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# Responding to violence against women in Melanesia and East Timor

Australia's response to the ODE report





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# Ministerial foreword

## Responding to violence against women in Melanesia and East Timor

Australia supports an end to violence against women and girls. Without strong global action, the social, political and economic participation of women in many communities will continue to be severely limited by violence.

Preventing violence against women is as important to the developing countries in our region as it is in Australia. By taking action, communities will be strengthened and the task of achieving the Millennium Development Goals made easier.

AusAID's Office of Development Effectiveness report, *Violence against Women in Melanesia and East Timor: Building on Global and Regional Promising Approaches*, found that violence against women in this part of the world is severe, pervasive and constrains development.

Violence against women is a global problem and one that requires global solutions. Australia is not immune. Nearly one in three Australian women experience physical violence and almost one in five women experience sexual violence in their lifetime.

Australia has zero tolerance for violence against women and is tackling this issue head-on at home by developing a national plan to reduce violence against women and their children.

We must also help our region and the rest of the world to tackle this serious human rights issue.

*Stop Violence: Responding to violence against women in Melanesia and East Timor*, the Australian Government's response to the Office of Development Effectiveness report, sets out our priorities and actions to respond to violence against women in the region.

The report outlines our support to increase women's access to justice and support services, prevent violence against women and deliver a coordinated and comprehensive response to the issue. We are also working hard to ensure measures promoting equality between men and women are included across Australia's entire development assistance program.

Much more needs to be done but together we can make a difference.



Stephen Smith MP  
Minister for Foreign Affairs





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The ODE report found that violence against women is severe, pervasive and constrains development in Melanesia and East Timor. It causes trauma to women and their families and communities. It severely limits women’s social, political and economic participation in their communities. It represents a significant strain on national economies with escalating costs in health care, social services, policing and the justice system.

Without a more comprehensive and effective response to violence against women, the ODE report found that the Millennium Development Goals are unlikely to be achieved internationally, including in Melanesia and East Timor.

## Australia’s response

This report sets out Australia’s initial response to the ODE recommendations for action to end violence against women in Melanesia and East Timor. It examines Australian activities and advocacy that have been undertaken at the country level and the principles and priorities that AusAID will use to guide future work.

## A framework for action

The box below sets out AusAID’s vision, aim and the outcomes we will strive to achieve in order to reduce violence against women in Melanesia and East Timor.

A framework for ending violence against women in Melanesia and East Timor		
<b>Vision:</b> Women in Melanesia and East Timor are able to live free from violence and the fear of violence.		
<b>Aim:</b> To work in partnership—with national governments, civil society, international partners, and men and women—to increase efforts to reduce and respond to violence against women.		
<b>Outcome:</b> Women have access to justice	<b>Outcome:</b> Women have access to support services	<b>Outcome:</b> Violence against women is prevented

## Guiding principles for Australia’s work

Australia will use the following principles to guide our contribution to ending violence against women. AusAID will:

- > make a long-term commitment to ending violence against women
- > promote gender equality as a central principle of our work
- > work in partnership with key stakeholders and align with partner government priorities
- > adopt an integrated approach.

## Key actions

Australia's support to end violence against women in Melanesia and East Timor will be based around the following key strategies that have proven successful in reducing violence against women within the region and internationally.

### Improving women's access to justice

Ensuring women have access to justice is key to responding to and preventing violence against women. A country's justice system, including formal, customary and community-based systems, should provide protection for women against violence, act as a deterrent to possible offenders, and impose consequences on those who commit domestic violence and sexual assault.

AusAID will support partner countries to increase women's access to justice by:

- > supporting governments to review, implement and monitor laws and policies that address violence against women, including through formal, customary and community-based justice systems
- > supporting civil society organisations that assist women to access justice, including by increasing women's knowledge of their rights and of the legal system
- > supporting improved police practices in responding to violence against women, in partnership with the Australian Federal Police.

For example, the Papua New Guinea – Australia Law and Justice Partnership is working to strengthen the courts so that they are better able to assist victims of violence. The program is supporting the Magisterial Services to implement national guidelines on family and sexual violence, including Practice Directions that help victims of violence understand the steps and processes in court proceedings.

This type of support aims to improve the ability of the justice system to respond to cases of violence against women and, consequently, increase public confidence in the ability of these systems to appropriately respond to and prevent violence against women.

### Increasing women's access to support services

Women who have been subjected to violence have an immediate need for support.

AusAID will support partner countries to increase women's access to support services by:

- > supporting civil society organisations that provide counselling, legal and practical support to women who have experienced violence, including women's safe havens
- > encouraging governments to improve health sector responses to violence against women
- > supporting responses to HIV and AIDS that include consideration of women's vulnerability to gender-based violence.

For example, continuing our support for the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre is a cornerstone of Australia's strategy for providing support services to survivors. The centre has a lead role in advocacy for women's rights and delivering practical services. It is the main institution providing psychological, human rights-based crisis counselling and practical support for women and children who have experienced violence in Fiji, and works with other agencies such as the police, courts, doctors and welfare agencies to ensure that women can access these services. Australia has supported the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre since 1989.



## Preventing violence against women

Preventing violence against women from occurring in the first place is the ultimate goal of any actions to end violence against women.

AusAID will support partner countries to prevent violence against women by:

- > supporting and working with a broad range of civil society organisations to conduct community awareness and advocacy to end violence against women, including women's organisations, faith-based organisations and men and boys
- > supporting prevention activities through the education sector
- > supporting women as peacemakers
- > upholding gender equality as a guiding principle of Australia's international development assistance program and supporting activities to empower women, including promoting women's leadership and economic empowerment.

In Vanuatu, for example, the Vanuatu Women's Centre has established Committees Against Violence Against Women, which play a pivotal role in promoting community awareness and advocacy to end violence against women, and in supporting women in rural areas. These committees are made up of prominent men and women from the community—in some cases elders, chiefs and rural practice nurses. The committees receive training from the Vanuatu Women's Centre in legal literacy and basic counselling skills. AusAID has provided core funding to the Vanuatu Women's Centre since 1994.

## Supporting an integrated approach

The ODE report found that piecemeal and isolated activities had limited impact in ending violence against women and could result in duplication of effort. Greater coordination across sectors and among partners will ensure that funds are targeted where they are needed, that good practice is shared, and that links are created across sectors to meet the range of needs of women who have been subjected to violence.

AusAID will support partner countries to take an integrated approach by:

- > engaging in high-level policy dialogue with our partners to raise the importance of addressing violence against women
- > encouraging partner countries to develop mechanisms—such as national action plans and policies—to coordinate and monitor national responses to violence against women
- > actively participating in interagency taskforces that bring together stakeholders to better coordinate and monitor responses to violence against women
- > supporting research on violence against women, including on the prevalence of violence, promising practices in responding to violence, and gaps in services in order to inform future responses.

In Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Fiji, Vanuatu and East Timor, Australia is working with government, non-government organisations, multilateral organisations and donors to address violence against women and promote gender equality. For example, following the release of the ODE report, AusAID was invited to be a member of the Gender Thematic Working Group in East Timor. This group brings together representatives from government, UN agencies, international development agencies and international non-government organisations to improve coordination efforts.









*Violence and the fear of violence severely limit women's contribution to social and economic development, thereby hindering the achievement of important national and international development goals, such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger and improving maternal and child health.<sup>1</sup>*

ODE's consultations, supported by previous research, found that the most common forms of violence against women are physical violence by husbands/partners against wives/girlfriends, and sexual violence against women and girls.

The ODE report sets out a *framework for action* at the national level to respond to violence against women. The framework is based on *three main strategies* that have proven successful in reducing violence against women within the region and internationally:

- > improving women's access to justice
- > increasing women's access to support services
- > preventing violence against women.

Central to this framework is a recognition of the need for an *integrated approach* that involves coordination and cooperation among the multiple actors working to end violence against women.

## About this report

This report sets out Australia's initial response to the ODE report *Violence against Women in Melanesia and East Timor: Building on Global and Regional Promising Approaches*. It examines Australian activities and advocacy that have been undertaken at the country level and the principles and priorities that AusAID will use to guide future work. The Australian Government recognises that ending violence against women will require a long-term commitment. AusAID is committed to intensifying its efforts to address violence against women, recognising that these efforts will need to build over time.

The report consists of:

- > a *regional report*, which provides an overview of AusAID activities and advocacy efforts in the five countries examined in the ODE study
- > five *country reports*, which provide more detailed information on AusAID activities and advocacy at the country level.

The structure of the regional report and the country reports reflects the framework for action recommended in the ODE report, with sections on women's access to justice, women's access to support services, prevention of violence against women, and efforts to support an integrated approach.

Each of the country reports includes an assessment of the situation in that country and of that country's national government priorities, in order to set the context for AusAID's support and in recognition of the need for AusAID's activities to align with national government priorities.

**The Australian Government recognises that ending violence against women will require a long-term commitment.**

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Agency for International Development Office of Development Effectiveness (2008), *Violence against Women in Melanesia and East Timor: Building on Global and Regional Promising Approaches*, Canberra: AusAID Office of Development Effectiveness, p. 4 (ODE report).

# Principles and priorities



The ODE report identified a range of principles and priorities structured around a framework for addressing violence against women. AusAID will use this framework and a set of four key principles to guide its contribution to ending violence against women in Melanesia and East Timor.

## A framework for action

The box below sets out AusAID's vision, our aim and the outcomes we will strive to achieve within the framework recommended by the ODE report.

### A framework for ending violence against women in Melanesia and East Timor

#### Vision:

Women in Melanesia and East Timor are able to live free from violence and the fear of violence.

#### Aim:

To work in partnership—with national governments, civil society, international partners, and men and women—to increase efforts to reduce and respond to violence against women.

#### Outcome:

Women have access to justice

#### Outcome:

Women have access to support services

#### Outcome:

Violence against women is prevented

## Principles and priorities that will guide Australia's work

### Principle 1: Australia will make a long-term commitment to ending violence against women

Australia is committed to addressing the issue of violence against women over the long term as part of its international development assistance program. AusAID recognises that this is particularly important in changing community attitudes to violence and in strengthening the capacity of civil society organisations to respond to violence. Long-term commitment will also be needed to integrate measures to address violence against women into sectors where this issue has not previously been considered, or where the response to the issue has been relatively weak.

Equally important is the need for long-term financial commitments, including the provision of core funding for organisations and activities, to ensure continuity of support services, adoption of promising practices, strengthened capacity, and expansion of services beyond urban areas.

## Principle 2: Australia will promote gender equality as a central principle of its international development work

AusAID recognises that promoting gender equality and empowering women are key to reducing violence against women. Improving the status of women in society will assist in changing community attitudes to violence against women and enabling women to respond to situations of violence. Preventing violence against women is essential for women to realise their rights and participate fully in economic, social and political life.

Australia is committed to ensuring that the needs, priorities and interests of women, as well as those of men, are considered in all development activities and at every stage of the development process in order to achieve effective development outcomes.



The Hon Stephen Smith MP, Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, receives an MDG3 Champion Torch from Suzanne Shine, the Ambassador of Denmark to Australia (left)—in recognition of Australia's commitment to women's empowerment. Photo: AusAID

## Principle 3: Australia will work in partnership with key stakeholders and align with partner government priorities

Australia recognises that responding to and preventing violence against women requires a concerted response involving the combined actions of many institutions and individuals—national governments, civil society, NGOs, international partners, and men and women in the community.



AusAID will continue to work in partnership with key stakeholders, including partner governments, civil society groups, and regional and international organisations, to eliminate violence against women across the region. In particular, AusAID will:

- > work with and support the priorities of partner governments in their efforts to end violence against women. This will include raising the issue of violence against women in high-level policy dialogue with partner governments
- > continue to support NGOs and civil society, recognising the important role that these groups play in preventing and responding to violence against women in the community
- > ensure disability-inclusive approaches are a central principle of our work, and seek to promote an active and central role for people with disability in responses to violence against women
- > continue to actively working with other Australian Government partners to ensure a coordinated whole-of-government response to these issues, including through key strategic partnerships with the Australian Federal Police and the Australian Attorney-General's Department
- > advocate for greater coordination on this issue among donors, and with regional and multilateral organisations.

#### **Principle 4: Australia will adopt an integrated approach**

AusAID recognises the importance of an integrated approach in responding to violence against women, and the need for greater coordination across sectors within our own programs—particularly in law and justice, health and education.

AusAID will support partner governments in their efforts to achieve a coordinated and comprehensive response to end violence against women. This will include working with partner governments to integrate measures to address violence against women across the range of sectors where we provide support and ensuring effective monitoring processes are put in place.

# Women have access to justice



## Rationale

Ensuring women have access to justice is key to responding to and preventing violence against women. A country's justice system, including formal, customary and community-based systems, should provide protection for women against violence, should act as a deterrent to possible offenders, and should impose consequences on those who commit domestic violence and sexual assault. This requires adequate laws, proper implementation of those laws, and knowledge throughout the community of the laws and how they operate.

*Wife-beating happens every day, but only the brave ones come to us.*  
(Police officer, Papua New Guinea)<sup>2</sup>

The ODE report found a need to reform legislation and strengthen its implementation in order to provide effective protection for women who have experienced violence. This requires strengthening the police response to violence against women; ensuring women are treated fairly by justice system personnel when it comes to enforcing laws on violence against women; and increasing women's participation in the justice system. There is a need to increase support to community organisations that assist women in accessing the legal system and obtaining information about their legal rights. Customary and community-based justice systems also require support so that they more effectively meet the needs of men, women and children, operating in partnership with the formal justice system.

## Australian support for women's access to justice

### Australia's commitments

AusAID will support partner countries to increase women's access to justice by:

- > supporting governments to review, implement and monitor laws and policies that address violence against women, including through formal, customary and community-based justice systems
- > supporting civil society organisations that assist women to access justice, including by increasing women's knowledge of their rights and of the legal system
- > supporting improved police practices in responding to violence against women, in partnership with the Australian Federal Police.

<sup>2</sup> Field work for the ODE report.

In Vanuatu, the introduction of domestic violence orders is a promising approach. In the Port Vila vegetable markets a young woman reads about her rights. Photo: AusAID



## Legislative and justice system reform

Legislative reform that increases women's access to justice is a major priority of a number of the national governments of Melanesia and East Timor. In Vanuatu, the government has passed the Family Protection Act, which significantly improves legal protection for women who have experienced violence. In East Timor, the government has made domestic violence a public crime in the Penal Code and is drafting domestic violence legislation. In Solomon Islands, the Law Reform Commission is conducting a review of the Penal Code, including its provisions relating to domestic violence and sexual assault.

Consistent with the priority that national governments in Melanesia and East Timor are placing on increasing women's access to justice, this is a major area of focus for AusAID. AusAID will increase its support in coming years, with the focus increasingly on the implementation of the legislation that has been enacted.

AusAID is actively working with other Australian Government partners to ensure a coordinated whole-of-government response to these issues, including through key strategic partnerships with the Australian Federal Police (AFP) and the Attorney-General's Department. A whole-of-government framework for all Australian law and justice assistance to the Pacific is currently being developed by AusAID, the Attorney-General's Department, the AFP and other relevant Australian Government agencies. The framework is expected to be finalised by the end of 2009.

AusAID is working with partner governments to strengthen formal justice systems, including increasing their capacity to respond to violence against women. For example, the Papua New Guinea – Australia Law and Justice Partnership is working to strengthen the courts to better assist victims of violence. The program is supporting the Magisterial Services to implement national guidelines on family and sexual violence, including Practice Directions that help victims of violence understand the steps and processes in court proceedings. This type of support aims to improve the ability of the justice system to respond to cases of violence against women and, consequently, increase public confidence in the ability of these systems to appropriately respond to and prevent violence against women.

AusAID is also committed to supporting customary and community-based justice systems, in recognition of the critical role they play in providing justice services to the bulk of the population in Melanesia and East Timor. For example, in Papua New Guinea, AusAID is working with the Department of Justice and Attorney-General, and partners at sub-national levels, to increase the number of women magistrates in village courts and to support ongoing training programs for village court officials in issues of criminal jurisdiction, human rights, and HIV and AIDS. Across the region, AusAID is also working in partnership with the World Bank through the Justice for the Poor program. This initiative uses locally driven research and pilot projects to build a greater understanding of the relative roles

and capacities of formal, customary and community-based systems in providing access to justice for the poor and marginalised, including women.

The Australian Attorney-General's Department also works with Pacific Island countries in the region to address criminal and policing legislation and legal frameworks to assist police and governments to address issues such as domestic violence.

## Civil society organisations assisting women's access to justice

Australia actively supports civil society organisations to improve women's access to justice. This includes support for organisations such as the Vanuatu Women's Centre and the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, which provide women with information about their legal rights and support women in applying for protection orders and taking cases to court.

*In the past, female victims [did] not feel very comfortable and easy coming to the police station to make their complaints. However, today, with much awareness and information provided to the communities, many victims will choose to go to the police station because they usually feel safer with the police than with the chiefs or the churches. (Police officer and male advocate, Vanuatu)<sup>3</sup>*

The Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI)<sup>4</sup> Law and Justice Program provides financial support to the Women in Law Association of Solomon Islands, which advocates for women's legal rights and provides a network of support for female legal practitioners.

This support to civil society organisations complements AusAID's assistance to the law and justice agencies, by ensuring that women are aware of their legal rights and are supported to participate in and access formal, customary and community-based justice systems.



Richard Moore, AusAID's Gender Advocate, with the Hon Maxine McKew MP and Ermelinda da Costa Monteiro, a UNIFEM Peace Scholar, at a UNIFEM Australia and Alola Foundation event in Canberra to raise awareness of the issues facing women in East Timor.  
Photo: Andrew Taylor/EUREKA MEDIA

## East Timor Justice Sector Support Facility

A Justice Sector Support Facility has been created by a bilateral agreement between the governments of East Timor and Australia to support both institutional and civil society initiatives to improve access to justice for men, women and children in East Timor.

AusAID will contribute approximately \$10 million over five years (2009–13) for the civil society component of the facility, which includes a civil society grants scheme.

The civil society grants scheme will directly promote gender justice outcomes, including measures to respond to and prevent violence against women. The ODE report's recommendations and findings will guide priorities in funding. One key area will be preventing and dealing with violence against women and girls. Another will be supporting women's access to justice in rural areas, through traditional law and the formal justice system.

## Policing response

An effective police response to violence against women is also a crucial part of ensuring that women have access to justice. For women who have been subjected to violence, the police may be the first point of contact with the formal justice system. Australia recognises that it is important that police have the capacity to respond to cases of violence and that formal systems are in place for dealing with these cases.

<sup>3</sup> Field work for the ODE report.

<sup>4</sup> RAMSI is a partnership between the government and people of Solomon Islands and the contributing countries of the Pacific region, including Australia.

The Australian Federal Police is the lead agency for support to policing through Australia's international development assistance. It plays a key role in Australian support for strengthening justice sector responses to violence against women. In Vanuatu, for instance, the AFP is working in coordination with the New Zealand Police to train the Vanuatu Police Force on their responsibilities under the new Family Protection Act. In Solomon Islands, the AFP is working as part of the RAMSI Participating Police Force to support the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force to develop family violence policies and assist with coordinating provincial police Family Violence Coordinators.

In November 2008, the Australasian Police Commissioners, including the AFP, released a policing strategy to address family violence. The strategy identifies reducing family violence as an Australasian policing priority. One of the aims of the strategy is to improve frontline policing responses to family violence, including as part of the international work of these police forces.

*As community leaders, the Australasian Police Commissioners will not tolerate family violence and are committed to protecting all victims. Family violence is a serious crime that damages our community at all levels ... The Australasian Police Commissioners are committed to reducing and preventing family violence through strong, consistent, and compassionate responses.<sup>5</sup>*

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5 Australasian Police Commissioners (2008), *Australasian Policing Strategy on the Prevention and Reduction of Family Violence*, p. 4. Accessed at [http://www.police.nsw.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0003/145434/australasian\\_policing\\_strategy\\_prevention\\_reduction\\_family\\_violence.pdf](http://www.police.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/145434/australasian_policing_strategy_prevention_reduction_family_violence.pdf).

# Women have access to support services

## Rationale

Women who have been subjected to violence have an immediate need for support. This can include access to a safe place to stay, access to medical services, and access to counselling. Women also need information about their options in responding to experiences of violence.

The ODE report found that civil society organisations play an active role in Melanesia and East Timor in providing support services to women who have experienced violence.

*Women want peace of mind and rest. When we enter this place they are like friends to us. They are like family. They love us and feed us three times a day.* (Resident of Haus Ruth Hostel, Papua New Guinea)<sup>6</sup>

ODE's recommendations for strengthening support included increased resourcing for organisations that provide this support; capacity building to improve the quality of formal and informal support; and better coordination among services. It also pointed to the need to extend the reach of available services to rural areas. The ODE report particularly pointed to the need to increase women's access to safe havens and psychological, medical and legal support, and to strengthen the response to violence against women through the health and education sectors.

## Australian support for women's access to support services

### Australia's commitments

AusAID will support partner countries to increase women's access to support services by:

- > supporting civil society organisations that provide counselling, legal and practical support to women who have experienced violence, including women's safe havens
- > encouraging governments to improve health sector responses to violence against women
- > supporting responses to HIV and AIDS that include consideration of women's vulnerability to gender-based violence.

## Civil society services providers

AusAID recognises the major role that civil society plays in supporting women who have been subjected to violence. The ODE report found that civil society organisations were often the key source of support for women in these circumstances, particularly in rural areas. It noted that a recognition by these organisations of the equal rights of men and women was crucial to their work having a lasting impact.

<sup>6</sup> Field work for the ODE report.



In line with ODE recommendations, AusAID will continue its direct financial support for civil society organisations. AusAID provides funding for safe houses for victims of domestic violence such as Centro Esperansa ba Feto (Hope Centre for Women) in East Timor. AusAID supports organisations that provide counselling and support services to survivors of gender-based violence. In Papua New Guinea, for example, Australia is providing support so that the reach of Stop Violence Centres can be expanded through four additional centres. These centres provide medical assistance, counselling and legal support to women who have experienced violence, and have close links with the police. AusAID will need to give further consideration to support for shelters and emergency accommodation, in light of the ODE finding that there is a shortage of these services in Melanesia and East Timor.

Shamima Ali, Coordinator, Fiji Women's Crisis Centre. The centre provides training for organisations in Fiji and across the Pacific to improve services provided to women who have been subjected to violence. Photo: AusAID



Australia will continue to provide multi-year core funding to the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre (funding of \$4.87 million over five years beginning in 2004-05) and the Vanuatu Women's Centre (funding of \$3.7 million over five years beginning in 2007-08).<sup>7</sup> These centres are the main source of support to women who have experienced violence in Fiji and Vanuatu. The centres provide practical support and counselling to women and work with other agencies such as the police, courts, doctors and welfare agencies to ensure that women can access these services. AusAID will need to give consideration to opportunities to extend multi-year core funding to other organisations that provide support services to women who have been subjected to violence.

AusAID will also look for opportunities to strengthen the capacity of civil society organisations to respond to violence against women. For example, in Solomon Islands, AusAID is supporting training and capacity building to improve formal and informal services available to women who have been subjected to violence. This includes supporting Oxfam to work with the Family Support Centre to improve its counselling and referral services. It also includes funding for training in Solomon Islands, to be conducted by the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, for informal providers of shelter to victims of violence on minimum standards and procedures for referrals to services.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> AusAID has provided financial support to the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre since 1989 and to the Vanuatu Women's Centre since 1994.

<sup>8</sup> The training is part of a broader project, the Solomon Islands Family Health and Safety Study, being carried out by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community in partnership with the Government of Solomon Islands, with funding from AusAID and the United Nations Population Fund.



## Support for capacity building

The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) Pacific has established a Facility Fund<sup>9</sup> to address the specific needs of local organisations in Pacific Island countries in responding to violence against women. The Facility Fund will help to strengthen the financial and organisational capacities of these organisations to manage projects and programs. This will be achieved through the establishment of a grants scheme and a capacity-building program. The countries covered by the Facility Fund are Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Samoa, Kiribati, Tonga, Tuvalu, Solomon Islands, Marshall Islands, Cook Islands, Palau, Nauru, Federated States of Micronesia, Vanuatu, Niue and Tokelau.

In 2008-09, AusAID contributed \$600,000 to the Facility Fund.

In response to the ODE report's recommendation to support capacity building, \$200,000 of AusAID's contribution will go to supporting staff from civil society organisations from Melanesia to participate in training and exchanges during 2009 and 2010. This will include participation in formal training programs conducted by key agencies in the region such as the Regional Rights Resource Team and the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre. Training will cover practical skills such as counselling, data collection and administration. It will also increase service providers' knowledge of international human rights law and theoretical issues associated with violence against women. This support will assist in improving the quality of services provided to women who have been subjected to violence.

The remaining \$400,000 of AusAID support will be used to provide grants to organisations working to end violence against women in Fiji. The funding will support Fijian organisations for core and project activities to eliminate violence against women, and build the capacity of organisations to promote gender equality and women's rights.

In 2009-10, AusAID will contribute \$200,000 to the Facility Fund to support grants to organisations working to end violence against women in Papua New Guinea. AusAID will also consider providing additional funding to the Facility Fund in future years to support the ongoing provision of grants to civil society organisations in Fiji.

## Government health services

The ODE report found that violence against women is a significant cause of injury and ill health among women in the countries studied. It identified a significant gap in the health sector when it comes to providing services for victims. AusAID will make increased access to health services for survivors of violence a priority. AusAID will seek to work with partner governments to increase the capacity of the health sector to recognise and support women who have experienced violence, as part of the support that AusAID provides to strengthen the health sector and basic health services across Melanesia and East Timor.

In Fiji, AusAID will provide funding that will support training for health professionals, developing policies and protocols for handling sexual offences in the health system, and developing data collection systems.

In Papua New Guinea, AusAID, through its Capacity Building Service Centre, is playing a lead role in working with the Papua New Guinea National Department of Health to raise awareness of gender issues, including the health impacts of sexual and gender-based violence. This includes provision of a domestic violence project officer within the department in 2009, to scale up efforts to address violence against women.

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9 The Pacific Facility Fund in Support of Actions to End Violence Against Women.

Effective responses to HIV and AIDS require comprehensive approaches to address the gender issues that are involved in HIV transmission and impact.

In this area, AusAID will seek to build its support over time, working with partner governments to incorporate measures to respond to violence against women into support to the health sector, including through sector-wide approaches.

