



Gender & Local Government

A COMPARATIVE REGIONAL STUDY

In the Pacific

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Gender & Local Government in the Pacific

A Comparative Regional Study

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Table of Contents

	Page No
Abbreviations and Acronyms	
Executive Summary	5
I. Introduction	6
II. Background	8
III. The Current Situation	9
IV. Research methodology	10
V. Constitutional and Legal Frameworks	11
VI. Temporary Special Measures (TSM)	16
VII. Case Studies: Cook Islands, Kiribati, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu	17
1. Cook Islands	18
2. Kiribati	25
3. Solomon Islands	32
4. Vanuatu	45
Bibliography	58



List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

BPfA	Beijing Platform for Action
BTC	Betio Town Council
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women
CLGF	Commonwealth Local Government Forum
DLG	Department of Local Government
FPP	First Past the Post
GADD	Gender and Development Division
IWDA	International Women's Development Agency
LPV	Limited Preferential Vote
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NCW	National Council for Women
NWM	National Women's Machinery
NZAID	New Zealand Overseas Aid for Development
NGO	Non Government Organisation
PICs	Pacific Island countries
PP	Pacific Plan
PNG	Papua New Guinea
PR	Proportional Representation Systems
RPPA	Revised Pacific Platform for Action on Advancement of Women and Gender Equality
RCDF	Rural Community Development Fund
TSM	Temporary Special Measures
TUC	Teinainano Urban Council
UNDEF	United Nations Democracy Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Fund for Women
WDO	Women's Development Officer

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This comparative report has been prepared for the Pacific Commonwealth Local Government Forum and the International Women's Development Agency. The objective of the research is to identify existing special measures, both formal and informal, at the local government level and produce a comparative analysis as a platform whereby Pacific local governments can begin to integrate gender equality into the decision making processes and the delivery of services. Through desk research a comparative analysis of eight CLGF member countries was undertaken. Four countries were then selected for detailed case studies. In addition, as part of this larger research specific projects were selected to highlight the important role of local government in promoting and advancing gender equality through temporary special measures.

For the Pacific region women's right to vote has been in place since independence. In spite of this, women's participation at national decision making level continues to lag behind as compared to men. In the same way, women are underrepresented in local governments in the Pacific region. Based on the four country case studies statistics show the percentage of women in local government is well below 5%. This is despite the existence of constitutional rights and the ratification of a number of key international, regional and national policies that espouse gender equality at the decision making level in all sectors. Women still experience fundamental inequalities which closely tie the roles of women to their reproductive and domestic roles, and politics are perceived as not suitable for them. Although women make up at least half of the electorate in almost all countries and have attained the right to vote, women continue to be seriously under-represented as candidates for public office. The traditional working patterns of local government structures continue to be barriers to women's participation in local government offices. Women may be discouraged from seeking political office by discriminatory attitudes and practices, family and child-care responsibilities, and the high cost of seeking and holding public office.

The introduction of quotas systems for women in local government in many countries has resulted in significant increases in the number of women being elected and employed. For the four countries studied: Cook Islands, Kiribati, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu temporary special measures can be achieved either by direct election or through nominations. Statutory provisions for elected and nominated members are discussed separately under each country. As suggested in the report these measures must be accompanied by other measures and includes:

- For a gender responsive environment, consideration could also be given to developing the local government administrations' policies and strategies that are gender inclusive.
- Considerable support and training is needed to assist women to learn the way in which the political environment works and support is also needed to help them fulfil both their public and private roles.
- Voter education should accompany the various options discussed and capacity building is necessary for members of the local government targeting councillors and administrations of councils.
- Identification of male champions would be critical to such initiatives and provides the unique opportunity for males to take collective responsibility for gender equality.
- Establishing a comprehensive data base on membership of councils and committees to inform policy development and to make visible the participation of women.

The specific projects studied also demonstrate how Pacific women have displayed considerable leadership in community and informal organisations and making a difference in their personal and family lives, the community and contributing to national level development.

I. INTRODUCTION

The founding principle of local level governments is that citizen's have a right to influence the decisions that affect their lives. A key way of doing this is their ability to elect local representatives who can lead and impact their local environment. This implies a fair representation by all sections of the community. In recent decades there is mounting evidence and demand for the inclusion of women and minorities in elected office. It is argued that women bring different perspectives, views and concerns to decision making. Their lack of representation at the local government level therefore means that local government policies and programmes are devoid of women's specific interests. Women in politics and decision-making positions in Governments and legislative bodies contribute to redefining political priorities, placing new items on the political agenda that reflect and address women's gender-specific concerns, values and experiences, and providing new perspectives on mainstream political issues.

Local level government is a major route through which the voice and interests of local people, through their elected representatives, can be brought to bear on the national and local institutions which provide local services. This requires independent, strong and effective local government that is transparent and accountable to the people. Local governments require the devolution of powers from central (national) to local level governments' representatives and the citizens. In practice however, as is often experienced within the Pacific and demonstrated in the four countries studied, effective running and delivery of services by local governments are often hampered by a combination of different factors such as lack of finance as most depend on the national governments for core budgetary provisions, lack of capacity, unclear lines of communications and over centralised control by the national governments, rendering local governance ineffective.

The role, therefore, of councillors and councils is critical in ensuring that local services are responsive to the needs of all sections of the local communities. Given this unique mandate, decision making at the local government level should be representative of its electorate. An examination of the composition of councillors in the countries studied, however, indicate there is still bias towards males reaffirming the stereotypical notion that politics is a male bastion.

The Pacific Island countries (PICs) are party to a number of international and regional conventions or commitments that espouse gender equality at the decision making level in all sectors. Chief among this is the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination (CEDAW). In expressing commitment to the empowerment of women, the 1995 the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) affirmed that: "Women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making process and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace". In addition PICs have endorsed key policy frameworks including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), The Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015, the Revised Pacific Platform for Action on Advancement of Women and Gender Equality (RPPA) 2005-2015 and the Pacific Plan. All these policy frameworks emphasise the promotion of gender equality and encourage the government to take action to increase the participation of women in decision-making in political, public and private sectors, with the adoption of at least a 30% target for women's representation. Thus, the PICs constitutional framework

and international commitments provide an enabling environment for the advancement of women and the promotion of gender equality at the local government level.

While this is so, women are still largely underrepresented at most levels of government, including the local government, and this is especially true in Pacific where the countries have made little progress in attaining the target endorsed by the Economic and Social Council of having 30% women in positions at decision-making levels by 1995. Current fundamental political, economic and social changes experienced have seen a significant decrease in the number of women represented in decision making levels. Although women make up at least half of the electorate in almost all countries and have attained the right to vote, women continue to be seriously under-represented as candidates for public office. The traditional working patterns of many political parties and government structures continue to be barriers to women's participation in public life. Women may be discouraged from seeking political office by discriminatory attitudes and practices, family and child-care responsibilities, and the high cost of seeking and holding public office. The low proportion of women among economic and political decision makers at the local, national, regional and international levels reflects structural and attitudinal barriers that need to be addressed through positive measures.

As noted, to-date women still have limited access to the traditional avenues of power, such as the decision-making bodies of political parties and employer organisations. However, similar to other societies, Pacific women have demonstrated considerable leadership in community and informal organisations, as well as in public office. As such, women have gained access to power through alternative structures, particularly in the nongovernmental organisation (NGO) sector. Through non-governmental organisations and grass-roots organisations, women have been able to articulate their interests and concerns and have placed women's issues on the national, regional and international agendas.

II. BACKGROUND

A Project Summary

The Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF), as the local government arm of the Commonwealth, seeks to support and sustain local democracy in nine Pacific Island Commonwealth Countries: Cook Islands, Fiji Islands, Kiribati, Samoa, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. CLGF works with local government and other stakeholders in the Pacific region to strengthen local democracy, institutions and service delivery capacity of sub-national governments. Drawing on comparative analysis and experience, CLGF works to strengthen good governance, support capacity building through exchange of best practices, enhance political equality and participation and develop local democratic institutions and practices. The inclusive and responsive nature of these local government institutions is considered to be of particular importance if there is to be effective governance, benefiting a wide spectrum of groups in society. In this context, CLGF is committed to promoting the participation and representation of women in decision making levels and local government political life.

The research is an initiative of CLGF in collaboration with the International Women's Development Agency (IWDA) and funded by the United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF). CLGF promotes women's right to engage and participate in local governance activities as councillors, staff members and constituents of municipal councils. In particular it focuses on women's accessibility and participation at the decision making levels to achieve gender equality. It is in this regard that temporary special measures (TSM) as a mechanism to accelerate and increase the participation of women has been the focus of much debate and research world-wide and in the Pacific.

A preliminary scan of local government in the Pacific by CLGF revealed that special measures exist at the local government level. The lack of implementation of these provisions is due to a number of factors including the lack of knowledge of their existence. This research is intended to identify and document these best practices in the Pacific, producing a comparative analysis and providing a platform whereby Pacific local governments can begin to integrate gender equality into the decision making processes and the delivery of services.

