

Improving the Electoral Chances of Pacific Women through an Evidence-Based Approach

A synthesis report prepared for the Centre for Democratic Institutions and the State Society and Governance in Melanesia Program, ANU

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The State, Society and Governance in Melanesia (SSGM) program is the leading international centre for applied multidisciplinary research and analysis concerning contemporary state, society and governance in Melanesia and the broader Pacific. Situated within the Coral Bell School of Asia Pacific Affairs, SSGM seeks to set the international standard for scholarship on the region.

Author Note

This report draws on discussions that occurred at a three-day workshop hosted by the Centre for Democratic Institutions (CDI) and State, Society and Governance in Melanesia Program (SSGM) at the Australian National University in Canberra in June 2016. The purpose of the workshop was to review the evidence base regarding lessons learned about successful campaigning, how women are positioned to run successful campaigns, and how development partners might enhance the effectiveness of support provided to women candidates by drawing on and responding to this evidence base. While the workshop focused on the Melanesian context — and Papua New Guinea (PNG), Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, in particular — it drew on lessons from other parts of the Pacific islands region and the findings of this synthesis report may be applicable more widely.

The workshop was attended by a broad range of stakeholders, including campaign activists, women candidates, former and current sitting members of legislatures, development partners, NGOs, policymakers and academics from Melanesia and Australia. An annotated copy of the three-day workshop program is provided at Appendix A, with speaker names excluded. Discussions at the workshop were held on a Chatham House basis to encourage frank discussion.

While the synthesis provided in this report draws on those discussions, this report reflects the analysis of the authors and should not be taken to reflect the views of attendees at the workshop. This report is supplemented by a series of framing papers which were presented at that workshop to inform focused workshop discussions and have been published as *SSGM In Briefs* in tandem with this report.

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Executive Summary

The Pacific Islands have the lowest level of female parliamentary representation of any region in the world, and electoral trends point to the very slow pace of change. There are 19 male members of parliament to every one female member in the region, compared to four to one globally. This reflects a range of structural factors such as the uneven distribution of power and resources, as well as cultural values. It also reflects the highly competitive nature of electoral politics in the region.

Development partners have provided significant resources to enhance women's parliamentary political representation, including providing support to women candidates running for office. Such support, however, has not significantly improved women's electoral performances, and, consequently, has not led to higher women's representation in Pacific Islands parliaments. This is partly because structural impediments are difficult to overcome, but also because development partner responses do not appear to have consistently or effectively drawn on available evidence regarding factors that contribute to electoral success in the region. Bridging this gap between evidence regarding the factors that influence successful electoral performance and development partners' practices to support women candidates may enhance the effectiveness and impact of that support. While there are significant research gaps, the available evidence suggests that successful male and female candidates have local credibility (strong local connections and a demonstrated record of delivering services locally), access to resources and experience as political actors. Successful and near-successful candidates campaign strategically to consolidate local support and build coalitions with influential local powerbrokers. Supporting intending candidates to develop, strengthen and leverage some or all of these factors and characteristics may improve their prospects of performing well in elections.

To a large extent, development partner programs have not focused systematically on helping intending candidates to build their support bases and to develop their campaigns according to these criteria. Development partners' approaches to supporting women candidates, centred on capacity building, resource supplementation, awareness raising, advocacy, and institutional reform, have not

been sufficiently grounded in the realities of the contexts in which they are implemented so as to maximise their effect. For example, capacity-building programs intended to support women candidates have often focused on supporting women to develop supposed attributes of good women leaders, rather than supporting women to strengthen and leverage the characteristics common to candidates who have performed well in elections in the region.

Poor coordination amongst development partners over the electoral cycle, and the surge of support in the immediate lead-up to elections also limits the impact of support programs. Current support approaches could be strengthened by: theories of change which draw on the evidence regarding successful campaigning; targeted and well-coordinated support throughout the electoral cycle; a focus on strengthening strategic campaigning skills rather than general capacity-building; an enhanced focus on candidate selection; greater attention to strategically addressing resource imbalances; and a renewed focus on effective coalition building.

Supporting Women Candidates More Effectively Requires Development Partners to:

- > provide sustained and nuanced support calibrated to the electoral cycle
- > conduct electorate-level political economy analysis to identify which electorates may be winnable and to determine the types of strategies likely to respond to political dynamics in these electorates
- > invest early in candidate identification, based on available evidence, to better focus support on those candidates best placed to win elections
- > help women bridge resource gaps by building their capacity to develop innovative financing approaches
- > support political capacity building to equip women with skills needed to run strategic election campaigns.

Responding to These Challenges Will Require Development Partners to:

- > invest further in building the evidence base, with a particular focus on investigating local level political economies and their implications for women candidates contesting elections

- > ensure program governance arrangements are robust, with strong local ownership, to ensure program supports are well targeted, context-responsive and engage appropriately with political and program risks
- > build program support structures that enable development partners to reach well-placed prospective candidates and provide them with nuanced support calibrated to the needs of the electoral cycle
- > develop more flexible support modalities that respond to the emerging evidence base and can be tailored to the needs of individual candidates at the local level. This means adapting existing modalities — primarily capacity-building approaches — so that they engage with the most important challenges facing women candidates and better position them to develop effective campaign strategies that respond to them
- > innovate in the support they provide, complementing more traditional approaches centred on capacity building and technical support with new forms of assistance such as research partnerships, long-term mentoring and support for coalition building
- > improve program coordination structures so that development partner support is complementary and better coordinated over the course of the electoral cycle.

Introduction

Women are significantly under-represented in national parliaments and sub-national legislatures in the Pacific islands region. It has the lowest level of women's representation in national parliaments of any region in the world, with only 30 female parliamentarians — 6.1 per cent of the total — well below the global average of 23 per cent. The negative consequences of women's political under-representation are identified on both political and development grounds (Domingo et al. 2015). In terms of political implications, parliaments — a key political institution — cannot be said to be representative when women, or half of the population, are not represented. Developmentally, while there is no broad, decisive evidence that legislatures in which women are better represented would necessarily lead to policy choices that result in more inclusive forms of development, increased women's representation could provide a basis for more gender-responsive policymaking (ibid.:2).

There have been marginal improvements in the rates of female representation in national parliaments over the last decade, but advances have been slower in the Pacific islands region than elsewhere. The slow and limited progress towards increased female representation reflects a number of factors. Not the least, parliamentary elections are hotly contested and a large number of candidates — male and female — lose election contests. It also reflects the significant structural impediments facing women candidates, including real inequalities in power and resources. Women candidates also face important cultural barriers to election, reflected in views about appropriate roles for women in society and the inability of women to exercise political leadership in Melanesian communities.