### Australia's international development strategy for HIV and AIDS

Australia's new international development strategy for HIV and AIDS, *Intensifying the Response: Halting the Spread of HIV*, was launched by the Hon Stephen Smith MP, Australia's Minister for Foreign Affairs, on 7 April 2009. The strategy sets priorities that will guide Australia's international development assistance in tackling the growing epidemic in the Asia-Pacific region.

One of the strategy's priorities is to improve the way that violence against women is considered and addressed through AusAID's programming on HIV and AIDS. Effective responses to HIV and AIDS require comprehensive approaches to address the gender issues that are involved in HIV transmission and impact. Programs need to consider women's vulnerability to gender-based violence as part of the response to HIV and AIDS. AusAID's support for this work will build over time as these priorities are incorporated into its programming on HIV and AIDS.

In the Pacific, HIV and AIDS responses will need to address the gender inequality that is associated with significant physical and sexual violence against women and women's lack of empowerment.

*The men always blame the woman [for sexually transmitted infections], even if they know they were running around themselves. The women usually know they got it from their husband, but they can't accuse him or they'll get bashed up.* (Nurse, Vanuatu)<sup>10</sup>

As part of its HIV strategy, Australia will provide support to governments to review and improve the laws and policies that address gender inequality and promote the empowerment of women, particularly regarding sexual violence and inheritance laws.<sup>11</sup>

*When a man dies, his family will only keep the children and send his wife back to her people.* (NGO worker, Solomon Islands)<sup>12</sup>

In Papua New Guinea and Pacific Island countries, Australia will also support programs that address women's vulnerability to violence and poverty as part of efforts to intensify HIV prevention.

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<sup>10</sup> Field work for the ODE report.

<sup>11</sup> Laws that prevent women from inheriting from their fathers and husbands increase women's economic vulnerability, which in turn can put them at increased risk of exposure to HIV and AIDS.

<sup>12</sup> Field work for the ODE report.

# Violence against women is prevented

## Rationale

Preventing violence against women from occurring in the first place is the ultimate goal of any actions to end violence against women. Central to this is changing community attitudes that see violence against women as being acceptable or a private matter. Increasing the status of women in society and promoting gender equality also have a key role in ending violence against women. Challenging violence against women requires a community response, involving all parts of the community, including both men and women.

The ODE report identified a number of innovative programs in Melanesia and East Timor that are aimed at preventing violence against women and changing community attitudes. The report made a series of recommendations to strengthen violence prevention. These included supporting efforts to raise community awareness of violence against women and promoting women's rights, including through community-based activities and the media. The report identified a need to involve a broad range of actors in efforts to prevent violence against women, including those that have not traditionally been involved. Key decision-makers, churches, faith-based organisations, traditional chiefs, and men and boys—all need to be involved in efforts to prevent violence against women.

## Australian support for preventing violence against women

### Australia's commitments

AusAID will support partner countries to prevent violence against women by:

- > supporting and working with a broad range of civil society organisations to conduct community awareness and advocacy to end violence against women, including women's organisations, Disabled Peoples Organisations, faith-based organisations, and men and boys
- > supporting prevention activities through the education sector
- > supporting women as peacemakers
- > recognising and promoting the rights of women with disability
- > upholding gender equality as a guiding principle of Australia's international development assistance program and supporting activities to empower women, including promoting women's leadership and economic empowerment.

## Working with civil society to prevent violence against women

### Community advocacy and engagement

*If people hear back in the villages that a woman has been raped, they talk about her as if she was wrong or dirty. So she doesn't feel safe. She feels like she has no friends, she's not a normal person anymore. (Male advocate, Vanuatu)<sup>13</sup>*

*She will hide it [rape] for a long time, because she's a student she should have decided not to join these people at the party, so her being raped is her own doing. (Village woman, Fiji)<sup>14</sup>*

A major part of preventing violence against women, as recognised in the ODE report, is changing the attitudes of those who view violence as acceptable, and encouraging advocacy that promotes an end to violence against women. The report found innovative examples of civil society organisations in East Timor and Melanesia working to engage with communities to change community attitudes to violence against women.

AusAID provides financial assistance to a broad range of civil society organisations throughout Melanesia and East Timor to support their community awareness-raising and advocacy work on preventing violence against women.

AusAID provides financial assistance to a broad range of civil society organisations throughout Melanesia and East Timor to support their community awareness-raising and advocacy work on preventing violence against women. AusAID's support is consistent with the ODE report's recommendation to prioritise initiatives that have an emphasis on transforming gender norms. In particular, these programs are working at a community level to promote attitudes that support equality between men and women and condemn violence against women.

For example, AusAID supports Wan Smol Bag, a theatre group in Vanuatu, to raise community awareness on violence against women through an innovative program that combines community theatre, media and workshops.

*With these activities, we are able to create an open and conducive atmosphere whereby young people interact with peers and many of whom are themselves offenders or victims of violence so they can understand, accept and change their behaviour to violence. (Member of Wan Smol Bag, Vanuatu)<sup>15</sup>*

In Solomon Islands, AusAID is supporting Oxfam to work with two groups—Family Support Centre and Western Province Council of Women—to reduce gender-based violence in Honiara and Western Province. Oxfam's work with these groups will have a strong focus on sustained engagement with existing cultural norms in an effort to shift attitudes and beliefs about violence against women in the community, particularly among men.

There are opportunities for AusAID to engage with a broader range of groups to end violence against women, including through our existing civil society and governance programs.

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<sup>13</sup> Field work for the ODE report.

<sup>14</sup> Field work for the ODE report.

<sup>15</sup> Field work for the ODE report.

## Addressing violence against girls and boys

AusAID has committed to playing its role in addressing violence against girls and boys with the launch, in March 2008, of its Child Protection Policy. The overall goal of the policy is to protect girls and boys from all forms of abuse in the delivery of Australia's overseas aid program.

The policy covers all aspects of the agency's operations and applies both to AusAID staff and to all contractors and NGOs funded by the agency.

The policy is based on four guiding principles: zero tolerance of child abuse, recognition of children's interests, a risk-management approach to child protection, and sharing responsibility for child protection.

An innovative aspect of AusAID's Child Protection Policy is the inclusion of mandatory child protection compliance standards for all contractors and NGOs funded by AusAID. Contracting firms and organisations must have their own child protection policies and must obtain criminal record checks for personnel who work with children.

AusAID will not fund any organisation or individual without appropriate mechanisms in place to protect children from all forms of abuse.

Other key elements of the policy include enhanced codes of conduct for AusAID officials, consideration of risks to children when designing development activities, clear procedures for raising concerns about child abuse, strengthened recruitment and screening processes, and child protection training for all staff.

## Working with men and boys

Strengthening partnerships with men to prevent violence against women, was one of the key recommendations of the ODE report. The report found that men and male youth generally have not been engaged in efforts to prevent violence against women, even though they are critical partners in effecting long-lasting change.

*People think that gender is an issue for women only. When we go out and run workshops for men, a lot of men have come up to us and said: 'Why do you talk about this? This is women's stuff. Let the women talk about it.'* (Member of Association of Men against Violence, East Timor)<sup>16</sup>

AusAID recognises the importance of involving men and boys in working to end violence against women. AusAID will seek to support the work of community organisations to engage with men and boys to prevent violence against women. This includes providing support to organisations such as the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre and Vanuatu Women's Centre, which conduct a Male Advocates Program to engage men to influence community attitudes towards violence against women.

*As a chief I can talk to other chiefs ... I answer the questions in meetings because many of the questions are critical. Men always want to put women down. So I always do my best to explain the rights of women and children.* (Chief and male advocate, Vanuatu)<sup>17</sup>

In response to the ODE recommendations, AusAID also provided financial support to Asosiasaun Mane Kontra Violencia (the Association of Men against Violence—AMKV) in 2008-09. AMKV runs a community-based education program in East Timor that seeks to raise awareness and change the behaviour of men and youth towards women.

<sup>16</sup> Field work for the ODE report.

<sup>17</sup> Field work for the ODE report.

The involvement of men and boys is an issue that AusAID will consider in supporting partner governments in their design and delivery of services to support women who have experienced violence. For example, the role of men and boys is an important consideration in ensuring women are able to access health services, in ensuring women have access to justice, and in ensuring appropriate police responses to violence against women.



The Pacific delegation present to the 'Global Symposium on Engaging Men and Boys to Achieve Gender Equality'. The delegation will participate in the development of a regional strategy for engaging with boys and men for violence prevention and the promotion of gender equality, to be led by UNDP. Photo: UNDP Pacific Centre

### Global Symposium on Engaging Men and Boys to Achieve Gender Equality

AusAID partnered with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Pacific Centre in supporting a Pacific and East Timorese delegation to attend the 'Global Symposium on Engaging Men and Boys to Achieve Gender Equality', held in March 2009. This support enhanced the skills and capacity of the Pacific and East Timorese delegates. It enabled them to network with others working in this area, and to showcase the innovative work that is happening in the Pacific to increase men's engagement as advocates against violence against women.

Delegates have been sharing their learnings with other community organisations and strategic policymakers in their countries since the symposium. The delegation will also participate in the development of a regional strategy and initial plan of action for engaging with boys and men for violence prevention and the promotion of gender equality, to be led by UNDP. AusAID sees this partnership with UNDP as a key step in strengthening our work in the region in engaging with men and boys to prevent violence against women.

### Working with faith-based organisations

The ODE report found that churches and faith-based organisations play a significant role in delivering support services to women who have experienced violence. The report recommended strengthening partnerships with churches and faith-based organisations to prevent and address violence against women and to promote equality between men and women. This is important given the key role that churches and faith-based organisations can play in shaping community attitudes to violence against women and the fact that they are often the first point of contact for women who experience violence.

AusAID is a Principal Partner to the International Women's Development Agency initiative 'Asia Pacific Breakthrough: The Women, Faith and Development Summit to End Global Poverty'. The summit will be held in Melbourne in December 2009, in the lead-up to the World Parliament of Religions. It will bring together faith-based, women's and development organisations from across Asia and the Pacific to discuss opportunities to work together to advance gender equality, including ways to end violence against women. An ongoing Women, Faith and Development Alliance for the region will be launched at the summit.

AusAID also works at the country level to support the work of churches in responding to violence against women. In Solomon Islands, AusAID funds the Church of Melanesia's Inclusive Communities Program, which aims to rehabilitate prisoners and includes the topic of gender-based violence in its training syllabus. In Papua New Guinea, AusAID's Church Partnership Program includes support for churches in developing community-based plans to respond to, reduce and prevent violence against women. There are opportunities for AusAID to do more to prevent violence against women through its existing programs to support faith-based organisations.

## Prevention activities through the education sector

*In school, I couldn't talk to friends because I was ashamed. No, I didn't tell any of my friends. (Rape and incest survivor, Fiji)<sup>18</sup>*

The ODE report recommended a role for schools and the education sector in preventing violence against women and girls. This included preventing violence in schools, teaching boys and girls about the negative impacts of violence and the importance of equality between men and women, and mobilising communities to support women's and girls' safety and rights.

AusAID, through its support to the education sector, has the opportunity to raise these issues with partner governments and to improve the capacity of the education sector to respond to violence against girls. For example, in Vanuatu, Australia will investigate opportunities to provide training on gender-based violence through its support to the Vanuatu Institute of Teacher Education in Port Vila, which provides training to all teachers working in Vanuatu. Training may help teachers prevent violence in schools and influence young people's attitudes to violence against women and gender equality.

This is an area where AusAID can do more in future years. There are opportunities to address the issue of violence against women at all levels of the education curriculum, from early childhood education through to technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and tertiary level.

Addressing the issue of gender-based violence early on, including in early childhood education, can assist in changing attitudes to violence. Schools can play a role in widespread public-awareness campaigns on raising the profile and knowledge among the community of the issue of violence against women and support mechanisms that are available. This approach is supported by established research which recognises that women in particular receive information through their children and schools. Similarly, there needs to be a focus on the tertiary/TVET sector, where the threat of violence may in fact be acting as a deterrent to many women attending post-secondary courses.

Addressing the issue of gender-based violence early on, including in early childhood education, can assist in changing attitudes to violence.

## Supporting women as peacemakers

The ODE report highlighted the crucial role that women have played in the past in resolving armed conflicts and acting as peacemakers in Melanesia and East Timor.

*In our culture, we women should not stand up and walk around talking to people, so we had to break this culture ... In the end, the men came to listen to us and we told them, 'If you want to kill us, rape us or do whatever you like, do it ... We are here to find ways to stop the fighting so we can live peacefully'. (Member of Kup Women for Peace, Papua New Guinea)<sup>19</sup>*

The report noted the link between violence against women and social violence. These links are formally acknowledged through UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security and Resolution 1820 on ending sexual violence in conflict.<sup>20</sup> These resolutions recognise that violence against women escalates during conflict, can continue at higher rates in post-conflict situations and can be a barrier to their participation in peace processes.

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<sup>18</sup> Field work for the ODE report.

<sup>19</sup> Field work for the ODE report.

<sup>20</sup> UN Security Council Resolution 1325 was adopted in 2000. It is the key international framework that addresses the links between the protection of women from violence and the promotion of women's participation and leadership in peacebuilding and reconstruction efforts. Resolution 1820 was adopted in 2008. It addresses the issue of sexual violence in armed conflicts and post-conflict situations.



*Even after the tensions, the men went back to the villages and were abusing their wives because there was nothing for them to do. (Trauma counsellor, Solomon Islands)<sup>21</sup>*

The actions recommended by these UN resolutions are aimed at protecting women's rights and ensuring that they are equal participants in the maintenance and promotion of peace.

AusAID recognises the important links between violence against women, social violence and the role of peacebuilding activities in preventing violence. Since 2002, AusAID has supported a range of activities aimed at implementing Resolution 1325 to address these issues. Current AusAID activities to support women's role as peacemakers are set out below. These activities are consistent with the ODE report's recommendation for support for women's peacebuilding activities as a way to strengthen violence-prevention activities, especially where women are mobilising to end conflict and foster peace and reconciliation in their communities.

To further guide our approach to women's peacebuilding, AusAID is commissioning research on the impact and challenges of implementing Resolution 1325. This research will be conducted by the University of South Australia from mid 2009. It will focus on two in-depth case studies of Fiji and East Timor to highlight best practices, provide transferable lessons and make practical recommendations on how AusAID can measure, evaluate and advance the participation of women in peace and security issues.

AusAID provided funding to support a joint research project by UNIFEM Pacific and the UNDP Pacific Centre on sexual and gender-based violence in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands. The research will make recommendations on how the implementation of Resolutions 1325 and 1820 can be supported by various actors to reduce the high levels of sexual and gender-based violence in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands, as well as other Pacific Island states. The findings of this research are expected to be released in 2009.

In East Timor, AusAID provided support to the 'Women for Peace' conference. The conference was held in March 2009 in Dili and was hosted by the Alola Foundation. The conference strengthened awareness of women's roles in peacebuilding and conflict resolution, focusing on women and youth as positive forces for change and building regional networks to achieve sustainable peace and stability in East Timor. AusAID funding contributed to a 14-week roadshow exhibition of art and theatre that was produced as part of the conference, providing outreach to the districts and enabling widespread engagement with conference themes and outcomes.

In the Pacific, AusAID partners with femLINKpacific to support the Regional Women's Community Media Network on Women, Peace and Security (AusAID provided \$235,000 to support the network in 2008-09). The network raises awareness and supports the implementation of Resolution 1325 through regional media initiatives including publications, a website and radio campaigns. This work also supports the institutional strengthening and improves the media skills of a regional network of partner organisations in Fiji, Bougainville, Solomon Islands and Tonga.

AusAID supports the 'Peace Talks' initiative of the International Women's Development Agency (\$85,000 in 2008-09). The initiative raises awareness on implementing Resolution 1325 in the Pacific through training for civil society organisations from Solomon Islands, Tonga, Bougainville and Fiji. This work supports training for a core group of regional women's organisations to engage with regional policymakers during the annual Forum

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<sup>21</sup> Field work for the ODE report.

Regional Security Committee meeting as well as in regional security planning processes.<sup>22</sup> In addition, it manages a regional secretariat of women to support regional and national government commitments on Resolution 1325 and prepares policy documents.

## Recognising and promoting the rights of women with disability

Australia's new disability-inclusive development strategy, *Development for All: Towards a disability-inclusive Australian aid program 2009–2014*,<sup>23</sup> was launched by the Hon Bob McMullan MP, Australia's Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance, on 25 November 2008.

One of the strategy's six guiding principles is to 'take into account the interaction of gender and disability'. The strategy recognises the significant barriers faced by women with disability and the need to take account of the interaction of gender and disability in policy and programming design, monitoring and evaluation. This includes recognition that women and girls with disability often face multiple forms of discrimination due to their gender, disability and economic status and often face a greater risk of abuse and violence. The strategy's primary outcome is to support people with disability to improve the quality of their lives by securing better access to the same opportunities for participation, contribution, decision-making, and social and economic well-being as others. It also contains measures to provide capacity development support for Disabled Peoples Organisations (DPOs).

AusAID recognises that women and girls with disability face not only greater risk of violence and abuse, but also face particular barriers in accessing information about their rights, and accessing the justice system and appropriate support services.<sup>24</sup>

Consistent with AusAID's disability-inclusive development strategy, AusAID will seek to promote an active and central role for people with disability in the design, implementation and monitoring of policies and programs dealing with violence against women, will actively support leadership of people with disability (both men and women) in addressing violence against women, and will seek opportunities to build country and regional knowledge and disability-inclusive responses in this area. We will also seek to foster and encourage links between DPOs and civil society organisations active in the area of violence against women to work effectively together to adopt disability-inclusive practice and share information.

AusAID, through the Pacific Public Sector Linkages Program, is supporting the Australian Human Rights Commission to partner with the Pacific Disability Forum to progress disability issues in the Pacific by delivering training in nine Pacific countries.<sup>25</sup> The training will bring together members of DPOs and government representatives to build their capacity and knowledge of disability rights in order to progress disability issues.

AusAID recognises that women and girls with disability face not only greater risk of violence and abuse, but also face particular barriers in accessing information about their rights, and accessing the justice system and appropriate support services.

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22 The Forum Regional Security Committee is part of the Pacific Islands Forum. The committee meets annually to set the regional security agenda and to identify priorities for enhancing the capacity of members to respond to security threats. Members of the Pacific Islands Forum are Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, Nauru, New Zealand, Tonga, Samoa, the Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Niue, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, New Caledonia and French Polynesia.

23 Available at [www.ausaid.gov.au/keyaid/disability.cfm](http://www.ausaid.gov.au/keyaid/disability.cfm).

24 A UNDP report, *Pacific Sisters with Disabilities: At the Intersection of Discrimination*, released in May 2009, identifies the higher risk of violence faced by women with disability and the barriers they face in gaining support and access to services. The report makes a range of recommendations to address the discrimination faced by women with disability.

25 The training will be conducted in Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

This support recognises the key role of DPOs in advising and working with government and the public sector on the rights of people with disability and achieving the progressive realisation of these rights. A key focus of the training will be on engaging with women with disability in order to build their knowledge and capacity. This training will enable women to become more active participants in DPOs, and to ensure effective representation of the needs of women with disability.

AusAID supported the attendance of nine women with disability from the Pacific and two representatives from East Timor at the Pacific Regional Forum on Women with Disabilities and the Pacific Regional Disability Conference in Vanuatu on 20–23 April 2009. One of the key components at these conferences was discussion of the sensitive issue of violence against women with disability.

## Gender equality and empowering women

Gender equality is a guiding principle of Australia's international development assistance program.

Gender equality is a guiding principle of Australia's international development assistance program. The Australian Government is committed to ensuring that the needs, priorities and interests of women, as well as men, are considered in all development activities and at every stage of the development process.

In Tuvuvur, Papua New Guinea, women participate in a training workshop to empower them with skills to enter parliament.  
Photo: AusAID



## Skilling up for a more effective aid program

AusAID recognises gender integration as a key instrument for improving the impact, scope and effectiveness of its international development assistance program.

Pivotal to this goal is the need for strong staff capacity to:

- > drive and implement an extensive gender integration agenda
- > put in place institutional arrangements to support it.

The purpose of AusAID's 'Gender Integration for Development Effectiveness' training program is to provide participants with an introduction to the concepts and tools of gender analysis and gender sensitisation for direct application to all of AusAID's work.

The training program is designed to improve the knowledge and skill sets of staff. Key areas of focus are:

- > improving understanding of gender relations and how they affect access to resources and assets, and the opportunities and benefits created through development work
- > improving understanding of the links between gender integration, poverty reduction and the Millennium Development Goals
- > improving understanding of the costs of gender inequalities
- > improving understanding of the principles of gender analysis and their implications for, and application to, development work
- > developing practical approaches to improve gender integration in high-level policies through to reporting on results and outcomes
- > developing practical tools for the implementation of gender integration principles and frameworks into design, implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation for all forms of aid
- > building gender advocacy skills for stakeholder engagement.

In this three-day intensive training program, a strong emphasis is placed on practical adult learning methodologies. This includes using case studies that cover a range of priority issues identified by AusAID. The case studies are based on local contexts and issues as much as possible. This approach gives participants the opportunity to apply their learning to scenarios that are very real to them. The program has proven to be effective and empowering, and feedback from participants has been consistently positive.

Ending violence against women has been identified as one of the priority areas for AusAID in promoting gender equality, and is highlighted in the training. It was introduced into the training as a direct response to the ODE report.

In the training program conducted in Dili in May 2009, one of the key issues that surfaced repeatedly was domestic violence. Participants explored issues relating to access to support and services for victims of violence, ranging from institutional and legal frameworks through to informal support services. Participants discussed the role of men in challenging community attitudes about gender-based violence and the opportunities for anti-violence messages in cultural contexts.

In addition to integrating the promotion of gender equality into development activities, AusAID also supports activities that are specifically targeted at empowering women.

On 8 March 2009, the Hon Stephen Smith MP, Minister for Foreign Affairs, announced that Australia would increase its core funding to UNIFEM to \$17.7 million over four years as part of Australia's international commitment to advancing greater equality between men and women. This funding will support UNIFEM's work in more than 100 countries to reduce women's poverty and exclusion, end violence against women, reverse the spread of HIV and AIDS among women and girls, and support women's leadership in governance and post-conflict reconstruction.

Following are some of the main initiatives that AusAID is supporting in Melanesia and East Timor to promote gender equality and empower women.

### **Women's leadership and decision making**

*We are still tied to our traditional culture, where men are dominant and where they control the family and the village. We still have the problem of that mentality. (Woman activist, East Timor)<sup>26</sup>*

Australia is providing \$6.2 million over five years from 2007-08 for the Gender Equality in Political Governance Program, in partnership with UNIFEM. The primary focus of the program is to improve women's leadership and access to decision making at a local and national level in the Pacific. The program will train women at a local level in governance and leadership issues, undertake research on the barriers and successful pathways to women's leadership, and develop communication and training materials for use in the region.

The program will contribute to:

- > more women understanding their rights and responsibilities and being active as citizens and leaders in Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu
- > support for women standing for elections<sup>27</sup>
- > increased support for women's leadership and participation in government by broad and diverse sectors of Pacific societies, including governments, civil society organisations, male advocates, the media, electoral bodies and political parties
- > an increase in government structures, operations and procedures that support women and men and are more accessible by women.

In Solomon Islands, Australia is supporting a women in government strategy through the RAMSI Machinery of Government Program in partnership with the Solomon Islands Ministry of Women, Youth and Children's Affairs. The Strategy for Advancing the Position of Women in Government aims to increase the number of women in government, at both administrative and representative levels, and to increase the opportunities for women to realise leadership potential.

In East Timor, AusAID is providing funding through UNIFEM for the Integrated Program for Women in Politics and in Decision Making, which supports the development of a political vision of women as citizens and decision-makers.

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<sup>26</sup> Field work for the ODE report.

<sup>27</sup> This support will be provided in up to 15 Pacific countries in which UNIFEM operates (Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Republic of Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu).

## Women's economic empowerment

*Women say, 'If I report my husband for what he did, I won't get any money from him when he's in prison'. So only a woman who has a job can come forward and do something about it. But most don't have jobs, and need the husband so they'll have money for school fees and things for the children. (Female police officer, Solomon Islands)<sup>28</sup>*

AusAID, in collaboration with the International Finance Corporation and the World Bank, is undertaking a series of Gender and Investment Climate Reform Assessments in East Timor, Tonga, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea. The assessments will result in a 'gender toolkit' that will be released later in 2009. The aim of the toolkit is to show policymakers and business organisations how to ensure that improvements in the business-enabling environment take gender issues into consideration, and that both men and women can participate in and benefit from private sector development. A team of economists and legal experts will visit each country to trial the toolkit and to liaise with government officials, NGOs, business service providers and female entrepreneurs.

This project builds on previous work that AusAID has supported in Fiji, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Tonga, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea and Samoa that examined gender-based barriers in a number of business-related areas. These included gender-based barriers to basic investment-climate reform; business start-up; business licences; access to alienated land and enforcement of property rights; and access to justice and alternative dispute resolution.

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<sup>28</sup> Field work for the ODE report.





## Coordination mechanisms

Better coordination between sectors and among partners is critical to maximising the impact of interventions to address violence against women. Australia is actively engaging in high-level policy dialogue with our partners in Melanesia and East Timor to improve coordination of responses to violence against women. In Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Fiji, Vanuatu and East Timor, Australia is working with government, NGOs, multilateral organisations and donors to address violence against women and promote gender equality. For example, following the release of the ODE report, AusAID was invited to be a member of the Gender Thematic Working Group in East Timor. This group brings together representatives from government, UN agencies, international development agencies and international NGOs to improve coordination efforts. In Vanuatu, AusAID will support the planned national taskforce on violence against women to implement the Family Protection Act.

In line with ODE recommendations, interagency taskforces in Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Solomon Islands and East Timor are helping to raise the profile of violence against women as a priority issue. They also assist in ensuring that AusAID support and activities are coordinated with and complement other work occurring in the country to maximise the impact of interventions to reduce violence against women. There is potential for these taskforces to play a greater role in monitoring national responses to violence against women.