Due to challenges faced in accessing formal decision making mechanisms, women have organised themselves through alternative power structures, particularly in the nongovernmental organisation sector. Through nongovernmental organisations and grassroots organisations, women have been able to articulate their interests and concerns and have placed women's issues on the national, regional and international agendas. Women have demonstrated considerable leadership in community and informal organizations, as well as in public office. However, socialisation and negative stereotyping of women and men reinforces the tendency for local government decision-making to remain the domain of men. Community track record is, to an extent, a precondition for council nomination and election, as found in the research. It was therefore important to document women's development efforts at community levels, through case studies to demonstrate the legality of these claims where women are concerned.

Through desk research a comparative analysis of eight¹ of the nine CLGF member countries was undertaken. The analysis is limited due, to some extent, to the limitation in data and on-line literature available, particularly in terms of current practice as benchmarked against statutory provisions. Four countries were identified for detailed case studies. Every effort was made to further examine the use of formal and informal special measures by the local governments studied. Attempts were also made to identify case studies to document, within these countries, the experiences of both women and men and the changes that have happened.

III. The CURRENT SITUATION

For the Pacific region women's right to vote has been in place since independence. In spite of this, women's participation at national decision making level continues to lag behind as compared to men. In the same way, women are underrepresented in local governments in the Pacific region. Based on the four country case studies statistics show the percentage of women in local government is below 5%. With the exception of Kiribati, there are even fewer women represented in management positions of local governments' administration. The higher number of women in local government administration in Kiribati is not necessarily the result of deliberate gender policy neither has it resulted in a gender equality administration, programmes or services delivered.

While it is often argued that local government provides a unique opportunity to increase the number of women at decision making level because it is the level of government that is closest to the electorate, is potentially most accessible to women² and is often the first step into political decision making arena, it is nevertheless a level where the most resistance to woman's participation can be experienced because of cultural norms and values. Due to women's subordinate position in society, they continue to face multiple barriers in achieving equality with men in all sectors of development including the local government levels. Often their participation at local government level is hampered by their biologically determined needs and experiences and discriminations that they face in cultural and social institutions. Attesting to this phenomenon is the fact that more than a decade after the declaration of the BPfA in 1995 and the coming into force of the CEDAW in 1979, the stated goals for women's participation in decision making are still far from being achieved.

In spite of this, women's participation at the local government level has been overlooked, yet it provides one of the principal opportunities of progressing women's participation at decision making level. Women's participation at the local government is increasing. The increase however is incremental and in some councils has actually regressed, supporting the justification for temporary special measures to accelerate women's participation at the local government.

Whereas it can be expected that women are likely to be councillors in urban or town councils, this is not necessarily the case as revealed in the research. For the four countries (Cook Islands, Kiribati, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu) women councillors have been more successful in the island or provincial councils with two women holding mayoral positions. With the exception of Vanuatu where candidates are nominated as party candidates; active community and religious participation is a prerequisite for candidature to local government elections. Committee systems in local governments varied in terms of impact, with most of these lacking women's representation. There is no data currently available in an aggregated form on either the number of committees or their composition. Initiatives taken by political parties, NGOs, women's associations and other civil society organisations

¹ Fiji, due to the 'abrogation' of the constitution and its suspension from the Commonwealth is not discussed in this report.

² CLGF, IWDA & UNDEF, 2010. *Strengthening Women's Participation in Municipal Governance (SWPMG): Where Are the Women*. Suva. 2010

to increase women's participation in local elections and for educating women voters have been marginal so far. Only in the case of a very few local authorities have efforts been made to (indirectly) set up women's organisations and only for specific sectors such as road markets. Programmes undertaken by urban local government institutions to encourage women to participate in governance or to obtain their views for purposes of planning and development have also been negligible.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Desk research and literature review

The research was preceded by desk research of available literature to identify and review formal and informal TSM provisions, to gain an understanding and identify the current developments within local governments. This included a review of the constitution, relevant national legislations, policies, reports and studies undertaken by international, regional and civil societies and academic institutions.

Structured one to one questionnaires

Two sets of questionnaires were developed to guide the interviews. The first was targeted towards councilors to gauge the perceptions and views of female and male councillors with regard to female participation, focusing on both access and participation of women councillors at the local government levels. The second questionnaire was geared towards ministries directly responsible for local government, the local government administration and political parties, where applicable, focusing on the political will and the organisational culture of the organisation. These provided the basis for quantitative analysis of the research. The qualitative analysis of understanding and analysis of those interviewed in respect of concrete demonstrations of political will, or lack of it, was also obtained through the questionnaires. Documenting actions or nonaction in specific areas that can be compared across organisations within countries highlights strengths and gaps as well as areas for potential intervention. Areas of strengths in internal awareness and systems and can be used to collate commonalities and gaps for recommendations to improve and increase internal organisation culture that supports gender in local government.

Meetings, where possible, were also held with donors and development partners to ascertain the level of engagement with local governments and to discuss development projects that are currently implemented.

Semi structured interviews

To acquire greater insight, councilors were identified to profile the following:

- The enabling and supportive factors for election into the councils
- Women councilors to identify obstacles to effective participation
- Women councilors and their different interests and concerns to men
- Male councilors to demonstrate perceptions of women's participation at the local level
- The changing attitudes towards women's participation at local government levels

Focus Groups discussions

Focus groups discussions employing force field techniques were used to identify supportive and constraining factors to gender equality at the local government level and with the assistance of the group, to identify projects for case studies. Women's non-government organisations, civil societies and donors (where possible) were part of the discussions.

Case studies

The case studies identified and researched local government level measures to promote women's participation. Where relevant, case studies are focused on women councilor's projects to demonstrate the substantive and positive contribution and impacts experienced at the community level due to women's participation at the local government levels.

V. CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS

1. Constitutional Framework

a. Constitution and Local Government

For all the Pacific Island states, the constitutions of these countries establish the *main* organs of government and define the relationship of the people of that country to those organs of government³. As such the constitution does not usually establish the organs of local government, such as city, town and provincial councils. There are exceptions to this and as noted (Hassall & Tipu: 2008) for the eight countries under review, four of these countries (Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu) have constitutional provisions for local government whilst Cook Islands, Samoa, Tonga and Tuvalu do not. The Kiribati Constitution makes reference to the Banaban Island Council but other local level governments are provided for in the locally enacted legislation.

b. Constitution and Fundamental Rights

The constitution of each country in the region also defines and protects the rights and freedoms of people of that country in relation to those organs of government. The inclusion of this framework of fundamental rights is important, as it provides a ready-made framework for gender equality work and advocacy. With some variations on one issue of a general nature, the constitutions, while guaranteeing equality before the law and the protection of the law without discrimination on the grounds of sex, are limited and do not expressly articulate the principle of equality between men and women, nor contain a definition on discrimination against women covering both direct and indirect discrimination with regard to acts of private and public actors.

Part IVA of the Cook Islands Constitution sets out the fundamental human rights provisions for the nation. Section 64 (1) guarantees equal protection under the law 'without discrimination on the grounds of sex'⁴. Chapter II, s 3 of the Kiribati and the Solomon Islands constitutions contain the Bill of Rights provisions that state that every person is entitled to the fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual irrespective of race, place of origin, political opinions, colour, creed or sex. Section 15 (1) – (4) of the Solomon Islands Constitution contains a specific anti-discrimination definition on the grounds of sex or gender⁵. This anti-discrimination clause extends to direct and indirect discrimination and provides a mechanism for achievement of gender equality. The Papua New Guinea Constitution, under its national goals and directive principles, gives every right to any man or woman the opportunity to fully develop as a person in relation to others. In addition, the second goal of the Constitution under the equality and participation goal, is for all citizens to have equal opportunity to participate in, and benefit from, the development of Papua New Guinea (PNG).⁶ Basic rights and the exceptions are described under Division 3 of the Constitution. The Constitution, however, does not

³ Jennifer Corrin and Don Paterson. 2007. *Introduction To South Pacific Law*. London and New York

⁴ Constitution of the Cook Islands (as of July 2004 including Amendments 1 – 27)

⁵ Refer to SICEAW Legislative Compliance Review for a full discussion.

⁶ PNG Constitution. http://www.pacilii.org/pg/legis/consol_act/cotisopng534/, accessed 12 October, 2010.

define discrimination or have a specific antidiscrimination clause that does guarantee substantive equality between men and women.