Development partners and activists have devoted significant attention and resources to support efforts to address these obstacles and to support women candidates running for office, although these have had a relatively limited impact. This reflects the reality that development interventions may not always be capable of overcoming or shifting deep-seated structural obstacles to electoral success. But it also suggests that the development support that has been provided might not be as effective as it may be in supporting women's candidates to overcome the range of barriers they face. It is therefore reasonable to ask if current development partner approaches in the Pacific are fit for purpose.

It is in this context that this synthesis report considers two key questions. Firstly, why do current development partner approaches struggle to support women candidates to run more politically persuasive electoral campaigns? Secondly, could development partners provide support in different ways that might be more effective in helping potentially competitive candidates to perform better in elections? In seeking to answer these questions, this report draws on the available research evidence to inform a more effective policy approach. Notwithstanding significant gaps in the evidence regarding factors that influence candidates' electoral performance in Melanesia, there is nevertheless a breadth of research evidence available for policymakers to draw on. Development partners and women's groups have not systematically drawn on this evidence to inform more innovative support programs.

It should be noted from the outset that measures of electoral success for women candidates should not be limited to the number of women in parliament. For example, increases in the number of female candidates contesting and running credible campaigns, the vote share of female candidates, the proportion of female candidates being elected, and shifts in voter attitudes to women's political participation may be valued outcomes. However, we do consider increasing women's electoral representation to be a key objective, both because of the equity gains in having more women elected to parliaments and the potential positive developmental implications of including women in key legislative and resourcing decisions taken by parliaments. We will focus on this instrumental objective in this report, specifically on the issue of improving electoral prospects. We will not engage directly with broader issues of women's leadership in its many forms (see Haley and Zubrinich 2016) except insofar as the evidence base highlights how the exercise of leadership in other domains (public service, civil society) may improve women candidates' electoral prospects.

This report is structured in five parts. Part 1 reviews briefly the nature of the problem and how the Pacific compares in terms of women's electoral experiences and trends. Part 2 then assesses the evidence base regarding determinants of electoral success in a Pacific Islands context (for both male and female candidates). Part 3 assesses current development partner approaches, including the logic behind current support efforts. Part 4 identifies where current approaches

may be falling short. Based on this analysis, the final part of the report considers policy implications and how development partners might tailor their support in response to the evidence base to improve its impact upon the electoral prospects of women candidates who are beneficiaries of development support.

1. Electoral Trends

By global standards, the Pacific islands region has an extremely low level of women's political representation. Currently only around 1 in 20 Pacific parliamentarians are women. There are no female representatives at all in two Pacific parliaments, the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) and Vanuatu. If non-sovereign territories are included, the level of women's representation in the region rises to 13.5 per cent, which is still well below the global average of 23 per cent.

The under-representation of women is a long-term challenge. For example, Solomon Islands has had only three female representatives since independence in 1978, and never more than one female member at any point in time. Furthermore, progress is not necessarily linear. While women's representation has increased in recent national-level elections in Samoa, Marshall Islands and Palau, it has stagnated in national-level elections in Vanuatu, Tuvalu and FSM, and actually decreased in Kiribati. Prior to the 2014 Fijian election, Kiribati had the highest level of women's representation of any Pacific independent state, yet it is now ranked fifth. Concerted efforts to improve female representation levels have made little progress, and the marginal improvements in the level of women's representation over the last decade have been at rates far lower than other regions.¹

While women are under-represented in parliament, they are also under-represented as candidates. Between January and July 2016, national elections were held in Vanuatu,

Samoa and Nauru; overall, women made up just 8 per cent of candidates in these elections. Furthermore, the women who did stand were successful at lower rates than their male counterparts. Only 13 per cent of female candidates in these elections were successful, compared to 26 per cent of men. As stated above, the measure of success in terms of women's representation should not merely be the number of women elected to parliament; the number of female candidates who perform well and can demonstrate a solid voting bloc, even if they are ultimately not elected, is also important. The proportion of high-performing female candidates varies significantly across the region and between elections. In the 2016 Vanuatu election, only 1 out of 10 female candidates won more than 10 per cent of the vote, yet in the 2016 Samoan election over half of the women contesting did.

While improvements have been marginal, the situation is not totally bleak. The national election in Fiji in 2014 saw eight women elected to parliament, and the introduction of a gender quota prior to the 2016 Samoan election saw the number of female parliamentarians increase from three to five. The introduction of reserved seats for women at the municipal level in Vanuatu saw a significant increase in the number of women elected at that level (PLP 2016). Public surveys in Solomon Islands and Fiji have shown widespread public support for greater women's political representation (Dumar and Pene 2014; Haley et al. 2015; McMurray 2012).

2. Metrics of Success — What Does It Take to Win Elections?

What does it take to get elected? What can we learn from the experience of successful male candidates and the few women that have been elected? What do successful candidates — male and female — look like? What are the common factors that underpin successful election campaigns? Assessing the evidence base in relation to these questions will allow us to gauge the appropriateness of current development partner efforts and may point to more effective support strategies.

The first thing to note when reviewing the evidence base is that getting elected in the Pacific — and particularly

Melanesia — is challenging for both male and female candidates. Competition within electorates is often intense, with many candidates running for office, often with limited access to resources. It is difficult for candidates to sustain campaigns over an electoral cycle and across geographically and culturally diverse electorates. Moreover, many victors do not win by large margins. In PNG, over half of MPs elected in both 2007 and 2012 won with a primary vote share of 20 per cent or less (Haley 2015), and in Solomon Islands the average vote share of winning candidates since independence has been well below 50 per cent (Wood 2014a). This means that relatively modest improvements in

the vote share of women candidates, in the right electorates, could make a significant difference.

Upon reviewing the available evidence, successful candidates (male and female) can be said to share a number of common traits, and deploy particular campaign strategies:

Profile

In their longitudinal analysis of successful MPs in Solomon Islands, Corbett and Wood (2013) showed that winning candidates are getting older, becoming better educated (compared to the rest of the population), have tended to work in the formal economy (traditionally in the civil service but increasingly in the private sector), and have spent time working in the urban capital. Successful candidates also tend to have a broad support base (ideally spread across the electorate) and strong relational ties to voters through a range of clan, kinship and civil society — particularly church — groups.

Credibility and Experience

Demonstrating credibility — which, in Melanesia, often means the likelihood that a successful candidate will be able to deliver benefits to their voters/constituents — is an important factor impacting upon candidate success (Wood 2014b). Candidates' prospects of election improve when communities have confidence they are likely to deliver services and respond to local needs when elected. As such, having constructive and long-term connections with local constituents is important in building broader trust and support. Successful candidates can demonstrate credibility if they have a track record in mobilising resources for local supporters, and have built reputations as being effective local representatives. Prior to being elected, this could be displayed through local entrepreneurialism. Once elected, this is through the effective deployment of constituency funding (Hou 2016; Kidu and Setae 2002). Credible candidates also are politically savvy; they understand local political economies and how to work within them to secure benefits (Wood 2014b). MPs with a stronger chance of re-election tend to be those who spend a significant amount of time in their electorates, as many voters see the role of an MP as primarily service delivery, rather than policymaking at the national level (Hou 2016).

