political power. It was not until 1951 that the Constitution was amended to give women the right to vote. No women were elected in the 2010 elections and only one woman was given a position as a cabinet minister by the Prime Minister. The most recent national election held in November 2014 saw a record number of 16 women candidates although none were elected (ABC 2014).

Tongans pride themselves on the privileged status of women; however, in reality this is limited to their role within families as sisters, a source of power that has been dwindling for many years. Key institutions, particularly the family and the church, reproduce gender inequalities through a blend of patriarchal cultural values and an indigenized Christianity that reaffirms those values and undermines aspects of women's power within their patrilineal kinship group. As wives, women across all strata of society are still regarded as

subordinate to their husbands, and attempts to change this attitude are strongly resisted – including by many women – in part because of the strength of religious beliefs. A 2009 study of Tongan women found that 87 per cent of ever-partnered women reported they had to let their partners know of their whereabouts at all times (Ma'a Fafine Moe Famili Inc. 2012).

Tonga is an archipelago of about 170 small islands, only 36 of which are inhabited. There is one urban centre, Nuku'alofa, on the main island of Tongatapu and much smaller towns in the northern island groups of Ha'apai and Vava'u. The total population counted in the 2011 Census was 103,252 (51,979 males, 51,273 females) and inter-island migration has concentrated this population on Tongatapu, where 73 per cent (75,416) of the population now lives (Ministry of Finance and National Planning 2010a). About a quarter of the population lives in urban areas, and some parts of Nuku'alofa have crowded housing including some migrants from outer islands now living in squatter settlements on poorer land (part of which was a former rubbish dump). In 2009, about 25 per cent of households overall were female-headed while in Nuku'alofa this was 29.6 per cent (ibid.).

Tonga's population has remained fairly stable for many years due to out-migration by both females and males, often as family groups, mainly to New Zealand, the United States and Australia. Although accurate statistics have not been kept for migration,

the population profile of villages in the 1980s showed that more males had migrated; some men were later joined by their wives and children but others began new families overseas (Lee 2003). Since the 1990s, there have been claims that more Tongans live overseas than in the islands, particularly if overseas-born Tongans are included, but problems with the collection of statistics by host nations mean official numbers are always underestimated (*ibid.*). The most recent figures are 60,336 people of Tongan ethnicity in New Zealand in the 2013 Census; 57,183 who self-identified as Tongan in the 2010 United States Census; and 9,208 Tongan-born recorded in Australia in the 2011 Census (Department of Immigration and Citizenship 2014; Hixon, L. et al., 2012; Statistics New Zealand 2013). Tonga has always been a largely mono-cultural society, but there was an influx of Chinese migrants during a cash-for-passports scheme in the late 1990s and they have become very active in business, particularly in Nuku'alofa (Hedditch and Manuel 2010b).

The World Bank classifies Tonga as a lower middle-income country, but in contrast to PNG's dynamic growth its economy has declined in recent years. The Asian Development Bank has forecast the economy will grow by only 0.3 per cent in 2014. Tonga's GDP growth of about 1.3 per cent per annum is well below the regional average of 3.2 per cent (Government of Tonga 2010). The country has a narrow export base, mainly agricultural products that are subject to significant price fluctuations, changes in market demand or other problems such as sudden bans on exports due to quarantine issues. There is a heavy reliance on remittances from Tongans living overseas and on international aid; the latter accounts for 59 per cent of the 2014–15 budget (Fonua 2014). Tonga also faces high levels of debt, limited employment opportunities and low levels of private sector investment (Asian Development Bank 2012). It is dependent on imported fuel as well as importing most of its consumer goods, with limited domestic industrial resources.

In recent years Tonga has been recovering socially and economically from riots that occurred in Nuku'alofa in November 2006, during which fires and other damage destroyed more than half the buildings in the central business district. The riots were triggered by

Parliament closing for the year without addressing the push for democratic reform but can also be seen as the result of people's growing frustration about the cost of living, lack of jobs and other social and economic problems. The centre of town was closed after the riots for several months and is yet to be completely rebuilt. Potentially crippling debts have accrued from borrowing for the reconstruction project, which could impact on the economy for many years. Prior to the riots a civil servants' strike for nearly six weeks in 2005 led to a significant increase in wages for both female and male civil servants but has had a lasting legacy of cuts to essential areas such as health and education.

Living costs have risen dramatically in recent years, with steep rises in the cost of power and consumer goods, impacting on household economies, which are typically managed by women. The cost of living as measured by the Tongan consumer price index rose an astonishing 86 per cent between 2001 and 2009, with the real income of many households declining by as much as one-third in that period (Ministry of Finance and National Planning 2010a). An estimated 22.5 per cent of the population was living below the national poverty line in 2009, up from 16.2 per cent in 2001, with many more living perilously close to the poverty line (Asian Development Bank 2012; Ministry of Finance and National Planning 2010a; Government of Tonga 2010). The greatest increase in poverty was in the rural areas and outer islands. People are being forced to rely more heavily on subsistence agriculture, although not all have access to land since the number of men now exceeds the available plots of land.

As household managers, women have had to increasingly rely on informal social protection through family connections, with flows of support from urban to rural families and from migrants to those remaining in the islands. Poverty, or hardship, is even more prevalent today, as the global economic crisis has led to a marked decline in people's ability to provide this support and cut other revenue from sources such as tourism. Yet, the hierarchical social order established by Tonga's Constitution has now been cross-cut by the rise of an educated and relatively wealthy commoner elite who have established themselves in the professions, business

and at high levels in the civil service, including a significant number of women. Increasing economic inequalities have thus exacerbated the differences between women on the basis of rank.

In addition to the economic challenges Tonga faces, the kingdom is vulnerable to natural disasters, especially tropical cyclones, tidal damage and earthquakes that can seriously damage infrastructure, as well as droughts that threaten the agricultural economy. Climate change will likely increase the severity of cyclones and storm surges. In January 2014, Cyclone Ian devastated the islands in the Ha'apai group, destroying many homes and damaging infrastructure and vegetation. Recovery from such events is largely dependent on foreign aid and the support of Tongans overseas, although the coordination and distribution of such support is hampered by the corruption that is widely acknowledged to be a serious issue in the country.

Livelihoods and the continuum of work

Tonga's human development index (HDI) value has risen slowly since the 1980s, and at 0.710 in 2012 it was positioned at 95 out of 187 countries and territories (UNDP 2013b). The UNDP gender inequality index (GII) for 2012, using measures of reproductive health, empowerment and economic activity, shows Tonga ranking 90 out of 148 countries (ibid.). In 2007 its ranking in the similar gender empowerment measure (GEM) showed that women's level of participation in economic and political activities was 102 out of 190 countries, and reveals that there has been no improvement for women in that time on these measures (Ministry of Finance and National Planning 2010a). There remains significant gender disparity in rates of participation in employment, with labour force statistics from the 2006 Census showing that the workforce participation rate, including paid employment and subsistence work, was 64.2 per cent for males compared to 49 per cent for females. For paid employment the rate in 2006 for those aged 15–59 was 45.4 per cent of males and 29 per cent of females (Tonga Department of Statistics 2009). The 2011 Census shows the gap between male and female workforce participation has increased to 62.7 per cent of males and 42.3 per cent of females

compared to the 2006 Census figures. Within the age group 15–59 years, 50.2 per cent of males were in paid work compared to 34.3 per cent of females, and although this shows higher rates of paid employment for both males and females, weekly earnings remain higher for men (ibid.).

The main sources of employment and income for women are in craft and related trades. Women are also strongly represented in the public service, particularly in the areas of education and health, and hold a range of clerical and unskilled positions. Some women are now in higher positions such as CEO and Deputy CEO of government departments. However, they are still under-represented in senior office work and managerial positions (1 per cent compared to 2.7 per cent of men) though slowly increasing in numbers. The 2006 Census showed women slightly outnumbered men in professional occupations (8.8 per cent women and 8.1 per cent men) (Hedditch and Manuel 2010b). Much of women's work is within the informal economy and not always reflected in official employment statistics. Production of *koloa*, the traditional wealth items of decorated bark cloth and finely woven pandanus mats, has become an important source of income for rural women flowing from urban women in Tonga and overseas who cannot produce *koloa* themselves but continue to use it as wealth to be gifted at weddings, funerals and other important events (Addo 2013). *Koloa* is also used as credit in pawnshops both in Tonga and the diaspora, providing women with informal social protection when cash is urgently needed (Addo and Besnier 2008).

Whether or not the markets for *koloa* will continue to be strong remains to be seen, but if they do weaken rural women will need alternative sources of income that may be difficult to secure and will lack the social status attached to producing and owning this form of traditional wealth. In addition to the production of *koloa*, rural women also engage in forms of subsistence agriculture, although not to the same extent as men and, as they have no land rights (see below), their agricultural work is usually on land held by male kin. Women also gather shellfish and other food from the coral reefs surrounding many of the islands.

The gendered division of labour in the majority of Tongan households still leaves 'domestic' work – including household chores, childcare and care of the sick, disabled and elderly – in the hands of women, whether or not they engage in paid or unpaid work outside the home. Reduced government funding of health care in recent years has increased women's burden of unpaid care work, as has the additional responsibility for childcare created by overseas Tongans sending children and youth to live with families in Tonga. The seasonal worker schemes offered by Australia and New Zealand primarily employ males, leaving their wives to manage households alone or live with relatives. Women also take on the largest share of responsibility for community activities, including volunteer work, and for meeting cultural and kinship obligations. They are estimated to work over 50 per cent longer than men on family and community activities each week (International Finance Corporation 2010).

It is difficult to get an accurate picture of employment in Tonga, with about 60 per cent of people who are 'labour active' working in the informal community sector (Ministry of Finance and National Planning 2010a). This includes women producing *koloa* and selling produce or second-hand goods in markets, the latter often sent by relatives overseas for resale. In recent years there has been an increasing government and NGO focus on support for income generation and commercial activities, but opportunities are restricted with such a small population and the high costs of importing goods. There have been limited attempts to increase the labour force participation of women. For example, in 2008 the Ministry of Agriculture, Food, Forests and Fisheries created the Food, Women and Youth Community Development division to support women and youth in their communities primarily through agricultural initiatives such as raising chickens and growing vegetables that can be sold at markets. The Ministry of Finance and National Planning has recommended the Government supports micro-credit and training for 'vulnerable' women such as single mothers and the unemployed, including conditional cash transfers channelled through NGOs and civil society organizations (CSOs) (Government of Tonga 2010). More generally, the Ministry recommends

strengthening social protection laws including an Employment Relations Bill and legislation to prevent gender discrimination. However, there have been no moves to act on these suggestions.

An increasing number of women are prominent in the private sector. Significant gender-based barriers to women's participation in business still exist, including their responsibility for household and care work as well as wider responsibilities to their church and kinship group, which usually take precedence over employment (Hedditch and Manuel 2010b). These responsibilities mean not only a commitment of time but also a diversion of money and goods to these cultural obligations. Yet these must be met in order to benefit from the informal social protection offered by others in their kinship group and the church and community support networks. Women take the risk of being excluded from access to informal social protection if they do not demonstrate the cultural values of generosity and reciprocity. As in PNG, these values define a 'good woman'.

Establishing even a small business, therefore, can be very difficult for women as there are always relatives whom women are obliged to support and cultural activities to which they are required to contribute (ibid.). It is often difficult for business owners to hold onto their profits, and small enterprises such as village stores (*fale koloa*) may even have difficulty holding onto their stock. In fact, many of the *fale koloa* that can be found throughout Tonga have been taken over by Chinese immigrants who are not part of this system of cultural obligations, making it even harder for Tongan women to engage in the commodity economy.

Other issues deter women from establishing businesses, such as problems with difficult licensing regimes, harassment from regulatory officials that is targeted at women and, more generally, less knowledge about 'the system' and less access to the networks needed to obtain permits and licenses (ibid.). In addition, accessing credit is one of Tonga's worst ranking indicators, being listed at 109 out of 181 global economies (Nakao 2010), and it can be particularly difficult for women to be given credit or manage the high interest rates on repayments.

Inheritance and land laws based on rules of patrilineal succession have long discriminated against women, and this “economic discrimination” further reduces their ability to access credit and own and operate businesses (US Department of State 2013, p. 10).