Article 4 of the Constitution of Tonga guarantees equal rights for all citizens declaring that there is only one law “for chiefs and commoners and for non-Tongans and Tongans”⁷ (Amended by Act 3 of 1976). This is often interpreted as guaranteeing women equal legal rights although this is not the case in practice. The absence of a specific definition of discrimination or of discrimination against women in the Constitution gives rise to explicit and implicit discriminations against women. This also means that lawmakers can continue to enact legislations that are not consistent with the principle of non-discrimination or equality as the Constitution does not provide a standard against which to measure all subordinate legislations and practices. Part II of the Tuvalu Constitution and chapter 2, Part I of the Vanuatu Constitution provide for the protection of the fundamental rights and freedoms of the people, on the basis, amongst others, of sex. Part II of the Samoan constitution expresses both rights and freedoms, and also the exceptions in detailed terms.

c. *Fundamental Rights and Customary Laws*

It is important to note that an increasing focus is the relationship between fundamental rights as provided for in the constitutions and customary law. As evident in the research, the practice of customary laws and traditions as a way of life for the Pacific peoples is cited as one of the major challenges to the participation of women at decision making levels. The custom where women are forbidden from ‘standing in the front and speaking’ in the maneabas (public meeting house) except through the old men representatives, or in the nakamal (traditional meeting house usually reserved for men only), demonstrates this dilemma and can be argued, influences attitudes and perceptions witnessed in the formal decision making structures due to stereotypical attitudes of gender roles. In Cook Islands, Kiribati and Tonga, the constitution do not expressly recognise custom as a formal source of law, thus the fundamental rights can be interpreted as having priority over custom. In Solomon Islands the constitution clearly stipulates that customary law is part of the legal system of the country, but subject to the constitution⁸. The position in Samoa differs in that the constitution clearly recognises customs as having the force of law, but presumably this would be subject to the constitution as the supreme law. The Constitution of Tuvalu on the other hand provides for the express provision for the protection of Tuvaluan values, culture and traditions⁹ when exercising fundamental rights. In Vanuatu, the Constitution recognises both fundamental rights and customary laws but does not state that one is subordinate to the other. These examples demonstrate the ‘tension’ between fundamental rights and customs which is open to interpretation in the court of law when claims to denial of fundamental rights based on sex as against the accepted and practiced customs and traditional norms.

d. *Women’s Human Rights and Customary Laws*

More specifically the survey, through desk research and interviews, has revealed that there is evidence of conflicts between women’s human rights and customary laws. In the case of Vanuatu fundamental rights including the rights of women over customary law was upheld and the court noting that ‘failure to treat women equally ...was a substantial breach of the Constitution’¹⁰. In the Solomon Islands case, however, the judiciary had allowed customary law to override the right to equality. This is the case of the Guadalcanal Provincial Assembly whereby area assemblies consisted of 50% elected members and 50% non-elected chiefs and elders. The judiciary noted because only males could be traditional chiefs it

⁷ Constitution of Tonga, s 4.

⁸ Constitution of the Solomon Islands, Sched 3, para 3. http://www.pacii.org/sb/legis/consol_act/c1978167/, accessed 21 November, 2010

⁹ Constitution of Tuvalu, s 29. http://www.pacii.org/tv/legis/consol_act/cot277/, accessed 21 November, 2010.

¹⁰ Jennifer Corrin and Don Paterson. 2007. *Introduction To South Pacific Law*. London and New York

therefore meant that 50% of the members of the area assembly would be males and the right to elect provincial government members would be heavily biased towards males. The act therefore effectively denied females equal opportunity. Constitutional provisions governing these matters are not clear and contribute to the continued tension between fundamental human rights and freedoms and customary laws. These are matters that require a delicate balance taking into account the specific circumstance of the region, the responsibilities to others and cultural heritage.

Table 1: Constitutional/Legal Provisions/Elections for Local Governments

Country	Constitutional Provision	Legislation	Voting System	Compulsory level	Term	Next Election
Cook Islands	N/A	Outer Islands Local Government Act (1987) established the Island Councils. (A draft bill to amend the 1987 LG Act is still to be tabled before the House)	First past the post	Voluntary	4 years	2011
Kiribati	N/A	Local Government Act (1984)	Two round system	Voluntary	4 years	2011
Papua New Guinea	Part VIA, s 187 make provision for a system of provincial and local-level governments through the enactment of an organic law	Organic Law on Provincial Governments and Local level Governments 1995. Local Level Administration Act 1997. Provincial Governments Administration Act 1997	Limited preferential voting (LPV)	Voluntary	5 years	2013
Samoa	N/A	Village Fono Act 1990 Internal Affairs Act 1993	First past the post	Voluntary	5 years	2011
Solomon	Chap. XII, s 114	Local	First past	Voluntary	4 years	2010

Islands	provides for the political divisions of the Honiara city and provinces	Government Act (1996) makes provisions for the establishment, powers, composition and election of local government (councils) Honiara City Act (1999) establishes the Honiara City council, functions and powers	the post First past the post First past the post	Voting is voluntary. Turn out in the last election was dismal. Voluntary	4 years 4 years	2010 2010
		Provincial Government Act (1997), establishing eight provincial councils and area assemblies.				
Tonga	N/A	Cabinet is responsible for national and local government levels District and Town Officers Act (Cap 43)	First past the post and block voting	Voluntary	3 years	2010
Tuvalu	N/A	Falekaupule Act 1997	First past the post and block voting	Voluntary	4 years	2010
Vanuatu	N/A	Decentralisation and Local Government Regions Act (1994) established the provincial councils	Single non-transferable votes	Voluntary	4 years	2011

		Municipalities Act [Cap 126] provides for the establishment of the three town/urban councils	Single non-transferable votes	Voluntary	4 years	2011
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2. Legal Frameworks

a. Local Government Legislations

For the eight countries under review, Table 1 above details the legislative framework that establishes local governments. The Cook Islands Outer Island Local Government Act 1987 established the organs and functions of the island councils. In PNG the principal laws governing the operations and mandate of the local level governments include the Organic Law on Provincial Governments and Local Level Governments (1995), the Local Level Administration Act (1997) and the Provincial Governments Administration Act (1997). The Kiribati Local Government Act (1984) makes provision for the establishment of both the urban and the island councils. In the case of Solomon Islands and Vanuatu separate principal acts were passed to establish the provincial councils and the city/urban and town councils. These are the Decentralisation and Local Government Regions Act (1994) and the Municipal Acts [Cap126] for Vanuatu and in respect of Solomon Islands the Local Government Act 1996, the Honiara City Act (1999) and the Provincial Government Act (1997). As detailed in Table 1 Tonga's local level government is governed by the District and Town Officers Act [Cap 43] and in Tuvalu the Falekaupule Act of 1997. In the case of Samoa two principal legislations, the Village Fono Act 1990 and the Internal Affairs Act 1993, govern local level governance.

b. Electoral System

The electoral system in Cook Islands, Samoa and Solomon Islands is a simple first past (FPP), the post returning single member constituencies. In FPP systems the candidate with the largest number of votes wins. Kiribati electoral system is a two-round where in single member constituencies if no candidate secures more than 50% of the vote then there is a second round-off between the two candidates with most number of votes. In multi-member constituencies candidates need only to secure 25% of the votes to be elected and if a second round of voting is required then the candidate with the highest number of votes wins. PNG uses an alternative vote system, a limited preferential vote (LPV) system with voters required to rank only three candidates, even if there are more than three candidates in a constituency. Tuvalu and Tonga use a mixture of FPP and block voting. Block voting used in multi-member constituencies and FPP for single member. In Vanuatu the single non transferable vote system is used where voters cast a single vote for a multiple members constituency. In a survey of electoral systems¹¹ around the region it was found that most PICs use a first past the post system that tends not to favour female candidates. Series of studies conducted have confirmed that proportional representation (PR) systems¹² tend to favour women candidates as compared to the majoritarian electoral systems using single member constituencies.

¹¹ PIFS, 2006. *A Woman's Place is in the House – the House of Parliament. Research to Advance Women's Political Representation in Forum Island Countries*. Suva, 2010

¹² New Caledonia and French Polynesia are two PICTs that use the PR system

For the countries studied, the electoral system at both national and local levels is based on a term basis. Each term or tenure is for four years in respect of Cook Islands, Kiribati, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu; five years for PNG and Samoa and three years for Tonga . Any person over 18 is eligible to vote in local government elections. There are no statutory barriers to women contesting local government elections although, as already discussed, there are social and cultural constraints. This year (2010) saw three of the countries (Solomon Islands, Tonga and Tuvalu) going to the polls with the local government elections in the Solomon Islands to be held in the month of December. Cook Islands, Kiribati, Samoa and Vanuatu will have elections in 2011 and PNG in the year 2013 with local level governments following soon after as stipulated in the relevant acts.

VI. TEMPORARY SPECIAL MEASURES (TSM)

A brief discussion on what constitutes the temporary special measures is necessary before embarking on a comparative analysis of the existing formal and informal special measures and the proposition for practical implementation of such measures. Temporary special measures as defined under Article 4 (1) of CEDAW aim to achieve *de facto* equality¹³, also referred to as substantive equality, between men and women. It is important to note that even if *de jure* equality¹⁴ may be achieved, substantive inequality may still persist due to more subtle and indirect discrimination on the basis of sex and the existence of gender structures. This type of discrimination occurs when laws, policies and programmes are based on seemingly gender neutral criteria but may have a detrimental impact on women. Gender neutral laws, policies and programmes unintentionally perpetuate the consequences of past discriminations because they are inadvertently modelled on concepts of male life-styles, and may fail to take into account aspects of women's life experiences that may differ from men. These differences in actual life experiences persist because of stereotypical expectations, attitudes and habitual behaviours based on biological differences of men and women. They may also persist due to the factual subordination of women by men.

It is therefore imperative that special measures adopted do not just address the achievement of mere formal equality of opportunity and equal treatment of both men and women but rather to go beyond this and focus on the establishment of enabling conditions for women and equal treatment. It is with this in mind that any proposition for the achievement of gender equality must be based on measures that lead to women's empowerment to be able to take advantage of opportunities that exist under the *de jure* system. In addition the implementation of special measures should result in transformed institutions (such as the local government) and the processes employed have institutionalised gender and the needs and concerns of women as an integral part of the statutory requirements, policies and programmes of the organisations.