Demonstrating political and administrative experience can be important in enhancing candidate credibility. A large number of successful candidates in Solomon Islands have had prior experience as senior public servants or as successful businessmen (Corbett and Wood 2013). Demon-

strating experience can be challenging for women candidates who have historically faced discrimination in obtaining high-level public sector positions (see Haley and Zubrinich 2016). The increasing number of women elected at the provincial and municipal level in Melanesia has prompted questions about whether experience at a sub-national level may be a 'pipeline to [national] Parliament'. However, there is limited evidence on women's political participation at sub-national levels (see Meleisea et al. 2015 and PLP 2016 for notable exceptions), especially in comparison to national-level data. Indeed, research has found that at least in PNG the pipeline may work in the opposite direction; participation in national-level elections could be a pathway to political roles at the provincial or local level. A number of high-performing unsuccessful female candidates in the 2012 national election were appointed to positions in provincial assemblies following the election (Zubrinich 2016). In Vanuatu, women candidates at the local level have benefited from institutional measures; this is also true in Bougainville and to a lesser extent elsewhere in PNG.

Incumbency

Until recently, incumbency has not been seen as a particularly important factor in Melanesian elections with the region historically having high rates of incumbent turnover. In PNG and Solomon Islands, as many as 50 per cent of elected MPs have lost their seats at the next election (Morgan 2005). In theory, the high turnover in representatives provides opportunities for aspiring candidates, with sitting member (largely male) vulnerability providing greater opportunities for aspiring women candidates. In practice, the issue of incumbency may be more complex. First, while incumbency overall has not been a significant factor in determining success in Melanesian elections, in some cases male candidates are firmly ensconced, reflecting the peculiarities of local electoral competitions and making it more difficult for any competitor to dislodge them. Second, incumbency trends may be changing. In Solomon Islands, where turnover has been around 50 per cent on average since independence, it dropped to 28 per cent in the 2014 national election. Declining incumbent turnover rates have been linked by some to the increasing amounts of constituency development funds given to MPs to spend in their electorates (Kabutaulaka quoted in Kando 24/11/2014); so for challenging candidates, resourcing election campaigns is becoming more critical to success. Since most incumbents in the Pacific are men, however, decreasing turnover rates in areas of the Pacific like Solomon Islands could constitute a further barrier for aspiring female candidates (see Haley et al. 2015). While

incumbency trends may make it more difficult for aspiring women candidates, it may be important for women in getting re-elected. Of the seven women who were elected to Pacific parliaments at elections in 2015, three were incumbents, while another had previous parliamentary experience. In the 2016 Samoan election, despite an unusually high turnover rate of 54 per cent, all three incumbent female MPs retained their positions (Baker 2016).

Resources

Successful candidates are able to mobilise resources effectively to support their campaigning and build electoral majorities. Male and female candidates who are able to mobilise significant economic resources have been found to be more successful in winning elections (Haley & Zubrinich 2013; True et al. 2012). It costs a lot to run for office in Melanesia and credible candidates have a reasonable prospect of securing sufficient resources to mount effective campaigns over the course of an electoral cycle. Electoral costs are also increasing, reflecting the rise of money politics and corruption.² The increasingly moneyed nature of electoral competitions puts pressure on all candidates to pursue innovative funding strategies. Unsurprisingly, this trend tends to support strong connections between government and the private sector, particularly between political elites and business interests in the region, most prominently logging and mining interests (see Allen 2011). This nexus between politics and business tends to favour men, who benefit from having greater control over material resources and political power. Overcoming resource inequalities is a critical challenge for all candidates, but is particularly challenging for women, who tend to have less access to resources than men. The rise of money politics and increased cost of campaigning create structural constraints that are profoundly gendered. Women often struggle to raise sufficient funds to support effective election campaigning because they are less engaged in the formal economy and where they do earn cash incomes, on average, earn less money than men. This creates a critical resourcing gap for female candidates, which hinders effective campaigning.

Campaigning

Preparations for an effective election campaign generally begin well before the campaign period. Having a visible presence in the constituency during the campaign period is essential. Successful candidates, however, begin building their profile long before the campaign period starts. Interviews with successful female candidates in the Pacific

Islands have shown that they begin campaigning early, and think strategically about their campaign approaches. Successful candidates — both female and male — tend to campaign on local, rather than national, political issues (Kelly 2010; Steeves 2011). Responding to the local context and local norms of campaigning is crucial. A strong (and loyal) campaign team, that may comprise influential local power-brokers, is also important (Wood 2014b). Successful candidates also tend to use a range of campaign techniques to maximise their visibility in an electorate. While traditional campaign techniques such as using posters and billboards can be an important part of successful campaigns, money politics and the provision of targeted gifts has become an increasingly pervasive element of campaigning in Melanesia; in the 2007 and 2012 PNG national elections, candidates who campaigned with gifts and money tended to perform better than those who did not (Haley and Zubrinich 2015a).

Powerful Local Coalitions

Candidates who perform well at the polls in Melanesia tend to have the support of strong coalitions built upon a constituency base, and typically have secured the support of key leaders within the community. In particular, successful women candidates usually have strong male backers (Haley and Zubrinich 2013), and this is true of high-performing male candidates as well (see Wood 2014b). These backers can work as agents for the candidates, using their influence in their local communities to secure support. Building these coalitions well before an election, and gaining the support of key local powerbrokers, is critical to success. In Solomon Islands, some candidates engage the services of electoral brokers to deliver local votes (Wood 2014b). It is notable that successful female candidates often come from prominent local families and benefit from strong family networks (Baker et al. 2013).

Persistence

For many successful electoral candidates in the Pacific islands region, getting elected to parliament required a long-term campaign, highlighting the importance of persistence. Running in consecutive elections to gain name recognition is a strategy for many male candidates (see Haley 2011). There are also several female politicians who have won after numerous attempts. Julie Soso, the Governor of Eastern Highlands Province in PNG, unsuccessfully contested three national elections before winning in 2012. The delegate for American Samoa in the US House of Representatives, Aumua Amata Coleman Radewagen, contested 10 congressional elections prior to her wins in 2014 and 2016. There is, however, usually a majority of first-time candidates

contesting elections. In the 2014 Solomon Islands election, only 6 out of the 26 female candidates had contested a national election before; in the 2016 Vanuatu election, only 2 out of 10 had.