### Pacific Women's Network Against Violence Against Women

The fifth regional meeting of the Pacific Women's Network Against Violence Against Women was held on 5 to 12 June 2009, on the theme 'Prevention Strategies'.<sup>29</sup> The meeting brought together 60 practitioners from 12 countries to share information on current activities to respond to violence against women, and to develop resolutions for future activities. Participants were from Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Caledonia, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

The meeting brought together men and women who work in the area of violence against women, and included representatives of crisis and counselling services, women's organisations, perpetrator programs, police, education, human rights organisations and HIV/AIDS programs. This broad representation facilitated sharing of information across sectors and development of strategies that take a multisectoral approach in order to inform future work to end violence against women.

The network provides a valuable information-sharing and support mechanism for practitioners across the Pacific. It enables sharing on best practice models and lessons learned to facilitate effective programs and improve services available to women who have been subjected to violence. In addition to meeting face-to-face every four years, the network maintains ongoing contact. The Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, secretariat of the network, acts as a 'clearinghouse' for members on information on violence against women in the Pacific.

The meeting was facilitated by the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre and supported by AusAID and UNIFEM Pacific.

<sup>29</sup> Resolutions from the meeting are available at [www.fijiwomen.com/images/regionalmeeting.pdf](http://www.fijiwomen.com/images/regionalmeeting.pdf).

The fifth regional meeting of the Pacific Women's Network Against Violence Against Women brought together practitioners to share information on current activities to respond to violence against women, and to develop resolutions for future activities. Photo: Fiji Women's Crisis Centre



AusAID recognises the role that regional mechanisms, such as the Pacific Islands Forum and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, play in the Pacific in sharing information and leading change. These organisations provide the opportunity for governments to collectively advance efforts to address violence against women in the Pacific. For example, the Pacific Islands Forum Regional Security Meeting, held in June 2009, discussed the issue of sexual and gender-based violence as a risk to the human security of communities and societies. The meeting supported action at the highest level to raise awareness of the seriousness and impact of sexual and gender-based violence on the Pacific. The issue of sexual and gender-based violence will also be considered at the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders' Meeting in August 2009, with a side event to be held on this issue to enable discussion between officials, international agencies and practitioners on strategies for responding to violence against women.

Australia's work to reduce violence against women involves programs of support in a number of sectors. Efforts are under way to promote coordination across our own programs, although more work needs to be done. One means of tracking our progress in delivering support and achieving greater multisectoral coordination will be through assessments of AusAID activities at a country level through annual program performance reviews, and at an agency level through the annual thematic program reviews.

### Strengthening the evidence base

Another important aspect of maximising the effectiveness of interventions is ensuring a strong and shared evidence base on the prevalence and forms of violence against women. Australia is actively supporting the creation of such an evidence base across Melanesia and in East Timor. In Vanuatu and Solomon Islands, for example, AusAID has provided financial support to the Vanuatu Women's Centre and to the Secretariat of the Pacific Community<sup>30</sup> for national surveys on gender-based violence. Both surveys use World Health Organization methodology. The surveys will produce robust data that will inform future activities at a country level, and because the data produced will be comparable with that

<sup>30</sup> This survey is being carried out by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community in partnership with the Government of Solomon Islands, with funding from AusAID and the United Nations Population Fund.

of other countries, the surveys will also contribute to the international evidence base on violence against women.

## National action plans

As part of our dialogue with partner governments, AusAID will also seek to raise the issue and support the development of national mechanisms, such as action plans and policies, as a means of coordinating and monitoring national responses to violence against women. For example, in Solomon Islands, AusAID is providing financial support to the Ministry of Women, Youth and Children's Affairs to develop a National Policy and Plan of Action on Gender-based Violence.

The Australian Government has a 'zero tolerance' policy on violence and has taken significant action domestically to improve our own response to violence against women, including the development of a National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women.

In May 2008, the Australian Government established the National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children to provide the government with expert advice on a national action plan for Australia. On receiving the council's report, *Time for Action*,<sup>31</sup> the Prime Minister, the Hon Kevin Rudd MP, announced that the Australian Government will take *Time for Action* to the Council of Australian Governments<sup>32</sup> with a view to having a nationally agreed approach, by early 2010, to reducing the incidence and impact of violence against women and their children.

The practical importance of national action plans in guiding a country's response to violence against women is underlined by statements by the Hon Tanya Plibersek MP, Australia's Minister for the Status of Women.

*We need a clear road map that will set time lines, allocate responsibilities and use the best evidence available to us to build a future in which violence becomes unthinkable. I want a national plan that gives us clear guidance and concrete strategies to reduce violence, to support victims and survivors and to change the behaviour of perpetrators.*<sup>33</sup>

The work of Australia's National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children provides opportunities for Australia to share with partner governments in Melanesia and East Timor the lessons we have learned in developing a national action plan.

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<sup>31</sup> The council's report and the Australian Government's response are available at [www.fahcsia.gov.au/about/news/2009/Pages/TimeforActiontoReduceViolenceAgainstWomenandChildren.aspx](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/about/news/2009/Pages/TimeforActiontoReduceViolenceAgainstWomenandChildren.aspx).

<sup>32</sup> The Council of Australian Governments is the peak intergovernmental forum in Australia. It brings together leaders from Australia's three levels of government—the Prime Minister, State Premiers and Territory Chief Ministers, and the President of the Australian Local Government Association.

<sup>33</sup> The Hon Tanya Plibersek, Minister for the Status of Women quoted in the National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children (2009), *A Snapshot to Time for Action: The National Council's Plan for Australia to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children, 2009–2021*, Canberra: Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, p. 15.







# Introduction



Mr Gary Baki, Papua New Guinea's Police Commissioner, speaking at the launch of the ODE report in Port Moresby. Photo: AusAID

Papua New Guinea was one of five countries included in a study by AusAID's Office of Development Effectiveness (ODE) to assess the effectiveness of current approaches to addressing violence against women and identify promising practices. The report of the study—*Violence against Women in Melanesia and East Timor: Building on Global and Regional Promising Approaches*—was published in 2008.

The ODE report was released by the Hon Stephen Smith MP, Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, and the Hon Tanya Plibersek MP, Australian Minister for the Status of Women, on 25 November 2008 to coincide with White Ribbon Day, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

The Papua New Guinea country supplement to the report was launched in Port Moresby on 24 November 2008 by Mr Bill Costello, head of AusAID in Papua New Guinea. Dame Carol Kidu, Papua New Guinea's Minister for Community Development, and Mr Gary Baki, Papua New Guinea's Police Commissioner, attended as guest speakers.

The ODE study used a participatory approach focused on women's own experience of violence, and on what does or does not help them in terms of protection and prevention. In Papua New Guinea, the research team interviewed 41 individuals from 64 organisations and held focus group discussions with another 248 people. The research was undertaken using international and local researchers. The local researchers in Papua New Guinea were Martha Kup, Agnes Mek, Barbara Kepa and Kritoe Keleba, with support from Angela Kelly. The research was also supported by a local advisory group of prominent individuals.

The ODE report made a series of recommendations for Papua New Guinea and the region that are relevant to all organisations and individuals who are committed to preventing and responding to violence against women.

This paper sets out Australia's initial response to the recommendations for action to end violence against women in Papua New Guinea. AusAID recognises that ending violence against women requires action over the long term, and that the activities set out in this report are just the first stage in intensifying our efforts to address violence against women as part of the Australian international development assistance program.

# Principles and priorities

The ODE report identified a range of principles and priorities structured around a *framework for action* for addressing violence against women. AusAID will use this framework and a set of key principles to guide its contribution to ending violence against women in Papua New Guinea.

## Principles guiding Australia's contribution

The following principles will guide Australia's contribution to ending violence against women. AusAID will:

- > make a long-term commitment to ending violence against women
- > promote gender equality as a central principle of our work
- > work in partnership with key stakeholders and align with partner government priorities
- > adopt an integrated approach.

Further details are set out in the regional report.

## A framework for action

The framework for action sets out three main *strategies* for responding to violence against women:

- > ensuring women have access to justice
- > ensuring women have access to support services
- > preventing violence against women.

The framework for action can be used by all those working to end violence against women.



The box below sets out AusAID’s vision, its aim and the outcomes it will strive to achieve within the framework recommended by the ODE report.

<b>A framework for ending violence against women in Melanesia and East Timor</b>		
<b>Vision:</b> Women in Melanesia and East Timor are able to live free from violence and the fear of violence.		
<b>Aim:</b> To work in partnership—with national governments, civil society, international partners, and men and women—to increase efforts to reduce and respond to violence against women.		
<b>Outcome:</b> Women have access to justice	<b>Outcome:</b> Women have access to support services	<b>Outcome:</b> Violence against women is prevented

The structure of this report reflects the framework for action recommended in the ODE report, with sections on each of the three key strategies—ensuring women’s access to justice, ensuring women’s access to support services, and preventing violence against women—and on efforts to support an integrated approach.

# Women have access to justice

## Goals for all stakeholders in Papua New Guinea

To increase women's access to justice.

This will include:

- > passing and implementing laws and policies that discourage violence and impose consequences on offenders
- > providing women with the means to protect themselves and their children from violence
- > providing women with the information necessary to access their rights
- > ensuring women are treated humanely and fairly by justice system personnel.

## Situational analysis

Historically, the response of the Papua New Guinea justice sector to violence against women has been relatively weak. Women can receive inconsistent treatment from the police in response to domestic violence. Many women are dependent on community-based justice through village courts because of difficulty in physically accessing the formal justice system and low levels of knowledge of their legal rights.

There are a range of new initiatives occurring in the justice sector aimed at improving protection for women against violence, including a number of government-led activities. Where there is strong leadership at senior levels, activities are progressing well and beginning to lead to visible improvements in service delivery such as in legal aid, the district courts and local-level crime-prevention initiatives. Where significant donor support has been lacking, there is equally less evidence of progress, which is the case for the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary.

The Family and Sexual Violence Action Committee, provincial councils of women and Stop Violence Centres in hospitals are engaged in public awareness activities to improve women's knowledge of laws and rights.

## Papua New Guinea Government priorities and actions to support women's access to justice

Revised legislation on sexual offences came into force in Papua New Guinea in 2003. The legislation includes a clear definition of sexual offences against children, expands the definition of rape, makes rape in marriage illegal and improves court procedures to protect survivors' safety and dignity.

Papua New Guinea's Department for Community Development and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) are working together in a pilot program in two provinces to educate communities, leaders, health service providers, legal aid organisations, the police and the judiciary about the amendments to the legislation.

The Papua New Guinea Government adopted a gender strategy for the justice sector in 2006. The strategy aims to increase women's access to the formal justice system. It includes a number of activities specifically aimed at improving the sector's response to violence against women, including providing training for prosecutors and magistrates; piloting a court accompaniment program for survivors of rape or child sexual abuse; setting aside one day a week in the National Court to hear sexual offence cases; and updating village court policy to include family and sexual violence.

The Papua New Guinea Police Commissioner is a strong advocate for the elimination of violence against women and supports a stronger response to family and sexual violence both within and outside of the constabulary.

There is a Sexual Offences Squad within the police to investigate cases of sexual assault.

A homemade sign advocating an end to violence against women in Papua New Guinea.  
Photo: AusAID



## Australian support for women's access to justice

Australia's emphasis on gender equality and preventing violence against women is being taken up as a core issue in AusAID's Law and Justice Sector Program. AusAID is committed to continuing this focus, including extending measures to promote gender equality and prevent violence against women to the provincial and district levels. Australia will support the implementation of the Papua New Guinea Government's Law and Justice Sector Gender Strategy and continue to assist the sector in encouraging both male and female access to what is traditionally a male-dominated sector.

Through the Papua New Guinea – Australia Law and Justice Partnership, Australia will strengthen its focus on working in partnership with the Papua New Guinea Government in responding to violence against women. This will include providing support to the government on planning, budgeting and program implementation of initiatives to support women's access to justice.

Australian support to the sector also extends to the Magisterial Service of Papua New Guinea, which is responsible for providing the community with an accountable, independent and impartial courts system. Australian support works to address family and sexual violence through the implementation of national guidelines and policies, including Practice Directions to help victims understand the steps and processes in court proceedings. Family courts are being strengthened to assist victims of violence, and a focus will be maintained on increasing the number of women magistrates. AusAID, through the Law and Justice Sector Program, is supporting training of village court magistrates including training on violence against women. Efforts are also being made to increase the number of women village court magistrates in an attempt to make courts more accessible to women.

Australia will continue its efforts through the Law and Justice Sector Program to provide women with access to justice in the areas of counselling and legal assistance. Through the provision of funding, assistance on budget prioritisation and provision of advisory support, Australia is supporting the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary to improve and strengthen the 'victims of crime' desk in each police station. This initiative provides support to enable women who are victims of family violence to be heard and assisted. The victims of crime desks have links with the Stop Violence Centres in the hospitals, and with the frontline Policing and Practice Directions initiated by Magisterial Services.

AusAID will fund the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 2009 to undertake research on gender equality laws and organic law. National consultations supported by AusAID on the Papua New Guinea Government's Women's Policy will inform a possible Bill on gender equality.

AusAID also supports the Yumi Lukautim Mosbi project (\$1.5 million in 2009). The project is a joint initiative by AusAID's Law and Justice Sector Program and the National Capital District Commission to reduce crime through a variety of crime-prevention activities. Yumi Lukautim Mosbi sponsors vocational training for youth, including for victims of family and sexual violence and sex workers. The project supports youth to work on community initiatives and sponsors their on-the-job training with businesses.

Through the Papua New Guinea – Australia Law and Justice Partnership, Australia will strengthen its focus on working in partnership with the Papua New Guinea Government in responding to violence against women.

# Women have access to support services



## Goals for all stakeholders in Papua New Guinea

To increase women's access to support services.

This will include providing assistance to:

- > increase women's access to psychological, medical and legal support
- > increase women's access to safe havens
- > increase support to organisations that provide support services to women.

Silia Aina, daughter of the caretakers of the Morata Safe House on balcony. The Morata Safe House provides shelter for women who have been subjected to violence. Photo: AusAID



## Situational analysis

In Port Moresby, the Salvation Army, the Individual Community Rights Advocacy Forum and City Mission (Haus Ruth) provide emergency and temporary shelter for women who have experienced violence. Outside of the capital, shelter is provided on a more informal basis by churches, HIV and AIDS care centres and individual women. In Goroka, Family Voice provides counselling for women and children, and training for community volunteers to support women who have experienced violence.

The ODE report identified a need to improve service provision for women who have experienced violence, particularly for women in rural areas. This included a need for increased technical and financial resources for existing services, and provision of standardised training for counselling women and children who have experienced violence.

## Papua New Guinea Government priorities and actions to support women's access to support services

Papua New Guinea's National Department of Health is the first in the region to introduce formal protocol training on domestic violence for primary health care providers in rural and urban areas, including developing clinical and medico-legal guidelines on rape for use in all facilities.<sup>1</sup> The protocols assist health workers to identify and respond to women who have experienced violence.

The department is also setting up Stop Violence Centres<sup>2</sup> in all major hospitals in Papua New Guinea. Stop Violence Centres serve as 'one-stop shops'. They provide medical assistance, counselling, referrals and legal support to women who have experienced violence. The linking of the centres with police through the Sexual Offences Squad provides immediate support to abused women lodging complaints through the formal courts system.

Implementation of the protocols and referral pathways at the Stop Violence Centres is a positive indication that the department is focusing on standardising the centres and on expanding the centres in order to allow access for all women to justice and support services.

Work on HIV and AIDS in Papua New Guinea includes a focus on promoting gender equality and preventing violence against women. This recognises the disproportionate impact of HIV and AIDS on women in the country. Addressing violence against women is included as a priority in the Papua New Guinea Government's *National Gender Policy and Strategic Plan on HIV and AIDS 2006–2010*. Strategies to achieve this include providing capacity building and training on integrating the issue of violence against women into work on HIV and AIDS, and working with the community to raise awareness of these issues.

## Australian support for women's access to support services

### Support services

AusAID will continue to support Yumi Lukautim Mosbi, which has partnered with Digicel and Protect Security Services to create a Famli Seif line to respond to calls for assistance from women in crisis in Port Moresby, Mount Hagen, Goroka, Lae, Madang and Rabaul. A call to 72221234 (*'7222 brings Protect to you, 1234 opens the door on family and sexual violence'* is the initiative's slogan) is toll free and the transfer to family, friends, hospital or police is free of charge.

AusAID's Democratic Governance Program provides funding through a small grants program that supports good governance and capacity building of local-level stakeholders from various provinces (primarily civil society organisations), a number of which provide counselling, therapy, safe house facilities for victims of all forms of violence, and life skills training and development (including in the areas of income generation, gender-based violence and human rights awareness training). AusAID's Democratic Governance Program also funds the Family and Sexual Violence Action Committee, which coordinates and

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1 AusAID's Law and Justice Sector Program supported the development of these guidelines.

2 Family Violence Centres were renamed Stop Violence Centres in 2008.



facilitates the establishment of the Stop Violence Centres and facilitates the establishment of Family and Sexual Violence Action Committees at provincial centres.

AusAID has provided funding to the UNIFEM Pacific Facility Fund in Support of Organisations and Actions to End Violence Against Women to support capacity building for staff from civil society organisations, including from Papua New Guinea. This funding (\$200,000 in 2008-09) will enable staff to participate in training and exchanges in 2009 and 2010. This will include participation in formal training programs conducted by key regional agencies such as the Regional Rights Resource Team and the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre. Training will cover practical skills such as counselling, data collection and administration. It will also increase service providers' knowledge of international human rights law and theoretical issues associated with violence against women. This support will assist in improving the quality of services provided to women who have been subjected to violence.

AusAID will also provide \$200,000 to the UNIFEM Pacific Facility Fund in 2009-10 for activities in Papua New Guinea. These funds will be used to provide grants to civil society organisations to enable them to finance key projects and actions for the elimination of violence against women in communities.

### Increasing women's access to safe havens

AusAID funding (\$357,000 in 2008-09) will continue to be directed to Médecins Sans Frontières to provide overnight accommodation for women escaping violence at Lae Angau Hospital; to Family Voice (Eastern Highland Province) to provide safe spaces that link health facilities within the province; and to Haus Ruth (Port Moresby) and Dove Sanctuary (Rabaul) to provide safe havens.

### Health sector

AusAID's support for health services in Papua New Guinea takes a sector-wide approach. AusAID works with the National Department of Health on priority areas—including violence against women—under the National Health Strategic Plan. AusAID will continue its collaboration with donor partners and health stakeholders (including the Papua New Guinea Institute of Medical Research, the University of Papua New Guinea Medical School and Australian non-government organisations (NGOs)) through the Health Sector Steering Committee.

AusAID, through its Capacity Building Service Centre, has a lead role in raising awareness on gender issues within the Department of Health and at a provincial level. The provision of a domestic violence project officer within the department will scale up efforts to address violence against women in 2009, as will support for the department to implement its policy to ban 'fight fees', which are sometimes charged by facilities for treating domestic violence injuries.

Through its Capacity Building Service Centre as well as its Health Services Improvement Program, AusAID will provide support to assist the Department of Health to broaden its policy focus to include sexual and gender-based violence, men's health and role as partners, and marginalised groups such as adolescents. Support will be provided for the department to develop the National Family Planning Policy and Strategic Implementation Plan. Assistance will also be given to support the growth and maintenance of the National Health Radio Network, which provides a primary means of communication for supervision, training and referral for many health facilities.

Australia will scale up support for Stop Violence Centres in 2009 by building capacity to allow for the opening of four additional centres—in Alotau (Milne Bay Province), Wewak and Maprik (East Sepik Province), and Arawa (Bougainville). These will be in addition to the existing centres in Port Moresby (National Capital District), Lae (Morobe Province), Goroka (Eastern Highlands Province) and Kundiawa (Simbu Province).

## Responses to HIV and AIDS

AusAID will continue to assist the health sector to engage in responding to HIV and AIDS, gender issues and violence against women. AusAID, through its Sanap Wantaim program, contributes to integrating gender into the HIV and AIDS response in Papua New Guinea. Sanap Wantaim supports the delivery of the strategies and implementing guidelines on integrating gender, as set out in Papua New Guinea's *National Gender Policy and Strategic Plan on HIV and AIDS 2006–2010*.

AusAID also supports the integration of gender issues, including measures to respond to violence against women, as part of its work with NGOs on HIV and AIDS. In conjunction with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), AusAID supports advanced training for counsellors working with survivors of gender-based violence and the development of tools and training materials for advocacy on HIV and AIDS and gender. One such tool is the 'gender advocacy toolkit', which aims to inspire community grassroots advocates to act against the spread of HIV and AIDS and gender-based violence using a human rights and advocacy framework.

## Disaster management

The onset of a disaster creates a high-stress environment associated with disruptions in families and the support mechanisms that exist for women (and children) in terms of health and law enforcement services. This means women become more vulnerable, which can increase the possibility of violence.

AusAID is currently finalising the design of its new Disaster Risk Management Program for the next four years (commencing in 2009-10). Activities included in the new program will be required to:

- > articulate the ways in which they will include both men and women in planning, monitoring and evaluation processes
- > specifically target women and girls
- > articulate in their work plans or programs the ways in which gender issues will be addressed through the activity
- > identify specific gender equity targets where possible and appropriate.

This approach aims to increase the extent to which gender considerations are taken into account in disaster management, and thus contribute to improving the prevention of and response to violence against women in disasters.

AusAID's Port Moresby Emergency Response Team training curriculum, operational procedures and tools (for example, needs assessment forms) will address the issue of violence against women when considering gender issues in emergency and humanitarian responses.



The Office for the Development of Women, which is situated in the Department for Community Development, plans to continue its efforts to increase the status of women by providing clear, accurate and well-researched advice to the government on gender-inclusive implications of policy decisions and outcomes. It will also consult with government agencies to investigate new and emerging issues affecting women and put forward policies that can generate structural change to improve the status of women.

Though women are protected under the Constitution, the implementation of particular Acts to give effect to this protection has been rather weak due to misinterpretation and cultural influences. The government's Medium-Term Development Strategy goes some way towards acknowledging the importance of gender equality. The law and justice sector has taken this on board in its sector-wide design and program implementation strategies for the various agencies in the sector. Champions such as the Chief Magistrate and the Police Commissioner have made progress in highlighting the importance of preventing violence against women.

Isolated activities are occurring in other sectors—for example, within the National Maritime Safety Authority, a special committee focused on women working in the maritime subsector was recently established. It meets regularly to focus on concerns regarding industry recognition of women in the maritime field, career progression, opening new areas of employment for women in the maritime industry and general welfare and social issues.

## Australian support for preventing violence against women

### Working with civil society

#### Community mobilisation and awareness raising

AusAID is actively seeking to incorporate measures to raise community awareness and prevent violence against women throughout its development assistance in Papua New Guinea. Examples include AusAID's work on democratic governance, in sport and in the transport sector.

In 2009, AusAID, through its Strongim Pipol Strongim Nesen program, will support individuals, communities, civil society organisations and government to progress democratic governance in Papua New Guinea. The program will include funding for activities to be implemented at provincial, district and local government and ward levels. The program will explore the potential to improve the prevention of violence against women through awareness raising at all levels, changing community attitudes about violence, and increasing women's status in society.

AusAID's Sports for Development Initiative supports the Papua New Guinea Sports Foundation's focus on promoting gender equality throughout its operations. The initiative proactively involves women and men in its sports and community activities and training courses, which incorporate HIV and AIDS awareness and behaviour-change methodologies (for example, through its 'Kicking Out Aids' youth sports networks and its Strongim Komuniti Klabs (community-run clubs)). High-profile sporting events, including the Prime Minister's XIII Rugby League match in Papua New Guinea, can provide awareness-raising opportunities. (The 2008 match included prominent 'Stop HIV/AIDS' and 'Stop Violence against Women' messages on players' T-shirts.)

Lessons learned suggest that ad hoc high-profile events are able to be used as effective springboards for more far-reaching, sustainable and effective campaigns and awareness-raising activities (by cultivating male champions, arranging community visits



Cathy Freeman discusses the issue of violence with women in Papua New Guinea.  
Photo: Jason Pini

by champions and encouraging media follow-up on issues raised at those events). Real opportunities exist for working in the sports machinery in Papua New Guinea more broadly to address violence against women. AusAID will continue to focus on strengthening relations between AusAID, the Papua New Guinea Sports Foundation, and the Papua New Guinea Sports Federation and the Olympic Committee to explore possibilities for extending successes in HIV prevention through sports to the campaign to end violence against women.

AusAID's support for the Papua New Guinea – Australia Transport Sector Support Program will focus on implementation of the new gender strategy for the sector. The strategy incorporates a variety of approaches to gender issues to assist agencies in the sector in improving their awareness of, and responsiveness to, gender equity within the workplace. It is hoped that the promotion of gender balance in the workplace and the development of activities and tools will have a flow-on effect of reducing the incidence of violence against women among employees and their families.

AusAID is supporting the engagement of a gender adviser whose role will be to assist the transport sector in devising a tailored set of strategies and assessments that are likely to include educational programs on violence against women, and to engage senior agency officials in the promotion of gender equity and awareness of women's issues.

AusAID, through the Key Roads for Growth Maintenance Project, has a good history of engagement with community groups along the Morobe and Eastern Highlands provincial sections of the Highlands Highway. Community liaison officers have been introduced by the roads maintenance contractors to consult with the communities along the highway, principally to alleviate pressure from landowner claims, but also to address community concerns including domestic violence that arise because of the participation of women in work groups.

### **Working with men and boys**

AusAID partnered with the UNDP Pacific Centre in supporting a Pacific and East Timorese delegation to attend the 'Global Symposium on Engaging Men and Boys to Achieve Gender Equality', held in March 2009. The delegation included representatives from Papua New Guinea.

AusAID will provide funding in 2009-10 to the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre for the development of a handbook on working with men as advocates for the elimination of violence against women in the Pacific. The handbook will provide guidelines on best practices for working with men to advocate for gender equality and the elimination of violence, including outlining a training program for men who will become gender equality advocates.

### **Working with faith-based organisations**

AusAID, through the Church Partnership Program, supports churches including those that develop community-based plans to respond to, reduce and prevent violence against women such as support services, gender and human rights training and peacebuilding work. Churches are supported to work at the local level to collaborate on training and capacity building of local-level organisations and individuals. Churches are also supported to provide outreach and support, including for women who have been subjected to violence. This support is particularly important in rural areas in Papua New Guinea, where access to other forms of support is limited.