Women are largely excluded from access to land rights. Under the Constitution there is no freehold land, with most of the land divided into *tofi’a*, or nobles’ estates. Nobles then make the land available to their people to rent, but only males inherit land use rights. Tonga’s Land Act, Section 43, entitles every male subject by birth over 16 years of age the right to access an *’api kolo* (town allotment) and *’api ’uta* (‘bush’ allotment for farming). A Royal Commission of Inquiry in 2012 recommended amendments to land laws to give women inheritance rights to land use, but there has been no change to the laws or Constitution. Women still have no independent land rights, only temporary access. If a woman is the widow of a male who held an allotment, she can use the land but cannot transact it and cannot pass it on to family. In addition, if she enters into another relationship she loses the right to use the land. After an amendment to the land laws in 2010, the oldest female child can register the family allotment if there are no male heirs but must pass it on to her oldest male child (Ministry of Finance 2010a). Women can legally acquire leases to land, but these are very difficult to access in a woman’s name, and although it is relatively cheap to apply, the actual lease can be too expensive for most women to manage.

Social policy for gender equality

Existing policy framework

Tonga has universal free and compulsory basic education for children aged 6–14 and there is very little gender disparity in participation in education. Literacy rates are approximately 99 per cent for both women and men. The Government funds and controls approximately 90 per cent of primary schools but only 30 per cent of secondary schools, most of which are church-run and involve fees. In both primary and secondary education the rate of enrolments for females and males is high: 94.7 per cent of females and 94.1 per cent of males aged 5–14 years. The 2011 Census shows a slightly higher proportion

of females aged 15 and older (33 per cent) having secondary qualifications than males (29 per cent). The Government admits there has been a decline in the quality of education in recent years (Ministry of Finance 2010a). There has also been increasing pressure on parents to contribute financially to schools to help top-up insufficient government funding, and since 2005 families have also been adversely affected by the 15 per cent consumption tax that adds to the cost of school supplies, uniforms, etc. (Government of Tonga 2010).

The ‘youth bulge’ in Tonga means about half the population is under the age of 25 and more than one third (38 per cent in 2010) is under 15 (Ministry of Finance and National Planning 2010a). The median age is 20 for males and 22 for females (Tonga Department of Statistics 2011). Education is highly valued in most Tongan families, and both females and males are encouraged to complete high school, but – with some 1,500 school leavers each year and limited job opportunities – there is a high rate of youth unemployment (Government of Tonga 2010). One of the effects of this is early marriage for some young women (ibid.). There is also limited access to tertiary education. A branch of the University of the South Pacific in Tonga offers a small range of courses, most of which have to be completed in Fiji, and otherwise very little post-secondary education is available except for some vocational and technical training. However, within the limited tertiary options the ratio of female to male participation rose from 67 in 1995 to 99 in 2006 (Ministry of Finance and National Planning 2010a). Most young people seeking tertiary education go overseas to study, often on scholarships provided by overseas donors. Tonga has experienced a substantial ‘brain drain’ over many years as people with tertiary education, particularly in sectors such as health and education, choose to work elsewhere for higher wages and better conditions. On the other hand, as noted above, Tonga has benefited from the flow of remittances from these migrants. The 2011 Census showed that only 2.7 per cent of females and 3.5 per cent of males over the age of 15 had tertiary qualifications, with a further 9.8 per cent of females and 9.3 per cent of males having vocational or professional qualifications (Tonga Department of Statistics 2011).

Tonga has a state-provided primary health-care system that is increasingly challenged by the rapid rise of non-communicable diseases, especially diabetes, cardio-vascular diseases and cancer. Some user fees for medical services were introduced in 2010. Maternal and child health has been a priority element of social policy in National Development Plans for many years and receives a significant proportion of the overall funding for public health (Ministry of Finance and National Planning 2010a). Women have had improved access to reproductive health care since a Reproductive Health Policy was developed in 2008. This focuses on addressing low use of contraception, maternal deaths, adolescent pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), increased gender violence and cervical cancer (the latter in relation to very low rates of uptake of testing).

The fertility rate remains relatively high at 3.9 in 2011, though down from 4.1 in 1996 (Tonga Department of Statistics 2011). The adolescent fertility rate is 18 births per 1,000 live births, which is low compared to other Pacific nations (United Nations Population Fund 2013). However, teenage mothers suffer social stigma and some do not receive proper antenatal care as they are kept hidden from the community to avoid bringing shame to their families. Nearly all births are attended by skilled health personnel, but women can experience problems accessing emergency obstetric care throughout the country and particularly in the outer islands. The 2013 UNDP report indicates that for every 100,000 live births, 110 women die from pregnancy-related causes, although with such a small population this means very few actual cases of maternal mortality. There are double standards in reproductive health policy. The Ministry of Health policy requires the husband's consent if a woman wants sterilization but a husband does not need his wife's consent if he wants a vasectomy (Braun 2012). Abortion is illegal except to save the life of the mother and, although there are family planning services throughout the kingdom, there are still some cultural barriers to contraception and sex education.

Since 2010 female civil servants have been eligible for three months maternity leave, with men allowed one week for paternity leave, while all civil servants also

have access to sick leave and holiday leave. In other sectors, however, there are no provisions for parental or other forms of leave unless particular employers choose to provide it; there are no laws enforcing leave provisions. There has been a growth in kindergarten and childcare facilities in recent years, at least in Nuku'alofa, most of which are run by private operators, but there is no government subsidy for childcare and no child or family allowance scheme. Access to formal childcare gives women who can afford it the opportunity to return to work while their children are still pre-school aged if they have no access to, or choose not to use, informal childcare.

Tonga has made limited attempts to establish social policies that would provide social protection and equality for women. A National Advisory Committee on Gender and Development (NACGAD) was established in 1999 as an inter-ministerial body, but by 2009 it was no longer operational (Braun 2012). NACGAD was reconstituted in 2014 when the National Policy on Gender and Development, first introduced in 2001, was updated and launched in May. The policy was developed by a partnership of government ministries, private sector, civil society, community representatives and international development partners. The policy aims to achieve gender equity by 2025, defined as "all men, women, children, and the family as a whole achieve equal access to economic, social, political, and religious opportunities and benefits" (Hedditch and Manuel 2010b, p. 14). The strategy for achieving this was "promoting universal and free participation and partnership of men and women in all spheres of life, religion, society, politics, economics, and culture" (ibid.)

The Division of Women's Affairs (DWA), originally in the Ministry of Education, Women's Affairs and Culture and since 2012 in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, is charged with the administration of the Government's Action Plan for its Gender and Development policy. However the office has no financial or human resources to implement the plan nor any specific targets, gender policies or programmes for women's economic empowerment (Hedditch and Manuel 2010b; Braun 2012). The DWA has not as yet carried out any reporting or monitoring except for specific donor requirements (Braun 2012); however, it does collaborate

with women's NGOs such as the Tonga National Centre for Women and Children. It relies heavily on donor funding for its programmes, although access to such funding has been limited and the department is in need of capacity development and organizational strengthening (Japan International Cooperation Agency 2010; Braun 2012). Through the 'Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development' programme, the Australian Government is providing funding (2014–17) to support a range of initiatives focusing on women's empowerment in the country, including the appointment of a Tonga Gender Equality Advisor to work with DWA in drafting an implementation plan for the Action Plan.

Overall, the Government of Tonga has only recently begun to engage with possibilities for gender equality and mainstreaming, therefore the associated legal and policy framework is weak. There are no national accountability mechanisms in relation to gender issues due to this lack of political prioritizing (Braun 2012). Neither the Ministry of Finance nor the Ministry of Labour, Commerce and Industry has a gender policy or supports any specific social assistance or services targeted at women's economic empowerment (Hedditch and Manuel 2010b). A report by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community found: "There is no national human rights institution in Tonga or other special mandate for the protection and promotion of women's human rights" (Braun 2012, p. 12). The Government has only limited collaboration with NGOs and CSOs in the area of gender equality and social protection. There is a clear need for stronger cooperation and coordination between the diverse government departments and NGOs/CSOs to develop any comprehensive social protection system (Government of Tonga 2010).

One group that experiences gender inequality but has been largely neglected in government policies as well as by NGOs/CSOs is the *fakaleiti*, or *leiti* (transgendered persons), who are subjected to significant discrimination. Since 1992 they have had their own Tonga Leitis Association (TLA), which facilitates support and outreach. TLA is a member of the Asia Pacific Coalition on Male Sexual Health and the Pacific Sexual Diversity Network. Within Tongan society there tend to be ambivalent attitudes to *leiti*. While they are still

included within kinship groups they are unable to call on the support of brothers, as women can, and they are not accorded full adult male status as husbands and fathers. Status differentials can mean that lower status or 'underprivileged' *leiti* are more likely to be exploited by their straight male partners (Besnier 2011). They are also vulnerable to gender violence, but this has not been part of the discussions around 'family violence' in recent years. *Leiti* are regarded as male in relation to Tongan law so if they have consensual sex with male partners, which is still criminalized, they face charges and intimidation by police.

Policy in the making and implementation issues

Tonga has committed to a range of international plans and agreements concerned with gender equality and social protection, including:

- International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights
- Beijing Platform for Action (1995)
- Millennium Development Goals (2000)
- Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005–2015
- Revised Pacific Platform for Action on Advancement of Women and Gender Equality 2005–2010
- Pacific Plan of 2005.

However, as with its own national planning involving gender and development, the country does not have the funding or political will to move forward with these commitments and, to a large extent, there are still significant cultural barriers. Tonga has refused to sign or ratify CEDAW (Palau is the only other Pacific country to refuse to do so). The UN Human Rights Council, as well as local women's groups, have consistently criticized Tonga for this but until recently the Government has remained steadfast in its decision. There are now some moves towards signing but some reservations remain. The primary issue of concern is the Government's desire to protect the laws of male succession to hereditary titles and land rights and other aspects of Tonga's "cultural and social heritage" (Japan International Cooperation Agency 2010, p. 9).

The rate of domestic violence and other gender violence in Tonga has been shown to be high by a number of studies but it is only in recent years that any serious attempts have been made to address the problem. In 2007, a Police Domestic Violence Unit was established and each police district now has a specialist Domestic Violence Officer. The 2009 National Study on Domestic Violence, funded by the Australian Government and produced by the women's advocacy group Ma'a Fafine mo e Famili, drew renewed attention to the ongoing problem of family violence, including its negative impact on women's economic participation. Women are gradually becoming more willing to report domestic violence and sexual assault to the police, which has helped to raise the profile of these key issues affecting women, as have the activities of the main women's groups. However, these changes continue to be undermined by corruption and the attitudes of many in the police force, as well as cultural factors such as widespread acceptance of punitive violence, particularly when used towards women and children.

The Family Protection Act of 2013 came into effect on 1 July 2014. It introduces protection orders and clarifies the role of the police, who in 2009 introduced a 'No Drop' policy in cases of domestic assault. This policy means all cases must progress to a judicial hearing and charges cannot be dropped once they have been filed. The Act is an important step, but implementation will depend on other changes, including in police culture. Reducing violence against women and increasing support services is a focus of the Tonga Country Plan of the *Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development* initiatives, and accounts for over half of the budget for the first three years of the plan from 2014 to 2017 (Australian Government 2014). It remains to be seen whether the Family Protection Act has the desired effect in reducing domestic violence, which was identified by the US Department of State country report for 2013 as one of Tonga's worst human rights problems (in addition to discrimination against women and government corruption). A great deal of work remains to be done to address each of these issues.

Women's groups were critical to the introduction of the Family Protection Act, particularly the Women and Children Crisis Centre (WCCC) and Tongan National

Centre for Women and Children (TNCWC) as well as church-run counselling services. The WCCC and TNCWC both operate refuges for women and children but only on Tongatapu. Through its Division of Women's Affairs the Government is now also involved in advocacy in relation to domestic violence including reviews of policy and legislation. However, NGOs and CSOs continue to do most of the work in the area of family violence and the protection of women rather than government-funded initiatives. They are hampered to some extent by the conflicting views held by women in relation to gender equality; moreover, different organizations are often unable to work together to push for social protection, assistance and services because of their diverging perspectives of the 'cultural' roles and status of women.

Tonga's laws can be described as gender neutral at best but more often gender blind. For example, the divorce laws can act as a disincentive for women to leave marriages as these only guarantee them the right to keep any assets they brought into the marriage. It is up to the court to decide how to allocate any assets acquired during the marriage, leaving women vulnerable to losing access to land and other property. Until the 2007 amendment to the Nationality Act, Tongan women who married non-Tongan citizens could not retain their nationality and their children could not be Tongan citizens (Braun 2012).