Party Membership

The weakness of political parties in Melanesia limits their influence on electoral outcomes. Party affiliation has an apparently limited impact on a candidate's electoral performance; large numbers of independents have historically tended to win elections throughout Melanesia (Steeves 2011). Despite this, many female candidates choose to align with parties; almost 70 per cent of women who ran in Solomon Islands in 2014 were party-endorsed (Haley et al. 2014), and almost 90 per cent of female candidates in Samoa in 2016 were party-endorsed or affiliated (Baker 2016). Campaigning as a party-endorsed candidate could potentially benefit a female candidate through connection with a popular public figure in the party's leadership, or through some financial support, which is usually very limited and gendered in that prominent male candidates generally receive more than women. While party membership has a limited impact, moves to strengthen incentives for political

parties to preselect women candidates may provide a marginal advantage for women that might otherwise struggle to access resources and support to run campaigns.

While there is no single path to electoral success, it is possible from the available evidence to identify what could be called 'metrics of success'. Based on these metrics (outlined in Text Box 1) the evidence suggests that improving electoral prospects of women candidates requires identifying candidates who look credible in the eyes of the community and supporting them to contest elections in electorates in which there is a reasonable prospect that they might secure a majority of votes. Such candidates should be supported to develop and implement election campaign strategies that respond to and address the political realities in the electorate over the course of the electoral cycle. Such campaign strategies should pay particular attention to the formation of strong electoral coalitions that encompass influential leaders and groups within the electorate, securing access to sufficient resources, and mobilising those resources in a timely manner and in ways which help to strategically consolidate support.

The following section considers the ways in which current development partner approaches respond to these issues.

Text Box 1: Metrics of Success – a profile of successful candidates in Melanesia

| Key Metric | Issue | Development implication |
|----------------------------|---|---|
| Profile | Successful candidates (male and female) are more likely to be older, better educated and have work experience in the formal economy. They also have strong local connections, experience and networks. | In choosing who to support, candidate selection processes should consider how well positioned prospective candidates are to win elections. Identifying prospective candidates from non-urban centres can be difficult for development partners. |
| Credibility and experience | Successful candidates can demonstrate credibility (an ability to deliver benefits to constituents). Demonstrating political and administrative experience through public or private sector work experience can be particularly important. | Helping women candidates with strategies focused on building confidence in their ability to deliver benefits to local communities is important. |
| Incumbency | Incumbency may be becoming more important as money politics becomes more entrenched. Decreasing turnover rates make it harder for aspiring women candidates but possibly easier for successful women to hold their seats. | Analysis of incumbency issues at the electorate level should inform contestation decisions and candidate strategising. |
| Resources | Assessing the resources available to other candidates and the ability of women candidates to mobilise resources should be an entry-level consideration for prospective candidates. | Helping women candidates to develop innovative resourcing approaches will be crucial to improving women's electoral prospects in increasingly moneyed electoral competitions. |
| Campaigning | Successful candidates can sustain local-level campaigns and are focused on building winning electoral majorities. | Candidates should be helped to undertake political economy analysis of how electoral competitions play out in their electorate to inform their nomination decisions and campaign approaches. |
| Powerful local coalitions | Candidates who perform well secure the support of powerful actors who can influence voting decisions. They also can draw on support coalitions to help them run and sustain campaigns. | Supporting women to build politically influential electoral coalitions is important. |
| Persistence | Successful candidates often run several times before winning. | Provide support over several electoral cycles to improve name recognition. |
| Party membership | Party membership has had a marginal impact for male candidates but may help women candidates by giving them access to modest resources and campaign support. | Work with parties to encourage preselection of women candidates and better resourcing of those selected. |

3. Development Partner Approaches

One way of explaining the effectiveness — or otherwise — of development partner assistance for women candidates is to assess how current development partner approaches respond to and engage with these basic metrics of success. Development partners have, over many years, provided significant support to advance women's leadership in the Pacific. Indeed, the Pacific islands region could be described as a crowded field in terms of the number of development partners active in the area, including bilateral donors (including Australia and the European Union), multilateral agencies (e.g. UN Women, Commonwealth Secretariat) and international NGOs (e.g. International Women's Development Agency), all providing support for intending women candidates through a range of direct and indirect programs.

Support for women candidates has been an important subset of development partner efforts to improve women's leadership, with development partners providing a range of *direct* and *indirect* support for women candidates.

- > Direct assistance for women candidates refers to support focused explicitly on assisting women to run for elections. Such support can be focused on improving the capacity of women candidates to run election campaigns, or on reducing structural barriers limiting women's electoral prospects.
- > Indirect support for women candidates encompasses development partner support for women which is not focused directly on women candidates and elections, but has an incidental impact on the ability of women to run for elections. Such support might include women's leadership programs and economic empowerment programs.

Direct Support for Women Candidates

The following section considers approaches typically taken by development partners to support women candidates to perform well in elections in the region. It should be noted that there is a strong rationale for the suite of modalities commonly employed by development partners to provide support to intending women candidates. For example, any credible support program will reasonably include a significant capacity development and training component, a resource supplementation component and an advocacy and networking component. A disconnect is observed, however, between the substance, targeting and timing of support delivered via those modalities and that which is

likely to respond to the metrics of success and address barriers to women's electoral success. This issue will be focus of the second part of this paper:

Capacity Building

Capacity building intended to improve women's understanding of electoral processes and campaigning techniques is one of the most common forms of development partner support to women candidates. Training workshops for intending women candidates have commonly been held late in the electoral cycle, in the months prior to an election. Training course content has generally focused on technical aspects of elections and campaigning, and on resource management skills required to run campaigns. Training has typically not focused on assisting women candidates to develop their understanding of the complex political economy factors influencing local electoral contests and what this means for the construction of persuasive election campaigns in specific electorates. Training has also tended to focus on normative issues such as transformational leadership (assuming aspiring women candidates lack self-confidence), and has framed women's leadership in terms of international legal and policy instruments (e.g. the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)). Much of this training assumes a role for women candidates as gender ambassadors and therefore focuses on the importance of campaigning to win the votes of women as opposed to appealing to the broadest range of voters.

Resource Supplementation

While development partners have recognised the importance of campaign resource inequalities, they have only provided modest resourcing to women candidates, most commonly through the printing of campaign materials. Political sensitivities associated with providing material support for all or select women candidates, and in some cases constitutional and legal prohibitions preventing foreign campaign resourcing, has made development partners reluctant to engage significantly with this issue. Recently, development partners have become more interested in the potential to support more innovative campaign financing programs, such as the extension of EMILY's List-like models to the region, although no development partner has

operationalised such support (Zubrinich 2016). Resource supplementation approaches are of course dependent on domestic laws and campaign finance regulations.

Support for Cultural and Social Change

Development partners have routinely supported civic awareness initiatives linked to broader electoral support programs that aim to change voting culture and norms in relation to gender and leadership. Such programs have sought to encourage voter perceptions about a positive role for women in politics, and support the mobilisation of voters who support women candidates, usually by engaging civil society groups to undertake outreach activities in the months preceding an election. The effectiveness of this type of support is not substantiated by the evidence base; surveys in Solomon Islands, for example, generally show a reasonably high level of community support already exists for the idea of greater women's political representation, even though women are rarely elected (Haley et al. 2015; McMurray 2012).