AusAID will advocate for greater coordination and collaboration among churches, and between churches and government, in order to strengthen the response to violence against women. AusAID's Church Partnership Program offers opportunities for greater coordination between churches and government. At the national level, some churches have already raised gender equality issues within church governing bodies.

**AusAID will advocate for greater coordination and collaboration among churches, and between churches and government, in order to strengthen the response to violence against women.**

AusAID is a Principal Partner to the International Women's Development Agency initiative 'Asia Pacific Breakthrough: The Women, Faith and Development Summit to End Global Poverty', to be held in December 2009. The summit will bring together faith-based, women's and development organisations from across Asia and the Pacific to discuss opportunities to work together to advance gender equality, including to end violence against women.

## Prevention activities through the education sector

Through its Basic Education Development Program, AusAID supports the reduction of disparities in equality between men and women and the promotion of a gender transformative approach. The program provides training for boards of management in primary schools using board of management facilitator teams. Each team includes an education official and a civil society representative. The civil society representatives, known as district women's facilitators, ensure a gender balance in the teams given that most education officials are male. The teams are trained to provide guidance to school boards of management in the management of school finances, infrastructure planning and acquittal processes.

AusAID plans to scale up its technical and financial support for post-basic education and institutional capacity building at all levels of education administration, including support to the Papua New Guinea Department of Education's Gender Strategic Plan.

## Supporting women as peacemakers

AusAID supports the International Women's Development Agency 'Peace Talks' initiative (\$85,000 in 2008-09), which aims to raise awareness on implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1325<sup>4</sup> on women, peace and security by training civil society organisations from Solomon Islands, Tonga, Bougainville and Fiji. The International Women's Development Agency supports training for a core group of regional women's organisations to engage with regional policymakers during the annual Forum Regional Security Committee meeting of the Pacific Islands Forum. In addition, it manages a regional secretariat that shares women's perspectives and experiences of conflict and peacebuilding; facilitates collaboration among stakeholders in implementing Resolution 1325; and supports women's participation in regional forums on peace and security.

AusAID provided funding to support a joint research project by UNIFEM Pacific and the UNDP Pacific Centre on sexual and gender-based violence in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands. The research will make recommendations on how the implementation of Resolutions 1325 and 1820 can be supported by various actors to reduce the high levels of sexual and gender-based violence in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands, as well as other Pacific Island states. The findings of this research are expected to be released in 2009.

## Recognising and promoting the rights of women with disability

AusAID, through the Pacific Public Sector Linkages Program, is supporting the Australian Human Rights Commission to partner with the Pacific Disability Forum to progress disability issues in the Pacific by delivering training in nine countries in the Pacific. The training courses are scheduled to be held between August 2009 and July 2010.

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<sup>4</sup> UN Security Council Resolution 1325 was adopted in 2000. It is the key international framework that addresses the links between the protection of women from violence and the promotion of women's participation and leadership in peacebuilding and reconstruction efforts. UN Security Council Resolution 1820 was adopted in 2008. It addresses the issue of sexual violence in armed conflicts and post-conflict situations.



In Papua New Guinea, the training will bring together members of the Papua New Guinea National Assembly of People with Disabilities and government representatives to build their capacity and knowledge of disability rights and to progress disability issues, including the rights of women with disability.

AusAID, through the International Seminar Support Scheme, supported the attendance of a woman with disability from Papua New Guinea at the Pacific Regional Forum on Women with Disabilities and the Pacific Regional Disability Conference in Vanuatu on 20–23 April 2009. One of the key components at these conferences was discussion of the sensitive issue of violence against women with disability.

## Gender equality and empowering women

The ODE report noted that efforts to reduce violence against women are intrinsically linked to women's political, social and economic empowerment. The report recommended that Australia ensure all its interventions focus on promoting greater equality between men and women.

Gender equality is a guiding principle of Australia's international development assistance program. The Australian Government is committed to ensuring that the needs, priorities and interests of women, as well as men, are considered in all development activities and at every stage of the development process.

### Women's leadership and decision making

AusAID is providing funding to the UNDP to support women in leadership in Papua New Guinea. This funding will contribute to building the capacity of the Department for Community Development and the Office for the Development of Women to:

- > formulate policies and legislation for increasing women's access to decision-making mechanisms
- > develop and implement a communication and advocacy strategy on women in leadership
- > share best practices to support women in leadership at the community level
- > conduct research on women's roles and representation in local-level government and in the provincial assemblies, to inform support for women's participation.

Australia is providing \$6.2 million over five years from 2007-08 to the Gender Equality in Political Governance Program, in partnership with UNIFEM. The program focuses on supporting women standing for elections in the Pacific and including gender in governance programs in the Pacific. It will undertake research and develop information, resources and learning materials to promote women's leadership. In Papua New Guinea, the program will also train women at a local level on their rights and responsibilities and increase their capacity to be active citizens and leaders.

### Women's economic empowerment

AusAID, in collaboration with the International Finance Corporation and the World Bank, is undertaking a series of Gender and Investment Climate Reform Assessments, including in Papua New Guinea. These assessments will result in a 'gender toolkit', to be released later in 2009, that will show policymakers and business organisations how to ensure that both men and women benefit from improvements in the business-enabling environment within a country.



The strategy will map out an action plan for government, civil society and donors to respond to family and sexual violence. The government component of the strategy will address the recommendation in the ODE report for a government-led national action plan. The revised strategy is expected to strengthen links between government and civil society by bringing together the work of government agencies with the work of the Family and Sexual Violence Action Committee.

## Papua New Guinea Government priorities and actions to ensure an integrated approach

The Papua New Guinea Government ratified the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1995. In 2008, the government, through the Department for Community Development, presented its state report on the status of women in Papua New Guinea and its compliance with CEDAW to the CEDAW Committee—its first report since the government ratified the treaty. NGOs are discussing the development of a CEDAW shadow report to respond to the government's report.

Section 2.3.5 of Papua New Guinea's Medium-Term Development Strategy acknowledges the importance of gender equality and the empowerment of women in order to achieve all of the strategy's goals and objectives. Much work is still required to reduce the disparity between men and women in formal education and in all levels of decision making, to improve women's health and to promote gender equality.

The Office for the Development of Women is the national government institutional base for promoting gender equality, gender mainstreaming and monitoring of national and international instruments such as the National Platform of Action, the Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender Equality and CEDAW. In 2009, the office was allocated funding for 14 positions and those positions are currently being advertised. When fully operational, the office will coordinate policy implementation relating to gender equality across government sectors. It will also increase multisectoral coordination by building partnerships with women's NGOs, civil society organisations, government agencies and professional groups.

The government's 1987 Women's Policy to support women's endeavours is now being updated. Led by Dame Carol Kidu and the Department for Community Development, national consultations will inform the development of a new policy and may lead to the development of a Bill on gender equality.

## Australian support for an integrated approach

AusAID will participate in a United Nations-led coordination mechanism on gender, the Gender Thematic Group, to commence in 2009. The group will include representation from donors, the Government of Papua New Guinea and the National Council of Women. It will improve coordination of efforts to promote gender equality so as to increase the impact of these efforts.



Dame Carol Kidu, Papua New Guinea's Minister for Community Development, asks for a community rejection of violence towards women. Photo: AusAID

AusAID is providing financial support to the Department for Community Development to strengthen its role as the key agency within government to promote gender equality and respond to violence against women. This support takes a number of forms, including:

- > funding through the UNDP to build the capacities of the department and the Office for the Development of Women (\$180,000 in 2009-10)
- > appointment of an AusAID officer in the department in 2009, whose role will include a focus on gender. The officer will support implementation of the Family and Sexual Violence Action Committee strategy, and focus on developing close links between donors and the Gender and Development Branch and the Office for the Development of Women in the department. The officer will assist in developing approaches to address violence against women and will work with development stakeholders to strengthen the collective efforts to address violence against women in Papua New Guinea
- > a contribution of \$400,000 to support national consultations to inform the development of the new Women's Policy (provided over two years commencing in 2008-09). AusAID has engaged with the extensive network of district women's facilitators as local consultation points in the process.

AusAID's Democratic Governance Program supports democratic and shared governance in Papua New Guinea. This includes working with national partners, communities and individual citizens to promote governance that is characterised by transparency, accountability and inclusiveness. The program's work with a range of stakeholders means it is well placed to provide increased support for multisectoral coordination among government and non-government actors on the issue of violence against women.

AusAID's Democratic Governance Program and its Sanap Wantaim program will continue to support multisectoral coordination by funding the Consultative Implementation and Monitoring Committee and the Family and Sexual Violence Action Committee (\$842,000 over two years commencing in 2008-09).

By supporting the committees' operational costs, the programs will assist with:

- > implementation of the Family and Sexual Violence Action Committee strategy within civil society
- > institutional strengthening
- > provincial family and sexual violence action committees
- > workshops and symposiums on gender-based violence that include donors and representatives from the Papua New Guinea Government as participants
- > research on sexual and domestic violence.

The funding will also support the Family and Sexual Violence Action Committee's ability to coordinate with civil society to establish Stop Violence Centres in provincial hospitals; provide competency training for counsellors working in the area of family, sexual and gender-based violence; and develop counselling standards.

AusAID will provide financial support in 2009-10 to the UNIFEM Facility Fund in Support of Organisations and Actions to End Violence Against Women. This grant funding mechanism will enable local NGOs to access funding for activities to end violence against women. By drawing on the expertise and knowledge of donors, UN agencies and regional NGOs, the fund will contribute to increased coordination as well as sharing of knowledge and good practice across the region.





# Solomon Islands country report





# Introduction



Solomon Islands was one of five countries included in a study by AusAID’s Office of Development Effectiveness (ODE) to assess the effectiveness of current approaches to addressing violence against women and identify promising practices. The report of the study—*Violence Against Women in Melanesia and East Timor: Building on Global and Regional Promising Approaches*—was published in 2008.

The ODE report was released by the Hon Stephen Smith MP, Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, and the Hon Tanya Plibersek MP, Australian Minister for the Status of Women, on 25 November 2008 to coincide with White Ribbon Day, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

The Solomon Islands country supplement to the ODE report was launched in Honiara on 11 March 2009 by the Hon Peter Tom, Solomon Islands’ Minister for Women, Youth and Children’s Affairs, coinciding with the week-long celebration of International Women’s Day, with its theme ‘Men and women together to end violence against women’.

The ODE study used a participatory approach focused on women’s own experience of violence, and on what does or does not help them in terms of protection and prevention. The research team spoke with more than 120 people in Solomon Islands, including 40 people who were interviewed and another 80 people who participated in focus groups. The research was undertaken using international and local researchers. The local researchers in Solomon Islands were Salote Austin and Caroline Laore. The research was also supported by a local advisory group of prominent individuals.

The ODE report made a series of recommendations for Solomon Islands and the region that are relevant to all organisations and individuals who are committed to preventing and responding to violence against women.

This paper sets out Australia’s initial response to the recommendations for action to end violence against women in Solomon Islands. Australian development assistance to Solomon Islands is delivered through a number of mechanisms, on a bilateral, regional and multilateral basis. The Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) is a partnership between the government and people of Solomon Islands and the contributing countries of the Pacific region, including Australia. There are a number of areas where RAMSI is providing support to end violence against women. These are included in this report to demonstrate the scope of effort currently occurring in Solomon Islands to end violence against women.

AusAID recognises that ending violence against women requires action over the long term, and that the activities set out in this report are just the first stage in intensifying our efforts to address violence against women as part of the Australian international development assistance program.



Launch of the ODE report in Honiara.  
Photo: Charles Kadamana, Solomon Star Ltd

# Principles and priorities

The ODE report identified a range of principles and priorities structured around a *framework for action* for addressing violence against women. AusAID will use this framework and a set of key principles to guide its contribution to ending violence against women in Solomon Islands.

## Principles guiding Australia's contribution

The following principles will guide Australia's contribution to ending violence against women. AusAID will:

- > make a long-term commitment to ending violence against women
- > promote gender equality as a central principle of our work
- > work in partnership with key stakeholders and align with partner government priorities
- > adopt an integrated approach.

Further details are set out in the regional report.

## A framework for action

The framework for action sets out three main *strategies* for responding to violence against women:

- > ensuring women have access to justice
- > ensuring women have access to support services
- > preventing violence against women.

The framework for action can be used by all those working to end violence against women.

The box below sets out AusAID’s vision, its aim and the outcomes it will strive to achieve within the framework recommended by the ODE report.

<b>A framework for ending violence against women in Melanesia and East Timor</b>		
<b>Vision:</b> Women in Melanesia and East Timor are able to live free from violence and the fear of violence.		
<b>Aim:</b> To work in partnership—with national governments, civil society, international partners, and men and women—to increase efforts to reduce and respond to violence against women.		
<b>Outcome:</b> Women have access to justice	<b>Outcome:</b> Women have access to support services	<b>Outcome:</b> Violence against women is prevented

The structure of this report reflects the framework for action recommended in the ODE report, with sections on each of the three key strategies—ensuring women’s access to justice, ensuring women’s access to support services, and preventing violence against women—and on efforts to support an integrated approach.

# Women have access to justice

## Goals for all stakeholders in Solomon Islands

To increase women's access to justice.

This will include:

- > passing and implementing laws and policies that discourage violence and impose consequences on offenders
- > providing women with the means to protect themselves and their children from violence
- > providing women with the information necessary to access their rights
- > ensuring women are treated humanely and fairly by justice system personnel.

## Situational analysis

Current legislation in Solomon Islands is limited in its ability to prevent and respond to violence against women. In particular, the Penal Code covers only some forms of domestic violence: there is no specific offence for domestic violence, and marital rape is not a criminal offence. Maximum penalties for physical assault are low. Protection orders are available only to people who are married; they must be obtained from a court and they can be difficult to enforce. There can be long waiting times to have cases heard in court, as priority is being given to trials associated with the civil conflict of 1998 to 2003 (referred to as 'the tensions'). Accessing courts and police can be difficult in provincial areas.

The ODE report found low levels of knowledge in the community on laws relating to violence against women. This is consistent with findings of RAMSI's annual 'People's Survey' over a number of years that women are less likely to report crime than are men and they have lower levels of confidence in police and the justice system generally.

Solomon Islands is one of six countries that will be participating in the project Changing Laws, Protecting Women. The project is being carried out by the Pacific Regional Rights Resource Team<sup>1</sup> with funding under the 2008 grants round of the United Nations Trust Fund in Support of Actions to End Violence against Women (the Global Trust Fund). Through this project, the Regional Rights Resource Team will work with the Solomon Islands Government to advance legislation to combat gender violence.

<sup>1</sup> The Regional Rights Resource Team is a Fiji-based human rights organisation. It works with state and non-state organisations in the region to build capacity on human rights and gender equality.

## Solomon Islands Government priorities and actions to support women's access to justice

The Solomon Islands Law Reform Commission is currently conducting a review of the Penal Code. As part of this review, the commission has prioritised reform of the morality offences under the Penal Code including its provisions relating to domestic violence and sexual assault. In November 2008, the commission released an issues paper, *Review of Penal Code and Criminal Procedure Code*, and commenced a public consultation process that includes a call for written submissions and consultation meetings in the provinces. The commission will make recommendations for reform to the Penal Code to the Solomon Islands Minister for Justice.

The Police Commissioner has approved a domestic violence policy for the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF). In support of the policy, the RSIPF has established the position of Family Violence Coordinator (FVC) in each of the nine provinces in Solomon Islands. The FVCs will provide information to the RSIPF's Domestic Violence Unit (a policy unit based in Honiara) about what is happening in the provinces. The role of the FVCs is to educate other police members, disseminate information on family violence, investigate cases of family violence and manage cases through the court system. The collection of information on domestic violence cases by the Domestic Violence Unit from the FVCs and from health clinics in Honiara will allow FVCs and the police to better target problem areas. In early 2009, the FVCs attended training in Honiara, which included gender sensitisation as well as training in identifying and responding to domestic violence.

The RSIPF has introduced a new family violence report format in 2009 to enable more accurate recording of data on domestic violence incidents. Collation of statistics from those family violence forms will enable the targeting of recidivist offenders. The RSIPF has also increased its efforts to seek meaningful bail conditions against family violence offenders.

## Australian support for women's access to justice

### Law and Justice Program

RAMSI is a partnership between the government and people of Solomon Islands and the contributing countries of the Pacific region, including Australia. It is a long-term activity aimed at helping to create the conditions necessary for a return to peace, stability and a growing economy. The RAMSI Law and Justice Program, primarily funded by AusAID, focuses on support to the Solomon Islands justice and corrections sectors. The Law and Justice Program supports a variety of activities that contribute to increasing women's access to justice, as set out below. The redesign of the program commencing in July 2009 will place a priority on strengthening measures to improve access to justice for women, drawing on the experiences of other law and justice programs in the Pacific region.

A RAMSI-funded Principal Legal Officer Adviser to the Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs and the National Judiciary has developed new Civil Court Procedure Rules, which came into effect on 1 March 2008. The new rules have assisted the National Judiciary to streamline the litigation procedures of the High Court and magistrates' courts. These aim to make the courts more efficient, accessible, and less costly.

Through the RAMSI Law and Justice Program, Australia provides funding support to the Law Reform Commission. Through RAMSI adviser support, the commission is taking into account gender concerns as part of its review of the Penal Code in Honiara and the provinces.

RAMSI is a partnership between the government and people of Solomon Islands and the contributing countries of the Pacific region, including Australia. It is a long-term activity aimed at helping to create the conditions necessary for a return to peace, stability and a growing economy.

Through the RAMSI Law and Justice Program, Australia seeks to build capacity of the Public Solicitor's Office, which provides legal aid to Solomon Islanders in need, both in the civil and criminal courts. RAMSI advisers provide training and mentoring to local lawyers and support the office's free legal clinics. A formal referral system ensures that clients of the Family Support Centre who require legal aid are able to access assistance from the Public Solicitor's Office.<sup>2</sup>

The RAMSI Law and Justice Program also provides support to build the capacity of the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP) to meet the demands of the criminal justice system, in particular to ensure criminal charges progressed through the court system are both timely and fair. The program is also assisting the development and implementation of a prosecution policy, which will assist the ODPP, police and lawyers in applying criminal law, as well as increase the ODPP's transparency and accountability to the community.

The RAMSI Law and Justice Program is currently providing financial support (\$32,000 over two years from 2008-09) to the Women in Law Association of Solomon Islands for both administrative support and funding to participate in training and advocacy for women's legal rights. This frees up volunteers' time to focus on making policy submissions, such as the Country Legislative Indicators for the Solomon Islands country report on progress in implementing the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, to which Solomon Islands is a signatory, and providing a network of support for female legal practitioners. The Women in Law Association is continuing to build stronger ties with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) in Fiji and with the Law Reform Commission in order to provide input, including a written submission, to the commission on the Penal Code review of domestic violence legislation.

## Policing

The Participating Police Force (PPF) is part of the support provided to Solomon Islands through RAMSI. It is composed of police from 14 countries, including Australia. The PPF works in partnership with the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force across Solomon Islands, and has posts in all provinces.

The implementation of programs to prevent violence against women and children is a key performance measure for PPF provincial operations and is considered by the PPF to be one of the more successful areas of capacity development of the RSIPF.

The PPF Provincial Advisers work with RSIPF Provincial Police Commanders to manage the work of Family Violence Coordinators and to assist in interaction with community groups, including those working in the area of family violence and victim support. PPF Provincial Advisers will continue their efforts to develop the capacity of FVCs in accordance with their position descriptions, along with providing resources (such as family violence information material) and assistance with managing public events.

The PPF also has an adviser working with the RSIPF Community Policing Section to develop family violence policies and assist with coordination of provincial FVCs.

The PPF has undertaken work to embed community perception surveys into the evidence base for policing decision making. The representative surveys include questions relating to fear of violence, for example.

The PPF plans to continue seeking to establish closer ties with women's groups at a local and national level to further advance strategies for reducing violence against women. This will be done in conjunction with local crime prevention committees.

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<sup>2</sup> The Family Support Centre is a non-government organisation based in Honiara that provides counselling and supports women to access the legal system.



# Women have access to support services



## Goals for all stakeholders in Solomon Islands

To increase women's access to support services.

This will include providing assistance to:

- > increase women's access to psychological, medical and legal support
- > increase women's access to safe havens
- > increase support to organisations that provide support services to women.

## Situational analysis

In Solomon Islands, the main support services for women who have experienced violence are the Family Support Centre and the Christian Care Centre. The Family Support Centre provides counselling and supports women to access the legal system. The Christian Care Centre provides shelter and counselling to women who have experienced violence. These services are both based in Honiara. In rural areas, women are largely dependent on informal support from family members, friends, chiefs or church ministers or pastors.

The health sector in Solomon Islands does not currently have formal systems in place to respond to violence against women. There is a need for protocols and training for health service providers to support them to better identify and respond to violence against women. The Family Support Centre has held some initial discussions with relevant stakeholders on establishing a referral protocol with the health sector in Honiara. These referrals are currently operating at an informal level.

## Solomon Islands Government priorities and actions to support women's access to support services

It is anticipated that the Solomon Islands Government will develop a comprehensive response to address violence against women, including access to support services, based on the findings of the Family Health and Safety Study (see below).

The Ministry of Health and Medical Services, with the support of the World Health Organization, will conduct training and sensitisation for all medical personnel on dealing with domestic violence cases, which may include training on counselling women who have been subjected to violence.

## Australian support for women's access to support services

### Support services

Oxfam, with AusAID funding, will support the Family Support Centre to improve its counselling and referral services in Honiara and expand its reach to Western Province (see below).

AusAID will work with the Ministry of Women, Youth and Children's Affairs and the Solomon Islands Support Committee to explore how support could be better provided to informal providers of shelter to victims of violence. This is an issue that has been identified by the Family and Health Safety Study. As an early response to the findings of the study, AusAID is funding training by the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre for these providers on minimum standards and procedures for referrals to services (\$50,000 in 2009-10).

AusAID is providing funding to UNIFEM's Pacific Facility Fund in Support of Organisations and Actions to End Violence Against Women to support capacity building for staff from civil society organisations, including from Solomon Islands. This funding (\$200,000 in 2008-09) will enable staff to participate in training and exchanges in 2009 and 2010. This will include participation in formal training programs conducted by key regional agencies such as the Regional Rights Resource Team and the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre. Training will cover practical skills such as counselling, data collection and administration. It will also increase service providers' knowledge of international human rights law and theoretical issues associated with violence against women. This support will assist in improving the quality of services provided to women who have been subjected to violence.

Oxfam, with AusAID funding, will support the Family Support Centre to improve its counselling and referral services in Honiara and expand its reach to Western Province.

### Health sector

The aim of Australian support to the health sector in Solomon Islands is to assist in strengthening management and improving provision of essential health services. AusAID support for the health sector is provided through a sector-wide approach with the Solomon Islands Ministry of Health.

The Ministry of Health will explore the possibility of conducting a gender analysis of the Solomon Islands health sector with support from development partners including AusAID and the World Health Organization. WHO has expertise in this field and has offered to work with the Ministry of Health and AusAID to develop possible terms of reference for consideration by the Ministry Executive.

A completed gender analysis incorporating the newly established sex-disaggregated data sets for the health sector would assist the ministry to develop a more accurate baseline of women's health issues in Solomon Islands. The analysis would be an important component to inform future activity in the health sector and ensure gender issues are addressed. This information would also provide important data for consideration during the development of the next health strategic plan, due to commence in late 2009.

# Violence against women is prevented



## Goals for all stakeholders in Solomon Islands

To prevent violence against women.

This will include assisting in:

- > raising awareness through coordinated efforts at all levels
- > changing community attitudes about violence
- > increasing women's status in society.

## Situational analysis

There is a need to strengthen women's participation in economic, social and political life in Solomon Islands. This will help in improving the status of women in society, which will in turn assist in changing community attitudes to violence against women and enabling women to respond to situations of violence.

Madame Doris Sikua, wife of the Prime Minister of Solomon Islands, leads the White Ribbon Day march in support of ending violence against women in Honiara in November 2008. Photo: Solomon Islands White Ribbon Day Committee 2008



Civil society—in particular, women’s organisations and faith-based organisations—is active in Solomon Islands in raising awareness of, and contributing to prevention of, violence against women. A number of groups—such as Vois Blo Mere Solomons; Solomon Islands Christian Association, Federation of Women; Save the Children; and Caritas trauma support workers—play a role across Solomon Islands, in both Honiara and the provinces, in working to prevent violence against women and to change community attitudes towards violence against women. There is potential to further strengthen the work of civil society in rural areas to prevent violence against women.

White Ribbon Day in 2008 brought together a broad range of stakeholders in Solomon Islands to raise awareness and encourage individuals to take action to end violence against women. Events were held in each province, including a march in Honiara, to encourage men and women to work together to end violence against women.

## **Solomon Islands Government priorities and actions to prevent violence against women**

The Solomon Islands Government has established a Prime Ministerial Taskforce to Look into Special Actions for Women (the Gender Taskforce) focusing on gender-based violence as one of four central strategies to improve gender equality. The other issues to be considered by the taskforce are women in leadership, economic empowerment of women and gender equity.

The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Women, Youth and Children’s Affairs chairs the Solomon Islands Support Committee, a reference group on gender-based violence. The committee coordinated public awareness raising for White Ribbon Day and 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence. At the White Ribbon Day 2008 national leaders’ dinner, the Prime Minister of Solomon Islands and six of his ministers signed the UNIFEM pledge form to ‘stop violence against women’.

The Ministry of Women, Youth and Children’s Affairs is using the Family Health and Safety Study (see below) to raise awareness of the high rates of violence against women in Solomon Islands and the costs of this violence for women, their families and the community. This will include wide dissemination of the research findings, including briefings in the provinces.

## **Australian support for preventing violence against women**

### **Working with civil society**

#### **Support for civil society**

In March 2009, Australia announced its support to Oxfam (under a Solomon Islands NGO Partnership Agreement) to work with two groups—Family Support Centre and Western Province Council of Women—to reduce gender-based violence in Honiara and Western Province (\$3 million over five years commencing in 2008-09). The work of Oxfam with these groups will have a strong focus on sustained engagement with existing cultural norms, in an effort to shift attitudes and beliefs in the community (and particularly among men) concerning violence against women. The program is consistent with the findings and recommendations of the ODE report, which emphasised extending the reach of services into rural areas and strengthening service providers to create an environment of awareness and support.