The lack of political participation by women has been identified as a key issue contributing to ongoing gender inequality and the lack of social protection policies. Since the early 2000s, there has been a strong push by women's groups to increase female participation in politics and decision-making. A range of social and cultural barriers has been identified (Guttenbeil-Likiliki 2006) and a number of initiatives introduced, often funded by external aid donors, but there has been little progress, often because of reluctance by women themselves to challenge cultural norms. Programmes for voter education and encouragement of women to run as candidates have been largely unsuccessful.

It was not until 2004 that Tonga had its first female Town Officer at the local level of government, and there is currently only one woman in Parliament: the

Minister for Education and Training, the Honorable Dr. 'Ana Taufe'ulungaki, who was not elected but appointed by the Prime Minister. Before the 2010 elections the Tongan Women's National Congress mounted a campaign to reserve 30 per cent of seats in Parliament and 30 per cent of Cabinet positions for women, but this was resisted by the incumbent Government. With elections due in November 2014 and no female elected representatives, efforts such as a Practice Parliament for Women are being made to encourage women to participate by standing as candidates.

As with domestic violence and women's political participation, most of the initiatives around gender equality and social protection for women have come from community organizations. Tonga has a strong history of women's groups. Queen Salote Tupou III, who ruled from 1918 until her death in 1965, set up the first national women's organization in 1954, the Langa Fonua 'a e Fafine Tonga (Nation Building by Tongan Women). This led to other women's organizations in

the 1960s such as Women's Public Health Committees, and the Queen was an advocate for women to have equal access to education.

Langa Fonua continues today as an umbrella NGO for women's issues (Braun 2012). It has become involved in the push to have greater political representation for women, as well as supporting other initiatives on issues such as family violence. Today there are many other women's organizations including those associated with churches, CSOs and local community groups. The Catholic Women's League of Tonga has been a particularly strong advocate for women for many years and has established legal literacy projects, counselling and human rights education. A relatively new NGO, Talitha, was established in 2009 to focus on young women including the key areas of leadership and political participation, economic empowerment, advocacy against gender violence and discrimination, and health and sexual reproductive rights. Talitha supports a Young Women's Leadership Programme with projects across the island group.

BOX 3-1

WISE as a recently emerged community group of businesswomen

There is a growing acceptance of female entrepreneurship in Tonga, at least at the sole trader level (International Finance Corporation 2010). The International Finance Corporation supported the establishment of the Tonga Business Women's Forum in 2009 to create a network of women entrepreneurs and provide training opportunities for women. WISE Tonga Inc., Women in Sustainable Enterprises, is an NGO founded in 2011 that connects women involved in any form of business, women's village groups and aspiring businesswomen. The organization's mission, adopted in July 2012, includes the aim of "advancing women's roles in business and society" and encourages women's leadership. The focus is on networking, training and opportunities such as night markets.

WISE has: "A vision of Tonga where women may prosper in sustainable enterprises, with equal

opportunity for improving the lives of their families and communities" (WISE Tonga 2014). This vision manages to support women in business while acknowledging their cultural obligations. WISE connects with other programmes to support women in business, such as the 'Women in Business Be Your Dream' programme run by the Emerging Pacific Women's Leaders Programme, which includes a competition in Tonga for young female entrepreneurs.

As long as WISE remains active and can tap into external forms of support for activities such as training programmes, the group will continue to boost the engagement of women in business. However, it is reliant on the energies and expertise of particular individuals, so its future depends on their continued involvement or that of others from within its small pool of members.

Financing

Tonga's heavy reliance on overseas aid has meant that, to some extent, its approach to issues of gender equity and social protection is donor driven. This aid is further affected by the shifting priorities of external government and non-government donors. In the absence of external funding or government financing to support targeted priorities for formal social assistance and services, women will continue to rely on informal social protection through kinship networks. This reflects the problem of a widespread lack of political will to direct funding to gender issues and a lack of human resources and appropriate training to implement any social protection policies for women. The Government directs few resources to these issues, as indicated by the Division of Women's Affairs receiving only 0.007 per cent of the total government budget in 2009–10.

Making economic policy work for women

Tonga's economy is fragile as it has relied for many years on overseas aid and remittance; in fact, it is the recipient of the highest levels of remittances in the Pacific. This can be seen then as a form of social protection, even though this is not via the state or directed to the most vulnerable. In a sense it is a continuation of kinship-based social protection in the transnational context of Tongans living between the islands and overseas, much of which is managed by women. Official statistics significantly undercount remittances as both money and goods are sent in a wide variety of ways, many of which are not included in official figures, so Tongans are even more reliant on this income than the data indicate. For many years there has been a high level of complacency, including by the Government, about the ongoing flow of remittances to bolster the economy. In 2006–07 recorded remittances comprised 46 per cent of GDP, but they dropped sharply during the global economic crisis of 2008–09 and have not recovered. Remittances through formal channels in 2008–09 were \$TOP160.3 million, before the impact of the global economic crisis, and they had dropped to \$TOP89.7 million by 2011–12. Yet no social policies have been put in place to deal with the impact of this change. Remittances will also decline over time as it becomes increasingly difficult for Tongans to migrate due to the tightening

of immigration policies in the main receiving nations. In addition, it has already been shown that the children of migrants remit at far lower levels than their parents' generation, which raises questions about the ongoing sustainability of remittances (Lee 2006).

At present, remittances form a crucial informal safety net for families and particularly for women whose husbands have emigrated. They are estimated to average 21 per cent of household income, and both urban and rural households are equally reliant on them; 80 per cent of all households report remittance income (Tonga Department of Statistics 2014). As well as remittances for households there is strong support from the diaspora in other ways, such as fundraising for sports teams, church groups and other groups that visit Tongan communities overseas and support for specific causes such as disaster relief following cyclones and earthquakes. As with remittances the future sustainability of such support is unknown, and economic planning for the possibility of reduced income from the diaspora is urgently needed. Seasonal worker schemes are providing some hope for ongoing remittance flows, but they also impact negatively on families, especially women whose husbands are absent for many months at a time.

A government paper on social protection issues openly admits the country has "no overall strategy for social protection and safety net programmes" for any sector of the population (Government of Tonga 2010b, p. 21). The only attempt to introduce any social insurance scheme is the National Retirement Benefits Scheme (NRBS) established by an act of Parliament in 2010, which came into effect in 2012. All employers must contribute, and in its first year of operation it collected over \$TOP6.15 million and had a membership of 4,304 employees and 308 employers, about half the expected membership to be added from all eligible businesses (*Matangi Tonga Magazine* 2013). Retirement benefits and death claims have already been paid, and overseas Tongans are being encouraged to add to their family members' retirement accounts in a new twist to remittances. Given women's much lower rate of employment in the formal sector, they are less likely to benefit from this scheme as

employees; however, it does give them some protection through partners' retirement benefits and death benefits in cases where they are widowed. Concern is being expressed in Tonga about this form of social insurance because the burden on employers is likely to prevent wage increases and could threaten jobs, and it is unclear whether the funds being accumulated are being used for re-investment into the economy. In any case, only approximately 11 per cent of the labour force is covered by the retirement scheme (Government of Tonga 2010).

For Tongans who are not formally employed and therefore are excluded from this state-managed social protection scheme, kin networks remain the only source of social welfare. Here again, women's reliance on men for access to land and property creates problems in relation to social protection even within these informal networks. Tonga's National Strategic Planning Framework does identify widowed women as a vulnerable group – along with children and the elderly – needing care and support services, particularly in rural areas (Ministry of Finance and National Planning 2010). The Government's structural reforms include directing funds to the outer islands for communities to allocate spending, which would be determined through the community planning undertaken by local authorities such as the District and Town Officers. The Tongan National Leadership Development Forum (TNLDF), funded by the Australian Government through the Pacific Leadership Programme, has worked to include women and youth in the formal governance structure in 27 village councils as well as six District Councils of the island group of Ha'apai and is pushing to extend this structure throughout the Kingdom. If successful this could potentially challenge male dominance in

all levels of formal decision-making and could support the push by some women's groups to increase women's participation in national government.

With remittances declining and the exclusion of many women from the NRBS, the need for a focus on women's economic empowerment is obvious. However, to achieve this there needs to be strong support for mainstreaming gender into government policies and programmes and the development of policies explicitly framed around social protection. Protection for women workers is needed along with policies to promote and facilitate the formal and self-employment of women (Japan International Cooperation Agency 2010). A clear indication of the lack of support for gender mainstreaming is the National Strategic Planning Framework (NSPF), which extends from 2010 to 2020 but pays scant attention to gender issues. In the Framework, there is one paragraph that mentions the Government's gender and development policy, claiming it supports "an increase in the level of gender-balanced economic opportunities and activities throughout Tonga by promoting skills, enterprises and innovation through training men, women and youth in the community level and informal sectors" (Ministry of Finance and National Planning 2010a, p. 5). It also mentions "participation in income generating commercial activities" but does not specify anything about addressing women's opportunities or activities in particular (ibid.). Given Tonga's economic situation, there is limited scope for the Government to develop social protection policies that involve cash transfer systems, such as child and family allowances. Policies to be developed are therefore likely to be focused on contributory social insurance, such as the NRBS and others that do not entail government benefits.

BOX 3-2

Making social protection inclusive: Class and rank differences of Tongan women

Tonga has significant differences between rural and urban areas in terms of access to resources, health care, education and paid employment. There are also traditional rank differences that were confirmed by the Constitution, in which the royal and noble families enjoy privileges that are inaccessible to most commoners. However, there is an urban middle 'class' of commoners that is now well established and wealthy relative to the majority of the population. Nobles and others with connections to the political elite own large tracts of land and dominate big- and medium-size businesses. As women themselves cannot be nobles, they rely on their connections through marriage and kinship ties to access resources and privilege. Most women who have positions of leadership in Tonga

have links with the royal family and nobility, with a much smaller number of educated, middle-class female commoners now taking on important roles in business and to a lesser extent in government. Family connections remain essential, so for women without connections to either the traditional elite or the rising middle class it is very difficult to navigate the complex and confusing bureaucratic and administrative approval processes (Hedditch and Manuel 2010b). Even accessing the correct information can be difficult without the right connections, leading many women to remain in the informal sector unprotected by any labour laws and with little access to credit and no potential to be helped by state schemes of social insurance based on formal employment.

The NSPF reflects the lack of macroeconomic policies directly aimed at addressing gender inequalities, and its Key Outcome Objectives and Targets do not mention gender at all. After providing statistics on increased poverty and the high rate of female-headed households, the NSPF acknowledges that the target for MDG3 – Promote gender equality and empower women – is not being met, but suggests this is balanced by what it claims are equal opportunities in areas such as government employment (Hedditch and Manuel 2010b). Moreover, Tonga's report on progress towards achieving the MDGs gives an overview that admits that Tonga is unlikely to achieve

MDG3 by 2015 and there is only 'good' (not 'strong') national support for the goal (Ministry of Finance and National Planning 2010b, p. ix). Tonga's failure to meet MDG3 and its ongoing problems of gender inequalities were strongly criticized by the UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review Working Group at a review in January 2013 (Pacific Island Development Program 2013). As with its consistent response to critiques in relation to CEDAW, the Government's response was to reiterate it had cultural reasons for resisting gender equality and to cite yet again the misleading claim that women in Tonga hold a privileged position in society.

4.

VANUATU CASE STUDY

Country profile

The Republic of Vanuatu comprises 83 islands, 65 of which are inhabited. The majority of the population of 269,560 people resides in rural areas, with 25 per cent located in and around the two main urban centres of Port Vila and Luganville (see Table 4-1).¹³ Rural-urban drift has led to an urban population growth rate of 3.5 per cent per annum since 1999, compared to a national average of 2.3 per cent in 2009. Estimates indicate that by 2020 Vanuatu's urban population will exceed 25 per cent of the total. By one calculation, in 2050, 41 per cent of the total population of Vanuatu will be residing on the island of Efate, in or around Port Vila (Asian Development Bank 2010). While men are more likely to migrate to urban centres than women (there are 107 men for every 100 women in urban centres), in 2009 women made up more than half (53 per cent) the people who have migrated within Vanuatu since birth (VNSO 2011). Patrilineal customs and traditional marital systems comprise the main reasons why women are domestically more mobile than men.