Special temporary measures encompasses a wide variety of legislative, executive, administrative and other regulatory instruments, policies and practices, such as outreach or support programmes; allocation and/or reallocation of resources; preferential treatment; targeted recruitment, hiring and promotion; numerical goals connected with time frames; and quota systems. The choice of a particular "measure" will depend on the context in which CEDAW article 4, paragraph 1, is applied and on the specific goal it aims to achieve. Special measures adopted must be designed within the different context of the country in question.

Resistance to TSM are many and reasons quoted include the non-democratic nature of special measures, the putting aside of merit and competitiveness in favour mediocrity. This resistance can be

¹³ De jure indicates that according to law women have equality

¹⁴ De facto means that in matter of fact, they do or do not have equality in many areas.

attributed to a misunderstanding of the substance of temporary special measures. In various parts of the world, quota systems have significantly increased women's participation and representation in both elective and appointive political decision making positions. Quotas have been viewed as one of the most effective affirmative actions in increasing women's political participation.

VII. CASE STUDIES: COOK ISLANDS, KIRIBATI, SOLOMON ISLANDS and VANUATU

This section will focus on the four countries under review – Cook Islands, Kiribati, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. An analysis of the enabling environment for special measures included an examination of the legislation and policies based on literature survey and interviews to gauge the commitment to gender equality and the potential for temporary special measures to accelerate women's participation at local government level. The research was premised on the knowledge that formal and informal TSM exist, however, they are either not implemented or are not well known. In addition, the absence of gender equality considerations in the development of policies and provision of services is due to a host of factors, including lack of awareness at the local government level. While gender equality and special measures are relatively well articulated at the national level, this has not been translated to the local government level. Interaction by national machineries of government directly mandated and responsible for promoting gender equality and by NGOs with local governments is negligible. Similarly, development partners and donors have generally tended to focus at the national level bypassing a potential avenue that could lend support to the capacity of governments to fulfil their stated commitments to gender equality.

With the exception of Kiribati, and based on focus group discussion and interviews, projects for case studies were identified for Cook Islands¹⁵, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. The case studies were to look at indepth the impact of women's participation at the local government level and to further illustrate the alternative power structures that women have accessed and used to articulate their interests and concerns and place their issues on national and local government agendas.

¹⁵ At the time of the writing of this report the Cook Islands case study had not been received.

1. Cook Islands

It must be noted from the outset that research at the national level was constrained by a number of factors and has some bearing on the extent of information gathered and the ensuing analysis that followed. Due to limited funds and time, the case studies for the outer island were conducted by the national consultant. Out of the nine Outer Island Councils, interviews were conducted only with the four of the five Mayors who attend the “Cook Islands Local Government Consultation and Action Planning Workshop” in Rarotonga. Interviews with the island council administrations were not possible due to limitations in financial resources and time.

a. Statutory Provisions

The *Outer Islands Local Government Act [Cap 230] (1987)* makes provision for the establishment of island councils. The electoral system is FPP with single member constituencies except for the constituency identified on the islands of Penrhyn, Manihiki and Pukapuka returning multi members. *Section 5* prescribes the membership of the councils to include an Ariki or Ui Airiki (members of the Cook Islands nobility), a representative of the Aronga Mana, members of parliament and elected members. *Section 8* contains the manner of election of a member of the Aronga Mana (traditional leaders) to be represented at the Council. Only elected members including the mayor have voting rights in the council. In total there are 50 elected councillors representing the nine island councils. *Section 9* prescribes the manner of elections for the councillors. Similar to the conduct of elections for elected members, mayors are elected by registered voters over the age of 18 years.

The first schedule to the Act stipulates that for the Island of:

- Mangaia six elected members, each representing each of the six villages,
- Aitutaki eight members, each representing each of the eight villages¹⁶,
- Atiu five members each representing each of the five villages,
- Mauke five members each representing each of the five villages,
- Mitiaro four members each representing each of the four villages
- Penrhyn five elected members, three members representing Omoka and two members for the village of Tetuatua
- Manihiki six elected members, three members representing Tauhunu and three members for the village of Tukao¹⁷,
- Rakahanga five members each representing each of the five villages,
- Pukapuka and Nasau six members, two members elected from each of the three villages of Ngake, Yato and Roto

Section 36 of the Act gives power to the Queens representative, may by Order in Executive Council, make regulations to amend the First Schedule with the object of increasing the number of constituencies for any island. The Act does not specifically make provisions for the establishment of standing committees however; *section 7* sets out the functions of each council to administer and carry out the provisions of the ordinances and by-laws as they are applicable to the Island. This would include the establishment of committees to oversight the activities and developments in these areas. Interview with the Mayor of Mitiaro confirmed the setting up of the development and planning committee with two women members appointed as part of the committee.

¹⁶ Outer Islands Local Government Amendment Act 1994 - 1995

¹⁷ Outer Islands Local Government Amendment Act 2004

b. Options for Special Measures

Based on the foregoing paragraphs four options for temporary special measures can be considered at the local government level. The Act makes provision for a seat in the council for a traditional leader which is that of the Aronga Mana, a form of reserved seat within the council. Based on this precedence, careful consideration can be given to reserving a seat for a women's representative in each council, similar to the Aronga Mana nominated representative. This would require amendments to the legislation and to be deemed inclusive, provision could also be made for other disadvantaged groups such as the handicapped. The statutory provision of the Aronga Mana within the council highlights the centrality of customs and traditions as a way of life in the Cook Islands. It is therefore imperative that such proposal must be subjected to wide consultations and especially with traditional leaders. In the event that the Aronga Mana representative is a female, as in the case of Mitiaro, then the council would have two female nominated members. While membership through this avenue is technically as a proxy member with no voting rights, the exposure and experience gained through council meetings and businesses provides a platform to becoming an elected member of the council and preparation for higher political office. This option would guarantee a minimum of nine women nominated or minimum of 18% in local government. The women's umbrella NGO, such as the National Council for Women (NCW) in each of the islands (or its affiliate) can act as the nominating body to nominate a woman representative in each of the council.

Secondly, under *section 36* of the Act, consideration could be given to creation of additional seats for each island that are reserved for women. These seats would be in addition to the existing seats. They could be based on the whole island with voters nominating female candidates and voting at large for the female elected councillor. This would be relatively easy to implement requiring the adding of a constituency for each island council by the Queen's representative - a far easier process than constitutional or legislative amendments. This option, however, would require careful analysis with the councils heavily reliant on the central government for appropriation of funds, the limited capacity of these councils to raise revenue internally and the issue of depopulation experienced by these islands. While the option of reserving seats may stand in contrast to the notion of free and fair election, the process of electing the female candidate would provide legitimacy to the position and the elected candidate.

Consideration could also be given to reserving existing seats for women with phased implementation beginning with multi member constituencies. Multi member constituencies include: Penrhyn, Manihiki and Pukapuka and Nasau. If one seat is reserved for women for each of the multi member constituencies, this option would guarantee a minimum of five seats reserved for women. Constituency for each reserved seat has to be agreed upon and possible option for voting could be on the basis of each island at large. This would require extensive consultations, voter education and advocacy on TSM.

Under the current principal Act (1987) no provision is made for the appointment of standing committees. Despite this, standing committees are established by certain island councils such as the Development and Planning Committee of the Mitiaro Island Council and present opportunities for island councils to integrate women's issues and concerns through the inclusion of women on the committees. An important factor, as noted by the informant, is the selection criteria for committee membership which goes beyond merely being a good community member but is based on expertise, knowledge and skills if committees are to be effective. The draft Island Government Bill (2007), which is yet to be debated and enacted, goes further to provide for the establishment of standing committees and sub committees as the council deems appropriate. Although these amendments are yet to be implemented, it does provide an occasion where the considerations discussed above can be taken into

account for more gender equal councils and more equitable delivery of its services. To address the concern for 'tokenism', the inclusion of women in standing and ad-hoc committees can be guided by well developed local government policies or standing orders. This initiative can be accompanied by capacity building programmes for both elected and nominated members of the councils.

Nomination for candidature for local government election is through endorsement of the community based on an observable 'track record' in community and church activities. Given a very weak political party system in place at the local level it means that voluntary or mandatory party quotas cannot be introduced at the local government level.

c. The Enabling Environment

Administrative Policies and Programmes

Within the context of these statutory provisions it is important to focus on the enabling environment for gender equality in local government. That is, to analyse the political will and organisation culture of the administration to ascertain the executive, administrative policies and practice in place as part of the TSM or that could lend support to temporary special measures, if implemented. The structured questionnaire developed targeted political party executives, where relevant, and ministries directly responsible for local governments and the national women's machinery (NWM) as the main organ mandated to advance and promote gender equality. The extent or lack of commitment to gender equality in these lead organisations would have a significant gender impact at the local government level.