## **Working with men and boys**

AusAID partnered with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Pacific Centre in supporting a Pacific and East Timorese delegation to attend the 'Global Symposium on Engaging Men and Boys to Achieve Gender Equality', held in March 2009. The delegation included representatives from Solomon Islands.

AusAID will provide funding in 2009-10 to the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre for the development of a handbook on working with men as advocates for the elimination of violence against women in the Pacific. The handbook will provide guidelines on best practices for working with men to advocate for gender equality and the elimination of violence, including outlining a training program for men who will become gender equality advocates.

## **Working with faith-based organisations**

AusAID is a Principal Partner to the International Women's Development Agency initiative 'Asia Pacific Breakthrough: The Women, Faith and Development Summit to End Global Poverty'. The summit will be held in December 2009. It will bring together faith-based, women's and development organisations from across Asia and the Pacific to discuss opportunities to work together to advance gender equality, including to end violence against women.

AusAID currently funds the Church of Melanesia's Inclusive Communities Program, which aims to rehabilitate prisoners through literacy and personal development training. The training syllabus includes gender-based violence, with topics such as 'What is domestic violence?', 'Cycles of abuse', 'Why do men abuse their partners?', 'How do women cope in abusive situations?' and 'What can you do to help someone in an abusive situation?'.

## **Supporting women as peacemakers**

AusAID partners with femLINKpacific to support the Regional Women's Community Media Network on Women, Peace and Security (\$235,000 in 2008-09). The network raises awareness and supports the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325<sup>3</sup> on women, peace and security through regional media initiatives including publications, a website and radio campaigns. The network also supports the institutional strengthening and improves the media skills of a regional network of partner organisations in Fiji, Bougainville, Solomon Islands and Tonga.

AusAID supports the International Women's Development Agency 'Peace Talks' initiative (\$85,000 in 2008-09), which aims to raise awareness on implementing Resolution 1325 by training civil society organisations from Solomon Islands, Tonga, Bougainville and Fiji. The International Women's Development Agency supports training for a core group of regional women's organisations to engage with regional policymakers during the annual Forum Regional Security Committee meeting of the Pacific Islands Forum. In addition, it manages a regional secretariat that shares women's perspectives and experiences of conflict and peacebuilding; facilitates collaboration among stakeholders in implementing Resolution 1325; and supports women's participation in regional forums on peace and security.

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<sup>3</sup> UN Security Council Resolution 1325 was adopted in 2000. It is the key international framework that addresses the links between the protection of women from violence and the promotion of women's participation and leadership in peacebuilding and reconstruction efforts. UN Security Council Resolution 1820 was adopted in 2008. It addresses the issue of sexual violence in armed conflicts and post-conflict situations.

AusAID provided funding to support a joint research project by UNIFEM Pacific and the UNDP Pacific Centre on sexual and gender-based violence in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands. The research will make recommendations on how the implementation of Resolutions 1325 and 1820 can be supported by various actors to reduce the high levels of sexual and gender-based violence in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands, as well as other Pacific Island states. The findings of this research are expected to be released in 2009.

## Recognising and promoting the rights of women with disability

AusAID, through the Pacific Public Sector Linkages Program, is supporting the Australian Human Rights Commission to partner with the Pacific Disability Forum to progress disability issues in the Pacific by delivering training in nine countries in the Pacific. The training courses are scheduled to be held between August 2009 and July 2010. In Solomon Islands, the training will bring together members of People with Disabilities Solomon Islands and government representatives to build their capacity and knowledge of disability rights in order to progress disability issues, including the rights of women with disability.

AusAID, through the International Seminar Support Scheme, supported the attendance of a woman with disability from Solomon Islands at the Pacific Regional Forum on Women with Disabilities and the Pacific Regional Disability Conference in Vanuatu on 20–23 April 2009. One of the key components at these conferences was discussion of the sensitive issue of violence against women with disability.

## Gender equality and empowering women

The ODE report noted that efforts to reduce violence against women are intrinsically linked to women's political, social and economic empowerment. The report recommended that Australia ensure all its interventions focus on promoting greater equality between men and women.

Gender equality is a guiding principle of Australia's international development assistance. The Australian Government is committed to ensuring that the needs, priorities and interests of women, as well as men, are considered in all development activities and at every stage of the development process.

### Women's leadership and decision making

Through the RAMSI Machinery of Government Program, Australia is supporting a women in government strategy, in partnership with the Solomon Islands Ministry of Women, Youth and Children's Affairs. The Strategy for Advancing the Position of Women in Government aims to increase the number of women in government, in administrative as well as representative capacities, and to increase opportunities for women to realise leadership potential.

The Machinery of Government Program is also working with the Ministry of Public Service to increase the percentage of women at all levels in the public service as well as with the Solomon Islands Electoral Commission to reduce the barriers to the election of women to public office.

Implementation of the strategy also involves partnering with various members of the national women's machinery—including the Solomon Islands Christian Association, Federation of Women; the National Council of Women; and Vois Blo Mere Solomons—to improve the capacity of organisations that have the potential to foster women's aspirations to public office and to increase women's leadership and decision-making roles.



Implementation of the strategy commenced in November 2007. Activities under way in the first 18 months include:

- > piloting of a national Women's Mentor Program
- > support for the Ministry of Women, Youth and Children's Affairs to implement government policy on affirmative action for women's representation in parliament
- > development of a curriculum vitae database and training to support women's nomination to government boards and commissions, resulting in increased numbers of female board appointments
- > conduct of strategic planning and leadership workshops for 170 women in emerging provincial women's organisations, with some workshops co-funded by members of parliament
- > establishment of networks to improve relationships and communication within the national women's machinery
- > collation of life stories of senior public service women in Solomon Islands, to be published in 2009.

The strategy has worked on identifying barriers to public service women's productivity and on developing strategies to ameliorate gender-based cultural disadvantages. This work has resulted in:

- > training for public service women in identified skill gaps—for example, report writing, oral presentation, and information and communications technology (ICT) skills
- > appointment of the first female ICT technical support officer
- > the Solomon Islands Electoral Commission actively encouraging applications from women for polling official positions, with a 33 per cent participation rate achieved in one constituency by-election
- > the Solomon Islands Electoral Commission incorporating a gender field in voter registration forms to support sex-disaggregated data collection and in turn enable future election planning and conduct to maximise women's participation in the electoral process.

Australia is providing \$6.2 million over five years from 2007-08 for the Gender Equality in Political Governance Program, in partnership with UNIFEM. The program focuses on supporting women standing for elections in the Pacific and including gender issues in governance programs in the Pacific. It will undertake research and develop information, resources and learning materials to promote women's leadership. In Solomon Islands, the program will also train women at a local level on their rights and responsibilities and increase their capacity to be active citizens and leaders.

### **Women's economic empowerment**

AusAID, in collaboration with the International Finance Corporation and the World Bank, is undertaking a series of Gender and Investment Climate Reform Assessments, including in Solomon Islands. These assessments will result in a 'gender toolkit', to be released later in 2009, that will show policymakers and business organisations how to ensure that both men and women benefit from improvements in the business-enabling environment within a country.

# An integrated approach

## Goals for all stakeholders in Solomon Islands

To deliver a coordinated and comprehensive response to violence against women, including among government and non-government actors, at the national and local levels.

This will include:

- > developing and implementing plans of action for preventing violence against women at national, provincial, municipal and community levels
- > supporting interagency taskforces on violence against women (for example, within the context of the reporting on progress required by Solomon Islands as a signatory to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women)
- > conducting national coordinated campaigns and awareness-raising activities
- > collaborating on training and capacity building of local stakeholders across all sectors.

## Situational analysis

In recent years, multisectoral coordination in responding to violence against women in Solomon Islands has been weak, in part due to 'the tensions'. However, there are signs that coordination and engagement among key stakeholders is improving. The release of preliminary findings of the research 'Solomon Islands Family Health and Safety Study: A Study on Violence against Women and Children' has generated strong interest across government and civil society in taking action to end violence against women. This survey is being carried out by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community in partnership with the Government of Solomon Islands, with funding from AusAID and the United Nations Population Fund.

As the ODE report noted, the re-establishment of the Ministry of Women, Youth and Children's Affairs has provided a focal point within government for improving the status of women and addressing violence against women.

There is strong interest and willingness among relevant Solomon Islands government ministries in contributing to ending violence against women. For example, the Solomon Islands Government has signed on to UNIFEM's 'Say NO to Violence against Women' campaign. The Prime Minister, a number of ministers, and the permanent secretaries of the Ministry of Women, Youth and Children's Affairs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs all signed on to the campaign at the White Ribbon Day national leaders' dinner held in November 2008. A mechanism is needed to draw these ministries together to ensure a coordinated response to ending violence against women.



At the White Ribbon Day 2008 national leaders' dinner, the Prime Minister of Solomon Islands and a number of his ministers signed the UNIFEM pledge form to 'stop violence against women'.  
Photo: Solomon Islands White Ribbon Committee 2008

## Solomon Islands Government priorities and actions to ensure an integrated approach

The Government of Solomon Islands ratified the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 2002. By becoming a party to the convention, the government affirmed its commitment to ensuring that men and women enjoy equality of rights and opportunity, including the right to live free from violence.

Combined with the ODE report and high-profile campaigns by government and non-government stakeholders, the Family Health and Safety Study has generated political momentum from within Solomon Islands to do more to address this challenge.

This culminated in a decision by the Solomon Islands Government in April 2009 to establish a Gender Taskforce. As noted above, the taskforce will look at options for improving gender equality in Solomon Islands in the areas of violence against women, women in leadership, economic empowerment of women, and gender equity.

The Ministry of Women, Youth and Children's Affairs has established good connections with civil society, donors and women's organisations in Honiara through its gender-based violence reference group, known as the Solomon Islands Support Committee. The reference group is chaired by the Permanent Secretary for Women, Youth and Children's Affairs.

The ministry is proposing to develop an overarching gender policy and a more detailed gender-based violence policy and action plan.

With the support of New Zealand's International Aid and Development Agency, NZAID, the ministry is leading a structural review of the national women's machinery in Solomon Islands. The review may also lead to increased coordination between government and civil society in the promotion of gender equality.

The work of the Gender Taskforce and the Ministry of Women, Youth and Children's Affairs will need to be closely coordinated.

## Australian support for an integrated approach

### Research and analysis

Through both RAMSI and the Bilateral Development Assistance Program, Australia has contributed to major research projects concerning violence against women. They are the Family Health and Safety Study (see above) and a recent UNIFEM study, 'Drafting of CEDAW Legislative Indicators', conducted in Solomon Islands in October 2008. Each has developed recommendations covering various sectors to stop violence against women in Solomon Islands.

The Family Health and Safety Study has collected national data on the prevalence and types of violence against women and children. This information will provide a strong evidence base to inform future activities in Solomon Islands to respond to violence against women. Australia has provided financial support for the survey and has been an active member of the advisory group that has supported the conduct of the survey.

AusAID is also providing funding to support the dissemination of the research findings (\$100,000 in 2009-10). This funding will be used to conduct workshops in the nine provinces and Honiara on the findings and recommendations of both the ODE report and the Family Health and Safety Study on gender-based violence in Solomon Islands.

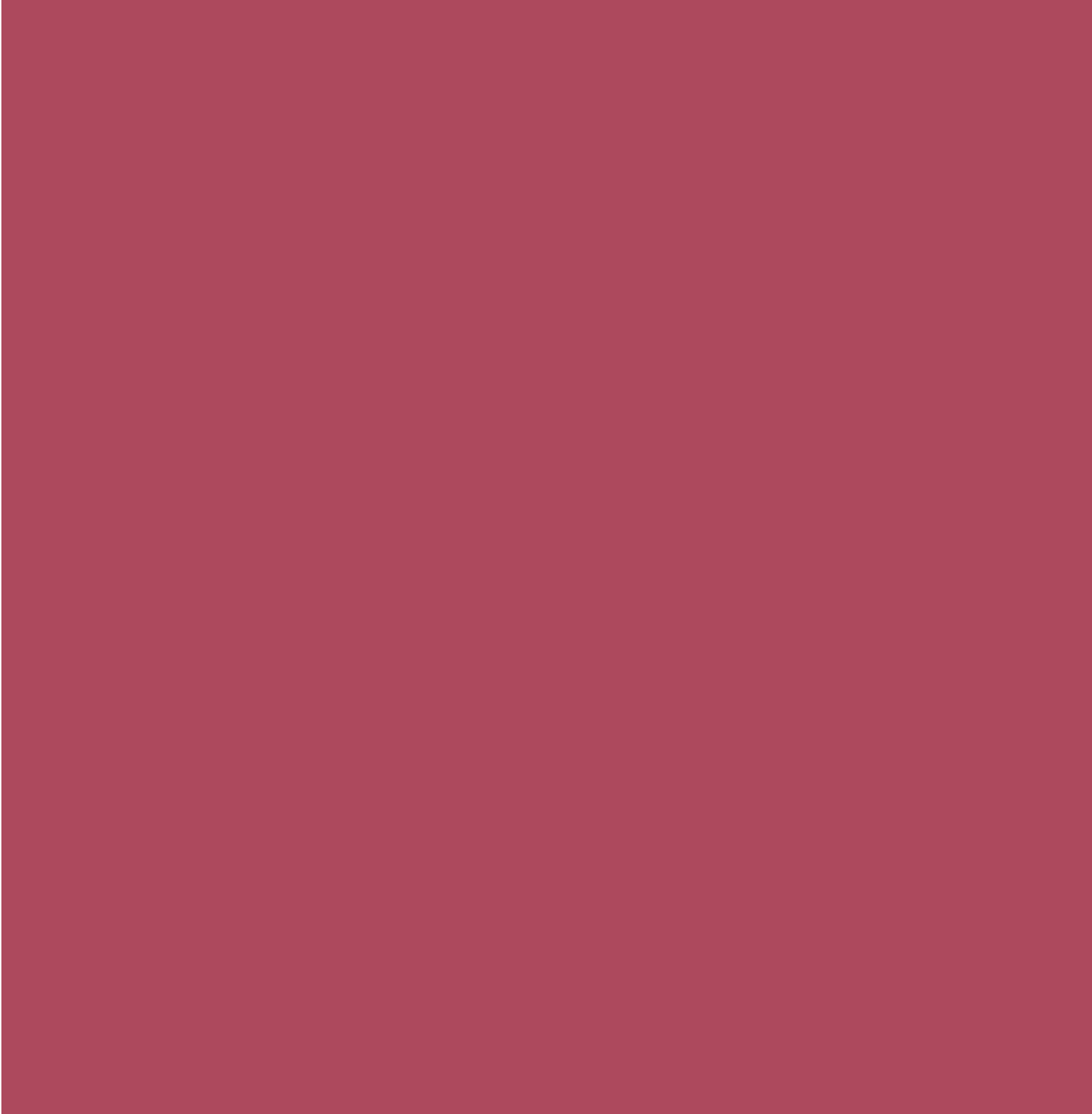
## Policy development

In line with the recommendations of the Family Health and Safety Study, AusAID's Community Sector Program will provide funding to the Ministry of Women, Youth and Children's Affairs to support the development of a national gender policy, and assist the ministry with accessing relevant technical assistance.

Linked to this broader gender policy, AusAID will also support the Ministry of Women, Youth and Children's Affairs to develop a National Policy and Plan of Action on Gender-based Violence under the guidance of the Prime Minister's Office (funding of \$50,000 in 2009-10). This policy will involve key ministries such as the Ministry of Health and Medical Services, the Ministry of Law and Justice, the Ministry of Police, and the Ministry of Education. It will draw on the findings and recommendations of both the ODE report and the Family Health and Safety Study.

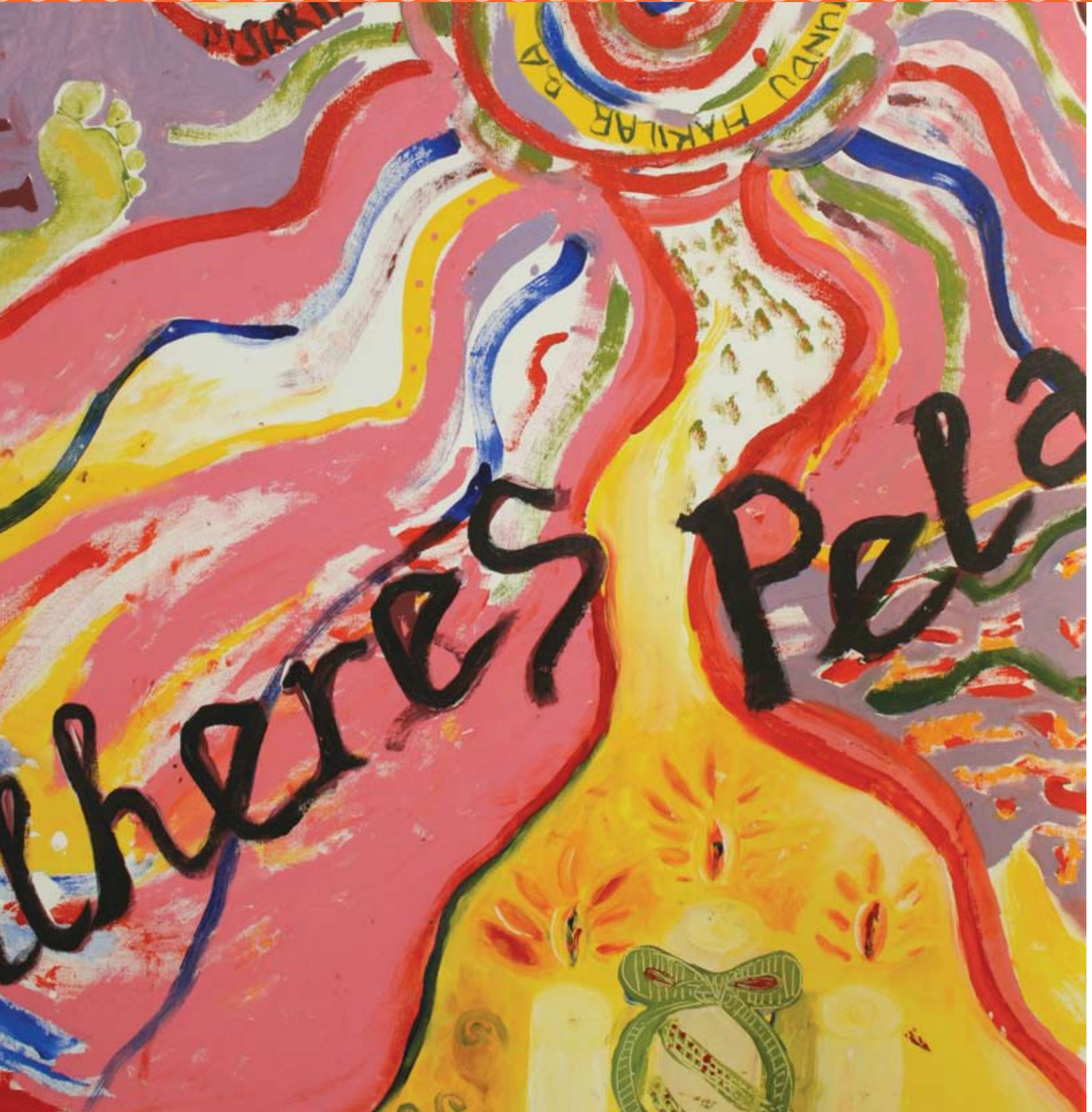
## Participation in coordination committees

AusAID has a representative on the Solomon Islands Support Committee. The committee is active in organising events to advocate for gender equality, women's rights, and the implementation of the findings of the Family Health and Safety Study. This has included the successful events organised for White Ribbon Day in November 2008 to raise awareness and encourage individuals to take action to end violence against women.





# Fiji country report





# Introduction

Fiji was one of five countries included in a study by AusAID's Office of Development Effectiveness (ODE) to assess the effectiveness of current approaches to addressing violence against women and identify promising practices. The report of the study—*Violence against Women in Melanesia and East Timor: Building on Global and Regional Promising Approaches*—was published in 2008.

The ODE report was released by the Hon Stephen Smith MP, Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, and the Hon Tanya Plibersek MP, Australian Minister for the Status of Women, on 25 November 2008 to coincide with White Ribbon Day, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

The Fiji country supplement to the report was launched in Suva on 3 December 2008 by Ms Judith Robinson, Australia's Minister Counsellor for Pacific Development.

The ODE study was undertaken using a participatory approach that focused on women's own experience of violence, and what does or does not help them in terms of protection and prevention. This included speaking with more than 120 people in Fiji, including interviews with 60 people and the participation of another 60 people in focus groups. The research was undertaken using international and local researchers. The local researchers in Fiji were Roshni Sami and Matelita Ragogo. The research was also supported by a local advisory group of prominent individuals.

The ODE report made a series of recommendations for Fiji and the region that are relevant to all organisations and individuals who are committed to preventing and responding to violence against women.

This paper sets out Australia's initial response to the recommendations for action to end violence against women in Fiji. The response is set in the wider context of emerging impacts of the global economic recession on vulnerable groups including women, children and people with disability. The political situation in Fiji also limits the value of considering some response options (for example, advocacy and legislative change). The response also seeks to minimise the proliferation of activities, to provide greater focus and to minimise demands on national organisations and the limited staff resources of AusAID's regional hub in Suva. Priority is given to activities that address violence against women by delivering key support services and promoting the economic empowerment of women.

AusAID recognises that ending violence against women requires action over the long term, and that the activities set out in this report are just the first stage in intensifying our efforts to address violence against women as part of the Australian international development assistance program.

# Principles and priorities



The ODE report identified a range of principles and priorities structured around a *framework for action* for addressing violence against women. AusAID will use this framework and a set of key principles to guide its contribution to ending violence against women in Fiji.

## Principles guiding Australia's contribution

The following principles will guide Australia's contribution to ending violence against women. AusAID will:

- > make a long-term commitment to ending violence against women
- > promote gender equality as a central principle of our work
- > work in partnership with key stakeholders and align with partner government priorities
- > adopt an integrated approach.

Further details are set out in the regional report.

## A framework for action

The framework for action sets out three main *strategies* for responding to violence against women:

- > ensuring women have access to justice
- > ensuring women have access to support services
- > preventing violence against women.

The framework for action can be used by all those working to end violence against women.

The box below sets out AusAID’s vision, its aim and the outcomes it will strive to achieve within the framework recommended by the ODE report.

<b>A framework for ending violence against women in Melanesia and East Timor</b>		
<b>Vision:</b> Women in Melanesia and East Timor are able to live free from violence and the fear of violence.		
<b>Aim:</b> To work in partnership—with national governments, civil society, international partners, and men and women—to increase efforts to reduce and respond to violence against women.		
<b>Outcome:</b> Women have access to justice	<b>Outcome:</b> Women have access to support services	<b>Outcome:</b> Violence against women is prevented

The structure of this report reflects the framework for action recommended in the ODE report, with sections on each of the three key strategies—ensuring women’s access to justice, ensuring women’s access to support services, and preventing violence against women—and on efforts to support an integrated approach.

# Women have access to justice

## Goals for all stakeholders in Fiji

To increase women's access to justice.

This will include:

- > passing and implementing laws and policies that discourage violence and impose consequences on offenders
- > providing women with the means to protect themselves and their children from violence
- > providing women with the information necessary to access their rights
- > ensuring women are treated humanely and fairly by justice system personnel.

## Situational analysis

The formal justice system in Fiji includes a number of promising mechanisms to respond to violence against women. The Fiji Police Force has a 'no drop' policy for domestic violence complaints. This policy is designed to ensure that complaints of domestic violence are investigated by police and proceed to court, and to remove possible pressure on women to drop complaints.

The Fiji Police Force's Sexual Offences Units operate to support victims of sexual assault; they have offices in Labasa, Lautoka and Suva. The welfare and employment services unit within the police force supports the welfare of police officers, including addressing the issue of domestic violence perpetrated by police.

The Fiji Government enacted the Family Law Act in 2003 with considerable input from non-government organisations (NGOs) and the Australia Fiji Law and Justice Program, which provided technical assistance and support enabling the implementation and enforcement of the Family Law Act in 2005. The Act is aligned to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and is based on a no-fault principle of divorce, and uses a compassionate counselling-based system. It also created a Family Division of the High Court, which prioritises children's needs and parental support.

A positive feature of the Act that is being used in domestic violence cases are the restraining/protection orders. Previously, under the Criminal Code, restraining orders were difficult to obtain and were impractical for women seeking protection from violent partners. The application process took several weeks and, even when a woman did receive a restraining order, the police could not detain the man for breaching the order. If an order was breached, it was only a magistrate who could make a decision on whether the perpetrator should be remanded or not.

Under the Family Law Act, restraining orders are easier to obtain and police now have the power to arrest and detain a man for breaching an order for up to 48 hours before he is brought before the magistrate. The magistrate then decides whether the man will be remanded further for breaching the order.

Before the 2006 coup, revised domestic violence legislation had been drafted, and consultations had taken place on reforming the Penal Code, including the possible strengthening of the sexual offence provisions. These reforms are currently on hold. However, the Employment Relations Bill, which includes some limited protections against sexual harassment, was promulgated in 2007 by the interim regime and put into force in April 2008.

NGOs play an active role in Fiji in supporting women's access to justice. The Fiji Women's Crisis Centre and the Regional Rights Resource Team provide training to police officers, judges, magistrates and prosecutors on violence against women. The Fiji Women's Rights Movement works to increase women's knowledge of laws and their rights.

Women in rural areas have difficulty accessing the formal justice system, which is largely urban based. As a result, rural women frequently rely on, or are coerced into, traditional justice systems that are overwhelmingly patriarchal and based on notions of reconciliation that provide few options and limited protection for victims of violence.

## **Fiji Government priorities and actions to support women's access to justice**

For women seeking information and assistance or reporting acts of violence, the Department of Women and the Department of Social Welfare make client referrals to relevant governmental agencies and NGOs. These departments track the progress of cases through further referrals and consultations with relevant agencies and institutions.

The Fiji Police Force continues to support survivors of sexual assault through its Sexual Offences Units by taking statements of survivors, transporting survivors to hospitals and health centres for medical checks and treatment, and making appropriate referrals to agencies for services such as counselling and emergency housing. The police also continue to abide by the 'no drop' policy, which allows investigations to continue once complaints of violence against women are lodged and cases are sent on to magistrates.

The Family Law Court is vested with jurisdiction under the 2003 Family Law Act in matters of family law and provides counselling, legal advice and redress for women and children survivors of violence.