TABLE 4-1

Vanuatu population by sex and urban/rural location, 2009

	Vanuatu		Urban		Rural	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Males	119,091	51.8	29,618	51.8	89,473	50.6
Females	114,932	48.2	27,577	48.2	84,355	49.4
Total	234,023	100.0	57,195	100.0	176,828	100.0

Source: VNSO 2011, p. 8.

Land is the fundamental source of people's livelihoods in Vanuatu and is traditionally inalienable, with approximately 90 per cent of land under customary tenure (Scott et al. 2012). Women's rights to land are not independent of male relatives and are an extension of socially constructed gendered roles as daughters, sisters, wives or mothers (AusAID 2008), which "increases women's economic dependence on men" (UN ESCAP 2013).

According to the measure of the basic needs poverty line (BDPL), which is VT4,175 per capita per year, 16 per cent of the population live below the national poverty line (Government of Vanuatu 2010b). In particular, Vanuatu's second major town, Luganville, shows an increasing trend in the proportion of households below the poverty threshold. Compared to 2 per cent of rural households, and 2.2 per cent of households in Port Vila, 6 per cent of households in Luganville report expenditure below the food poverty line in 2010) (VSNO and UNDP Pacific Centre

¹³ Vanuatu National Statistics Office live counter, based on the 2009 National Census. <http://www.vns0.gov.vu> (accessed 20 February 2014).

2012, p.10).¹⁴ Rural households, on average, reported lower incidences of basic needs poverty (10 per cent) compared to urban households in 2010.¹⁵

The majority of rural ni-Vanuatu live a subsistence lifestyle. Statistical data indicate that 49 per cent of all women produce their own food compared to 41 per cent of all men, who are more likely to be categorized as being in some form of paid employment (i.e., employee, self-employed, producing cash crops, etc.) (VNSO 2011). Women’s participation in formal employment in rural areas is much less than men’s, leading to the high reliance on own-food production.

Nationally, the rural food poverty line is 70 per cent less than that in Port Vila because the cost of food is less in rural areas, which also report more food production by the household (63 per cent of rural households) (VNSO 2008). Urban Vanuatu reports higher incidences of basic needs poverty, characterized by food poverty,

inadequate access to housing, clean water and sanitation and insufficient land for food production (Table 4-2). Urban areas report higher unemployment rates overall, with urban women experiencing the greatest unemployment nationally (14.7 per cent) (VNSO 2009). For urban residents, non-food costs such as affordable housing are increasingly becoming an issue, particularly for urban women who, in addition to an increased likelihood of unemployment are, like rural women, traditionally less likely to own property outright and are often dependent on male spouses or relatives for urban shelter. Nationally, only 1 in 5 households are headed by women, although the Government acknowledges that the use of ‘household head’ is a weak measure of gender relations within the household since it is up to each household to determine their head, which may vary over time (VNSO 2011, p. 16). However, these data do afford some level of analysis when estimating the possible gender outcomes of household-centric social protection policies.

TABLE 4-2

Vanuatu incidence of basic needs poverty

Proportion of households and population with weekly per capita adult equivalent expenditure less than the BNPL				
%	Households		Population	
	2006	2010	2006	2010
Vanuatu average	10.3	10.7	13.0	12.7
Port Vila (urban)	16.3	14.7	20.1	18.4
Luganville (urban)	10.4	19.4	12.2	23.6
Rural	9.0	8.5	11.5	10.0

Source: VNSO and UNDP Pacific Centre 2012, p. 10.

The Asian Development Bank (2013b) estimates that 40 per cent of all ni-Vanuatu and 50 per cent of the rural population have incomes below the international poverty line of US\$1.25 per capita per day. The World Bank classifies Vanuatu, like PNG and

Tonga, as a lower middle-income country, although its economic growth has not been so strong. From 2003 to 2008, the economy grew at an average rate of 6 per cent annually and has since maintained positive economic growth, although at levels closer to 2.5 per cent annually (Tevi 2012). Since 2009, the rate of inflation, based on Vanuatu’s consumer price index, has remained below the Government’s target of 4 per cent (ibid.). The agricultural sector dominates the economy, although the services sector, which comprises mainly tourism, is emerging as a major driver of economic growth as are public infrastructure investments. The

¹⁴ Food poverty is characterized as consumption of less than 2,100 kilocalories per day per adult equivalent. See VNSO and UNDP Pacific Centre 2012, p. 9.

¹⁵ The basic needs poverty line (BNPL) is made up of two components: the cost of a minimum food basket and an amount of expenditure for ‘essential’ non-food basic needs. Separate estimates were made for Port Vila, Luganville and rural (other islands/rural) areas. See VNSO and UNDP Centre 2012, p 29.

majority of government revenue is foreign-sourced, with 18.4 per cent of revenue sourced domestically in 2013. The Asian Development Bank (2013b) forecasts the economy to grow by 3.5 per cent in 2014. The low-tax regime and no income tax have made Vanuatu attractive as a retirement and investment destination for Australian citizens in particular (IMF 2013b). Overall, Vanuatu has performed well and a positive economic outlook is predicted for 2014. However, the Government acknowledges the potential for additional growth in the agricultural and tourism sectors. Approximately 20 per cent of the population uses banks that are mainly located in urban and provincial hubs, reflecting both the limited reach of financial services and the prevalence of the informal economy (Asian Development Bank 2013a).

Vanuatu's population is highly youthful. In 2009, approximately 40 per cent of the population was under the age of 15 years, with a median age for the entire population of 19 years for men and 20 years for women (VNSO 2011). The 'youth bulge' presents a considerable policy challenge in terms of education, training and employment opportunities. A Ministry of Youth and Sports was established in 2003 in recognition of the need for dedicated resources to youth development.¹⁶ In 2009, young people accounted for 34 per cent of the working-age population (Government of Vanuatu 2009b), but youth unemployment accounts for 9 per cent of both women and men aged between 15 and 24 years (VNSO 2011).

According to the National Population and Housing Census, there were 84,172 people employed in Vanuatu in 2009. Accurate unemployment figures are elusive, however, and there is ongoing debate within the country about what constitutes work and 'the economy'. The 2009 Census reported a 5.5 per cent unemployment rate, although the Asian Development Bank (2013b) estimates that this is more likely to be 47 per cent if subsistence workers are included in the unemployed measure. About 4,899 people enter the labour force each year, but most are not covered by any social protection policies (Chand Prasad and Kausiame 2012). Furthermore, while the country's employment-based superannuation scheme, the National Provident Fund,

¹⁶ Initially named the Ministry of Youth Development and Training, it changed to the current title in 2006. The Ministry was briefly dissolved in November 2012 and then re-instated in 2013.

records over 30,000 members, fewer than 2,000 are joining annually indicating that much of the incoming workforce is not covered (Vatoko 2014). Employed women are gradually gaining more senior decision-making positions: from 21 per cent in 1999 to 29 per cent in 2009 (VNSO 2011). Social networks and family and kinship ties are especially important for workers who are not covered by formal sector policies such as superannuation/retirement schemes and severance payments, or who fall below the eligibility threshold for certain work benefits such as maternity leave and holiday pay due to full-time versus part-time thresholds set out by the Employment Act.¹⁷

The World Risk Report (Alliance Development Works 2012) ranks Vanuatu as the most vulnerable country in the world based on exposure to natural disasters and societal vulnerability measured by coping and adaptive capacities. Tonga ranks a close second while Papua New Guinea ranks twelfth. In March 2014, Cyclone Lusi devastated the islands in the northern provinces killing 10 people (primarily women and children), destroying many homes and damaging infrastructure and vegetation. Climate change is likely to worsen the frequency and intensity of cyclones and storm surges. Recovery from such events is largely dependent on foreign aid.

Although women have equal rights under the law, a traditional culture of male dominance has meant that there are significant gender disparities in a number of areas. The UNDP HDI for 2012 ranks Vanuatu 124 out of 195 countries based on measures of maternal mortality and political and labour participation (UNDP 2012). There is limited access to education: 13 per cent of girls/women aged five years and older have never been to school, compared to 10 per cent of boys/men (VNSO 2011). Only 49 per cent of girls complete primary school and only 25.3 per cent commence secondary school. In over 30 years of independence, there has

¹⁷ For example, if part-time workers works for less than 20 hours per week (deemed 'non-continuous work'), they are not entitled to paid sick leave until they have worked for a full year (Employment Act CAP 160 section 34). Legislative loopholes permit employers to contract workers part time to avoid paying work benefits designed to afford workers some insurance during health-related or personal matters requiring time off. Similarly, due to the requirement for one month's equivalent severance pay for employees contracted for more than 12 months, year-to-year contracts are often used by employers to avoid accumulated severance pay-outs for long-term employees.

never been more than one or two female representatives in Parliament, and currently there is no female member out of a total of 52. Vanuatu has one of the highest rates of gender violence in the world, with 68 per cent of women experiencing this (Vanuatu Women's Centre 2011). Women's fertility remains a high 4.8, although maternal deaths have declined since 1980 to 150 per 100,000 (VNSO 2009).

Policy implementation context

In this context of a growing poverty gap between rural and urban areas, as well as a gender gap in terms of opportunities and social protection, the Government developed the Priorities and Action Agenda 2006–2015 (PAA). This development plan acknowledges the particular challenges that women in Vanuatu face due to the “spread of the cash economy and the weakening of the traditional forms of social cohesion” (Government of Vanuatu 2006, pp. 32), and prioritizes closing the gender gap in education, increasing women's political participation and increasing the number of women in wage employment in the non-agriculture sector. However, while the PAA's emphasis on equitable access to services and increasing women's share of the labour market is laudable, its economic lens on development challenges omits social justice, the informal economy and social protection. The PAA's vision acknowledges that: “welfare services need to be able to provide for the needs of youth, the elderly and the otherwise disadvantaged” (ibid., p. 6). However, no detail is provided regarding these services. The mid-term adjustment of the PAA, the Government's Planning Long, Acting Short 2009–2012 policy priorities, does not expand on them either. In 2014, the Government developed an updated national policy document, the National Sustainable Development Plan (NSDP), which promises a comprehensive view of social and economic development. Yet to be formalized by Parliament, the NSDP marks a new approach that incorporates ‘traditional,’ informal systems into state-centric policies, whether in relation to land management or access to justice.

Despite a decentralization policy being in place since 1994, in reality state architecture remains centralized in relation to service-oriented sectors such as health and education. Each of these ministries has a presence at

the provincial level but they undergo centralized annual budget and planning processes. Information flows between the national and sub-national levels of government, and citizens, have been improving since 2008, following the introduction of an e-Government system as well as expanded public broadcasting to cover 100 per cent of the population. Despite improvements in information flows, however, the capacity for service delivery across the country remains constrained by island geography and limited financial and human resources for implementation of social policies. The limited reach of the national Government has resulted in social service models that draw on civil society partnerships and traditional institutions.

In 1995, Vanuatu ratified CEDAW and has incrementally increased public funding towards gender policies. A Ministry of Justice and Community Services was created in 2006, which includes the Department of Women's Affairs (DWA) that chairs the National CEDAW Committee and provides oversight of gender and disability policies. DWA emphasizes social policy-making but acknowledges its dependence on civil society partnerships to implement policy (Naupa et al. 2011). Its recurrent budget remains one of the smallest of any government department, averaging VT24 million annually (or 0.1 per cent of the total government budget), leaving little money available for policy implementation and monitoring. The Australian and New Zealand Governments, European Union and UN agencies have traditionally played an important role in filling this budget gap.

Rapidly expanding mobile telephony and telecommunications networks are ushering in new opportunities and financial networks for citizens, regardless of urban and rural residence. According to socialbakers.com, Vanuatu's mobile phone penetration exceeds 100 per cent (Naupa and Howlett 2011). Since 2012, the Vanuatu National Provident Fund has provided an SMS-based service for checking superannuation payments and balances. Money transfers, managed by the two main telecommunications providers, Digicel and TVL, are also available. However, while providing an important entry into trackable financial transactions, they do not necessarily ‘bank the unbanked’, and nor do they provide savings or financial management literacy to users. The next logical policy step would be

to build on current user practice to introduce formal banking links for the incorporation of social protection programmes that do not rely on employment status, for example, disability support schemes.