Political will and organisational culture that support gender equality within these organisations can be described as varied. The NWM, despite the challenges faced, is in the forefront of promoting and implementing gender equality programmes and activities including temporary special measures. A number of initiatives are in place including the CEDAW Law Reform programmes endorsed by Cabinet. As part of this programme, scoping work will be undertaken to review relevant parts of family law and review of some parts of the Constitution. A CEDAW working group has been established to monitor progress in this area. Recommendations arising out of the "*Pathway to Development Report*" are now implemented in conjunction with the Law Reform Committee. These initiatives present unique opportunities to further explore the potential for TSM and to mainstream gender at the local government level. This would require coordination and networking of all major stakeholders to achieve these goals. Currently Gender and Development Division's (GADD) partnership and collaboration with the island councils is weak. In a recent "Women in Decision Making Forum" communiqué, except for a very brief mention, local government is absent. Local government has not been a focus of the GADD, effectively marginalising a potentially important area that could support government's international, regional and national commitment for gender equality. There is need to strengthen the working relationship between GADD and the Island Councils through the Island Secretary and the Women's Development Officer (WDO). Systems and processes need to be reviewed to enhance lines of communication and accountability and responsibility mechanisms.

Commitment to gender equality within the Ministry of Infrastructure was found to be low. Interviews conducted revealed that gender continues to be equated with 'women'. Gender equality programmes are usually driven by donors. Of the two informants in this study only the Director Corporate Services was able to cite examples such as support for further studies for both men and women and collaborative training undertaken with the GADD to support her ranking. It was further highlighted that the ministry targets all consumers and current critical issues faced by local governments include depopulation, the need to reform local government systems and representation, lack of collaboration and recognition by national politicians of local governments and lack of funding. It can be assumed

from such statements that gender is not considered as a development issue within the ministry. Therefore delivery of programmes by the ministry or in collaboration with the local governments would be devoid of gender considerations. The reason given for this deficiency stems from the core role of the ministry being responsible for and providing technical support to island councils for roads, water and power supply.

In addition, knowledge of international commitments, policies and legislations that could support gender equality within the organisation was found to be lacking. There is no official policy in place that is aimed at addressing gender inequality within the organisation or within local government. It was however noted by the Director that there exist a number of factors that can support special measures if implemented, citing NGOs, youth groups and church based organisations. These supports were ranked as major.

The organisational culture to support gender equality through special measures was ranked medium by one informant. It was noted that consultations conducted by the ministry with the communities was open to all but there is no requirement to focus on the specific different needs and experiences of both men and women when designing or implementing projects and programmes. While there is a recognition that these are important it was noted however, that gender has not been taken on board.

It can be concluded that administrative instruments, policies and practices in support of temporary special measures are confined to the national level and are found to be quite deficient at the local government level. Considerations can be given to developing these measures at the island council administration level and within the ministry that is directly responsible for the local governments.

d. Women and Local Government

A brief discussion on TSM will not be complete without focussing on the councillors themselves. As noted a set of questionnaires was targeted at male and female councillors to gauge their perceptions and views with regard to female participation, and focus on both access and participation of women councillors at local government levels. Based on an executive decision made by CLGF and due to budget and time constraints the research team was not able to travel together to the islands to interview members of the island councils and their respective administration. A decision was therefore made to confine the interviews to the Mayors who were attending the "Cook Islands Local Government Consultation and Action Planning Workshop" facilitated by CLGF.

i. Accessing Local Government

Women's absence from local government

Of the five Mayors who attended the meeting, the research team was only able to interview four. As a consequence the brief discussion and analysis that follows is by no means representative of the council population but reflects some common views among the Mayors interviewed which may or may not conform to existing theories and findings. Of the four Mayors interviewed three were males and one female. In the whole of the Cook Islands data made available to the research team, it was shown that there are currently six women councillors at local government level for the entire country (2010):

- Aitutaki – 2 women
- Atiu – 1 woman (Mayor)
- Mangaia – 1 woman
- Mauke – 1 woman
- Manihiki – 1 woman

Barriers to access

A number of factors exist as barriers to women's participation at local government level. They include fundamental inequality despite the existence of constitutional rights, which closely tie the roles of women to their reproductive and domestic roles, and politics are perceived as not suitable for them. The informants were asked whether they thought there were barriers to women's participation at the local government level and to rank these in terms of priorities. Three of the informants cited considerations for the family and husbands and the accompanying responsibilities as a major barrier. Women themselves were quoted as the second major barrier. Three of the male councillors interviewed stated that: "women were their own worst enemies but if they organise themselves and support each other then they can certainly make it into the political arena". One of the male respondents referred to Christian beliefs and traditional leaders. The only female informant raised the issue of capacity, noting that in the island councils, councillors speak in local dialects but when required to attend meetings in Rarotonga or elsewhere they are required to speak in English.

Quotas – A Strategy for Change

Three of the four informants interviewed agreed to the use of quotas to boost women's representation in local government, however as one informant said it is how to package the idea and present the case to the community. The Mitiaro Mayor in agreeing stated quotas for councils should not only apply to women but to consider all disadvantaged groups including youths. The Manihiki Mayor advocated for a study to be carried out before a quota system is put in place, noting that quotas can have both negative and positive impacts.

ii. Participation

Measuring participation

The team was unable to directly observe women councillors' participation during council meetings, however, through the questionnaire a number of responses were obtained. Three of the respondents stated that based on their experience they do not agree with the statement that women seldom speak in meetings. On the related question whether women often get interrupted when they speak one of the male respondents said that this was his experience in the last council when there was a woman councillor. This experience is not shared by other informants.

Barriers to participation

Patriarchal belief systems continue to act as a barrier to women's participation. As related by the woman Mayor, when voting on matters tabled before the council for discussion her male colleagues will not vote openly with her by a show of hands, even if they agree, but will do so by secret ballot. This system has worked for her because the identity of voters is not known. Lack of self confidence was stated as another barrier by the woman councillor. This view comes from the belief that women are inferior and is a byproduct of the socialisation process experienced in their communities and work places. This experience by the female councillor also attests to the notion that 'numbers make a difference'; while her male colleagues may listen when she speaks, when it comes to voting it is a different matter. As she put it "I am only one when it comes to voting, I do not have the power to influence decisions".

Enabling Factors

The support of families was raised as a major factor by the only woman informant. In addition an enabling environment that promotes equality is a major supportive factor to women's participation at the local government level. When this is in place it means that the organisation culture, policies and

individuals are acting in coordination to promote and advance gender equality within the organisation.

iii. Partnership in Local Government

What women bring into local government?

Women bring different perspectives, issues and concerns to decision making levels as acknowledged by all informants interviewed. On the issue of whether men can raise women's issues, two of the three male informants agreed that there is no difference, that both male and female councillors can raise women's issues. Two others, including the woman councillor, agreed that it is the responsibility of women elected into office to raise other women's issues because they have different interests to men and have the ability to focus on the details. However as she puts it: "At the end of the day it all boils down to voting and I have to go along with the majority even if I do not agree". On the question of whether male councillors can raise women's issues, the three male councillors agree that as representatives of the people both male and female elected members have a duty to raise all issues. The woman councillor said, however, that although attitudes are changing men may have the tendency not to raise women's issues due to cultural and traditional attitudes.

Attitudes of men

In general all male informants interviewed did not reveal any blatant opposition but are very supportive of women's participation at the local government level. All expressed progressive views about women's participation and are very active in engaging women in various committees that are set up by the council. For example in Mitiaro the Development Planning Committee has two nominated women members and efforts are in place to nominate two other woman members.

e. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDED INTERVENTIONS

A number of TSM options exist for Cook Islands. These temporary special measures, however, to be effective should be accompanied by other measures and must be carefully considered within the development context of Cook Islands. Considerations can be given to the following for implementation:

- As elected members consideration could be given to creating new additional seats for each of the islands that are reserved for women. These seats would be in addition to the existing seats. They could be based on the whole island with voters nominating female candidates and voting at large for the female elected councillor.
- Consideration could be given to reserving existing seats for women beginning with phased implementation in multi member constituencies. Multi member constituencies include: Penrhyn, Manihiki and Pukapuka and Nasau. As noted, however this must be preceded by extensive consultations and accompanied by voter education to explain the concept of TSM.
- Similar to special provisions provided for the traditional leader of the Aronga Mana consideration can be given to providing for a special women's representative within the council.
- Various provisions exist within the statutory provisions for appointments of nominated members into standing and ad-hoc committees.
- An effective enabling environment is necessary to provide a supportive environment for women which include political will and a organisational culture of the organisations directly responsible for local governments and within the local government administrations. Consideration could be given to building the capacity for these organisations through gender and local government specific training. Developing local government policies and human

- resource management policies that are gender focussed would contribute to a more gender equality organisation.
- Considerable support and training is needed to assist women to learn how political environment works and to help them fulfil both their public and private roles.

2. Kiribati

Due to budgetary limitations the research was limited to two urban councils: Betio Town Council (BTC) and Teinainano Urban Council (TUC). The first week of the research coincided with the Tarawa Climate Change Conference held in Tarawa making it very difficult to organise interviews because, most of those we sought were involved to some extent with the meeting. The second week overlapped with the monthly council meetings and interviews had to be staggered when councillors were available to meet with the research team. Contacting councillors was done through the councils' administrations.