Legal aid assistance is available for women who have experienced violence. This includes providing information on their legal rights and legal processes, including information on how to fill in relevant forms, especially for cases requiring court proceedings and representation.

The Legal Aid Commission provides training to women and men at the community level on the Family Law Act and other relevant issues. This assists in creating an understanding of the existing laws that address violence against women and the services provided by the Legal Aid Commission.



The Department of Women will continue to coordinate and facilitate awareness training with local communities targeting men and women, young men and young women, and law enforcement agencies. This training is designed to create awareness and understanding of gender-based violence and human rights issues and to provide information on procedures to follow when experiencing or encountering acts of violence.

### **Australian support for women's access to justice**

In view of the abrogation of Fiji's Constitution on 10 April 2009, legislative reforms and advocacy would have limited value. Pending broader political and legal developments in Fiji, Australia's support will focus on legal literacy and human rights-based training for community members. This will largely be through funding provided to civil society organisations that are already working in this area, such as the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, the Fiji Women's Rights Movement and the Regional Rights Resource Team. It also includes funding for training for government and non-government organisations through the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) Pacific Facility Fund.

# Women have access to support services



## Goals for all stakeholders in Fiji

To increase women's access to support services.

This will include providing assistance to:

- > increase women's access to psychological, medical and legal support
- > increase women's access to safe havens
- > increase support to organisations that provide support services to women.

## Situational analysis

The Fiji Women's Crisis Centre is the main institution providing psychological, human rights-based crisis counselling and practical support for women and children who have experienced violence in Fiji. The centre provides practical support and counselling to women and works with other agencies such as the police, courts, doctors and welfare agencies to ensure that women can access these services. The centre has its headquarters in Suva. It has branches in Ba, Labasa and Nadi, with plans for two more branches in Rakiraki and Savusavu.

Counselling services are also provided by Pacific Counselling and Social Services, emergency accommodation providers and faith-based organisations.

Support services are much more accessible for women living in Suva and other urban centres, where nearly half the population live. Women in rural areas in Fiji have greater difficulty in accessing support services.

For women wanting to escape violent situations, finding alternative accommodation often presents a significant obstacle. Crisis or emergency shelters, largely concentrated in urban centres in Fiji, are owned or administered by NGOs or faith-based organisations. There is a growing need for more crisis accommodation and this accommodation needs to be inclusive of the needs of women and girls with disabilities.

In rural, village or settlement areas, often the only option is for the survivors to stay at the home of a religious or community leader. In some cases the survivors have to move out of the area altogether.

## Fiji Government priorities and actions to support women's access to support services

The Department of Social Welfare is the lead government agency for the administration of welfare payments to women who have experienced violence and to their children. It provides referrals for counselling, emergency accommodation facilities and assistance in pursuing cases for maintenance payment awards.

The Ministry of Women, Social Welfare and Poverty Alleviation administers a boys centre and the Mahaffy Girls Home. Both facilities provide residential care for children between the ages of 10 to 17 years who are in need of care and protection as defined under the Juvenile Act. This includes care for children who have been subjected to violence.

## Australian support for women's access to support services

### Support services

Enhancing women's access to support services in Fiji and improving the quality and delivery of services are key recommendations of the ODE report. This will be a major area of focus for Australia in the support that it provides to collective efforts to end violence against women in Fiji.

Continuing support for the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre is a cornerstone of Australia's strategy for providing support services to survivors, given its role as a leader in advocacy for women's rights and its strengths in delivering practical services (such as counselling, training and mentoring other groups throughout Fiji and the Pacific region).

Australia has provided financial support to the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre since 1989. Under the most recent funding agreement, AusAID provided \$4.87 million over five years (2004-05 to 2008-09) as core funding to support the centre's work. AusAID is currently negotiating a multiyear funding arrangement, for commencement from July 2009, for continued support to the centre.

Australia also provides core and/or project support to other agencies in their efforts to address violence against women. This support will be guided by Australia's priority in funding activities that provide key support services to women and contribute to economic empowerment to mitigate the emerging impacts of the global economic recession and the existing economic challenges in Fiji following the 2006 coup and the resulting political uncertainty.

Agencies receiving AusAID funding include:

- > Pacific Counselling and Social Services—financial assistance is provided as core support towards establishing an infrastructure of professional counselling and social services throughout Fiji, including counselling and related support services for victims of gender-based violence. By providing counselling through the major hospitals in Fiji (Nadi, Lautoka, Suva and Labasa), the agency also has opportunities to address cases of suspected domestic violence referred to it by hospital staff
- > Regional Rights Resource Team—to support human rights training, technical support, and policy and advocacy services tailored specifically for the Pacific region including Fiji
- > Fiji Women's Rights Movement—to support advocacy, training and awareness-raising on women's human rights issues including violence against women, sexual harassment and other forms of discrimination against women

Continuing support for the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre is a cornerstone of Australia's strategy for providing support services to survivors, given its role as a leader in advocacy for women's rights and its strengths in delivering practical services.



In Fiji, counselling has proved effective. Fiji Women's Crisis Centre counsellor Shobna Devi, right, and project officer Wilma Eileen demonstrate a typical counselling scenario. Photo: AusAID

- > Foundation for Rural Integrated Enterprises 'N' Development (FRIEND)—to administer community programs for unemployed and rural women by creating income-generation programs in handicrafts and food production. FRIEND is particularly focused on poverty alleviation and creating gender equity in rural and underserved communities in Fiji
- > Salvation Army—financial assistance is provided for the Salvation Army–operated Suva, Lautoka and Labasa family care centres, which also provide shelter for domestic violence victims and their children.

AusAID provided a grant of \$400,000 to the UNIFEM Pacific Facility Fund in 2008-09 for activities in Fiji. These funds will be used to provide grants to civil society organisations and government agencies to enable them to finance key projects and actions for the elimination of violence against women in communities. AusAID will also consider providing additional funding to the UNIFEM Pacific Facility Fund in future years to support the ongoing provision of grants to civil society organisations in Fiji.

There has been no comprehensive study on crisis accommodation services provided to women and girls in Fiji. To guide Australia's future funding in this critical area, current standards of accommodation facilities need to be examined and those working in these facilities need to be trained to ensure they have a sound understanding of the issue of violence against women and operate using a rights-based approach. AusAID, through the services of local researchers and expertise, is currently conducting an assessment of standards of care in crisis accommodation for survivors of gender-based violence in Fiji. The research report will, in addition to reviewing current accommodation services, provide recommendations for effective strategies to improve the accessibility and quality of such services.

## Health sector

Although survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault receive medico-legal services at hospitals, the Ministry of Health does not currently have a policy on violence against women. Because violence against women is a significant cause of injury and ill health among women, increasing access to health services for survivors of violence will be a priority for AusAID. Integrating attention to violence against women into health services requires establishing policies and protocols that encourage health providers to identify support and referrals for women and girls experiencing violence, as well as training and follow-up to ensure programs are implemented effectively.

AusAID, in consultation with the health sector, will fund activities that:

- > provide training on issues relating to violence against women within the Fiji School of Nursing and Fiji School of Medicine curricula. This support will also be provided to any new health professional education and training institutions that are set up
- > support the development of policies and protocols for the handling of sexual offences cases in the health system
- > develop data collection systems in order to ensure that, as much as possible, information on all victims and survivors accessing health services is recorded
- > enable antenatal clinics to support pregnant women who are living in violent situations.

# Violence against women is prevented

## Goals for all stakeholders in Fiji

To prevent violence against women.

This will include:

- > raising awareness through coordinated efforts at all levels
- > changing community attitudes about violence
- > increasing women's status in society.

## Situational analysis

There are a range of innovative programs run predominantly by civil society in Fiji that aim to prevent violence against women, including through changing community attitudes towards violence. These programs actively seek to engage a broad range of stakeholders in preventing violence against women, and include activities that engage men, young people and churches.

Activities include public awareness campaigns, educational activities, use of the media, and use of theatre and workshops to raise awareness of the issue of violence against women and to change attitudes and behaviour.

Organisations that are active in working to prevent violence against women in Fiji include the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, the Fiji Women's Rights Movement, femLINKpacific, Women's Action for Change, the Regional Rights Resource Team, the Foundation of the Peoples of the South Pacific International and the Weavers Program.

The Fiji Women's Crisis Centre works to address all forms of violence against women, including rape, assault, sexual harassment, and abuse of children. It is involved in public advocacy and community education on gender-based violence. The centre started the Male Advocates Programme in 2002, to engage men as allies in challenging violence against women, and to encourage men to take responsibility for the issue of violence against women.

The centre also provides technical support for other organisations working in the Pacific region, such as the Vanuatu Women's Centre. It is also the secretariat for the Pacific Women's Network Against Violence Against Women, which meets every four years and carries out regional training workshops for network members, including both civil society organisations and government departments that deal with violence against women.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The fifth meeting of the Pacific Women's Network Against Violence Against Women was held in Fiji in June 2009. The meeting was facilitated by the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre. Resolutions from the meeting are available at [www.fijiwomen.com/images/regionalmeeting.pdf](http://www.fijiwomen.com/images/regionalmeeting.pdf).

Support is provided through ongoing in-country support visits and the regional training and attachment program, as well as through regular liaison via email and telephone.

The Fiji Women's Rights Movement provides a free legal information and referral service for women in Suva. It delivers feminist training to groups and organisations, including developing school- and institution-based education and awareness-raising programs. The agency has also played a significant role in advocating for other key legislative reforms, including the Family Law Act, and in advocating and providing draft legislation for sexual harassment to be included in the Employment Relations Bill.

FemLINKpacific is a regional feminist media organisation that focuses on women's role in preventing, reconciling and avoiding conflict. It also works with women who are victims of violence and gives them an opportunity to talk about their experiences and their needs. These women are also referred to other relevant organisations for counselling.

Women's Action for Change provides community-based dramas and workshops on a diverse range of issues, including child sexual abuse, women's reproductive health, and violence against women.

The Regional Rights Resource Team provides training, advocacy and resourcing on human rights issues relating to violence against women to the police, the judiciary and community-based organisations in Fiji and the Pacific region.

The Foundation of the Peoples of the South Pacific International operates an intervention program known as 'Stepping Stones'. Originally designed to address HIV prevention and gender relations, it targets communities and engages women, men and youth in a series of weekly workshops. The foundation also runs programs that engage men and boys as partners in eliminating violence against women.

The Weavers Program, part of the South Pacific Association of Theological Schools, advocates for women's issues in theological education. Weavers has focused on domestic violence against women as part of its core program, designing a curriculum for working with theological schools and faith-based organisations on violence against women in the South Pacific. The course, based on four years of consultations with member schools of the association, includes a series of readings on violence against women as a human rights violation and social problem, and also calls for reflection on and action against violence against women within Christian communities and churches of the Pacific.

Other organisations working in Fiji to address gender equality also indirectly address the issue of violence against women, including the National Council of Women Fiji and the Soqosoqo Vakamarama.

## **Fiji Government priorities and actions to prevent violence against women**

The Ministry of Women, in partnership with key stakeholders, has piloted the establishment of a violence-free community in Fiji. The project was launched on 25 November 2008 at the beginning of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence at Koroipita Village, Lautoka.

The goal of the pilot violence-free and zero-tolerance community is to empower women, men and children through human rights education using media campaigns and community training. An awareness program on relevant acts that violate the basic human rights of people, especially women, forms part of the campaign. It is envisaged that this will contribute to changing attitudes and behaviours of the community and stakeholders in



order to promote and protect human rights. Furthermore, it will enhance stakeholder knowledge of human rights and violence against women and promote recognition of the fact that violence against women is a crime.

Four other districts—Rakiraki, Tavua, Nadi and Sigatoka—have been identified to participate in the project. These communities were selected after extensive consultations with the Fiji Police Force regarding statistics on violence against women in the community and other relevant issues. The project will be undertaken only upon the approval of the identified communities. It is intended that the program will continue throughout 2009 and will be replicated in other districts in Fiji.

The Department of Women and the Department of Social Welfare are members of the Family Life Education Committee, which reviews and refines curriculum and resource materials for family life education in schools. One of the policy objectives of the committee is to raise awareness about gender-based violence and its consequences with a view to its complete elimination from society.

The school curriculum will be the entry point for raising awareness and eliminating violence against women and children among boys and girls in primary and secondary school. However, there is a need to lobby for the family life education program to become part of the compulsory social science curriculum in schools.

## Australian support for preventing violence against women

### Working with civil society

#### Support for civil society

A specific recommendation of the ODE report was the continuation of AusAID's support to the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre. As mentioned above, support for the centre will continue to be the cornerstone of AusAID's strategy for working with civil society to respond to and prevent violence against women in Fiji.

This approach does not rule out Australia's support for other organisations that provide awareness-raising and training programs on violence against women; indeed, AusAID does provide support to several such organisations as discussed above. However, ongoing funding for these organisations will be guided by Australia's priorities in funding activities that provide key services to women and contribute to economic empowerment to mitigate the emerging impacts of the global economic recession and the political situation in Fiji.

As noted earlier, AusAID is contributing to the UNIFEM Pacific Facility Fund. This funding will enable grants to support the work of civil society organisations in Fiji, including for community education and awareness-raising on the issue of violence against women, and activities directed at preventing violence against women.

#### Working with men and boys

AusAID partnered with the United Nations Development Programme Pacific Centre in supporting a Pacific and East Timorese delegation to attend the 'Global Symposium on Engaging Men and Boys to Achieve Gender Equality', held in March 2009. The delegation included representatives from Fiji.



Tura Lewai, a youth representative from Fiji, presents a Pacific perspective to the 'Global Symposium on Engaging Men and Boys to Achieve Gender Equality'. Photo: UNDP Pacific Centre

AusAID will provide funding in 2009-10 to the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre for the development of a handbook on working with men as advocates for the elimination of violence against women in the Pacific. The handbook will provide guidelines on best practices for working with men to advocate for gender equality and the elimination of violence, including outlining a training program for men who will become gender equality advocates. This will build on existing work by the centre, which started the Male Advocates Programme in 2002.

AusAID supports Pacific Counselling and Social Services, which provides a counselling service to men (both prisoners and offenders who have not been incarcerated) in areas that include personal responsibility, anger management and respect for human rights, especially of women.

### **Working with faith-based organisations**

AusAID is a Principal Partner to the International Women's Development Agency initiative 'Asia Pacific Breakthrough: The Women, Faith and Development Summit to End Global Poverty', to be held in December 2009. The summit will bring together faith-based, women's and development organisations from across Asia and the Pacific to discuss opportunities to work together to advance gender equality, including to end violence against women.

### **Prevention activities through the education sector**

Although women's rights organisations in Fiji have extensive experience in public awareness and advocacy campaigns, it is felt that a more effective and systematic way to conduct prevention work could be through primary and secondary schools. Australia—subject to a feasibility assessment and discussion with Ministry of Education officials, and consistent with our education priorities—may support activities that develop curricula and educational materials on violence against women and girls for use in schools. These activities would be implemented in partnership with Fiji's Ministry of Education and the Department of Women.

### **Supporting women as peacemakers**

AusAID is partnering with femLINKpacific to support the Regional Women's Community Media Network on Women, Peace and Security (\$235,000 in 2008-09). The network raises awareness and supports the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325<sup>2</sup> on women, peace and security through regional media initiatives including publications, a website and radio campaigns. This work also supports the institutional strengthening and improves the media skills of a regional network of partner organisations in Fiji, Bougainville, Solomon Islands and Tonga.

AusAID also supports the International Women's Development Agency 'Peace Talks' initiative (\$85,000 in 2008-09), which aims to raise awareness on implementing Resolution 1325 by training civil society organisations from Solomon Islands, Tonga, Bougainville and Fiji. The International Women's Development Agency supports training for a core group of regional women's organisations to engage with regional policymakers during the annual Forum Regional Security Committee meeting of the Pacific Islands Forum. In addition, it manages a regional secretariat that shares women's perspectives and experiences of conflict and peace-building; facilitates collaboration among stakeholders in implementing

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2 UN Security Council Resolution 1325 was adopted in 2000. It is the key international framework that addresses the links between the protection of women from violence and the promotion of women's participation and leadership in peacebuilding and reconstruction efforts.

Resolution 1325; and supports women's participation in regional forums on peace and security.

AusAID is commissioning research on the impact and challenges of implementing Resolution 1325 in partner countries. This research will focus on the four interrelated areas of Resolution 1325: increasing participation of women in decision-making and peace processes; ensuring gender perspectives and training in peacekeeping and security; protecting women and girls from violence; and gender mainstreaming in all peace and security concerns. The research will focus on two in-depth case studies of Fiji and East Timor to highlight best practices, provide transferable lessons and make practical recommendations on how AusAID can measure, evaluate and advance the participation of women in peace and security issues.

### **Promoting the rights of women with disability**

AusAID, through the Pacific Public Sector Linkages Program, is supporting the Australian Human Rights Commission to partner with the Pacific Disability Forum to progress disability issues in the Pacific by delivering training in nine countries in the Pacific. The training courses are scheduled to be held between August 2009 and July 2010. In Fiji the training will bring together members of the Fiji Disabled Peoples Association and government representatives to build their capacity and knowledge of disability rights in order to progress disability issues, including the rights of women with disability.

### **Gender equality and empowering women**

The ODE report noted that efforts to reduce violence against women are intrinsically linked to women's political, social and economic empowerment. The report recommended that Australia ensure all its interventions focus on promoting greater equality between men and women.

Gender equality is a guiding principle of Australia's international development assistance program. The Australian Government is committed to ensuring that the needs, priorities and interests of women, as well as men, are considered in all development activities and at every stage of the development process.

### **Women's leadership and decision making**

AusAID provides core support for the National Council of Women Fiji and Soqosoqo Vakamarama.

The National Council of Women Fiji promotes the interests of women, in particular those of women with disability, the girl child and marginalised women. It advocates on behalf of women and children to ensure development efforts produce sustainable improvements to the quality of life for all Fiji citizens. It operates a child care centre and is one of the 14 partners in the Fiji National Incentive for Civic Education project.

Soqosoqo Vakamarama works with indigenous Fijian women to enhance their status, strengthen their tradition, culture and heritage and improve the standard of living in villages and rural communities. It also works with civic education programs targeting Fijian women.

AusAID is providing \$6.2 million over five years for the Gender Equality in Political Governance Program, in partnership with UNIFEM. The program focuses on supporting women standing for elections in the Pacific and including gender in governance programs in the Pacific. It will also undertake research and develop generic information, resources and learning materials to promote women's leadership.

### **Women's economic empowerment**

Australia provides assistance for the Foundation for Rural Integrated Enterprises 'N' Development (FRIEND) (FJD 840,000 over three years from 2008-09) to work with rural communities, assisting them toward economic and social advancement. FRIEND has a number of income-generating projects that draw on local resources and traditional skills, for example in handicrafts and food production.

# An integrated approach

## Goals for all stakeholders in Fiji

To deliver a coordinated and comprehensive response to violence against women, including among government and non-government actors, at the national and local levels.

This will include:

- > developing and implementing plans of action for preventing violence against women at national, provincial, municipal and community levels
- > supporting interagency taskforces on violence against women (for example, within the context of the reporting on progress required by Fiji as a signatory to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women)
- > conducting national coordinated campaigns and awareness-raising activities
- > collaborating on training and capacity building of local stakeholders across all sectors.

## Situational analysis

Historically, there has been strong collaboration between civil society organisations and government agencies on addressing violence against women in Fiji.

The Fiji Government established an Inter-Agency Taskforce on Violence against Women in 1998 in order to follow up on Fiji's commitments with respect to the Beijing Platform for Action and the Fiji National Women's Plan of Action (1998–2008). This taskforce, chaired by the Chief Executive Officer (or Permanent Secretary) of the Ministry of Justice facilitated the participation of both government and non-government actors in the identification of priority actions to be implemented and the organisations responsible for implementing them; and development of mechanisms for implementing, monitoring and evaluating priority actions.

The taskforce, together with other taskforces, was discontinued in 2005 as the Fiji Government had identified mechanisms other than taskforces for addressing violence against women and other issues. Prior to its discontinuation, the taskforce had achieved several milestones, including the draft domestic violence legislation which was completed in 2005. The taskforce was reconvened by the Department of Women in 2008.

In 2008, Fiji was selected as one of the 10 pilot countries for a UN Joint Programming Initiative on Violence against Women.<sup>3</sup> This marks the first time the Fiji Government, NGOs, various UN agencies and donors will work together in a coordinated way as part of a Joint Program on addressing violence against women.

The first major step in the initiative was to organise a national multi-stakeholder workshop, held in July 2008, to address violence against women and to develop a draft framework for the program. The *Assessment of the State of Violence Against Women in Fiji* formed the core document of the meeting. This assessment was prepared by the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre at the request of the United Nations Population Fund. Based on this assessment, four forms of violence against women were identified as the most prevalent in Fiji: domestic violence; sexual violence, including rape; sexual harassment; and commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking.

The Fiji Multi-stakeholder Joint Committee on Violence against Women was subsequently formed to facilitate the development, funding, implementation and monitoring of a multi-stakeholder program approach to the problem of violence against women.

In Labasa and Ba, the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre branches have set up Interagency Committees to assist them, as well as other stakeholders, in the smooth handling of cases of violence against women and children. The interagency committees include key stakeholders such as the Fiji Police Force, the Department of Social Welfare, hospital staff, the Director of Public Prosecutions office, the Legal Aid Commission and NGOs such as the Salvation Army.

The committees meet on a monthly basis and are a forum for open discussion about the different areas of work on violence against women and the various problems that each agency is facing. They also allow for easier liaison when dealing with individual cases.

In Labasa, members of the Interagency Committee have joined together for campaign activities on violence against women.

## **Fiji Government priorities and actions to ensure an integrated approach**

The Fiji Government ratified the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1995.

Priority actions that have been identified by the Ministry of Women, Social Welfare and Poverty Alleviation for 2009 include:

- > reviewing and strengthening membership of the Inter-Agency Taskforce on Violence against Women and continuing taskforce meetings
- > conducting violence against women awareness training in partnership with taskforce members
- > conducting CEDAW awareness and human rights training for the community and service providers
- > developing a service protocol on violence against women for service providers.

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<sup>3</sup> This was a direct follow-up to the UN Secretary General's in-depth study on all forms of violence against women, *Ending violence against women: From words to actions. Study of the Secretary-General*, and the UN General Assembly resolution *Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women* (A/RES/61/143, of 19 December 2006).



The service protocol for assessing and appropriately handling victims—including procedures for case management and referrals to other government agencies—will be developed by the Department of Women in conjunction with relevant stakeholders including the Ministry of Health, the Department of Social Welfare, the Fiji Police Force, the Ministry of Education, National Heritage, Arts and Culture and Youth and Sports, and NGOs. It will provide better coordination of activities among government agencies and NGOs on issues relating to violence against women and support for women who have experienced violence.

## Australian support for an integrated approach

Australia will continue to play a key role in supporting harmonisation of efforts of all agencies involved in addressing violence against women in Fiji. As a member of the Fiji Multi-stakeholder Joint Committee on Violence against Women, Australia in collaboration with other donors and stakeholders will facilitate the development, funding, implementation and monitoring of a multi-stakeholder program approach to eliminating violence against women.

AusAID is committed to continuing support for the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, which makes an important contribution to multisectoral coordination in Fiji and across the Pacific. The centre is the secretariat for the Pacific Women's Network Against Violence Against Women. It plays a critical role in galvanising public opinion and action on violence against women, not only in Fiji but throughout the region through its training and mentoring programs. As discussed above, the centre has also set up interagency committees in Fiji to facilitate a multisectoral approach to ending violence against women.

AusAID is a contributor to the UNIFEM Pacific Facility Fund in Support of Organisations and Actions to End Violence Against Women. The fund was established to support government and civil society organisations working to end violence against women in the Pacific. Staff from AusAID's regional hub in Suva will be part of a Donor Steering Committee to oversee its operation. The committee will meet on a regular basis to receive feedback on the operation of the fund and to provide guidance on the fund's administration. By drawing on the expertise and knowledge of donors, UN agencies and regional NGOs, the fund will contribute to increased coordination as well as sharing of knowledge and good practice across the region.



The fifth meeting of the Pacific Women's Network Against Violence Against Women was held in Fiji in June 2009.



# Vanuatu country report





# Introduction



Vanuatu was one of five countries included in a study by AusAID's Office of Development Effectiveness (ODE) to assess the effectiveness of current approaches to addressing violence against women and identify promising practices. The report of the study—*Violence Against Women in Melanesia and East Timor: Building on Global and Regional Promising Approaches*—was published in 2008.

The ODE report was released by the Hon Stephen Smith MP, Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, and the Hon Tanya Plibersek MP, Australian Minister for the Status of Women, on 25 November 2008 to coincide with White Ribbon Day, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

The Vanuatu country supplement to the ODE report was launched in Port Vila on 1 December 2008 by Mr John Pilbeam, Australian High Commissioner to Vanuatu.

The ODE study used a participatory approach focused on women's own experience of violence, and on what does or does not help them in terms of protection and prevention. The research team spoke with 140 people in Vanuatu, including 43 people who were interviewed and another 97 people who participated in focus groups. The research was undertaken using international and local researchers. The local researchers in Vanuatu were Emily Niras and Naomi Bolenga. The research was also supported by a local advisory group of prominent individuals.

The ODE report made a series of recommendations for Vanuatu and the region that are relevant to all organisations and individuals who are committed to preventing and responding to violence against women.

This paper sets out Australia's initial response to the recommendations for action to end violence against women in Vanuatu. AusAID recognises that ending violence against women requires action over the long term, and that the activities set out in this report are just the first stage in intensifying our efforts to address violence against women as part of the Australian international development assistance program.



Mrs Hanson Matas Kelekele, Vanuatu's First Lady, speaking at the opening of the Vanuatu Women's Centre's National Conference on Violence against Women and launch of the ODE report. Photo: Vanuatu Women's Centre

# Principles and priorities

The ODE report identified a range of principles and priorities structured around a *framework for action* for addressing violence against women. AusAID will use this framework and a set of key principles to guide its contribution to ending violence against women in Vanuatu.

## Principles guiding Australia's contribution

The following principles will guide Australia's contribution to ending violence against women. AusAID will:

- > make a long-term commitment to ending violence against women
- > promote gender equality as a central principle of our work
- > work in partnership with key stakeholders and align with partner government priorities
- > adopt an integrated approach.