Livelihoods and the continuum of work

There is limited available information about the labour market in Vanuatu. According to the 2000 Labour Market Survey, the country has one of the lowest rates of formal labour participation in the Pacific, a situation that is unlikely to have altered significantly in the past decade due in part to insufficient opportunities for technical and vocational skills training (International Labour Organization 2000, p. 5). Women represent only a third of employees in the formal sector. In 2011, 61 per cent of working-age women participated in the workforce compared to 79.7 per cent of men, where the measure included agricultural (primarily subsistence) labour, which may not necessarily provide wage employment. An estimated 70 per cent of the employed population are involved in subsistence activities. A significant proportion of women work in the undocumented informal sector (e.g. as 'house girls' or domestic cleaners and carers), which is often overlooked in formal labour measures (Rodman et al. 2007). Unemployment is higher for women, who comprise 36 per cent and 39 per cent of the workforce in the private and government sectors respectively, and who are less likely than men to be self-employed (5 per cent compared to 7 per cent for men) (VNSO 2011). This may be due to experiences of discrimination in access to employment, credit to start a business and pay equity for substantially similar work. While standard labour measures may categorize unemployed women as economically inactive, most of these women (61 per cent) are full-time home-makers who care for dependents (children and the elderly) at home. This 'home-maker' role has been essential to social well-being in Vanuatu, providing a welfare role where the state does not.

Vanuatu has a number of acts governing employment and employment-related issues, which generally provide high levels of protection for employees in the formal sector (UN ESCAP 2007) – for example, in terms of hours of work, wage levels, leave and severance pay, etc. However, given that the majority of the workforce, and especially women, are engaged in the informal sector, they do not benefit from these protections.

Section 8 of the Employment Act (CAP 160 of 1983) pertains specifically to the employment of women and young people. The Act provides maternity leave on half-pay and breast-feeding allowances for women, who comprise 37 per cent of the formal sector workforce (AusAid 2013), and prohibits women from working in certain employment categories at night except in relation to health care, tourism or transportation-based jobs (clause 35). All employees are entitled to 12 days of paid holiday leave and 21 days of paid sick leave a year. The Minimum Wage Act raised the minimum wage to VT30,000 per month in August 2012, a move that several employees contested. In response, there is anecdotal evidence that more employees were granted part-time status, exempting them from this benefit.

Women are crucial in the subsistence economy, which is the main source of livelihoods and employment in rural regions. Social obligations and the gendered division of labour, whereby women are the primary caregivers for children and the elderly, are also an important part of women's work. Balancing both economic and non-economic responsibilities, women bear a disproportionate burden of work and financial pressure (Hedditch and Manuel 2010c). As in PNG and Tonga, women risk exclusion from informal social protection measures if they do not fulfil social and community obligations, such as kinship ceremonies and church activities. Women's engagement in formal economic activities also runs the risk of diminished social standing and increased gender violence, including from jealous relatives or resentful husbands. In addition, barriers to women's economic participation include lack of access to credit and lack of business 'know-how' and skills development. These provide less than optimal conditions for ni-Vanuatu women to expand access to formal social protection mechanisms.

In 1996, the Government, in partnership with UNDP, established the Vanuatu Women Development Scheme (VANWODS), a micro-finance scheme for women. The initiative became an NGO in 2001 and achieved sustainability in 2007, reaching over 5,000 members in Port Vila, Luganville, Malekula, and Tanna (Suen and Fred 2010). Forty-six per cent of loans are used to support women's micro-business in a range of sectors including retail stores, market stalls/road markets, handicrafts and *nakamals* (kava

bars). However, a common problem for micro-businesses run by women is customers paying on credit and refusing to make repayments, inducing business closure in several instances. VANWODS members reported that socially it was often difficult to enforce cash payments for services/products. Similarly, the blanket application of business license fees until 2012 failed to recognize the different business scales. In 2010, VANWODS successfully lobbied the Shefa

Provincial Government to reduce business license fees for women in micro-business, and by 2012 business license fees were afforded a blanket waiver for businesses with less than a VT4 million (US\$40,000) annual turnover. VANWODS reports increasing demand from women across Vanuatu to expand their lending services, but acknowledges that business training and financial literacy are critical to success (VANWODS 2014).

BOX 4-1

Land-based livelihoods and traditional social protection in a modernizing Vanuatu

Land is a key asset in Pacific social protection. As in many other Pacific countries, the Vanuatu Constitution enshrines customary ownership of land, acknowledging that for generations, outside of state structures, the land has provided for all members of society and sustained relationships between groups, underpinning the ni-Vanuatu identity. Access to land is critical for sustaining livelihoods, particularly for the 75 per cent of the population who reside in rural areas where there is limited reach of government services. Responding to increasing land pressures, the Vanuatu Cultural Centre organized a National Self-Reliance Summit in 2005, which was followed by a National Land Summit in 2006. This triggered public pressure on the Government for its policies to acknowledge that: “The traditional economy constitutes the political, economic and social foundation of contemporary Vanuatu society and is the source of resilience for our populations, which has allowed them to weather the vagaries of the global economy over past decades” (Regenvanu 2008).

Women have access to land resources through inheritance and marriage, but very few have recorded a formal claim to land (Government of Vanuatu 2010b). While matrilineal land tenure systems in some parts of the country allow women more participation in land decision-making, women’s rights to land are rarely independent of male relatives and are rather an extension of socially constructed gendered roles as daughters, sisters,

wives or mothers (Naupa and Simo 2007; AusAID 2008). According to the 2012 Alternative Indicators of Well-Being in Melanesia Vanuatu Pilot Study (Malvatumauri National Council of Chiefs 2012, Table 5, p. 23), 34.5 per cent of the women surveyed considered themselves sole custodians of customary lands (compared to 56.6 per cent of men), while 52.3 per cent claimed primary access through their spouse and 49.1 per cent accessed land through their family. Women’s access to this form of social protection therefore relies on the ability to nurture and maintain socially recognized relationships with males. Single mothers, divorced women, widows and spinsters risk falling through the social safety net that access to land provides.

Growing land alienation from weakly regulated speculative land transactions has resulted in increasing tensions amongst communities and a dilution of social cohesion. A movement to refocus state land policies on the role of customary institutions was born, resulting in legislative reform in 2013 to strengthen the links between customary and state governance of land. In the 2000s, popular rhetoric about the universal access principles of customary land tenure and its role in providing for all was instrumental in pushing for a formalized role for women in land decisions. The national land reforms of 2013 prescribe broad community consultations regarding customary land development and explicitly require the inclusion of disadvantaged groups

(women, youth) where customary land is to be formalized within a legal framework. However, the tendency for land discussions to focus on rural Vanuatu has meant that urban and peri-urban ni-Vanuatu, who have diluted customary links to land, are more vulnerable. It is these populations that fall more quickly and severely

through the traditional safety net provided by access to custom land. Urban women are particularly vulnerable to poverty and hardship due to diluted clan identities, and therefore weaker land claims, as well as minimal formal employment prospects that could offer them access to formal social protection mechanisms.

Social policy for gender equality

Existing policy framework: Government provision of basic services

The Government's most developed social policies lie within the health and education sectors and are guided by principles of universal, affordable access, similar to those in PNG and Tonga. As per the Priorities and Action Agenda 2006–2015 and the Planning Long, Acting Short 2009–2012 revision, the Government unveiled a Health Sector Strategy in 2010 (Government of Vanuatu 2010a), which prioritizes primary health care and the reduction of maternal and infant mortality and allocates approximately 13 per cent of the national budget to health services annually. Overall, health has improved for women. Maternal mortality has been reduced to 110 per 100,000 and infant mortality is one of the lowest in the Pacific region at 26 deaths per 1,000 live births (*ibid.*). However, there is a significant difference in rates for urban and rural areas (Chand Prasad and Kausiame 2012). Teenage pregnancies remain worryingly high at 116 births per 1,000 young women. Adolescent mothers tend to be from rural areas and to have only primary school education or less (AusAID 2013).

The reach of health services is a challenge for the island archipelago, as is health-care capacity development. Approximately 80 per cent of the Ministry of Health's recurrent budget goes towards salaries, and in recent years the Government has had to recruit nurses from the Solomon Islands to address chronic nursing shortages. The national nurse training college re-opened in 2011 after being closed for almost a decade. A partnership with Save The Children Australia assists the Government in

providing village-level aid posts as the first stop for those seeking health care, so that the Ministry can focus its limited staffing resources on the provision of secondary and tertiary health care. Rural residents typically travel to provincial and urban centres if they seek more advanced care. Reproductive health care and programmes targeted at adolescents have been relatively successful, although STIs affect 46 per cent of young people (Hedditch and Manuel 2010c). Several NGOs, such as the Vanuatu Family Health Association and the Kam Pusum Hed Clinic of the Wan Smolbag NGO, have enabled low-cost, community-based family planning and sexual health services for urban residents and work closely with the Government on health policies. Abortion is illegal but the national health policy does support the provision of family planning services and contraception. Non-communicable diseases such as diabetes and asthma are on the increase; government officials predict a growing burden on limited health resources for these so-called 'life-style' chronic diseases.

Funding for education comprises the largest annual budget investment for the Government, averaging 20 per cent during the 2000s. Since 2010, the Vanuatu Education Sector Strategy has facilitated government subsidies for children enrolled in primary schools, significantly reducing the cost of primary education for parents. Gender parity exists at primary school level, with the net enrolment rate at 87.9 per cent for both girls and boys, but the gender gap increases marginally at the secondary school level and considerably at the tertiary level (4.5 per cent of boys obtain tertiary qualifications while only 3.3 per cent of girls achieve the same) (AusAID 2012). Development partnerships with the Australian

and New Zealand Governments and UNICEF have contributed significantly to the outcome of gender parity at the primary level. The Government funds and controls approximately 80 per cent of primary schools and 95 per cent of secondary schools. There is a growing number of church-run primary and secondary schools, which involve higher fees than for government-run schools and often use non-national curricula. The Government acknowledges that an emphasis on universal access to education has been at the expense of quality (Government of Vanuatu 2009a). Beyond primary education, parents are expected to cover the full cost of school fees. In partnership with donors, the Government also facilitates a competitive tertiary scholarship scheme for study in Vanuatu and abroad. In 2011, young women comprised 45 per cent of scholarships awarded, compared to 2007 when they comprised only one third (Ministry of Education 2012). This increase is in part due to donor-funded scholarship schemes that promote gender equity as well as incrementally more girls graduating through the school system.

The Department of Women's Affairs provides oversight of the Family Protection Act, which was passed in 2008 following an 11-year advocacy effort by women's organizations for formal protection of victims of domestic violence. The legislation provides a process for individuals, civil society or customary groups, police and the formal judiciary to provide protection for women and children from situations of violence and clarifies the role of the police. A 2010 study on the prevalence of violence recorded 72 per cent of Vanuatu's women experiencing physical and/or sexual violence committed by a partner or non-partner and found that rates of violence were higher in rural than urban areas (Vanuatu Women's Centre 2011). Implementation of the law is an ongoing challenge, not least due to cultural attitudes that regard violence as a private matter and the need for further education of police and health services to report suspected cases. Safe refuge for victims of domestic violence is a particular social protection challenge in a cultural context where women's access to subsistence-based livelihoods is primarily controlled by men (see Box 5). As in all other policy areas, the Government collaborates closely with NGOs to implement legislation and

policy. Implementation support will continue in the new Vanuatu Policing and Justice Support Program (Australian-funded) from July 2014 to 2016.

Women with disabilities experience greater hardship due to the stereotypes surrounding disability and deprecating attitudes towards women overall (AusAID 2013; Stubbs and Tawake 2009). AusAID (ibid., p. 12) reports: "Young people living with disability have little access to schooling overall. However, the situation is worse for young women with a severe impairment, with 81 per cent not having been to school as compared with 69 per cent of male peers. It is worse still for girls aged 10–14 years, of whom an estimated 93 per cent have not attended school. Early childhood education is also not prioritized for children with disabilities, with a 2007 study finding that only two girls and four boys with disabilities were attending pre-school in Vanuatu".