Advocacy and Networking

Development partners have supported local advocacy networks such as peak national women's councils, which have been an important source of support for women candidates. Development partners often support national women's organisations as part of broader gender or civil society programs, with the expectation that they will implement campaigns to support aspiring women candidates. In recent years, development partners have begun to develop more politically engaged programming that seeks to provide support that is more cognisant of and responsive to the political context in which support is delivered, such as the Pacific Leadership Programme's provision of technical support to the Women in Shared Decision-making (WiSDM) coalition in Vanuatu.

Research

Development partners are beginning to invest significant resources in research to provide an evidence base to inform better targeted programming. Research support has been incorporated as an activity under large gender programs (e.g. Australia's regional *Pacific Women* program includes a significant research component). Development partners have also supported research institutions such as ANU's SSGM to support a long-term research program on women's leadership

and decision-making in Melanesia. In addition to research projects, development partners have begun to focus on strengthening monitoring and evaluation frameworks to test program effectiveness and support continuous improvement efforts. While such efforts are welcome, the research base remains small (Haley and Zubrinich 2016) and there remains a need for more local level and longitudinal data. Monitoring and evaluation efforts are not yet sufficiently robust nor well incorporated at the program level to inform iterative and adaptive programming approaches that respond to lessons learned and emerging evidence at the activity level.

Institutional Reforms

Efforts to support electoral reforms to improve the electoral prospects of women constitute a separate strand of development partner support. Development partners have supported locally led efforts to progress institutional reforms such as the establishment of parliamentary quotas for women by way of temporary special measures (TSM).³ Support has included technical assistance to help with drafting of legislation and modest material assistance for advocacy groups to sustain campaigns. Efforts to introduce TSM in the Pacific have faced a range of challenges. These centre on technical issues regarding development of credible reform packages that respond to local electoral contexts and on developing effective political strategies to underpin reform campaigns. Most efforts to introduce TSM in the Pacific have foundered when they have faced political roadblocks, such as legislatures unwilling to introduce reforms to parliament. There have been notable exceptions — for example in Samoa, where a parliamentary-level gender quota has been introduced, and Vanuatu, which has implemented reserved seats at municipal level. Campaigners in Vanuatu, however, have faced significant resistance from both inside and outside parliament to the idea of instituting reserved seats at national level (see Ligo 27/5/2016; Tokona 4/6/2016).

Indirect Support for Women Candidates

Development partners have also supported women candidates indirectly through a range of gender programs, including women's economic empowerment and women's leadership programs. Such support is indirect because increasing

electoral representation is not an explicit objective, but the outcomes of program support may strengthen the capacity of women candidates to run for office. For example, programs to improve women's economic empowerment may

increase the resources available to potential women candidates over time. Efforts to support women's leadership in the public sector and civil society may also improve the profile of potential candidates as successful leaders.

4. Where Are the Gaps?

Development partner support has been important in sustaining basic momentum behind efforts to improve women's political representation. However, the relatively limited success of women candidates in elections in the region suggests that approaches have not engaged effectively with critical obstacles preventing women's electoral success. We offer the following observations of where there are gaps in the support currently provided by development partners:

Theories of Change Are Too Generic

In providing support, development partners have rarely articulated specific theories of change focused on helping women win election campaigns.⁴ Oftentimes, support for women candidates is treated as an input to strengthen women's leadership, rather than as a specific object of development partner support. It is rare to see electoral assistance spell out clearly how it responds to local political economies and how it will empower aspiring women candidates to beat their counterparts. Development partner programs need to be informed by politically responsive theories of change which engage directly with local-level electoral dynamics and set out a clear logic about how specific types of support are best placed to empower women to win specific election campaigns.

A Poor Evidence Base

Few assistance programs for women candidates have drawn effectively on the available evidence base. This partly reflects the paucity of the evidence available. For example, McLeod (2015:3) has observed recently that '[t]here is limited evidence about the factors underpinning women's successful entry into parliament'. It is certainly true that the evidence base is low, and there are significant gaps, particularly at the local level. However, it is also fair to say that development partner programs have not drawn systematically on the evidence available to inform program development and

monitor program effectiveness in relation to campaigning. One reason for this is that much support has been supply-driven, with international development partners often relying on generic programs developed for other regions. While it is important for development partners to draw on global experiences to identify innovative forms of support that may be relevant in the Pacific, there are too few examples of context-responsive programming developed in partnership with Pacific women. In a welcome sign, development partners have begun to invest significantly in research and monitoring and evaluation, but significant challenges remain in how best to incorporate a growing body of research into program development.

Sustained Support Over the Course of the Electoral Cycle

Given that successful candidates take a long-term approach, it makes sense that development partner support would be provided early and calibrated to respond to the changing demands women candidates face over the course of an electoral cycle. Too often, development partner support for women candidates is provided late in the electoral cycle, limiting prospects for impact. This is particularly evident with candidate training, with support often provided in the months immediately before an election at which point its potential to make a difference is more limited. One reason for the sporadic nature of candidate support is that it is often provided as a project-level activity rather than as part of a dedicated electoral program which is structured to sustain support over a period of time. Development partners have also only provided limited attention to issues of sequencing: how different types of support need to be calibrated over an electoral cycle. Assistance tends to drop off in the period immediately following an election, and is only ramped up in the final year of an electoral cycle when elections loom large on development partner radars.

Resourcing

Resource imbalances between male and female candidates are an important factor undermining the latter’s electoral prospects. While development partner support for women candidates theoretically looks to help address this resource imbalance, support in this area has been relatively modest and not commensurate with the scale of the imbalance. Material support has generally been confined to modest supplementary campaign resourcing. Development partners have flagged the need for more innovative responses to resource deficits, including interest in ‘venture capital’ approaches (AusAID 2012:20) and the use of EMILY’s List forms of crowdsourcing (Haley and Zubrinich 2015b). Yet there has been little evidence of innovation on the ground in the way they have sought to engage with this key obstacle.

Coordination

While there are many development partners supporting women candidates, coordination across the sector remains fragmented (although improving). This means that limited resources are often used in duplicative ways, and that gaps remain in terms of addressing acknowledged deficits. Competition between specialist development partners has undermined prospects for productive collaboration or sensible specialisation based on development partner comparative advantage. Recent investments by DFAT’s *Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development* program that seek to foster improved coordination and alignment over the long term are very welcome in this regard.