Further details are set out in the regional report.

## A framework for action

The framework for action sets out three main *strategies* for responding to violence against women:

- > ensuring women have access to justice
- > ensuring women have access to support services
- > preventing violence against women.

The framework for action can be used by all those working to end violence against women.

The box below sets out AusAID’s vision, its aim and the outcomes it will strive to achieve within the framework recommended by the ODE report.

<b>A framework for ending violence against women in Melanesia and East Timor</b>		
<b>Vision:</b> Women in Melanesia and East Timor are able to live free from violence and the fear of violence.		
<b>Aim:</b> To work in partnership—with national governments, civil society, international partners, and men and women—to increase efforts to reduce and respond to violence against women.		
<b>Outcome:</b> Women have access to justice	<b>Outcome:</b> Women have access to support services	<b>Outcome:</b> Violence against women is prevented

The structure of this report reflects the framework for action recommended in the ODE report, with sections on each of the three key strategies—ensuring women’s access to justice, ensuring women’s access to support services, and preventing violence against women—and on efforts to support an integrated approach.



# Women have access to justice

## Goals for all stakeholders in Vanuatu

To increase women's access to justice.

This will include:

- > passing and implementing laws and policies that discourage violence and impose consequences on offenders
- > providing women with the means to protect themselves and their children from violence
- > providing women with the information necessary to access their rights
- > ensuring women are treated humanely and fairly by justice system personnel.

## Situational analysis

Improving the response of the justice system to violence against women is a priority and an area of significant reform in Vanuatu.

In general, addressing the problem of violence against women had not been a high priority in the past, as evidenced by the 11-year delay in passing the highly contentious Family Protection Bill through the Vanuatu Parliament. The Department of Women's Affairs, supported by women's organisations, lobbied the government to table the Bill in Parliament. In 1999, a violence against women taskforce was established to manage the public consultations on the Bill. Chiefs and politicians were particularly opposed to the legislation. After 11 years of public debate, the Bill was eventually passed by Parliament on 19 June 2008. The Vanuatu Christian Council launched an appeal against the Bill as having unconstitutional content; the Supreme Court, however, ruled that the Bill was in compliance with the Constitution. The Bill was signed by the President of Vanuatu on 23 December 2008 and was gazetted by the State Law Office on 2 March 2009.

The Family Protection Act (FPA) has significantly improved legal protections for women who have experienced violence. It creates a specific domestic violence offence and confers obligations on the police to intervene if violence is suspected. Enforceable Family Protection Orders can be made by courts to constrain the behaviour of perpetrators for up to two years. Protection orders can be made on the basis that acts of domestic violence have been, or are likely to be, committed. Further, the FPA excludes the payment of bride price as grounds for defence in domestic violence cases.

Women in rural areas generally have difficulty accessing the formal justice system, due to distance and cost, and often rely on *kastom* law. Traditional courts are empowered to hear cases relating to domestic violence but are not supposed to deal with cases of sexual assault. The FPA aims to increase the accessibility of protection orders for women in remote

areas by allowing people other than a complainant to apply for a protection order orally or by telephone, and by permitting authorised community members to issue temporary protection orders to protect complainants for up to 28 days.

The Vanuatu Police Force does not currently have formal protocols in place to respond to violence against women. There is a need for formal procedures and ongoing training for police to support them in responding to violence against women.

Vanuatu is one of six countries that will be participating in the project Changing Laws, Protecting Women. The project is being carried out by the Pacific Regional Rights Resource Team with funding under the 2008 grants round of the UN Trust Fund in Support of Actions to End Violence against Women (the Global Trust Fund). Through this project, the Regional Rights Resource Team will work with the Government of Vanuatu to advance legislation to combat gender violence.<sup>1</sup>

## Government of Vanuatu priorities and actions to support women's access to justice

The Family Protection Act represents an important legislative reform for addressing violence against women, providing a specific basis for legal action for survivors of violence.

The Department of Women's Affairs is playing a key role in implementing the legislation. One objective of the Department of Women's Affairs' draft implementation strategy for the FPA is to provide a safe environment for women and increase women's access to justice. Activities proposed in the draft strategy to achieve this include improving advocacy on gender equality under the law; increasing access to legal solutions to family problems; holding workshops on gender issues with key justice system personnel; and using positive traditional justice processes.

## Australian support for women's access to justice

Australia is committed to supporting Vanuatu's law and justice sector, and is providing long-term financial assistance in this area. The aim of this support is to contribute to stability and security in Vanuatu by strengthening the legal system and thereby supporting the rule of law and public confidence in the legal system of Vanuatu. A key part of this is ensuring that women have access to justice.

Australia is committed to supporting Vanuatu's law and justice sector, and is providing long-term financial assistance in this area.

## The legal sector and improving access to justice

Australia provides support to the Vanuatu Women's Centre (\$3.7 million over five years from 2007-08). The centre's work includes providing:

- > legal assistance to survivors of domestic violence, psychological and sexual abuse
- > legal representation, and support to obtain protection orders
- > funding to assist poor women in remote areas to travel to attend court hearings
- > support for the volunteer Committees Against Violence Against Women to assist survivors of gender-based violence and increase awareness of human rights in remote communities.

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<sup>1</sup> The Regional Rights Resource Team is a Fiji-based human rights organisation. It works with state and non-state organisations in the region to build capacity on human rights and gender equality.

The centre also continues to advocate on a national level for adherence to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, to which Vanuatu is a signatory.

New Zealand's International Aid and Development Agency, NZAID, also provides financial support to the Vanuatu Women's Centre. Donor support from AusAID and NZAID is well harmonised, with both agencies sitting on the Program Coordinating Committee for the centre.

## Support to the Vanuatu Police Force

Under the Vanuatu Police Force Capacity Building Project (\$28 million over five years from 2005-06), the Australian Federal Police works closely with the Vanuatu Police Force to enhance community safety, crime prevention and victim support. The project works in coordination with the New Zealand police initiative, which has a domestic violence focus.

Activities conducted through the project include:

- > developing a training session for senior management in the Vanuatu Police Force outlining the obligations of police under the new family protection legislation. It is hoped that this training will be extended to police officers around the country
- > assisting with training of recruits, which includes a module on violence and family and domestic issues. Obligations arising out of the FPA will be incorporated into this training material
- > developing pamphlets to raise awareness regarding the rights of men and women under the FPA for planned distribution in town centres and rural areas
- > implementing a national crime-reporting database. The database will improve statistics of reported domestic violence incidents, which will help monitor the implementation of the FPA on the ground.

## Training for mediators

AusAID's Vanuatu Legal Sector Strengthening Program (\$10 million over five years from 2005-06) aims to improve access to justice in Vanuatu. The project is currently working with the Vanuatu campus of the University of the South Pacific to develop a training course for mediators that will meet the accreditation requirements of the FPA. Increasing the number of accredited mediators will improve coverage of services available to women in rural areas under the FPA.

# Women have access to support services



## Goals for all stakeholders in Vanuatu

To increase women's access to support services.

This will include:

- > increasing women's access to psychological, medical and legal support
- > increasing women's access to safe havens
- > increasing support to organisations that provide support services to women.

## Situational analysis

In Vanuatu, the main support service for women who have experienced violence is the Vanuatu Women's Centre. The centre is located in Port Vila, with branches in regional centres. It provides legal support, counselling and temporary shelter for women who have been abused. The centre also supports women in rural areas through the volunteer Committees Against Violence Against Women and outreach programs. Ongoing core support for the Vanuatu Women's Centre, provided by Australia and New Zealand, has enabled the organisation to fill gaps in government service provision by expanding its assistance to isolated rural communities.

The health sector in Vanuatu does not currently have formal systems in place to respond to violence against women. There is a need for protocols and training for health service providers to identify and respond to violence against women. There is also a need to increase access to health services for women in rural areas.

## Government of Vanuatu priorities and actions to support women's access to support services

The Department of Women's Affairs' draft implementation strategy for the Family Protection Act includes plans to improve support services for survivors of violence including counselling and mediation, medical support and safe haven accommodation. It seeks to increase the levels of support currently provided by government and non-government actors through institutional and management strengthening of key agencies, increasing the capacity of service providers and effectively monitoring services.

In practice, the Government of Vanuatu will be severely limited in its ability to provide services to survivors due to a lack of resources. Australia's ongoing support, particularly for the non-government sector (including the Vanuatu Women's Centre), will be critical to the successful implementation of the FPA.



Members of the Penama Committee Against Violence Against Women and AusAID's Adviser on Ending Violence Against Women discuss plans for community awareness raising at the Vanuatu Women's Centre's National Conference on Violence against Women. Photo: Vanuatu Women's Centre

## Australian support for women's access to support services

### Support services

Australian support for the Vanuatu Women's Centre includes funding for counselling and support services to survivors of gender-based violence. Services are provided in town centres, and through mobile counselling, the Committees Against Violence Against Women and 24-hour phone counselling in more remote areas. Phone counselling has been made more accessible for rural women due to the expansion of mobile telephony services to remote areas, facilitated by AusAID's Governance for Growth program in 2008. Australian support has also helped to widen the geographic coverage of the Committees Against Violence Against Women.

Australia will investigate the possibility of including a module on domestic violence in the Australia Pacific Technical College's planned Diploma in Social Work, which may begin later in 2009.

AusAID has provided funding to the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) Pacific Facility Fund in Support of Organisations and Actions to End Violence Against Women to support capacity building for staff from civil society organisations, including from Vanuatu. This funding (\$200,000 in 2008-09) will enable staff to participate in training and exchanges in 2009 and 2010. This will include participation in formal training programs conducted by key regional agencies such as the Regional Rights Resource Team and the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre. Training will cover practical skills such as counselling, data collection and administration. It will also increase service providers' knowledge of international human rights law and theoretical issues associated with violence against women. This support will assist in improving the quality of services provided to women who have been subjected to violence.

### Health services

Australia has initiated policy dialogue with the Ministry of Health in order to identify opportunities to increase access to services and improve the capacity of service providers to respond to incidents of violence against women.

Australian funding of the Village Health Worker Program (\$1.9 million over four years from 2007-08), implemented by Save the Children Australia (in partnership with the Ministry of Health), supports the aims of the Family Protection Act through awareness-raising activities on child protection issues. Village Health Workers provide services in over 180 aid posts throughout Vanuatu and work with teachers, parents and other members of the community on child rights. Australia will investigate opportunities to incorporate a specific training module on domestic violence into the comprehensive training package delivered to Village Health Workers.

Australia also supports HIV and AIDS prevention and response work through the provision of funding to Voluntary Service Overseas for its Strengthening National Response to HIV and Sexually Transmitted Infections program in Vanuatu (\$1.3 million over four years from 2007-08). This program provides capacity-building support to the Ministry of Health (including the reproductive health unit) and other organisations (including the Vanuatu Family Health Association) in a number of provinces.

Australian support for the Vanuatu Women's Centre includes funding for counselling and support services to survivors of gender-based violence.

# Violence against women is prevented



## Goals for all stakeholders in Vanuatu

To prevent violence against women.

This will include:

- > raising awareness through coordinated efforts at all levels
- > changing community attitudes about violence
- > increasing women's status in society.

## Situational analysis

There is a need to strengthen women's participation in economic, social and political life in Vanuatu. This will help in improving the status of women in society, which will assist in changing community attitudes to violence against women and in enabling women to respond to situations of violence.

A number of civil society organisations in Vanuatu are active in raising awareness of, and contributing to prevention of, violence against women.

- > The Vanuatu Women's Centre carries out advocacy and awareness-raising activities, including through the volunteer Committees Against Violence Against Women. These committees use key international days such as the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence and International Women's Day to raise community awareness and gain support to end violence against women.
- > The Male Advocates Program, conducted by the Vanuatu Women's Centre, supports men to speak out against violence against women.
- > Wan Smol Bag, a Vanuatu theatre group, uses drama and creative materials to raise community awareness of a range of social issues, including domestic violence.



Wan Smol Bag, a Vanuatu theatre group, uses drama and creative materials to raise community awareness of a range of social issues, including domestic violence.  
Photo: AusAID

## Government of Vanuatu priorities and actions to prevent violence against women

The Family Protection Act, which came into effect in March 2009, is the cornerstone of Government of Vanuatu efforts to protect women and children from domestic violence. One component of the draft implementation strategy for the FPA, managed by the Department of Women's Affairs, is the prevention of violence against women. It aims to increase community awareness of violence against women and children as being a violation of human rights. Awareness raising, community education and research into violence against women are planned to meet this objective.



The Department of Women's Affairs used the occasion of International Women's Day on 8 March 2009 to conduct a series of panel discussions and a media campaign for ending violence against women. It has been collaborating with the national public broadcaster to air some talkback sessions on perceptions of how disputes should be resolved.

## Australian support for preventing violence against women

### Working with civil society

#### Community mobilisation and awareness raising

Australia supports Wan Smol Bag (\$1.4 million over three years from 2006-07) to deliver an innovative program combining community theatre, media and workshops. The program raises awareness and mobilises communities (particularly youth) on issues including gender roles, domestic violence and sexual and reproductive health. Wan Smol Bag has incorporated information about the Family Protection Act into its travelling theatre productions on domestic violence, generating considerable community discussion and engagement on these issues. The organisation also provides health services to populations in greatest hardship.

Australia will look for opportunities to address gender equality, including addressing violence against women, through involvement in management arrangements in AusAID bilateral programs such as the Vanuatu Kastom Governance Partnership.

#### Working with men and boys

As mentioned above, the Vanuatu Women's Centre conducts a Male Advocates Program, which engages men in positions to influence community attitudes or services to women and children. The geographic scope of this work has increased over time; along with the Committees Against Violence Against Women, the program has increased women's access to support in rural areas.

Australia partnered with the United Nations Development Programme Pacific Centre in supporting a Pacific and East Timorese delegation to attend the 'Global Symposium on Engaging Men and Boys to Achieve Gender Equality', held in March 2009. The delegation included representatives from Vanuatu.

AusAID will provide funding in 2009-10 to the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre for the development of a handbook on working with men as advocates for the elimination of violence against women in the Pacific. The handbook will provide guidelines on best practices for working with men to advocate for gender equality and the elimination of violence, including outlining a training program for men who will become gender equality advocates.

#### Working with faith-based organisations

Australia is a Principal Partner to the International Women's Development Agency initiative 'Asia Pacific Breakthrough: The Women, Faith and Development Summit to End Global Poverty', to be held in December 2009. The summit will bring together faith-based, women's and development organisations from across Asia and the Pacific to discuss opportunities to work together to advance gender equality, including to end violence against women.



Engaging men and boys is a key part of ending violence against women. In Port Vila, a man reads about the issue of domestic violence. Photo: AusAID

Australia will look for opportunities to address gender equality, including addressing violence against women, through involvement in management arrangements in the AusAID-funded Vanuatu Church Partnership Program.

### **Prevention activities through the education sector**

Australia will investigate opportunities to provide training on gender-based violence through its support to the education sector, specifically to the Vanuatu Institute of Teacher Education in Port Vila, which provides training to all teachers working in Vanuatu.

Further, Australia currently encourages information dissemination on child protection issues through the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Sector Strengthening Program. Australia will look to extend this to gender-based violence issues to raise awareness of these issues through the TVET sector's considerable community networks.

### **Recognising and promoting the rights of women with disability**

AusAID, through the Pacific Public Sector Linkages Program, is supporting the Australian Human Rights Commission to partner with the Pacific Disability Forum to progress disability issues in the Pacific by delivering training in nine countries. The training courses are scheduled to be held between August 2009 and July 2010. In Vanuatu, the training will bring together members of the Disability Promotion and Advocacy Association of Vanuatu and government representatives to build their capacity and knowledge of disability rights in order to progress disability issues, including the rights of women with disability.

AusAID, through the International Seminar Support Scheme, supported the attendance of a woman with disability from Vanuatu at the Pacific Regional Forum on Women with Disabilities and the Pacific Regional Disability Conference in Vanuatu on 20–23 April 2009. One of the key components at these conferences was discussion of the sensitive issue of violence against women with disability.

### **Gender equality and empowering women**

The ODE report noted that efforts to reduce violence against women are intrinsically linked to women's political, social and economic empowerment. The report recommended that Australia ensure all its interventions focus on promoting greater equality between men and women.

Gender equality is a guiding principle of Australia's international development assistance program. The Australian Government is committed to ensuring that the needs, priorities and interests of women, as well as men, are considered in all development activities and at every stage of the development process.

### **Women's leadership and decision making**

Australia is providing \$6.2 million over five years from 2007-08 for the Gender Equality in Political Governance Program, in partnership with UNIFEM. The program focuses on supporting women standing for elections in the Pacific and including gender issues in governance programs in the Pacific. It will undertake research and develop generic information, resource and learning materials to promote women's leadership. In Vanuatu, the program will also train women at a local level on their rights and responsibilities and increase their capacity to be active citizens and leaders.

# An integrated approach

## Goals for all stakeholders in Vanuatu

To deliver a coordinated and comprehensive response to violence against women, including among government and non-government actors, at the national and local levels.

This will include:

- > developing and implementing plans of action for preventing violence against women at national, provincial, municipal and community levels
- > supporting interagency taskforces on violence against women (for example, within the context of the reporting on progress required by Vanuatu as a signatory to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women)
- > conducting national coordinated campaigns and awareness-raising activities
- > collaborating on training and capacity building of local stakeholders across all sectors.

## Situational analysis

Multisectoral coordination in responding to violence against women in Vanuatu has been weak. The Family Protection Act, which came into effect in March 2009, may raise the profile of this issue and lead to increased coordination across government. The Department of Women's Affairs is playing a key role in implementing the legislation. This is expected to strengthen its role as the lead agency within government in addressing violence against women.

## Government of Vanuatu priorities and actions to ensure an integrated approach

The Government of Vanuatu ratified the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1995. As a signatory to CEDAW, the government has committed itself to promote and protect women's rights, including to take measures to end violence against women.

The Government of Vanuatu's 2006–2011 Priorities and Action Agenda highlights gender parity in education, women's economic empowerment and women's participation in decision making as key focus areas for Vanuatu.

The government, through the Department of Women's Affairs, is planning a two-year implementation strategy for the Family Protection Act. The strategy, still in draft form, focuses on three key areas: prevention, protection and punishment (legal response).

A review of the FPA is scheduled to take place in two years. The draft strategy includes a plan to revive a national taskforce on violence against women.

The taskforce is to be chaired by the Ministry of Justice and Social Welfare. Key partners to the taskforce would include, in addition to the Ministry of Justice and Social Welfare:

- > Ministry of Health
- > Department of Women's Affairs
- > Chief Registrar of the Supreme Court
- > Vanuatu Police Force
- > Malvatumauri National Council of Chiefs
- > Vanuatu Christian Council
- > Vanuatu Women's Centre
- > development partners including NZAID and AusAID.

### **Australian support for an integrated approach**

Australia will seek to support the planned national taskforce on violence against women to implement the FPA (see above).

The findings of the ODE report have been disseminated to team leaders of Australian-supported projects (including the Legal Sector Strengthening Project and the Vanuatu Police Force Capacity Building Project) and Australian-funded advisers in relevant government agencies (including the Ministry of Health and the Vanuatu Police Force). Ongoing dialogue will help to enhance opportunities for multisectoral links between programs.

The Vanuatu Women's Centre is currently undertaking a rigorous national survey on the characteristics and prevalence of gender-based violence in Vanuatu. The findings (expected to be released in late 2009) will inform evidence-based advocacy and multisectoral policy development on violence against women. AusAID provided funding (\$200,000 in 2008-09) to support the conduct of this survey.

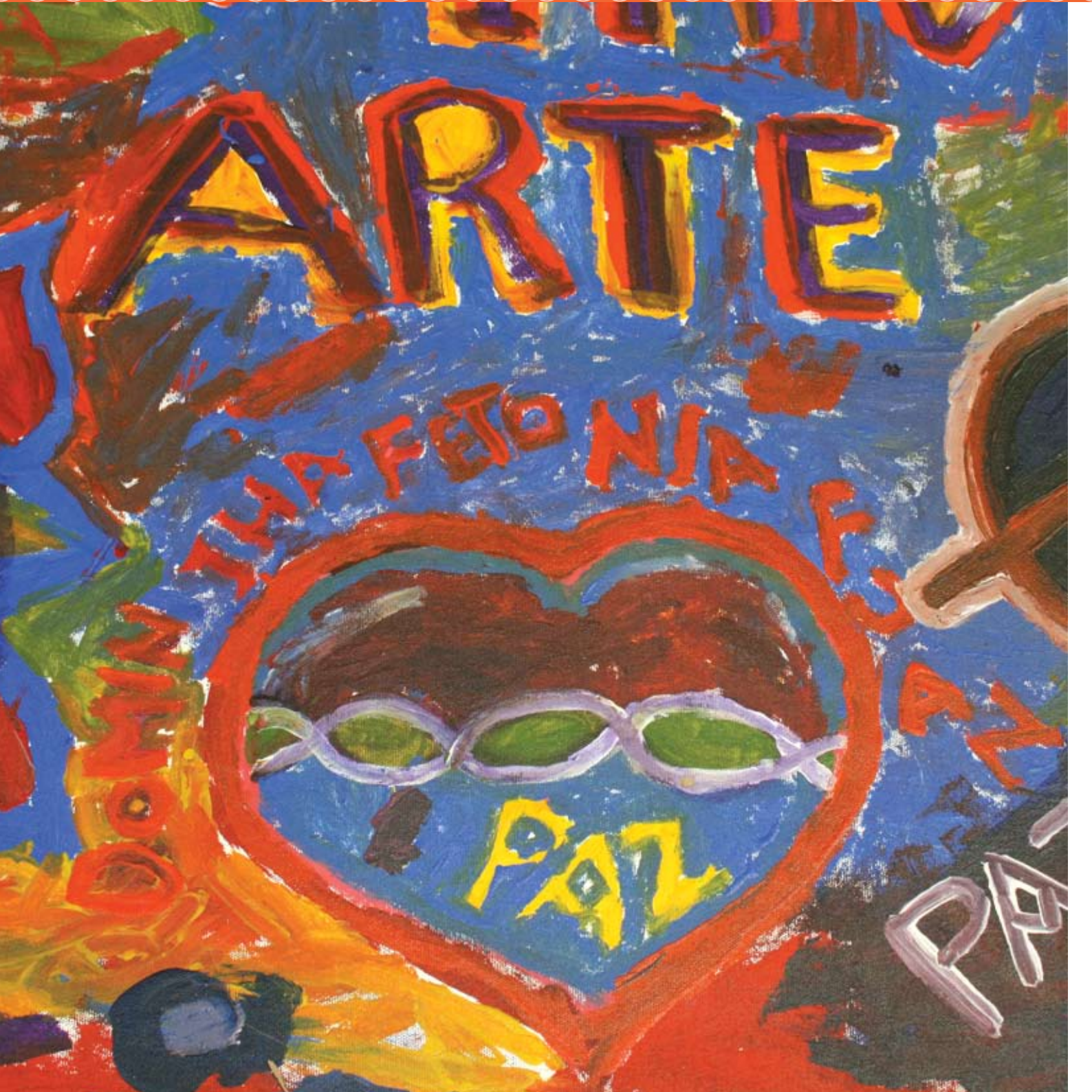


Merilyn Tahi, Coordinator, Vanuatu Women's Centre. The centre provides legal support, counselling and temporary shelter for women who have been abused, and carries out advocacy and awareness raising. Photo: AusAID





# East Timor country report



# Introduction



Dr José Ramos-Horta, President of the Democratic Republic of East Timor, accepts a copy of the ODE report at its launch in Dili. Photo: AusAID

East Timor was one of five countries included in a study by AusAID's Office of Development Effectiveness (ODE) to assess the effectiveness of current approaches to addressing violence against women and identify promising practices. The report of the study—*Violence against Women in Melanesia and East Timor: Building on Global and Regional Promising Approaches*—was published in 2008.

The ODE report was released by the Hon Stephen Smith MP, Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, and the Hon Tanya Plibersek MP, Australian Minister for the Status of Women, on 25 November 2008 to coincide with White Ribbon Day, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

The East Timor country supplement to the report was launched in Dili on 27 November 2008 by Dr José Ramos-Horta, President of the Democratic Republic of East Timor.

The ODE study was undertaken using a participatory approach that focused on women's own experience of violence, and on what does or does not help them in terms of protection and prevention. The research team spoke with 83 people in East Timor, including interviews with 29 people representing 21 organisations, and focus groups in which another 54 people participated.

The ODE report made a series of recommendations for East Timor and the region that are relevant to all organisations and individuals who are committed to preventing and responding to violence against women.

This paper sets out Australia's initial response to the recommendations for action to end violence against women in East Timor. AusAID recognises that ending violence against women requires action over the long term, and that the activities set out in this report are just the first stage in intensifying our efforts to address violence against women as part of the Australian international development assistance program.



# Principles and priorities

The ODE report identified a range of principles and priorities structured around a *framework for action* for addressing violence against women. AusAID will use this framework and a set of key principles to guide its contribution to ending violence against women in East Timor.

## Principles guiding Australia's contribution

The following principles will guide Australia's contribution to ending violence against women. AusAID will:

- > make a long-term commitment to ending violence against women
- > promote gender equality as a central principle of our work
- > work in partnership with key stakeholders and align with partner government priorities
- > adopt an integrated approach.

Further details are set out in the regional report.

## A framework for action

The framework for action sets out three main *strategies* for responding to violence against women:

- > ensuring women have access to justice
- > ensuring women have access to support services
- > preventing violence against women.

The framework for action can be used by all those working to end violence against women.

The box below sets out AusAID’s vision, its aim and the outcomes it will strive to achieve within the framework recommended by the ODE report.

<b>A framework for ending violence against women in Melanesia and East Timor</b>		
<b>Vision:</b> Women in Melanesia and East Timor are able to live free from violence and the fear of violence.		
<b>Aim:</b> To work in partnership—with national governments, civil society, international partners, and men and women—to increase efforts to reduce and respond to violence against women.		
<b>Outcome:</b> Women have access to justice	<b>Outcome:</b> Women have access to support services	<b>Outcome:</b> Violence against women is prevented

The structure of this report reflects the framework for action recommended in the ODE report, with sections on each of the three key strategies—ensuring women’s access to justice, ensuring women’s access to support services, and preventing violence against women—and on efforts to support an integrated approach.