Government social insurance programmes

The Government provides a number of state-managed social insurance schemes for those employed in the formal sector. The main social insurance programme comprises the superannuation scheme, the Vanuatu National Provident Fund, a savings scheme that "was established to safeguard the welfare interests of workers, especially retirement pensions" (Chand Prasad and Kausiame 2012, p. 64). All employees earning more than VT3,000 (US\$30) a month are mandated by law to pay a minimum 4 per cent dividend into the Vanuatu National Provident Fund. Employers match employees' contributions, with a ceiling of 4 per cent contribution each of the total monthly salary. It provides a lump-sum retirement payment to members once they reach 55 years of age. This payment is not universal and is based on membership, which is mandatory for formal sector employees. Voluntary payments from workers engaged in the informal sector are permissible; however, there is limited available information for this category of workers.

Surprisingly, given their significantly lower rate of employment in the formal sector, women comprised 50.1 per cent of the 24,366 membership base of contributing members to the Fund in 2011 (Vanuatu National Provident Fund 2012). However, given the gender disparity in formal sector employment, this simply suggests

that women are on average more likely to comply with VNPF regulations, although their contribution activity is highly variable. Women may also benefit if they are listed as beneficiaries of their spouse/relative. Outside of the formal workforce, women must rely on social and kinship networks for support in times of hardship (Chand Prasad and Kausiame 2012).

Government social assistance programmes

The 2012 Vanuatu Social Protection Index prepared by the Asian Development Bank assesses a number of formal sector-based in-kind social assistance programmes including the government-funded Home Island Passage Allowance (under the Public Service Act, public servants are entitled to paid passage to their home island each year), the Family Assistance Support Programme for civil servants and a scholarship programme for tertiary studies. Generally, however, there is no state mechanism for cash transfers to those in need of assistance. During times of disaster, the Government coordinates donor assistance for food aid as well as the provision of clean water, temporary shelter and transport. However, there is no government store of emergency supplies nor is there a permanent emergency fund (Asian Development Bank 2013c). Industry-based social assistance schemes may also be provided to employees, such as the Ifira Trustees annual community payment of VT10, 000 (US\$100) provided to all members of the community.

Policy in the making and implementation issues

Vanuatu has committed to a range of international plans and agreements concerned with gender equality and social protection, including:

- International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights
- CEDAW, ratified in 1995
- Beijing Platform for Action (1995)
- Millennium Development Goals (2000)
- Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005–2015
- Revised Pacific Platform for Action on Advancement of Women and Gender Equality 2005–2010
- Pacific Plan of 2005.

Yet, women's limited representation in politics and leadership roles is a key issue contributing to ongoing gender inequality and lack of social protection policies. In 2013, the DWA drafted a National Gender Policy to further progress areas of equality lag, such as women in leadership roles and women's economic empowerment. However, the policy has not yet been endorsed by the Government.

The introduction of women's reserved seats in the 2014 Port Vila Municipality elections was key to ensuring women's election to five seats and marks an attitudinal shift towards women as candidates. The Government is currently exploring how to roll out the approach for other local and national government elections.

Making economic policy work for women

Vanuatu has enjoyed relatively stable economic growth over the past decade, but still relies considerably on aid flows to fill gaps on social initiatives. At present, social and kinship networks form a crucial safety net for people, with limited direct intervention by the state to strengthen protection for vulnerable populations. However, "Informal social protection is eroded by diminishing flexibility in land allocation, increasing reliance on markets, rising overall poverty (too poor to practice reciprocity), weakening commitment to social obligations, increasing inequality and growing urban settlements with diluted clan identities" (Ellis 2012, p. 4).

Typically, the Government's strategy for state-run social protection measures has been to focus on formal employment as a solution and on avenues to unlock additional benefits that insure workers against events that may affect their ability to work and support their households. The Department of Labour's Decent Work Country Programme (2009), produced with the assistance of the International Labour Organization, devotes an entire section to social protection and its role within formal labour markets. The legitimacy of the emphasis on schemes for formal workers in a context where the majority of the population are in informal and subsistence activities is an issue that is yet to be tackled by government policy.

BOX 4-2

A social or economic opportunity? The RSE Scheme, remittances and women

The role of remittances in Vanuatu's economy is relatively recent and contributed 0.93 per cent of GDP in 2010. Vanuatu's workers abroad comprise 56 per cent men and 44 per cent women, most of whom are aged between 15 and 19 (VNSO 2011). The majority of them worked in New Zealand. In 2006, the Vanuatu and New Zealand Governments piloted a Recognized Seasonal Employment (RSE) scheme to provide alternative low-skilled

employment opportunities on New Zealand farms. When the RSE scheme commenced, Vanuatu's 1,067 participating workers comprised the largest contemporary labour group since blackbirding to Queensland, Australia in the late 1800s.¹⁸ Only 22.3 per cent of workers were female (MacKenzie et al. 2008, quoted in Cameron 2011). Since then, an average 2,000 ni-Vanuatu workers participate in the scheme annually (see table 4-3).

TABLE 4-3

RSE Workers to New Zealand from Vanuatu and Tonga, 2007–2013

	2007/8	2008/9	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Vanuatu	1,698	2,342	2,137	2,352	2,412	2,794
Tonga	805	1,355	1,142	1,411	1,398	1,627

Sources: Bedford (2013) and NZ Department of Labour RSE financial year statistics, in Bailey (2013).

In 2011/12, women comprised 18 per cent of RSE workers (Bailey 2013). Women's participation in the RSE scheme differs from place to place. The majority were typically single women or women with grown-up children and tended to come from islands such as Efate and Epi, where female paid employment is more common. Rochelle Bailey's research of RSE workers from North Ambrym found that "women from the island did not volunteer for the scheme because they were required to stay on the island and 'take care of things' as this 'is their role'" (Bailey 2013, p. 4). While women's paid employment on-site was not resisted, participation in international work schemes was restricted due to social and cultural obligations. Women may also not have had the financial capital to participate in these programmes (where workers must provide upwards of US\$2,000 for their domestic travel, international airfares, immigration documents and medical insurance).

The success of the scheme led to the development of a similar seasonal labour initiative with Australia that commenced in 2009. The Australian Seasonal Worker Program (SWP) has not enjoyed the same level of success as the New Zealand scheme, but as labour assistance architecture begins to be established, this labour initiative has the potential for strong outcomes. Workers may bring home AU\$5800–8400 (VUV505,497–732,099) after tax each year within their seven-month period in New Zealand (Bailey 2013, p. 6). Multiple claims on this income include paying for school fees, housing and infrastructure, social obligations (such as contributing to weddings and custom ceremonies) as well as business development. Bailey's research found that 31 per cent of RSE men from North Ambrym used their earnings to set up stores and businesses for themselves and their kin, including their spouses (ibid.). While fewer women than men participate in the RSE scheme, social and economic benefits can thus still be gained. However, as with women's access to land, their access to the benefits of the RSE scheme are dependent on their relationship to male spouses and relatives,

¹⁸ In the practice known as 'blackbirding', Pacific islanders were kidnapped to work in the agricultural industry in what is often described as a slave trade.

and therefore are tenuous at best when viewed through a social protection framework.

According to Edward Cameron “The challenge facing Vanuatu now is in creating a balance between the traditional community reciprocal support systems and the rising expectations among ni-Vanuatu for employment opportunities, education, health care, and other public services” (2011, p. 62). He suggests that the RSE scheme could be seen as alleviating the social and economic pressures that accompany the high unemployment rates in Vanuatu. However, for social and economic benefits from international seasonal labour to be sustainable and positively impact on social protection in Vanuatu, future policy must

consider the socio-cultural context to give more women the opportunity to participate.

A challenge for the RSE scheme is the level of turnover of labourers, to enable distribution of the aforementioned benefits. The scheme provides a limit of two-time participation to ensure broad access to this opportunity. However, New Zealand-based employers have indicated that they would prefer a low turnover of labour due to “training costs and financial losses due to low-quality work” (Ramasamy et al. 2009, quoted in Cameron 2011). The high 49 per cent return rate during the second season suggested that demand for paid employment is high (Cameron 2011).

The Vanuatu Government has increasingly incorporated women into its job-creation policies, encouraging women’s participation in non-traditional sectors such as public works. Through the Australian Government-funded Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Program in Sanma and Malampa provinces as well as through the Vanuatu Institute of Technology in Port Vila, women have access to training in basic business skills, mechanics, electrical apprenticeships and journalism as well as other, ‘traditionally female’ skills such as basic accounting and sewing. By adopting a gender and development approach that improves policy-making beyond women and development-type activities such as sewing and cooking (which have tended to reinforce gender

stereotypes), the Government is progressively broadening the scope for women’s roles/participation in the national economy. The Australian Government-funded Vanuatu Transport Sector Support Program (VTSSP) from 2009–2012 pioneered a community-based infrastructure programme on three islands (Ambae, Malekula and Tanna) that trained women and men in road-building, resulting in women comprising 14 per cent of the labour in what has traditionally been an all-male domain (Australian Government Aid Program undated). In addition, through the Department of Labour’s Decent Work Programme, an increasing number of women are participating in seasonal labour schemes in Australia and New Zealand.

5.

COMPARISONS AND CONCLUSIONS

We title this discussion paper “Falling Through the Net?” for good reasons. We warn against the prospect that women might fall through the gaping holes in both formal and informal systems of social protection in these three Pacific countries: PNG, Tonga and Vanuatu. These ‘safety nets’ are not tightly knitted and are in danger of further unravelling with the forces of economic development, unless policies and practices are carefully designed with fundamental principles of human rights and gender equality in view.

We strive to situate these Pacific case studies in the global literature on gender and social protection, which is consummately evaluated by the authors of the UN Women *Progress Report of the World’s Women 2015-2016: Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights* (UN Women 2015). Our analyses accord with their approach, which stresses the crucial importance of combining “universal provision of social services with contributory and non-contributory transfer systems” (ibid.). They point, as we do, to recent efforts to expand the meaning of social protection through definitions of a ‘social protection floor’, which would translate into more comprehensive social policies. They agree that, in most parts of the world “the state is the only actor able to extract the vast resources from society that make possible significant distributive and redistributive policies” (Houtzager 2005, cited in UN Women 2015, p. 151). But they acknowledge that greater state involvement does not ensure greater gender equality, citing examples where gender-blind schemes have had perverse effects in further marginalizing, overburdening or stigmatizing the very women mired in poverty and disadvantage they were designed to ‘protect’ (UN Women 2015).

Through a review of social transfer schemes for families with children, unemployed adults and the

elderly, the authors of *Progress of the World’s Women 2015-2016* expose important tensions or dilemmas between universal versus targeted, ‘means-tested’ transfers, non-contributory and contributory schemes, and conditional and non-conditional transfers. They are alert to the gendered dimensions of each scheme in practice and whether the payment schemes reinscribe or subvert prevailing gender norms, such as the antiquated, ethnocentric and very male ideal of “a life-long, full-time and formally employed worker” (ibid.). Everywhere, that ideal hides the reality of women’s contributions not just as formally employed workers but as informal workers and as unpaid family caregivers. As we have seen, such a male ideal is extremely remote from prevailing gender practices in securing livelihoods in the Pacific. Social policies need rather to relate to the pre-existing embodied practices of gender in order to redirect them towards greater gender equality.

The authors of the *Progress of the World’s Women 2015-2016* Report agree that “universal protection schemes are the best way for States to meet their human rights obligation”, and they are “more likely to serve gender equality” (ibid.). But, alert to the fact that formal availability does not ensure equal access, they argue that special measures may be needed to ensure equal benefits for “women and other structurally disadvantaged groups in the delivery of social services such as health, housing, water and sanitation” (ibid.). We endorse a comprehensive social policy that combines robust universal social services with both universalistic and targeted forms of state social protection. Yet, clearly there are very few formal systems of social protection in the Pacific – whether contributory or non-contributory, universal or targeted, conditional or unconditional. Annex 2 records those that do exist in PNG, Tonga and Vanuatu. But, as is clear from our case

studies, the capacity of States in the Pacific to deliver on such a promising conjunction of social services and social protection is limited at present and uncertain in the future. Moreover, such state initiatives should complement or even enhance increasingly fragile informal systems of social protection, grounded in land, kinships and church affiliations. We thus come to the following conclusions.