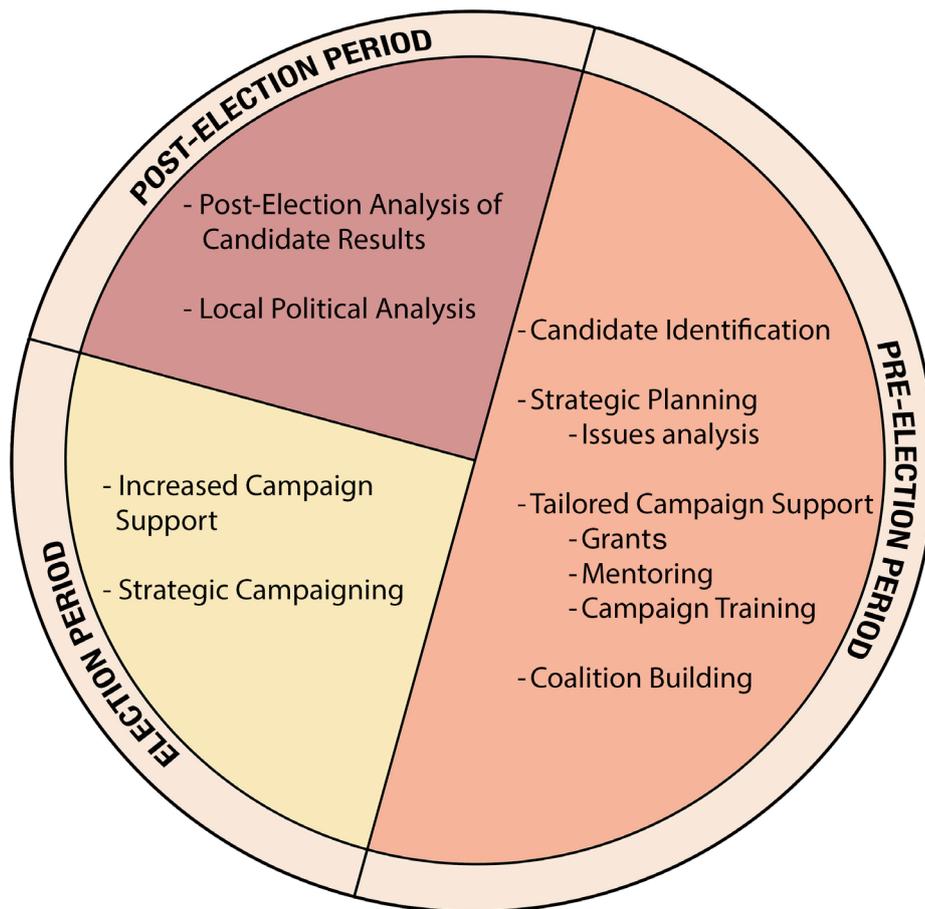


Figure 1. Electoral cycle approach to supporting prospective women.

Source: Adapted from Tuccinardi et al. (2007).

5. Supporting Women Candidates Better

The above review suggests there is a gap between program logics underlying development partner programs in this area and what the evidence base tells us about what is required to maximise prospects for electoral success. A key priority is to think more instrumentally about how to provide politically empowering forms of support for women candidates; that is, support that will help women to analyse political dynamics in the electorates they intend to contest and to develop strategies that accord with these dynamics. Support needs to move beyond a vague approach focused on developing generalised leadership attributes to engage directly with structural and social obstacles impeding women's prospects of election. According to the available evidence, we consider a more effective support approach would involve: political economy analysis of factors shaping local-level election competitions to inform the selection of candidates who receive programmatic support, including the seats they intend to contest and the development of strategic campaigns responding to local electoral circumstances; establishing structures to sustain candidate support over the electoral cycle and at the local level; increasing the focus on ways to address resource imbalances; and capacity-building approaches focused specifically on election campaigning including consolidating local support bases and building strong coalitions. The following are suggestions for support activities that we consider respond more directly to the extant evidence base:

Electoral Cycle Approach

The evidence demonstrates successful candidates' persistence in running strategic election campaigns over a sustained period of time. Successful candidates typically campaign over the course of an electoral cycle at a minimum, and more often throughout successive electoral cycles. The idea of an electoral cycle is used by election management bodies to calibrate preparations for future elections. Election management best practice requires officials to review the election in the immediate wake of the election, and to recommend and/or develop regulatory reforms responding to any issues identified by the review. Between elections, election management bodies typically undertake basic election preparations, such as updating voter rolls and refining administrative systems. In the year prior to an election, elec-

tion preparations intensify. The central idea of an electoral cycle is that management should be calibrated to election timeframes, with sustained preparation ensuring a systematic scale-up in the year leading up to an election.

A similar approach should inform how development partners provide support for potential and intending women candidates. Following an election, resources should be devoted to analysing local political economies, particularly local electoral politics, electoral competitions and factors influencing election outcomes. This analysis should then inform subsequent support, such as selection of support program participants, the implementation of activities that help women leaders to develop their profiles and reputations as effective local representatives and to develop strategies to consolidate and build their support bases. Support in an election year should be focused on providing mentoring to intending candidates regarding the implementation of their campaign strategies. Figure 1 sets out an example of an electoral cycle approach to supporting women leaders and intending women candidates.

An electoral cycle approach will require the establishment of specific engagement mechanisms to help development partners provide strategically targeted forms of support over the electoral cycle, and to reach prospective candidates in rural and provincial areas. Implementing such an approach will demand partnerships with groups and organisations across the countries in question.

Local Political Economy Analysis

More effective development partner programs need to respond directly to local-level political dynamics and election conditions. This requires granular analysis of how local election competitions play out. Factors such as the impact of incumbency, vote shares and mapping, the impact of political culture at the local level (such as the degree to which electorates are patrilineal or matrilineal, for example) and the nature of local politico-economic interests. Such analysis would help to inform prospective women candidates' decisions about where they contest subsequent elections.

Candidate Identification

Quality local-level political economy analysis would help development partners and activists to think more strategically about which prospective candidates may be well placed to succeed in an election competition. Owing to a range of factors, including incumbency, some electorates are more open to competition than others. Here, candidate selection may help strengthen the prospects for electoral success. As noted above, the evidence suggests that successful candidates have certain characteristics such as strong local connections, and reputations as good local representatives. Political economy analysis is also likely to reveal electorate characteristics with which prospective candidates must engage. These might include the dominance of certain groups or elites, or salient development issues which may serve as the basis for building voter support. Development partners should seek to concentrate support in favour of prospective candidates that are well placed to conduct strong election campaigns. Ideally, this means developing selection criteria that can be used to identify strong prospective candidates so as to better concentrate limited resources. Support programs should also foreseeably encourage potential candidates to consider how well positioned they are to contest in particular elections, based on those characteristics common to candidates who have won or polled well there. Given the importance of strong local connections in successful election campaigns, ensuring that selection processes include prospective women candidates from outside urban capitals is essential.

Bridging Resourcing Gaps

Given the importance of adequate and sustained resourcing of election campaigns over the electoral cycle noted above, providing support that helps women candidates respond to resource gaps is a key challenge and a priority. Development partners face legal and political constraints in this regard. They cannot be seen to interfere in local elections by favouring specific women candidates. In some instances, this has resulted in the provisions of modest in-kind resource supplementation (such as for printing costs for election campaign material), although evidence suggests that this approach is not particularly effective, for the most part because the resources delivered do not go far to address the scale of the imbalance and the quantum of funds required.