The research team, through focus group discussions with women's non government organisations, interviews with local governments and relevant line ministries, was unable to identify any projects either as initiatives by the councils or the women's NGOs that are linked to local government to use as object case studies.

a. Statutory Provisions

The *Local Government Act (1984)* provides for the establishment, compositions, meetings and proceedings and functions of the urban/town councils and island councils. In total there are 23 councils made up of three urban/town councils and 20 island councils. The electoral system is a two-round where in single member constituencies if no candidate secures more than 50% of the vote there is a second round-off between the two candidates with most number of votes. In multi-member constituencies candidates need only to secure 25% of the votes to be elected and if a second round of voting is required, then the candidate with the highest number of votes wins.

Section 6 states that all elected members will be elected registered voters within the respective ward as set out in accordance with the Elections Ordinance 1977. There are currently 230 council members for the whole country, of whom 223 members are males and 7 females¹⁸. *Section 7* makes provision for ex-officio¹⁹ and nominated²⁰ members of the town or urban council to include elected members of the Maneaba ni Maungatabu (Kiribati Parliament) from within the area of authority of the council, a special member²¹ and any such persons, by resolution, the council considers suitable. In total such nominated numbers not to exceed one third of the number of elected members. A special member of the council means as nominated by the Te Botaki ni Unimaana, an association or body of elderly men recognised by the council as representing the people of the island within the area of authority of such council. Similar provision is made under s.8 but in respect of any other councils, which includes the island councils. These amendments came into force in 1995 and were not part of the principal act of 1984. *Sections 12 and 12A* specify the term of office for nominated and special members of the council respectively. *Section 24* states that only elected members have a right to vote; nominated and special members can contribute to the discussion coming before the council but cannot vote.

Section 32(1) prescribes the appointment of committees for any general or specific purpose, subject to limitations, as the council deems fit to be dealt with by such committee. Such committees can be set up by councils within their areas of authority or as under s.32 (2) a council may concur with other councils

¹⁸ This represents only .3% of the total councillors.

¹⁹ Data made available to the researchers by MISA: ex-officio members made up of 32 males and 3 females for the country. Data were not available for some island councils.

²⁰ Data made available to the researchers by MISA: nominated members made up of 10 males and 9 females; 2 could not be verified as the names can either be females or males. Data were not available for some island councils.

²¹ New paragraph (b) inserted by s.3(i), *Local Government (Amendment) Act 1995*

to appoint joint committees for purposes of interest to those councils. Terms of reference for such committees would be as specified by the council(s). Membership of such committees includes persons who are not council members or those who are co-opted by the committee appointed by the council. The total number of such members is not to exceed one-third of the number of elected members. In addition, s.33 (1)-(3) make provisions for councils to appoint special town, village or area committees to conduct any business of the council as it thinks fit. The total number of members for such committees is five, two of whom shall be non-elected members. *Section 35* states that every committee so established under these provisions is required to table its report to the council.

Section 101 on staff instructions regulates among others matters - appointments, promotion; departmental procedure and the duties and responsibilities of officers and employees as the councils consider best under such instructions.

b. Options for Special Measures

Three options for temporary special measures can be considered at the local government level. The Act makes provision for a seat in the council for a special member from the Te Botaki ni Unimaana, an association or body of elderly men. As noted, the principal act of 1984 did not contain this provision, which was later inserted by an amendment in 1995 and can be argued is a form of reserved seat within the council for the elderly men. Cultural norms and traditions in Kiribati dictate that women cannot 'stand in the front' and speak in the meeting house (maneabas). Their views are communicated through the 'elderly man' representative. Given this precedence, consideration can be given for an (elderly) woman representative on the council. This would guarantee one nominated woman representative for each of the 23 councils. This option would require extensive consultations and careful deliberation about which women's organisation or community group representative is to be represented in the council. As a nominated position, the women's representative would not have voting rights, nevertheless through participation at the council meetings she could bring women's interests and issues to bear on the councils decisions. The second most important issue for this option is the selection criteria for the nominated woman member who may require capacity building (together with men) in local government to participate effectively.

In some constituencies the total number of nominated and exofficio members do not exceed one third of the number of elected members. Given that special members are all males and the exofficio (parliamentarians) members are mostly men, consideration could be given to encouraging local governments to allocating a certain percentage of the (remaining) nominated seats to women. If at least one nominated seat is reserved for a woman representative in the 23 councils then effectively a total of 23 women representatives would be guaranteed to be nominated in each council. Over time a higher quota for nominated seats for women can be negotiated. This option however would need to be accompanied by gender awareness programmes for men and women in the local council on the importance of gender equality in representation and the delivery of programmes. These proposals should be complemented by the collection of data on women's participation so as to add to the visibility of women at this level.

Another consideration can be given to reserving new additional seats in multi member constituencies for women. Interviews with the TUC revealed that four additional seats were recently endorsed by Cabinet for four multi member constituencies namely Bonriki, Bikenibeu East, Temwaikau and Eita effectively increasing from 13 to 17 the elected members of the council for 16 constituencies²². If these four seats are reserved for women then it would mean that four women would be elected from these

²² Currently there are 13 elected councillors for TUC representing 12 districts. Bairiki has 2 elected members with the remaining constituencies having 1 elected member each. The new increase will result in 2 members for each constituency identified, except Bairiki which would have 3 members.

two and three-member electorates, representing a minimum of 24% in the TUC. The challenge here is for women's groups positioning themselves and lobbying for the reservation of these four seats before the local government 2011 election. Similarly the BTC has recently requested Cabinet for additional 3 elected council seats (one additional seat for each of the wards – north, central and south), which if approved, would increase the number of elected seats from nine to 12. Consideration can be given to reserving these three additional seats to women. This option would guarantee a minimum of three women elected to BTC from the each of the four-member electorates, representing a minimum of 25% women's representative in the council. These options would be non-threatening to men as they are not required to give up their seats. To succeed however, it must be accompanied by voter education and training for women candidates on the political system, local government functions and processes to be effective council members.

c. The Enabling Environment

Administrative Policies and Programme

Not only do the organisations' structures, policies, procedures and culture govern the type of programmes that it is capable of delivering but inversely programmes and projects delivered by organisations are always consistent with its own internal practices and cultures. Within the context of these statutory provisions it is important to focus on the enabling environment for gender equality in local governments. Two aspects were considered: political will and organisational culture to ascertain the commitment to gender equality within the council administrations and the existence of an organisation culture that is supportive of gender equality. Interviews were held with the TUC and BTC local government administrators (clerks). Due to lack of awareness, time was taken to explain the concept of gender equality and TSM and how they relate to local government.

Political will was ranked by both informants as very low. Consequently specific activities could not be identified to demonstrate commitment to gender equality. This acts as a barrier to realising a gender equality environment that can support local government councillors to providing services that addresses the needs of both men and women under the authority of the councils. Knowledge of international commitments and national policies that could lend support to the work of gender equality within the administrations was found wanting. There is currently no commitment to increasing women's participation at the council level. At the administration level there are more females than male staff. This, however, is not the result of a deliberate gender policy.

Interaction with NWM, as the organisation mandated to promote and advocate for women's issues and concerns, is deficient. This demonstrates the lack of attention to local government level to promote gender equality, which has tended to focus on the national level, overlooking a potential area for change. Although certain women's NGOs are registered with the respective councils, they are not mainstreamed into the work of the councils. Under s 35 of the local government act, every committee or joint committee appointed by the council is required by law to table its report to the council or joint council, an avenue that is used by AKIBE, the women's umbrella organisation within Betio, to bring to the attention of the council its concerns and issues. In contrast to this the women's umbrella organisation, KARIBAW, under the authority of the TUC does not have similar mechanisms in place.

There is a need to change the culture of local government to ensure that gender equality is prioritise as a development issue and that women are treated fairly to ensure that discrimination against women is addressed. This would require that policies and strategies are developed and adopted that are supportive to gender equality. As a prelude, workshops on gender awareness to educate men and women on women's rights and the importance of gender equality must take place. Identification of

male champions would go a long way to breaking down the structural, institutional and cultural barriers.

d. Women and Local Government

A brief discussion on TSM will not be complete without focussing on the councillors themselves. As noted, a set of questionnaires targeted male and female councillors to gauge their perceptions and views with regard to female participation, and focused on both access and participation of women councillors at the local government levels. Only male councillors were interviewed in Kiribati as there are no women councillors in the two town/urban councils studied. In total the research team interviewed three male BTC councillors, representing more than 33% of the BTC and five TUC councillors, representing 41%.

i. Accessing Local Government

Women's absence from local government

Of the 23 urban and island councils there are only seven women councillors out of total of 230. This represents only 3% of councillors at the local government level for the whole country. Sixteen councils have no women's representation and the remaining seven councils have only one women representative in each. The underrepresentation by women points to barriers experienced.

Barriers to access

The lack of women's representation is attributed to structural, institutional, political, social and cultural barriers. Women's involvement in local government can also depend on the level of democracy practised in a country. Patriarchal societies such as exist in Kiribati emphasises the dominance of men with stereotypical expectations of the roles, behaviour and responsibilities of women. Hence women's role is always tied to their reproductive role and household activities, and politics are seen as unsuitable for them and as the domain of men.

A number of male respondents stated that 'it is the women themselves, they feel they cannot do it'. Their attitudes and views of men as (traditionally) decision makers in the family and community' contribute to their lack of self confidence, limiting their access to local government decision making. It was acknowledged that this is now changing, with more women taking up decision making positions at the formal arena.