# Women have access to justice

## Goals for all stakeholders in East Timor

To increase women's access to justice.

This will include:

- > passing and implementing laws and policies that discourage violence and impose consequences on offenders
- > providing women with the means to protect themselves and their children from violence
- > providing women with the information necessary to access their rights
- > ensuring women are treated humanely and fairly by justice system personnel.

## Situational analysis

In East Timor, victims of crime (including victims of domestic and sexual violence) access either of two different systems of justice depending on their circumstances: traditional law or the formal justice system. Difficulties that women experience in accessing justice in East Timor include barriers to the formal justice system as a result of distance and costs; a reliance on customary justice approaches, with their weak human rights records; and limited knowledge of laws and their rights. Almost 90 per cent of cases of violence against women are dealt with using traditional justice.

Police Victim Protection Units operate in East Timor's 13 districts. These units take complaints and have authority to investigate cases such as rape, attempted rape, domestic violence, child abuse, child neglect, missing persons, paternity and sexual harassment. The Victim Protection Units are considered to be an important initiative that should be strengthened.

The non-government organisations, the Judicial System Monitoring Program and the Women's Justice Unit, play key roles in monitoring women's access to the formal justice system, particularly in cases of sexual assault and domestic violence. The Women's Justice Unit conducts advocacy and training for the justice sector; in addition, it provides public education on violence against women and on women's human rights. The Victim Support Service of the Judicial System Monitoring Program provides legal support to women who have experienced violence.

The United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT) provides support to the Government of East Timor in the sphere of law and justice. UNMIT is assisting in establishing the rule of law in East Timor through the development of a legislative framework. UNMIT also provides policing support to the East Timor Government through the UN Police, which consists of police officers from more than 40 countries.

## East Timor Government priorities and actions to support women's access to justice

The East Timor Government has taken several steps to strengthen both the formal and the traditional justice systems.

### Reforms to the formal justice system

As part of the reforms to the formal justice system, the government has included domestic violence as a public crime in the Penal Code. The Penal Code was approved by the Council of Ministers on 18 March 2009 and promulgated by the President on 30 March 2009.<sup>1</sup> Draft domestic violence legislation is currently with the Office of the Secretary of State for the Promotion of Equality (SEPI) and is expected to be sent to the Council of Ministers to be discussed very soon.

SEPI (formerly known as the Office for the Promotion of Equality) is the agency within the East Timor Government with responsibility for advancing gender equality. Addressing gender-based violence is one of its four core programs. The role of SEPI is supported by Gender Focal Points in each district administration and in key line ministries.

Access to justice is part of the government's National Priorities Program for 2009.<sup>2</sup> One of the identified deliverables under the annual action plan is promoting and mainstreaming a culture of gender equality through campaign and advocacy on various laws from a gender perspective. (These laws are the Civil Code,<sup>3</sup> the Penal Code and domestic violence law.)

As part of its efforts to improve women's access to justice, the government, through the Ministry of Justice, is developing a gender justice policy. It is intended that the policy will be approved and adopted by the end of September 2009. The Ministry of Justice has also organised training—including for police, prosecutors and judges—on legal issues that uniquely affect women and on identifying and handling sexual and domestic violence cases.

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1 Under the new Penal Code, abortion is criminalised. However, it is permitted in cases where the interruption of pregnancy is the only way to remove the danger of death or serious and irreversible injury to the pregnant woman's body, and where it is carried out under the authorisation and supervision of a medical committee by a doctor or health professional in a public health establishment and with the consent of the pregnant woman and/or her spouse. The Penal Code states that this article will also be subject to separate legislation. The draft Penal Code originally included a provision for abortion in the event of foetal abnormality, when the mother was underage (younger than 16 years old) and in cases of incest (where the father had sexual relations with his own daughter) and rape. This provision has been removed, which has raised concern among women's organisations that domestic violence will increase.

2 The Government of East Timor has established seven working groups on the various themes under the National Priority Program for 2009. The themes are food security; access to justice; rural development; human resources development; public safety and security; social protection and social services; and clean and effective government.

3 In relation to the Civil Code, a Gender and Land Law Working Group has been established and has held various workshops to discuss women's right to title, ownership, access and use of land and property, and inheritance of land. This has resulted in the inclusion of provisions in the Civil Code to grant women equal access to land and property.



## Policing

The East Timor Government has committed to strengthening the police Victim Protection Units and to addressing the challenges these units face in terms of human resources and financial and logistic constraints. The government is attempting to support the Policia Nacional de Timor-Leste and the Victim Protection Units by collaborating with UN Police and other international agencies and non-government organisations (NGOs). The UN mission has been extended for another year and UN Police has been asked to provide further support to the units.

## Reforms to traditional justice structures

The East Timor Government's program on justice includes engagement with traditional justice structures. Research is currently being undertaken by UNMIT and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to inform government policy in this area.

The Ministry of Justice is now working closely with the Justice Sector Support Facility (see below), the UNDP and GTZ (the German government aid agency) to develop the legal and policy basis for traditional justice and formal justice to complement each other, providing fairer and more accessible dispute resolution.

The Ministry of Justice has recently organised several consultations and workshops on traditional justice in Dili and some of the districts. The consultations sought to gather ideas from the community to use in producing a law that will recognise and regulate traditional customs that contribute to the development of the justice system in East Timor. Women's access to traditional justice was the focus of one of the workshops, which sought to gather women's views on how their needs can be met in the traditional justice system. As a result of this consultation, the East Timor Government opted to make the traditional system more responsive by introducing legislation to make local government, especially *Chefes de Sucu* (chiefs of villages) and *Chefes de Aldeias* (chiefs of hamlets), more proactive in reducing domestic violence.

## Australian support for women's access to justice

Gender justice, especially in rural areas, is a major focus of AusAID's East Timor program and its support for ending violence against women in East Timor.

In 2008, a Justice Sector Support Facility was created by a bilateral agreement between the Government of East Timor and the Australian Government to support both institutional and civil society initiatives to improve access to justice for men, women and children in East Timor.

AusAID is contributing approximately \$10 million over five years (2009–13) for the civil society component of the facility, which includes a civil society grants scheme.

The civil society grants scheme will directly promote gender justice outcomes, including measures to respond to and prevent violence against women. The ODE report's recommendations and findings will guide priorities in funding. One key area will be preventing and dealing with violence against women and girls. Another will be supporting women's access to justice in rural areas, through traditional law and the formal justice system.

In 2008, a Justice Sector Support Facility was created by a bilateral agreement between the Government of East Timor and the Australian Government to support both institutional and civil society initiatives to improve access to justice for men, women and children in East Timor.

At a policy level, the facility aims to strengthen policy and legal reform, including support for the implementation of domestic violence legislation in partnership with SEPI, the Ministry of Justice, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

Through the Suai Integrated Justice Pilot, established in late 2008, the facility is supporting a steering committee to educate and involve communities in confronting and solving justice problems. It is doing this by coordinating the efforts of various organisations at the local level—civil society organisations, traditional and formal justice leaders, and donor and government programs. Violence against women and women’s access to justice will be among the issues addressed in the pilot.

Australia has also contributed to efforts to improve the capacity of the police to respond to cases of domestic violence. Policia Nacional de Timor-Leste officers have been given some training in understanding and investigating sexual and gender-based violence. This has been delivered in part through the Australian – Timor-Leste Police Development Program, which is managed by the Australian Federal Police.

# Women have access to support services

## Goals for all stakeholders in East Timor

To increase women's access to support services.

This will include providing assistance to:

- > increase women's access to psychological, medical and legal support
- > increase women's access to safe havens
- > increase support to organisations that provide support services to women.

## Situational analysis

Non-government organisations play a major role in East Timor in providing support services to women who have experienced violence.

The East Timorese Women's Communication Forum (FOKUPERS) provides counselling, legal advice, court accompaniment and shelter in Dili; it has gender-based violence focal points in the community in four districts.

PRADET (Psychosocial Recovery and Development in East Timor) provides mental health and psychosocial support for women who have experienced violence and supports women to access other services. PRADET runs a one-stop shop, Fatin Hakmatek, at Dili Hospital that provides medical treatment, counselling, legal advice, some practical assistance with food and transportation, overnight accommodation and referrals to other services.

The ODE report recommended developing systems of temporary shelter for women who have experienced domestic violence in regional areas. Currently, such support can be limited and dependent on individuals' offering women shelter.

## East Timor Government priorities and actions to support women's access to support services

Development of social services and protection, including for women and children, is one of the East Timor Government's national priorities for 2009.

The government has established five hospitals, in Dili, Oecusse, Suai, Maubisse and Baucau. These hospitals will help in providing health services to women who have experienced violence.

The government plans to establish centres in every hospital to facilitate the treatment and support of survivors of violence. The centres will provide services such as medical

treatment, police investigation, social services, psychosocial counselling and legal support. Currently, there is one such centre located in Dili Hospital and managed by PRADET.

The government, through the Ministry of Health, also plans to establish acute care centres in every government hospital around the country to provide psychological treatment for those who have mental health problems, including victims of sexual abuse.

The government intends to develop human resources in the health sector, which will include increasing the number of trained doctors in areas such as forensic and psychiatry specialisations to help with cases such as domestic and sexual violence and mental health.

The East Timor Government has been working closely with NGOs to help to provide support services to women who have experienced violence. It has committed to continuing its support to organisations that provide support to women and children such as FOKUPERS, Alola Foundation and church-based organisations such as the Missionary Sister Servants of the Holy Spirit and Santa Bhakita.<sup>4</sup> The services provided include medical treatment, counselling, psychosocial support, legal advice and shelters. Most of these organisations provide support in Dili and in the districts.

The Secretary of State for Social Assistance and National Disaster plans to build social houses for vulnerable groups including widows in all districts in 2009. Each district will have 34 to 35 houses.

## Australian support for women's access to support services

### Strengthening health service delivery at the community level

Ensuring that women who experience violence have access to health services is a key recommendation of the ODE report. In partnership with the World Bank, Australia is contributing \$23 million (over four years from 2007-08) through the Health Sector Strategic Plan – Support Project (HSSP-SP) to support the Government of East Timor to implement its national Health Sector Strategic Plan and Medium-Term Expenditure Framework to strengthen East Timor's health system.

The HSSP-SP promotes the UN Millennium Development Goals in the area of health: reducing infant mortality, maternal mortality and the incidence of illness and death due to preventable diseases. AusAID anticipates that the HSSP-SP will scale up its coverage of maternal and child health programs in 2009-10, significantly increasing both the number of births attended by trained health professionals and the number of health posts across urban and rural East Timor.

AusAID has also provided funds (approximately \$9,000 in 2008-09) to PRADET for the construction of its new office next to the Fatin Hakmatek (Quiet Place) at the Dili Hospital.

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<sup>4</sup> Santa Bhakita is an orphanage located in Becora Dili. The centre also looks after those who have experienced sexual violence.

## Safe houses

The ODE report recommended that opportunities be investigated for developing a local system of temporary shelters for women in response to domestic violence. The Fatin Segura (Safe Place) concept aims to bring existing service providers together to support a network of safe places at a subdistrict level where victims can receive support and where potential victims can come to avoid violence when they feel under threat.

AusAID provided funds (\$80,000 in 2008-09) to the Centro Esperansa ba Feto (Hope Centre for Women) in Salele, in the district of Covalima, operated by the Missionary Sister Servants of the Holy Spirit. The project provides a safe house for victims of domestic violence and support for widows and orphans through education, advocacy, training and income-generation activities.

AusAID, through the Justice Sector Support Facility, will consider opportunities to support other Safe Place projects, including in the context of the Suai Integrated Justice Pilot.

# Violence against women is prevented



## Goals for all stakeholders in East Timor

To prevent violence against women.

This will include assisting in:

- > raising awareness through coordinated efforts at all levels
- > changing community attitudes about violence
- > increasing women's status in society.

## Situational analysis

There is a range of good-practice approaches to raising public knowledge and awareness about violence prevention in East Timor that could be further strengthened. Awareness-raising activities have involved women's groups, NGOs and government and have included activities centred around the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence.

The Alola Foundation works at the village level through workshops to raise women's awareness of violence and ways in which they can respond. Asosiasaun Mane Kontra Violencia (the Association of Men against Violence—AMKV) is active in engaging men in ending violence against women and working with the community to promote gender equality. AMKV is active in seven districts across East Timor. A man in a remote village of Liquica district, during a discussion on gender-based violence organised by AMKV, said: 'Now I know that if I beat my wife, I will end up in Becora'.<sup>5</sup>

Women have strong representation in the National Parliament in East Timor. Further strengthening women's participation in economic, social and political life in East Timor will assist in changing community attitudes to and preventing violence against women.



AMKV—the Association of Men against Violence—is active in engaging men in ending violence against women and working with the community to promote gender equality. Photo: AusAID

<sup>5</sup> Becora is a suburb of Dili where the main prison is located.



## East Timor Government priorities and actions to prevent violence against women

Activities have been organised by the government, through SEPI, to promote public awareness of the need to prevent violence against women. SEPI will continue to hold its annual 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence throughout the country. The 2009 International Women's Day, with the theme 'No to Violence, Yes to Gender Equality', was an important opportunity for the government to disseminate information to end violence against women through the production and publication of normative materials, training, exhibitions, workshops and discussions.

The East Timor Government, with help from NGOs and civil society, is conducting community awareness raising on the draft domestic violence legislation.

The government has committed to supporting AMKV to help to raise awareness and change the behaviour of men and youth towards women.

The East Timor Government is also seeking to increase women's status in society through the economic empowerment of women. Creating employment and supporting livelihoods for local women are key priorities for SEPI, which has supported 24 women's small business groups in Dili and the districts. With the support of the Gender Focal Points, SEPI has established a team to monitor and evaluate the work of these groups. SEPI's support is designed to facilitate the production of marketable products and provide sustainable income for women. Economic empowerment of women—especially those in remote areas—will help to reduce the level of violence against women.

Despite the fact that East Timor is well placed in terms of women's participation in politics, much work needs to be done, especially at the local government level. The government will continue to encourage women to be involved in every level of politics. This includes encouraging women to be candidates in the upcoming *sucu* (village) and municipal elections, which will be held in late 2009 and early 2010. (Under the East Timor 2004 election law, female representation at *sucu* council is mandatory.) The election of women to *sucu* councils and as *sucu* leaders may have an impact on reducing violence against women.

## Australian support for preventing violence against women

### Working with civil society

#### Support for civil society

AusAID's East Timor Community Assistance Scheme is a small grants scheme that supports community initiatives throughout East Timor. The scheme provides assistance at the community level—including for local NGOs, community-based organisations and religious groups—with the aim of achieving better living conditions for East Timorese people. Since 2000, the scheme has supported 14 community-level and local NGO activities on gender equality issues. In 2008-09, support was provided to Bacau Buka Hatene (Friendship and Learning Centre) in Baucau district for its activity in promoting women's rights in rural areas through media.

## Working with men and boys

AusAID partnered with the UNDP Pacific Centre in supporting a Pacific and East Timorese delegation to attend the ‘Global Symposium on Engaging Men and Boys to Achieve Gender Equality’, held in March 2009. The delegation included representatives from East Timor.

AusAID has acted on the ODE recommendation to increase support to AMKV and strengthen its community-based education program, focusing on encouraging men’s participation in the pursuit of gender equality. In 2008-09, AusAID provided a grant of approximately \$60,000 to support the work of AMKV. The Justice Sector Support Facility is also working in partnership with Caritas and AMKV to develop its strategic plan and strengthen its management and governance arrangements.

AusAID will investigate opportunities for community-based organisations in East Timor to engage and share learnings with Pacific organisations working with men as advocates for the elimination of violence against women. In particular, AusAID has had preliminary discussions with the Fiji Women’s Crisis Centre about individuals from East Timor participating in training through the centre’s Male Advocates Program.

## Working with faith-based organisations

AusAID is a Principal Partner to the International Women’s Development Agency initiative ‘Asia Pacific Breakthrough: The Women, Faith and Development Summit to End Global Poverty’, to be held in December 2009. The summit will bring together faith-based, women’s and development organisations from across Asia and the Pacific to discuss opportunities to work together to advance gender equality, including to end violence against women.

As mentioned above, AusAID is providing funds to the Centro Esperansa ba Feto (Hope Centre for Women) in Salele, operated by the Missionary Sister Servants of the Holy Spirit. The project provides a safe house for victims of domestic and sexual violence.

## Supporting women as peacemakers

AusAID is commissioning research on the impact and challenges of implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1325<sup>6</sup> on women, peace and security in partner countries. This research will focus on the four interrelated areas of Resolution 1325: increasing participation of women in decision-making and peace processes; ensuring gender perspectives and training in peacekeeping and security; protecting women and girls from violence; and gender mainstreaming in all peace and security concerns. The research will focus on two in-depth case studies of Fiji and East Timor to highlight best practices, provide transferable lessons and make practical recommendations on how AusAID can measure, evaluate and advance the participation of women in peace and security issues.

In March 2009, AusAID provided support (\$43,000 in 2008-09) to the ‘Women for Peace’ conference in Dili, hosted by the Alola Foundation. The conference strengthened awareness of women’s roles in peacebuilding and conflict resolution, focusing on women and youth as positive forces for change and building regional networks to achieve sustainable peace and stability in East Timor. AusAID funding contributed to a 14-week roadshow exhibition of art and theatre that was produced as part of the conference, providing outreach to the districts and enabling widespread engagement with conference themes and outcomes.



The ‘Women for Peace’ conference in Dili, hosted by the Alola Foundation, strengthened awareness of women’s roles in peacebuilding and conflict resolution. Photo: AusAID

6 UN Security Council Resolution 1325 was adopted in 2000. It is the key international framework that addresses the links between the protection of women from violence and the promotion of women’s participation and leadership in peacebuilding and reconstruction efforts.

## Recognising and promoting the rights of women with disability

AusAID, through the International Seminar Support Scheme, supported the attendance of two representatives from the East Timor Government at the Pacific Regional Forum on Women with Disabilities and the Pacific Regional Disability Conference in Vanuatu on 20–23 April 2009. One of the key components at these conferences was discussion of the sensitive issue of violence against women with disability.

AusAID has provided support for a disability adviser to the Government of East Timor, to finalise a National Disability Policy and implementation plan and to develop community-based rehabilitation approaches, both of which may provide frameworks for addressing gender and disability issues.

## Gender equality and empowering women

The ODE report noted that efforts to reduce violence against women are intrinsically linked to women's political, social and economic empowerment. The report recommended that Australia ensure all its interventions focus on promoting greater equality between men and women.

Gender equality is a guiding principle of Australia's international development assistance program. The Australian Government is committed to ensuring that the needs, priorities and interests of women, as well as men, are considered in all development activities and at every stage of the development process.

## Women's leadership and decision making

Female representation in politics remains one of the strongest areas of equal gender participation in East Timor.

AusAID is providing funding through UNIFEM (\$400,000 over two years from 2007-08) for the Integrated Program for Women in Politics and in Decision Making, which supports the development of a political vision of women as citizens and decision-makers. Its current focus is on transformative leadership, politics and communities, including capacity-building support to women parliamentarians, support for the women's wings of political parties, and the resourcing of a Women's Resource Centre. Support to the women's caucus in the National Parliament is provided through the Women's Resource Centre.

Training in specific skills building, including gender-responsive budgeting training for members of parliament, was delivered in November and December 2008. Further skills building will include learning sessions on basic gender concepts and transformative leadership in relation to the nation-building process.

The direct beneficiaries of the program are primarily women politicians, although men are also included in key activities. However, it is intended that the ultimate beneficiaries of the program will be poor women who will be helped by the efforts of women officials to ensure that development programs are responsive to the needs of the poor and of poor women in particular.

**AusAID is providing funding through UNIFEM for the Integrated Program for Women in Politics and in Decision Making, which supports the development of a political vision of women as citizens and decision-makers.**

### **Women's economic empowerment**

AusAID, in collaboration with the International Finance Corporation and the World Bank, is undertaking a series of Gender and Investment Climate Reform Assessments, including in East Timor. These assessments will result in a 'gender toolkit', to be released later in 2009, that will show policymakers and business organisations how to ensure that both men and women benefit from improvements in the business-enabling environment within a country.

Research on the potential for gender-responsive budgeting in East Timor is currently being funded through AusAID's Australian Development Research Awards (\$200,000 over three years from 2007-08). The research, to be completed by December 2009, will identify the potential of various gender-responsive budget approaches for progressing women's economic empowerment. It aims to increase policymakers' capacity to promote women's economic independence through participation in both waged employment and self-employment. Further, it is intended that policymakers, donors and other stakeholders will benefit from understanding how gender-responsive budget approaches can enhance women's empowerment.

# An integrated approach

## Goals for all stakeholders in East Timor

To deliver a coordinated and comprehensive response to violence against women, including among government and non-government actors, at the national and local levels.

This will include:

- > developing and implementing plans of action for preventing violence against women at national, provincial, municipal and community levels
- > supporting interagency taskforces on violence against women (for example, within the context of the reporting on progress required by East Timor as a signatory to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women)
- > conducting national coordinated campaigns and awareness-raising activities
- > collaborating on training and capacity building of local stakeholders across all sectors.

## Situational analysis

Multisectoral coordination is relatively well advanced in East Timor, both at government and service-provider levels.

As noted above, SEPI is the government agency with responsibility for advancing gender equality, and addressing gender-based violence is one of its four core programs.

The Gender-based Violence Referral Partners Network (Rede Referral)<sup>7</sup> supports multisectoral coordination among service providers in responding to violence against women. The network brings together service providers, government and multilateral donors to develop a shared approach to case management. Organisations also assist each other logistically through the Referral Pathways Group, a working group of Rede Referral, on issues such as accessing transport and finding accommodation for women and children who have experienced violence.

<sup>7</sup> Rede Referral is a networking group composed of government bodies, UN agencies and international and national NGOs.

## East Timor Government priorities and actions to ensure an integrated approach

The East Timor Government ratified the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 2003, pledging to protect women's rights and promote equality between men and women.

Since its establishment in 2001, SEPI has been the driving force within government in terms of multisectoral coordination. SEPI is the lead government agency in producing and distributing information and educational material on gender equality; in addition, it conducts awareness-raising campaigns in all districts. It also promotes dialogue and collaboration among other government agencies, civil society organisations and international agencies to promote gender equality.

SEPI is supported by 16 Gender Focal Points (GFPs) in line ministries and 12 GFPs at district level. It has delivered training to the GFPs to help them to prepare individual action plans. SEPI is also working with the GFPs to support them to integrate gender perspectives into the Government's National Priorities Program for 2009.

The East Timor Government has decided that SEPI will have a formal status in the 2009 National Priorities Program process for the first time. It will participate in two working groups—Food Security and Rural Development—and maintain an active interest in two others—Access to Justice, and Social Protection and Social Services.

Strengthening the capacity of the GFPs has become one of the main strategies for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment across government. One problem, however, is the lack of human resources and budget required to achieve this. To address this concern, SEPI has strengthened its collaboration with various agencies and NGOs to deliver training activities and provide international gender advisers to support the GFPs. Currently, two international gender advisers have been placed, one in the Ministry of Education and another in the Ministry of Agriculture. SEPI plans to develop and strengthen the mechanism for coordination among the GFPs.

SEPI's 2009 Action Plan has been drafted and approved. Activities in the plan aim to:

- > implement an integrated gender policy approach
- > ensure the participation of East Timor in national and international gender events
- > ensure the continuation of the drafting of the periodic CEDAW report
- > ensure analysis of policies and legislation projects from a legal perspective of gender equality
- > consolidate and develop GFPs through the establishment of connection and coordination mechanisms at the central and district government levels
- > conduct gender training for all civil servants
- > promote a culture of equality through campaigns, and production and publication of normative materials
- > improve SEPI's human resources.

In early 2009, SEPI took over from UNFPA as the lead coordinator for Rede Referral. The purpose of Rede Referral is to advocate against gender-based violence in all its forms, monitor the protection situation of women, girls and other groups at risk, and ensure timely access to appropriate support and care services (legal, health and psychosocial) for victims of violence.



The East Timor Government's National Statistics Directorate and Ministry of Health are undertaking a national Demographic and Health Survey in 2009. In contrast with the 2003 survey, the 2009 survey will include a module on domestic violence. The survey will provide a strong evidence base for future government responses to domestic violence and coordination among relevant government agencies.

## Australian support for an integrated approach

AusAID has regular representation on the Dili-based Gender Thematic Working Group, a networking and coordination forum comprising representatives from the East Timor Government, UN agencies, international development agencies and international NGOs. The working group has established a taskforce to coordinate events and initiatives aimed at raising awareness of gender equality and progressing UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. These include, for example, International Women's Day and the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence, which is actively sponsored by the President and the Prime Minister of East Timor.

AusAID is contributing \$200,000 to support the national Demographic and Health Survey, mentioned above. The East Timor Government is carrying out the survey, with support from donors such as AusAID and USAID and a number of UN agencies, including UNFPA, the UNDP, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and UNIFEM. AusAID is an active member of the Stakeholders Group that is assisting with the conduct of the survey.

The Australian Government will work in partnership with other donors and stakeholders in promoting gender equality in East Timor. It will promote and increase donor harmonisation as set out in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness 2005 and the Accra Agenda for Action. East Timor will participate as a case study to monitor compliance with the Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States and Situations, and has asked Australia to be a mentor in this process.



# Abbreviations and acronyms

AFP	Australian Federal Police
AMKV	Asosiasaun Mane Kontra Violencia (Association of Men against Violence), East Timor
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
DPO	Disabled Peoples Organisation
FOKUPERS	Forum Komunikasi Untuk Perempuan Loro Sae (East Timorese Women's Communication Forum)
FPA	Family Protection Act
FRIEND	Foundation for Rural Integrated Enterprises 'N' Development
FVC	Family Violence Coordinator
GFPs	Gender Focal Points
HSSP-SP	Health Sector Strategic Plan – Support Project
ICT	information and communications technology
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
NGO	non-government organisation
NZAID	New Zealand's International Aid and Development Agency
ODPP	Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions
ODE	Office of Development Effectiveness, AusAID
PPF	Participating Police Force
PRADET	Psychosocial Recovery and Development in East Timor
RAMSI	Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands
RSIPF	Royal Solomon Islands Police Force
SEPI	Office of the Secretary of State for the Promotion of Equality, East Timor
TVET	technical and vocational education and training
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNMIT	United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste
WHO	World Health Organization