Development partners need to develop clear protocols to manage risks and set clear parameters around resource

supplementation activities. One way of navigating associated political sensitivities is to focus on building the capacity of aspiring candidates to raise funds, rather than directly providing resources. Several innovative approaches to fundraising have been trialled in recent elections in the Pacific Islands, with female candidates using contacts in Australia and New Zealand to raise money for their campaigns.

Support for networking and coalition formation could be an important way in which development partners could support women candidates to respond to moneyed political relationships that constitute a profound structural obstacle to electoral success. Those could include helping female candidates to establish international networks for support.⁵ An alternative that could have more widespread benefits would be the establishment of an organisation like EMILY's List to coordinate fundraising for Pacific female candidates. In the United States and Australia, EMILY's List has an explicitly pro-choice agenda which would be politically untenable in a Melanesian context. But by adopting a philosophy aimed at women's economic empowerment and ending violence against women, such lists in Melanesian countries should have little opposition.

The method adopted by EMILY's List is to identify, early in the electoral cycle, the seats obtainable and the women candidates likely to have a chance and then to provide material and logistical help. This would differ from past support programs in terms of its targeted nature to competitive candidates in winnable seats, and in terms of its long-term approach providing support across an electoral cycle. While such an initiative could not and should not get involved in money politics or gifting, they could provide support with transport costs, posters and media advertising (when and if appropriate and consistent with laws and campaign finance regulations). Context-specific training and mentoring could also form a part of this approach.

Political Capacity Building

To win elections, successful candidates must mount credible campaigns that engage with the political context of the electorates in which they are running. This requires them to understand the political system which they inhabit, including the actors, formal and informal institutions, rules and context which interact to frame elections (Barbara and Haley 2014; Leftwich 2006); and master the 'rules of the game' (Leftwich 2006) which condition electoral competitions. In the case of elections, the key formal institution is the electoral system in place, while important informal institutions

include factors such as culture, kin and ethnic relationships and the impact of patronage and clientelist networks which condition local electoral competitions. Support that is politically salient and electorally effective would logically help aspiring women candidates better understand the institutional context and the rules of the game, and then support them to develop politically effective campaigns that respond realistically to these rules.

Development partners have become increasingly interested in ‘thinking and working politically’ (Leftwich 2011) when providing support. This means providing forms of assistance which respond to the incentives and obstacles created by local political economies. The challenge facing donors is to provide forms of support that are technically neutral (that is to say, support which is provided with a focus on technical issues and does not seek to interfere in local political competitions) but also politically responsive. Politically responsive support could be delivered through analytical assistance — helping women candidates assess the political dynamics that govern the electorates in which they might run. It could also include forms of technical assistance focused on political strategising — drawing on the evidence base to develop innovative campaign strategies. One example is the work of the Pacific Leadership Program (PLP) with the Women in Shared Decision-Making (WiSDM) coalition in Vanuatu, which has focused on strengthening the capacity of women’s groups to exercise collective action in support of strategic reforms. In the case of WiSDM, a well-targeted reform campaign led to the institution of reserved seats for women on municipal councils in Port Vila and Luganville (see PLP 2016). Such approaches rely on flexible programming to provide behind-the-scenes support to local actors, a long-term approach focused on securing concrete policy reforms, and a tolerance for political risk on the part of development partners.

Building Politically Powerful Electoral Coalitions

One area which is receiving particular attention from programs such as the PLP is the importance of coalition building to undertake collective action. The capacity to form politically decisive coalitions is an important factor influencing the electoral prospects of any candidate. Depending on the nature of the electorate, this may require obtaining the support of specific individuals and groups such as influential chiefly leaders and business people. Different groups within an electorate will have different priorities, and can-

didates may need to adopt a range of strategies to build effective coalitions. Development partner programs have for some time sought to fund a range of women’s organisations which have worked to provide a support network for women candidates. Such an approach does not appear to have been particularly successful in straddling the broad range of groups across electorates that need to be included in politically decisive coalitions. Some of the more successful political campaigns pursued by women in the region have been notable for their strategic approach to coalition formation. For example, the short bus routes campaign mounted by the Young Women’s Parliamentary Group, while not an electoral campaign, provides an interesting example of an issue-based campaign that has leveraged broad community support and a coalition of decision-makers to progress a public policy issue relevant to local communities (Parliament of Solomon Islands 2013; Spark 2014).

Building decisive political coalitions to improve electoral prospects requires locally responsive campaign approaches. Issues such as the choice of campaign manager, the type of campaign promises made and the cultural appropriateness of campaign messaging will all come in to play. Wood (2015:16) has noted the importance of influential local figures in delivering vote blocs.

Support for Institutional Reforms

Successful institutional reform in terms of women’s political representation in the Pacific Islands has generally depended on capturing the appropriate ‘window of opportunity’ for reform, and gaining the support of critical political actors. In such cases, development partner support for institutional reform campaigns has tended to be modest, providing specific technical assistance to help local actors develop reform proposals. Development partner support for political strategising could include assistance with analytical mapping of the reform environment and technical support focused on issues-based campaigning.

Past attempts to incorporate gender reforms into party-strengthening legislation in the region have not led to significant advances in women’s political participation as candidates and representatives. Other methods of incorporating gendered components into such legislation, however, could work. One suggestion in PNG is to allow parties to endorse a second candidate in constituencies provided that one of the candidates is a woman. Another institutional approach would be to encourage the participation of women in political party structures, perhaps by gender-specified positions

on party executives. Care would need to be taken, however, to ensure these positions were not seen as ‘tokenistic’ and devoid of influence within the parties.

While helping local advocates identify context-appropriate reform models can be easily supported with the provision of technical support, most reform efforts face significant political obstacles in terms of gaining parliamentary support. Development partners seeking to support the introduction of TSMs need to devote greater resources to supporting campaigners develop politically effective reform strategies. This means considering how to secure support from a range of actors including political parties, parliamentary actors and regulatory agencies. Reform options should also consider the pathways of least resistance. In Vanuatu, advocates chose to focus on reserved seats at the municipal level as it was felt there would be fewer opponents at this level and that, once achieved, the demonstration effect could be leveraged to support a national- or provincial-level reform campaign. In many cases, seeking regulatory (non-legislative) change is potentially an easier space to work within.

Managing Risks for Innovative Programming

While there is a need for greater innovation and more responsive development partner support for women candidates, it should also be acknowledged that providing such support can entail risk for development partners and, potentially, women recipients.