Quotas – A Strategy for Change

Most male councillors in supporting the use of quotas to boost women's participation at the local government level stated that it should be through election and not by appointment. Comments in support included:

- I agree with quota but it has to be through elections because they (women) have the ability to contest. Government has to change legislation. Everyone has to be involved or take steps to increase women's participation (Betio Councillor)
- Quotas are good because it facilitates the participation of women in local government and they have their own ideas which can be taken on board through their participation (TUC Councillor)
- I am very supportive because I realise that so many women are holding top positions which means they have the ability and are very capable
- Currently we as men councillors do not consider gender equality as important because we want to retain the status quo and have not encouraged women to step out and be part of the process (Betio Councillor)

While there were some opposing views expressed, these comments were qualified and includes the following:

- No I do not agree in the use of quotas but I do not object to them (women) contesting the election (TUC Councillor)
- If I had the opportunity to come back I would object to TSM because it is undemocratic. In the past there have been women councillors in TUC and there continues to exist potential for women to get into the council without TSM. Unless there are no other possibilities for women to get into the council then maybe TSM can be considered (TUC Councillor).

ii. Participation

Measuring participation

Participation of women in council meetings could not be accessed because there are no women councillors in the two urban councils researched. Women's issues and concerns raised by AKIBE, the women's NGO, are tabled at the council meeting through submission of the AKIBE minutes of its meetings. Women are more likely to be found in decision making positions in the administration than as councillors. This is evident in TUC, BTC and the Department of Local Government (DLG). The Town Clerks in both councils and the Director DLG and other senior positions within these organisations are all occupied by women. It was noted by a number of male councillors that the participation of women in local government would provide 'added value' to the decisions and work of the councils.

Barriers to participation

Interviews with male councillors highlighted major barriers faced by women that act as deterrents to them participating in local government. Informants were asked to identify three barriers. Not least is the stereotypical notion of gender roles and responsibilities grounded in cultural norms and traditions that continue to perpetuate the view that politics is the domain of men. Other factors identified include lack of awareness of the concept of gender equality and how it applies at local government level; the attitudes of women themselves that they are not capable, and their lack of interest and lack of will to put their hands up for local government nominations and elections; and the attitudes of men councillors that may dictate to an extent the working environment which is seen by women as disempowering and hostile to their participation.

Enabling Factors

This part of the research and analysis was not carried out because there are no female councillors to interview within the two councils. However, from interviews with other male councillors and the management of the administrations and literature research it can be deduced that the capacity building of female (and males) councillors that targets knowledge of local government processes and systems would be of advantage. Other factors include the political will and the organisational culture that is supportive of women's participation in decision making and promotes women's rights in the work of the council. This includes gender equality policies and programmes that can bring about substantive equality for both women and men. Training of potential and women councillors (as well as men) is a crucial factor in ensuring that their participation is effective and meaningful. Data collection is vital to make visible the participation of women, which is currently not collected in a systematic and consistent manner to inform policies and programmes developed by the councils. The role of women's NGOs in encouraging women to participate in local government elections is important. Existing NGOs are ineffective due to lack of resources and capacity and are still focused on women specific projects as revealed in the focus group discussions.

iii. Partnership in Local Government

What women bring into local government?

It was apparent from the interviews that men councillors conceded that women as councillors can bring a different perspective to decision making in that they raise different issues and concerns from those of men councillors. Women, if represented, would raise (social) issues akin to their roles which men may not focus on. Male councillors interviewed noted that women tended to be more deliberate in their decisions and considered all the facts presented, whereas men were sometimes quite rash when confronted with contentious or differing viewpoints. On the question of whether women have a responsibility to raise other women's issues and concerns, all councillors interviewed agreed with the statement. On the issue whether men councillors can raise women's issues in councils meetings, it was noted that as male councillors they are already raising women's issues because they are responsible for everyone. It was acknowledged, however, that women would better represent their own issues and concerns and that is why they need to be represented at the council meetings. They can better express themselves on certain issues.

Attitudes of men

Interviews with all male councillors did not reveal any blatant opposition to women's participation at the council level. In fact most were supportive to seeing women stand in the up-coming 2011 elections. Any identifiable resistance was more from the perspective that they did not want women to be considered as less important to men, hence the comment that if women were successful in previous local government elections it meant that they can be successful (again).

f. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDED INTERVENTIONS

A number of TSM options exist for Kiribati. These temporary special measures, however to be effective should be accompanied by other measures and must be carefully considered within the development context of Kiribati. Considerations can be given to these for implementation:

- Four new seats have been recently approved by Cabinet for TUC and BTC has also made application for three new seats. Consideration can be given to reserving these additional new seats for women for the 2011 election. This option, however, would require active lobbying by the women's NGOs. To succeed it must be accompanied by voter education and training for women candidates on the political system, local government functions and processes to be effective council members.
- A form of special measure exists for a special member from the Te Botaki ni Unimaana, an association or body of elderly men. Given this precedence, consideration can be given for an (elderly) woman representative on the council. This would guarantee one nominated woman representative for each of the 23 councils. This option would require extensive consultations and careful deliberation about which women's organisation or community group representative is to be represented in the council.
- Various provisions exist within the statutory provisions for appointments of nominated members into standing and ad-hoc committees. Given that special members are all males and the exofficio (parliamentarians) members are mostly men, consideration could be given to encouraging local governments to allocating a certain percentage of the (remaining) nominated seats to women. If at least one nominated seat is reserved for a woman representative in the 23 councils then effectively a total of 23 women representatives would be guaranteed to be nominated in each council. Over time a higher quota for nominated seats for women can be negotiated.
- An effective enabling environment is necessary to provide a supportive environment for women which include political will and a organisational culture of the organisations directly

responsible for local governments and within the local government administrations.

Consideration could be given to building the capacity for these organisations through gender and local government specific training.

- Considerable support and training is needed to assist women to learn the way in which the political environment works and support is also needed to help them fulfil both their public and private roles.
- Voter education should accompany the various options discussed and capacity building is necessary for members of the local government targeting councillors and administrations of councils.

3. Solomon Islands

The research was conducted with three local governments: Honiara City Council, Isabel Provincial Council and Guadalcanal Provincial Council. At the time of the research the Honiara City Council was under suspension and was managed by a CLGF seconded officer acting as City Clerk. At the time of the research the Acting City Clerk was not in-country. An interview was conducted with the Deputy Director, Corporate Services and the Director of the Planning Unit.

a. Statutory Provisions

Three Acts establish and regulate the local government within Solomon Islands. The Local Government Act (1996) makes provision for the establishment, defines the powers, compositions and elections of local governments. In addition and more specifically, Honiara City Council Act (1999) establishes the Honiara City council, its functions and powers and the Provincial Government Act (1997) established eight councils with area assemblies, their powers, functions and responsibilities. The electoral system is 'first past the post'. Members of a Council shall be elected by registered voters over the age of 18 years but to be able to stand as a candidate for election one must be 21 years. The term of office for elected members is four years.

The *Local Government Act (1996) s.3 (1)* sets out the powers of the Minister, by warrant, to establish councils as he deems appropriate or expedient for the purposes of the local government. *Section 6* makes provision for the Minister, in the case of a Town Council, at his own discretion to appoint persons, but not to exceed one-quarter of the number of total elected members, to be nominated members of the council. *Section 15* stipulates the manner of election for the President and Vice-President of each council. *Section 32 (1)-(6)* make provisions for the appointment by every council of an Executive Committee and any other committee as the council may deem fit for any specific or general purpose that it considers best dealt with under such committee. Provisions are also made under this section for appointments of joint committees by one or more councils for co-opting members by committee members appointed by the council(s). The total number of nominated and co-opted members is not to exceed the majority of the elected members of the council. *Section 33 (1) – (2)* authorises a council, with prior approval of the Minister, to appoint a town, village or area committees within the area of its authority to exercise certain powers that it thinks fit. *Section 102* provides for the issuance of staff instructions laying down the conditions and terms of services and any other matters relating to departmental procedure and duties and responsibilities.

The *Honiara City Act (1999)* makes provision for the establishment of the Honiara City Council and prescribes its functions and powers. *Schedule 1* of the Act delineates the boundaries of the city having twelve ward boundaries, returning one member each: Naggosi, Mbumburu, Rove-Lengakiki, Cruz, Vavaea, Vuhokesa, Mataniko, Kolaa, Kukum, Naha, Vura and Panatina. *Section 5* prescribes membership of the council:

- 12 elected members,
- Four members appointed by the Minister provided one of the members is from Guadalcanal
- Members of Parliament who represent Honiara City
- Premier of Guadalcanal Province

Sections 19 and 20 makes provision for standing and ad-hoc committees. *Section 38 of the Honiara City Act* provides for the issuance of staff instructions laying down the conditions and terms of services and any other matters relating to departmental procedure and duties and responsibilities. *Schedule 2* provide for the establishment of standing committees and any other committees.