First, given that they are disadvantaged relative to men in the commodity economy and that men markedly predominate and control the institutions of the state, women are far less likely to benefit from those forms of social protection that depend on paid employment status or integration with the commodity economy rather than universal citizenship. As we have seen, women's integration with the commodity economy has been severely constrained not just by the unequal burdens of unpaid labour and reproductive labour (bearing and caring for children, and the elderly and disabled) but by lack of skills, education and, especially in PNG, the problems of safety in public places such as markets given the pervasive threats of gender and sexual violence. All of these are real and present threats to women's 'economic empowerment', construed in the restricted sense of the commodity economy. Thus schemes that rely on paid employment status or cash contributions for superannuation or insurance are likely to benefit men far more than women and thus increase gender inequality.

By contrast, non-contributory and universal schemes such as the old age and disability pensions proposed by the PNG Government are likely to afford more equivalent benefit to women and men. Old age is more highly valued and elders are accorded more respect in Pacific nations than in many more developed countries, and so old age pensions should have broad popular appeal. Although in the past women's longevity in PNG was less than men's it is now almost equal, and thus older women should benefit as much as men. More difficult would be how to ensure that such cash transfers reached these women as individuals, given the propensity for men to control cash flows into households or kin groups. Research on financial inclusion in the Pacific has shown that women more often spend money on household

necessities for both adults and children than men (who tend to spend on personal luxuries such as beer and gambling) and are better at budgeting for future expenses such as health and education (Sibley and Liew 2009). But women are less likely to have bank accounts and to have benefited from financial literacy training. If universal old age and disability pensions are introduced in PNG, male members of households (including younger men) may try to exert control of such cash flows for their own self-interested purposes. Unwarranted diversions of pensions may be impeded by targeted use of mobile phone banking technologies, although this would depend both on mobile coverage (patchy in some remote areas) and on older PNG women having ready access to these digital tools.

Moreover, as suggested above, forms of social protection that are linked to the delivery of fundamental services such as health and education, and delivered by locally relevant institutions including churches and NGOs, are likely to provide more equal benefits to women. This is especially crucial in PNG where the delivery of health and education services is very poor and where persisting high rates of maternal mortality and low rates of girls entering secondary education suggest far more refractory problems in combating gender inequalities than in some other countries of the region. So, for instance, it may be appropriate to focus on those women and girls who are especially impeded in access to services because they live in remote, less developed parts of the country by providing cash transfers to assist travel to schools, health centres and hospitals. Rather than providing funds via the men who drive the trucks for churches, NGOs or as private enterprises, providing such travel costs to individual women through mobile phone banking might be feasible. If that proves difficult, funds might be channelled through church-based women's groups. Another alternative for the least developed regions of the country would be to provide cash transfers for girls and women for transport to schools and hospitals through provincial government budgets, so that rather than 'means-testing' on the basis of the cash income of individuals, this was done on the basis of district planning and budgeting at the provincial level.

As Michelle Rooney suggests above, the Sovereign Wealth Fund, created to deal with the windfall incomes deriving from the LNG project in PNG, offers a recent, rare opportunity to fund gender equality with state revenue. The future shape of this is still under negotiation. For women to share equally in the benefits of this seismic generational shift in economic opportunity, they need to be able to influence its redistribution and 'ring-fence' funding that is directed specifically at women. This may prove hard since in PNG, as in Tonga and Vanuatu, miniscule proportions of the state budget have been directed to gender equality in the past, despite the fulsome rhetoric of gender equality in its founding Constitution.

Second, as is evidenced in detail in the three case studies, the indigenous forms of social protection that have afforded some benefits to women in the past are not only being eroded but are becoming more unequal. Land has been a crucial source of livelihood, belonging and social protection in all three countries, but women's access is typically through male kin. Moreover, these unequal rights to land are being further diminished by diverse processes of commodification including the development of extractive industries (especially in PNG), migration, urbanization and real estate speculation (especially in Vanuatu, as per Anna Naupa above) (see also McDonnell 2013). In Vanuatu, and on Efate island most intensely, indigenous practices of collective custodianship of land are being contested by powerful male leaders and entrepreneurs, who often exclude other men and especially women from access to land and the cash benefits of long-term leases to developers, real estate speculators and expatriate residents. Poor urban women in settlements in Port Vila are especially vulnerable due to insecure access to land for housing and food gardens. Furthermore, indigenous forms of social protection often entail unequal relations between women and men in caring for the young, the elderly and the disabled. Such unequal burdens are exacerbated when men are more engaged in the commodity economy, frequently at some remove from home communities and often spending wages on personal consumption rather than household sustenance, care and protection.

Third, state-initiated schemes of gender-equitable social protection should be designed to work in an

integrated and synergistic way with pre-existing indigenous forms, rather than eviscerating them, thus generating plural and mutually supportive forms of social services and social protection. An innovative example of this was the policy of the Vanuatu Government from 2006 to revalue the *kastom ekonomi* in relation to the commodity economy. School fees have long been a burden for the majority of ni-Vanuatu households that are cash poor, and this has too often resulted in preference being given to educating boys rather than girls. The Government legitimated the practice that, in lieu of payments in cash, fees in certain schools could be paid with indigenous valuables, pigs and pandanus textiles or through taro and yams contributed to the food supplied to pupils. Women regularly create such objects of value through their daily labour in food gardens and in plaiting pandanus textiles and nurturing pigs for exchange ceremonies and life-cycle rituals, and usually exert more control over these than they do over the cash income of their households. This exemplifies such synergy; it ensured girls greater access to education and revalued the hard work and creativity of adult women. By contrast, another policy for promoting *kastom ekonomi*, catalysed by the Malvatumauri (The Council of Chiefs) to ban the payment of bride price in cash and promote the use of indigenous valuables, was unsuccessful and arguably reinforced an important dimension of gender inequality in Vanuatu (Jolly 2015).

Our trio of case studies: Commonalities and differences

Our trio of case studies is only a sample of the great diversity of gender relations and forms of social protection in the countries and territories of the Pacific. Still we trust that some of the broad parameters of our discussion can be extrapolated more broadly. The studies reveal both significant similarities and crucial differences that are relevant to any consideration of gender and social protection in the Pacific. These derive both from indigenous cultures and from differential engagement with modernity and the contemporary global system. The broader contours, past and present are not just inert background. They significantly shape the prospects for increasing gender equality and ensuring gender-equitable social protection regimes, including the challenges of

implementation by state and non-state actors. They also dramatically influence both women's individual and collective agency.

First, there are large differences of demographic scale: PNG presently has a population of 7.3 million, while Tonga and Vanuatu have only 103,252 and 269,560 people respectively, although all are experiencing what has been dubbed a 'youth bulge' (see Map 1-1). The sheer size of PNG's population presents particular challenges for state capacity that are apparent in persisting problems in the delivery of basic services such as health and education. Second, in the case of PNG, these challenges are compounded by geographical dispersal and socio-linguistic diversity. Given the limits of transport both by land and ocean there are many inland valleys, riverine settlements and islands that are remote from the urban centres of state power and service delivery. Moreover, the fact that PNG has over 800 distinct indigenous languages and cultural groups presents immense challenges for the translation of state policies into local contexts, even though Tok Pisin is a lingua franca across most of the country and English is the official language of government and education. Despite its much smaller population, the state in Vanuatu has similar challenges with people spread across 65 inhabited islands and extreme socio-linguistic diversity, with 110 indigenous languages. Bislama, a cognate pidgin, is the lingua franca of the archipelago while English and French, the two other official languages of government and education, are spoken primarily by those who are well-educated (and reflect Vanuatu's dual colonial heritage). By contrast, although Tongans are spread over an archipelago of islands (and increasingly in the diaspora), Tongan is the sole indigenous language. Tonga is a very mono-cultural small state, with only a small number of recent Chinese migrants and the continuing influence of Britain evinced in the English spoken predominantly by the elite.

Third, Tonga proclaims its unique status in the Pacific as a country that was never formally colonized although it was a British Protectorate from 1900 to 1970. All the countries, however, were subject to the combined influences of Western traders, planters and labour recruiters; the work of both foreign and Pacific

missionaries in converting people to Christianity; and the effects of rivalry between imperial powers for control over their lands, resources and peoples. The two regions that are now PNG were first colonized by Germany (New Guinea) and Britain (Papua) and subsequently by Australia until independence in 1975. Vanuatu was subject to the dual colonial control of Britain and France under the Condominium Government from 1906 until independence in 1980. Additionally, Tonga is also distinctive in being a constitutional monarchy whereas both PNG and Vanuatu are democratic States, adhering in rather different ways to a Westminster system of governance.

Fourth, although all three countries are engaged with modernity and the global capitalist economy, this engagement differs in its scale and texture. PNG has a far larger and more dynamic commodity economy with growth rates of GDP approaching or exceeding 10 per cent in recent years. The lucrative commodity export of minerals, forest products, oil palm and coffee is being complemented and eclipsed by the rapid expansion of the LNG project. As Rooney points out, this will generate windfall incomes from the growth of extractive industries. The central economic challenge there is to ensure that this is redistributed inclusively and equitably, particularly to women.

By contrast, Tonga has a faltering commodity economy, with declining GDP in the period of the global financial crisis and a miniscule growth rate of 0.3 per cent projected for 2014. With high levels of debt and a narrow export base it has relied primarily on international aid and remittances from Tongans overseas, but these are declining. Vanuatu's commodity economy is doing rather better than Tonga's but less well than the turbo-charged growth of PNG with annual GDP growth rates of 6 per cent in 2003–2008 falling back to 2.5 per cent recently. Agriculture and tourism are projected to grow, while the low tax and no-income tax regimes have attracted expatriate investment and real estate speculation, especially by Australians, in recent years.

Despite their divergent economic performance, all three countries are classified by the World Bank as lower middle-income and estimations of poverty

levels are similarly high. In 2014, 26.5 per cent of people in PNG lived below the food poverty line and 39.9 per cent below the total poverty line, a worsening since 1996 (World Bank 2014a). There has also been an increase in poverty in Tonga from 16.2 per cent in 2001 to 22.5 per cent in 2009 below the national poverty line and many more perilously close to it, according to the ADB (Asian Development Bank 2012). Poverty there seems to have been increasing most in rural areas and outlying islands. The ADB estimates 40 per cent of all ni-Vanuatu and 50 per cent of rural ni-Vanuatu live below the international poverty line of \$1.25 per capita per day in 2014, although basic needs poverty is higher in urban Vanuatu according to 2010 data, and urban women are especially vulnerable in terms of food security, access to land, water, sanitation and adequate shelter (see Naupa above). While many are getting poorer, many are getting richer. For instance, Rooney reports for PNG that the poorest 20 per cent account for only 5 per cent of consumption while the richest 20 per cent account for 48 per cent. Whether we call these emergent and intensifying inequalities 'classes' or differences between educated 'elites' and 'grassroots,' they have major implications for women.

Most wealth is concentrated in the hands of men in all three countries, thus exacerbating pre-existing patterns of male domination. Inequalities are emerging between women as well, again interacting with pre-existing hierarchies based on seniority or rank. For example, Lee reports above that alongside those high-ranking and wealthy Tongan women of royal or noble ancestry who have access to greater educational and economic opportunities, there is also an urban middle class of 'commoner' women who are relatively wealthy and influential in business and, to a lesser extent, government. A number of these women have been involved in the new community group for businesswomen called WISE. Still, across all three countries, it appears that when ordinary women achieve economic or political success, they are far more likely than men to be criticized for being selfish or arrogant. The ideal of a 'good woman' is still pervasively someone who is not just hardworking but generous, caring and sustaining of collective rather than individual well-being.

Despite the differences and inequalities between them, women in these three countries and across the Pacific have formed collectivities as women, often in the context of Christian churches via women's groups and fellowships and more recently through burgeoning NGOs. As can be seen in the case studies of Tonga and Vanuatu, women's groups have proved crucial in exerting influence to get legislation passed on issues of gender violence and family protection and in promoting economic opportunities for women through micro-credit schemes such as VANWODS. However, women's groups have not always advanced causes or policies that would be seen to be promoting 'gender equality' or 'empowerment' as usually defined. Indeed some, most notably in Tonga, have advanced conservative models that support male domination and have agreed with male leaders opposing the implementation of CEDAW on the grounds that it is at odds with Tongan 'culture'. Still, we have to witness this as an articulation of women's collective agency.