There are a range of significant program risks associated with providing support for women candidates. These include:

- > Political risks related to perceptions of political interference by external development partners. These are likely to be exacerbated if a candidate receiving support is successful, driven by disgruntled male candidates.
- > Security risks for recipients of significant development partner support and their supporters, where they are potentially targeted by competing candidates with threats, intimidation and physical violence.
- > Implementation risks related to the challenges of providing sustained support over the course of an electoral cycle.

Mitigating risks requires responding to local circumstances. Key mitigation efforts should include:

Encouraging local ownership and leadership: Development partner support should be delivered in ways that empower local activists and support locally-led initiatives.

Early support mobilisation: Electoral competition early in an electoral cycle will be less intense. Providing support earlier in an electoral cycle will enable recipients to establish robust governance arrangements and develop local relationships which will buttress campaign approaches at the height of electoral campaigns. The provision of support early in the electoral cycle is also likely to be most useful to prospective candidates.

Development of open support systems: Perceptions of favouritism could be mitigated by making some support provided to candidates gender neutral. For example, opening up innovative financing capacity-building programs to a broader group of candidates may be one option (and could potentially benefit marginal male candidates who will commit to legislative goals around gender equality).

Politically neutral but effective modalities: Development partners should look to provide politically neutral, technical forms of support in politically empowering ways. A key issue is the way in which technical support (advisory assistance or capacity-building support) is provided. For example, research partnerships can be used to support local political economy analysis that can then be used by candidates to inform campaign approaches.

6. Conclusions: Delivering More Effective Support

The aims of the June workshop, and this synthesis report, were to review the evidence base for support for female candidates in the Melanesian context and to evaluate how development partners might make use of this evidence base to deliver more effective support on the ground. At this point, we would like to reiterate that the evidence base is small and future research in this area would be of great benefit to more fully understanding how best to support aspiring female candidates. But drawing on what is available, we conclude the report with five key recommendations that could enable the creation of more effective support programs for female candidates.

1. Deepening the Evidence Base

First, continue to invest development resources to deepen the evidence base, particularly around political economy research about how electoral competition occurs at the local level. Such research should be conducted collaboratively with intending women candidates and their supporters. There is also a need for development partners to draw on existing research evidence more in providing support.

2. Enabling Development Partners to Reach and Support Candidates During Electoral Cycles

Second, responding to the evidence base requires development partners to reach a diverse range of often remote prospective candidates and provide them with different forms of support over the long term. This requires the development of engagement structures that can support more programmatic approaches to support women candidates which are calibrated to the electoral cycle.

3. Flexible, Innovative and Tailored Support Modalities

Third, develop a more flexible suite of engagement modalities that can provide support for women candidates to tailor campaign strategies at the local level. This individualised focus must incorporate local electorate knowledge in order to maximise the chances of electoral success. Such modalities could include research partnerships with academic institutions to support women candidates to under-

take electorate-level political economy analyses; mentoring resources so that women candidates can develop strategic campaign plans early in the electoral cycle (drawing on political economy research); and support for strengthened regional partnerships with international NGOs to help women develop more innovative finance strategies.

4. Robust Governance Arrangements

Fourth, robust and inclusive governance arrangements are required that facilitate strong local ownership of support programs. This is necessary to ensure support approaches are well targeted and context appropriate, but also to manage risks including perceptions of political interference. Program structures should include representation from a range of local stakeholders including past successful male and female candidates, activists, civil society groups, relevant institutions such as political party registrars and development partners.

5. Development Partner Coordination

Finally, development partner coordination mechanisms need to be strengthened. In this way, development partners can work better and more strategically together to support women candidates over the course of an electoral cycle. Working out where development partner strengths lie and how support can be coordinated to maximise the impact of interventions should be a priority.

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Endnotes

- 1 See the [Inter-Parliamentary Union](#) Women in Politics database; note that their statistics for the 'Pacific' region include Australia and New Zealand, countries which are excluded in the figures given in this report.
- 2 In the 2012 election in PNG, candidates who participated in money politics generally performed better than other candidates (Haley and Zubrinich 2013). Incumbent MPs — overwhelmingly men — have access to increasingly large constituency funding to support their electoral prospects (Batley 2015). It is perhaps no coincidence that incumbency rates in the 2014 national election in Solomon Islands coincided with significant increases in constituency funding available to MPs in the last term of parliament (Haley et al. 2015). Corruption also poses a major challenge for aspiring candidates in Melanesia. Vote buying is a particular challenge, although its illegality makes it difficult to quantify (Wood 2015). Candidates deploy a range of strategies to buy votes and influence electoral outcomes, not all of which are effective. Voter rolls in the region have been notoriously inflated (although the shift to biometric registration in Solomon Islands appears to have improved this). Election observations in PNG and Solomon Islands have documented how candidates have used cash and gifts to influence voters, with many feeling coerced to accept money and gifts offered to them by candidates and/or their agents (Haley and Zubrinich 2013; Haley et al. 2015).
- 3 Regarding models, most institutional approaches to the issue of women's political under-representation have focused on temporary special measures as these can be easily fused onto most electoral systems. Other approaches include gendered components of party strengthening legislation, electoral procedures and campaign finance regulations. Legislation designed to increase political stability and to strengthen political parties has often included a gendered component. In PNG, the Organic Law on the Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates (OLIPPAC) includes a provision that any party which endorses a female candidate who goes on to win at least 10 per cent of votes in her electorate is refunded 75 per cent of her campaign expenses. This led to an increase in party endorsement among female candidates in the next election, but the number of successful female candidates actually decreased. The 2014 Political Parties Integrity Act in Solomon Islands included some weak provisions designed to encourage the selection of women candidates, with a minimum requirement of 10 per cent women's representation on party lists, and a grant of SBD\$10,000 per successful woman candidate to be paid to the political party that endorsed her. In the election that year just 3 out of 12 political parties endorsed more than 10 per cent women candidates, with half of all registered parties endorsing none. In general, the provisions on women's political participation in such legislation tend to be weak, and the incentives ineffective. It is notable that in the national elections in Solomon Islands, party strengthening measures were circumvented by candidates with the majority of successful candidates having run as independents (Haley et al. 2015).
- 4 Theories of change seek to explain how a desired change may happen in a development context. They are used by programs to inform the type of support provided and the strategic approach used to achieve a desired development objective. For example, DFAT's *Pacific Women* program (AusAID 2012:20–22) seeks to empower women through a range of 'direct' and 'underlying' interventions that seek to overcome structural obstacles: 'Change requires both underlying and direct interventions. It can be unpredictable. **Underlying interventions in positive social change, women's advocacy, health and education** are necessary to buttress **direct interventions in the areas of women's decision making, economic opportunity and reducing violence**. In combination, the interaction of underlying and direct interventions will lead to an increase in women's agency, which will in turn increase the opportunity for Pacific women to participate more fully in social and economic life.' (ibid.:4) [original emphasis]
- 5 Such assistance would need to be cognizant of relevant campaign financing rules and other legislative and regulatory provisions regarding external assistance.



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