This raises the important point that Pacific women have been collectively active not just in local or national contexts but regionally. Over the last several decades there have been numerous occasions when Pacific women have debated their visions for the future in the context not just of large UN-sponsored meetings but regional meetings in preparation for such events and through other organizations such as the South Pacific Community and DAWN (George 2012). Nicole George's important study of Pacific women's regional organizations based in Suva, Fiji has shown how the political space for feminist visions has been more constricted in recent time both by the nationalism and militarized masculinities emanating from a series of coups in that country since 1987 and a pervasive neo-liberalism that has promoted a narrow view of gender equality, enforced through audits and aid conditionalities (ibid.). Still, there is an increasing sense that Pacific women should be the ones who are authoring the visions for development in their region. So when we compare the situation of Pacific women in these three countries we must situate our analysis of gender and social protection policies in the context of these broader regional conversations in which Pacific women have been engaged for decades.

ANNEX 1.

Existing policy framework for women’s empowerment and gender equality in Papua New Guinea

National policy or legislation	Responsible institution	Key implementation issues and risks or opportunities
National overarching policy framework		
Papua New Guinea Vision 2050	Department of Prime Minister and National Executive Council National Strategic Plan Taskforce	Risks of diversion from plans and budgeting processes as a result of weak accountability mechanisms, including increase in funds allocated under the District Services Improvement Programme (DSIP), which are managed and implemented directly by Members of Parliament Lack of funding and implementation capacity, including human resources
PNG Development Strategy Plan, 2010–2030	National Department for Planning and Monitoring	
Medium Term Development Strategy, 2011–2015		
Annual National Budgets	Departments of Treasury, Finance, National Planning and Monitoring and sector departments; provincial administrations and local governments	
National Policy for Women and Gender Equality, 2011–2015	National Department for Community Development	
Health		
National Health Plan, 2011–2020	National Department of Health	Lowest spending on health in the Pacific and falling Deterioration and decreasing health services provision despite population nearly tripling since 1975 Aging and demoralized workforce Lack of funding and implementation capacity, including human resources
National Sexual and Reproductive Health Policy		
National Family Planning Policy		
2008 Ministerial Task Force on Maternal Health		
Health Sector Gender Policy (under formulation)		
Health sector reforms to streamline health service delivery mechanisms – 2007 Provincial Health Authorities Act		
Family Support Centres	National Department of Health Family and Sexual Violence Action Committee	

HIV and AIDS		
National HIV and AIDS Strategy, 2011–2015	National AIDS Council	Limited human and financial resources Need to ensure communication and advocacy on prevention measures are non-judgmental and not detrimental to particular groups of women such as sex workers
HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control in Rural Development Enclaves	National AIDS Council and implementing partners	
PNG Business Coalition against HIV and AIDS (BAHA)	BAHA	
National Department of Health Operational Plan for PPTCT and Paediatric AIDS, 2011–2015	National Department of Health	
Lae Chamber of Commerce Guidelines for Workplace Action to reduce HIV and AIDS	Lae Chamber of Commerce	
National Department of Education HIV/AIDS/STIs Implementation Plan, 2007–2012	National Department of Education	
Adoption of WHO protocol for administration of highly active antiretroviral therapy to HIV-positive women	National Department of Health	
Education		
Universal Basic Education Plan, 2010–2019	National Department for Education	Limited human and financial resources
National Education Plan		
Education Gender Equity in Education Policy, 2009		
Draft Gender Equity Strategic Plan, 2009–2014		
Aligned Sector Plan for Higher Education, 2012–2015	Office for Higher Education	
Employment livelihoods and economic resources		
National Informal Economy Policy 2011–2015	Department of Community Development	Amendments to laws need to remove legal differentiation between women and men that can impede women's efforts to obtain formal employment, engage in economic activity or obtain finance Provide training for judges, magistrates and legal practitioners on the gender implications of rulings on matrimonial causes act and other marriage laws Explore alternative dispute resolutions avenues to provide women with more cost-effective and efficient avenues to resolve disputes in the course of economic engagement
Laws relating to divorce and division of property Inheritance laws and practices Employment laws		
Financial Competency Survey 2011-2012	Bank of PNG and Institute of National Affairs with support of the World Bank	

Women's microbank	PNG Women in Business	In line with the PNG Development Strategic Plan 2010–2030, which identifies financial inclusion as a key outcome, all these initiatives aim to expand financial services with particular focus on women
PNG microfinance expansion project	Asian Development Bank	
Pacific Financial Inclusion Programme	UNCDF, DFAT, EU and UNDP	
IFC investment in PNG Micro Bank	PNG Micro Bank	
IFC investment in Bank South Pacific with rural focus	Bank South Pacific	
International Development Association - IFC risk share facility for small to medium enterprises	Commercial banks	
Targeted scholarships to enable gender equality in higher level formal sector positions	Department of Labour and Industrial Relations, with Chamber of Commerce and Industry, National Apprentice, Trade and Testing Board, Office of Higher Education, PNG Employers Federation and PNG Trade Congress and Union	
Agriculture, forests and fishing		
Agriculture, forests and fishing	Various sectors	Major constraints are in gendered labour divisions; many policies assume that community initiatives are appropriate when the social and economic organization of production revolves around households
National Agricultural Development Plan 2007–2016	Department of Agriculture and Livestock	Explicit commitments to addressing gender imbalances in access to resources, decision-making and research and extension services
Women in Agriculture Development Unit	Department of Agriculture and Livestock	Limited funding Women in Agriculture networks developed over last decade
Extension support from Agribusiness	Ramu Sugar, New Britain Oil Palm Ltd, New Guinea Table Birds, North Fly Rubber, Fresh Produce Development Authority	Challenges remain in consistent provision of information and services to women that recognize specific issues relating to women such as lower levels of mobility
National agriculture and development networks	National Agriculture Research Institute, PNG-Australia Agricultural Research and Development Support Facility, links with Women in Agriculture Foundation	
Extractive Industries Sector: Women in Mining Action Plan	Inter-Agency steering committee comprising Departments of Mining, Petroleum and Energy, National Planning and Monitoring, Environment and Conservation, Works, Justice and Attorney General, Community Development, Agriculture and Livestock	Creation of a gender coordinator position in Minerals Resources Authority Most resource developer companies set up gender desks to assist with women's representation Introduce similar mechanism in the petroleum sector Use reviews of mining and petroleum laws to include compulsory participation of women in negotiations
Safer Markets Programme	National Capital District Commission and UN Women	Prioritize donor and National Capital District Commission support

Legal and social empowerment		
National Constitution of Papua New Guinea	National Parliament	
Ombudsman Commission	Ombudsman Commission	Has integrated gender, family, sexual violence, HIV and AIDS and human rights into outreach programmes aimed at educating public about leadership code
Human Rights Commission	Department of Justice and Attorney General drafting legislation	Approved by the National Executive Council; legislation to establish HRC is being drafted
National Courts	12 National Courts throughout PNG with jurisdiction over formal laws	Responsible for human rights, freedom from inhumane treatment, freedom of person and property Responsible for divorce and matrimonial and adoption laws
District Courts	65 District Courts with jurisdiction over formal laws	Very low number of district court magistrates: 1 to every 36,000 people In recent years this is being addressed through training by the Law and Justice Sector Programme, including a significant number of women; an association of women magistrates has been established.
Village Courts	Over 1,540 village courts	Women comprise 46 per cent of complainants Intersection between formal laws and customary laws In recognition of the importance of village courts for women, in recent years efforts have been made to increase numbers of female magistrates as well as to address concerns with the way women are treated in the courts
Marriage Act and Matrimonial Causes Act		Difficult to access due to being based on fault model where spouses must prove in courts the extensive abuse by partners
Amended Criminal Code and Evidence Act (2002)		Gives legal recognition to sexual offence against women and children, including in marriage; limited impact due to poor law enforcement
Yumi Lukautim Pikinini Act (Child Protection Act)		Child protection law drawing from the Convention on the Rights of the Child
Family Protection Bill		Criminalizes domestic violence and provides access to protection orders for victims; low impact due to limited human and financial resources for law enforcement
Repeal of Sorcery Act 1971 and creation of new provision in the Criminal Code Act 1974 (Chapter 262). Section 229A of Criminal Code Act provides that any person who intentionally kills another person on account of an accusation of sorcery is guilty of wilful murder		Repeal and new provision will enable legal prosecution of people charged with sorcery-related accusations, abuse and killings

In recognition of the poor law enforcement capacity that results in low impact of these laws, a number of initiatives were introduced: Sexual offences squads established in the 1980s Family and sexual violence units (FSVU) established Training of police officers in gender-based violence at the Fiji Crisis Centre	Royal PNG Constabulary	High case loads and overworked staff limit law enforcement
Establishment of safe houses	NGOs	Large number of cases, limited number of safe houses and limited funding and resources
Political voice and participation		
Equality and Participation Bill		If passed will introduce 22 reserved seats for women
Organic Law on Provincial and Local Level Governments		Includes provision for women's representation at local levels of government
International and regional policy framework		
Universal Declaration of Human Rights		Major challenges remain in translating these international frameworks and commitments into national governance and political structures; requires political will, implementation capacity and financing
International Convention on Civil and Political Rights		
International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	PNG acceded to the ICESCR in 2008	
Pacific Platform for Action	Secretariat of the Pacific Community	
Pacific Women's Network Against Violence Against Women		
Beijing Platform for Action		
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women	Ratified by Government of PNG in 1995	
Millennium Declaration and the MDGs	Signed by Government of PNG in 2000	
UN Security Council Resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888, 1889		

vernment of Papua New Guinea, et al. 2012.

ANNEX 2.

Existing modes of formal social protection in case study countries

Country	Name of programme	Funding source	Type of social protection	Targeting and benefits	Gender responsive?
Papua New Guinea	Nambawan Super Limited	Government	Compulsory contributory pension scheme	Retirement benefits for public sector employees	Not directly, given women's lower rate of employment in public sector.
	National Super-annuation Fund (NASFUND)	Private sector	Compulsory contributory pension scheme	Financial protection for private sector members at retirement, in cases of loss of employment, death, inability to work or when normal flow of income suddenly ceases	Not directly, given women's much lower rate of employment in formal sector.
	Scholarship Programme	Department of Labour and Industrial Relations	Educational scholarships	Targeted to enable gender equality in higher level formal sector positions	Yes, designed to promote women's appointments to higher-level positions by improving access to educational opportunities.
	Programme for the Elderly and People Living with Disabilities	New Ireland Provincial Government	Non-contributory pension scheme	Pension of \$1 per day paid quarterly to people living in New Ireland Province aged 60 and above and people with disabilities, including people who have a medical condition needing medical assistance. Estimated 3.2% of eligible people were covered in second year of programme (2011).	Neutral. Programme reduces burden of care in households indirectly and improves access to medical services.
	Family Support Centres	Government and donors	Support services (shelter, food, clothes, medical, legal) for families in crisis	Women and children affected by family violence	Yes. Support services for women and children in need of protection.
Tonga	National Retirement Benefits Scheme (NRBS)	Employers (government and private sector)	Contributory pension scheme	Retirement and death benefits to formal sector employees (only 11 per cent of labour force currently covered, predominately men)	Not directly, given women's much lower rate of employment in formal sector; some protection for married women through partner's retirement benefits and death benefits in cases where they are widowed. Concern that burden on employers is likely to prevent wage increases and threaten job market. Unclear whether funds being accumulated are reinvested into Tongan economy.

Vanuatu	National Provident Fund	Employers (government and private sector)	Contributory pension scheme	Retirement benefits to formal sector employees (>30,000 members)	Not directly, given women's much lower rate of employment in formal sector.
	Home Island Passage Allowance	Government	Social assistance scheme	Annual travel entitlement for public servants covering passage to home island	Not directly, given women's lower rate of employment in public sector
	Family Assistance Support Programme	Government	Social assistance scheme	Benefits for public servant	Not directly, given women's much lower rate of employment in formal sector.
	Ifira Trustees	Industry	Trust fund	Annual payment to all members of Ifira community (people living on Ifira Island and Ifira clan members living on the mainland of Efate)	Neutral. Not clear how distribution is made at household level.
	Scholarship Programme	Government	Scholarship programme for tertiary studies Scholarship programme	Tuition and fees for tertiary education based on merit and need	Not directly, depending on equity of access to educational opportunities.
	Decent Work Country Programme	Employers (government and private sector)	Employment benefits	Regulates various benefits including 12 week maternity leave on half-pay and breastfeeding allowances while working	Yes, for women in formal sector employment.

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