Provincial Government Act (1997) s.3 lays down the administration of Solomon Islands on the basis of provinces. Table 2 (below) shows the provinces as contained in Schedule 1 and the electoral wards for each province as specified (*Provincial Government Act, 1981 s.8*):

Table 2: Provincial Assemblies and Wards

Provinces	Wards	Provinces	Wards
Western	24	Makira Ulawa	20
Isabel	16	Temotu	17
Central	13	Choiseul	14
Guadalcanal	21	Rennell and Bellona	10
Malaita	32		

Sections 4 and 5 make provisions for the review of boundaries of any provinces by the Constituency Boundaries Commission based on the conditions prescribed and make recommendations for changes to existing boundaries or establishing new boundaries. *Section 7* makes provision for a provincial assembly and the electoral arrangements in relation to each province to return one member for each electoral ward as stipulated under section 8 of the Provincial Government Act (1981). In addition s.7 (4) also makes provision for the Minister in consultation with the Provincial Assembly amend, vary or alter existing electoral wards if necessary.

b. Options for Special Measures

Reserving newly created women-only seats or converting existing seats to women-only reserved seats would be challenging for Solomon Islands at the local government level and especially within Honiara City with its limited number of constituencies and weak political party system. Patriarchal attitudes still dominate the political landscape. While a number of women are beginning to break the 'glass ceiling' and are holding executive positions in various fields, the fact that since the nation's independence in 1978 only one woman has ever been elected to parliament is testimony that politics continues to be considered as a male bastion. The unsuccessful attempt by the women's organisations in 2009 to lobby parliament to endorse and enact the initiative for a quota system for women, and more recently the non-election of 29 female candidates in the 2010, election are examples of this phenomenon. Similar sentiments are expressed for the local government level. A number of factors contribute to this condition. Not least is the electoral system of 'first-past-the-post' that is used by Solomon Islands (SI), which worldwide has shown to disadvantage women²³. Other factors are historical, institutional, traditional and social have promoted the pre-eminence of male leadership. In addition, in the current economic situation, the cost implications of creating additional seats reserved for women is untenable and more so when local governments are dependent on national government for funding and lack opportunities to raise their own revenue. Within this context, a phased approach can be considered, targeting in the first instance the nominated positions.

The local Government Act 1996 makes provision for the minister at his discretion to appoint nominated members, the total not to exceed one-quarter of the elected members. Similarly the council can appoint any other committee as it deems fit to for any general and specific purpose. Appointments

²³ Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat.2006. *A Woman's Place in the House – the House of Parliament. Research to Advance Women's Political Representation in the Forum Island Countries: A Regional Study Presented in Five Report*. Suva, Fiji.

of town, village and area committees are also under responsibility of councils with the prior approval of the minister. Consideration could be given to lobbying the minister and councils to allocate a percentage of these nominated positions to women. This option would increase the minimum number of women in the councils' respective committees. As nominated members, women would, despite not having voting rights, have opportunities with this platform to articulate women's issues; it would be a training ground to become elected members and provide the much needed experience in local government systems, structures and issues.

Section 5 of the Honiara City Council Act provides the minister the mandate to appoint four nominated members. Consideration could be given to reserving two of these nominated positions for women only. This option would require extensive lobbying by the women's organisations to secure these nominated seats, first at the discretion of the appointing authority but could progressively, through the changes to legislation, become a statutory requirement. Recommending authority and selection criteria would be important factors that, need careful consideration so that the process is transparent and credible. In a political environment such as exists in Solomon Islands the identification of male champions would be critical to such initiatives and provides the unique opportunity for males to take collective responsibility for gender equality. This proposal to be preceded by gender awareness and training at local government level.

For a gender responsive environment, consideration could also be given to developing the local government administrations' policies and strategies that are gender inclusive. This option would require the active participation of the NWM and other development partners to provide technical backstopping to the local government administration. Furthermore, closer interaction between the NWM and local government through information dissemination and advocacy is called for to address the existing gap identified during the research and to raise awareness at the local government level.

Despite the challenges at provincial government level, options for consideration include creating additional women-only reserved seats. This requires careful deliberation as to the criteria used for voting, such as population, province-wide or ward-level constituencies bearing in mind that ward-level nomination have proven more successful for women candidates as they are likely to be known to the voters and their achievements recognised. This option may necessitate a review of boundaries at ward levels which under s.7 (4) of the Provincial Government Act the minister has the power, in consultations with the provincial assembly, to amend or vary.

c. The Enabling Environment

Administrative Policies and Programme

Similar to the other countries studied, two aspects were considered: political will and organisational culture to ascertain the commitment to gender equality within the council administrations and the existence of an organisation culture that is supportive to gender equality. Interviews were held with the Honiara City Council Director of Corporate Services and the Director for Planning. Honiara City Council has undergone a number of challenges not least was the suspension of the council during the time of the research, which had an impact on the findings of the research. Due to limited time the research team was not able to meet the Guadalcanal and Isabel Clerks.

Political commitment to gender equality within the administration of the Honiara City Council was ranked very low. Although there are persons appointed to positions and roles defined, processes and systems are lacking, particularly for gender equality work. Development plans for the city currently do not consult or take into account women's experiences and concerns. Despite this, gender equality activities are being implemented, for example, through CLGF technical support and funded by the

New Zealand Overseas Aid for Development (NZAID), and structures are now put in place for financial management. The United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM) study has made recommendations on market structures which are being seriously considered by the Acting City Clerk. A business survey has been undertaken, through the technical support of CLGF, that includes a survey on women and men owned businesses within Honiara City. Gender is now considered as part of the recruitment policy of the organisation.

Barriers identified to preventing a higher level of commitment to gender equality within the organisation include lack of awareness, and because of this gender is not being institutionalised. Gender awareness training was identified as the key priority action to address this barrier. Knowledge of international, regional and national policies to support gender equality work within the organisation was found to be fair. There are currently no organisational gender policies or affirmative actions in place to achieve gender equality between men and women within the administration or at councillors' level.

Correspondingly, organisation culture was also stated to be very low and women holding positions at the lower rung of the ladder were cited as an example. Gender is not considered as an important part of the organisation's work due to lack of awareness. There are however, individuals within the organisations who are supportive of gender equality work. The organisation is not part of a larger network where gender is raised as a development issue and there are also no human resource management policies or regulations in place to support gender equality work within the organisation. Collections of data are ad hoc and are not sex disaggregated, although there is now some effort made through the business survey conducted.

The almost gender parity at the two most senior positions within the council is not as a result of deliberate gender policy as there are no specific programmes, formal or informal, in place to encourage women into decision making level positions. Through individuals within the administration some initiatives are in place, however, for example advertisements for vacancies incorporate wording such as "women are encouraged to apply".

d. Women and Local Government

A brief discussion on TSM will not be complete without focussing on the councillors themselves. As noted a set of questionnaires was at towards male and female councillors to gauge their perceptions and views with regard to female participation, and focussed on both access and participation of women councillors at the local government levels. Of the three councils studied only the Isabel Provincial Council has woman councillors. No councillor was interviewed for the Honiara City Council as it was under suspension. In total four male councillors were interviewed from the Guadalcanal Provincial Council, representing only 19% of the total councillors and eight councillors in respect of Isabel Provincial Council representing 50% of the council. The low turnout in Guadalcanal was due to difficulty in locating the councillors as they are not fully engaged within the council. Another major challenge was the decision by the councillors to be interviewed as a group, despite the research team's request to be interviewed separately. The decision to conduct the interviews with the group was made and while this may have posed some difficulty for the team every attempt was made to cover all questions.

i. Accessing Local Government

Women's absence from local government

Of the three local authorities studied two did not have women at all in their councils. Of the two councils, the Honiara City Council even prior to suspension did not have a woman councillor in previous councils. It is interesting to note that the Isabel Provincial Council, an island or rural based council, has two women councillors compared to the peri-urban Guadalcanal Provincial Council and Honiara City Council with no women councillors.

Barriers to access

A number of factors exist as barrier to women's participation at decision making level. This includes culture and tradition, religion, political turmoil, violence, finance, workloads and lack of opportunities. While a number of these issues are endemic across the region, two issues are of particular significance to Solomon Islands. The political turmoil and violence experienced in the ethnic tension between 1998 – 2003 caused untold trauma and suffering for many people (PIFS 2008). Because of their gendered position in society, women were arguably more adversely impacted by the conflict than men and the social and economic negative impacts of the conflict continue to be felt today. The issue of having adequate finance to mount campaigns is experienced by women across the Pacific region but in Solomon Islands the issue of what has come to be termed 'devils night' comes into play where on the night before the polling day (mostly) male candidates and their supporters would be active distributing rations, such as food and money, in exchange of votes. This was revealed by both women and men councillors who were interviewed. Women are especially disadvantaged because they are unlikely to engage in such practices, demonstrating more honesty and accountability. It was suggested that a means to addressing this challenge was the removal of the Rural Community Development Fund (RCDF) which is considered the source of funding for the devil's night.

Culture and tradition were cited as major barriers to women's participation in leadership positions. As aptly put by one of the informants "the issue of traditional leadership and leadership through politics by election are different. Voting is not our way. Traditionally leadership was inherited and was by consensus. Even in matrilineal societies where leadership was through matrilineal lineage, men continued to dominate the leadership positions and were the talking heads. There is a therefore a great need for increased and sustained awareness raising amongst the community". Another respondent is cited as having said, "In our traditional society women are always segregated and it is men's decision that causes women to be segregated according to our traditional norms and values of the past. In most cases men do not intend to marginalise women but because the society in which we are nurtured accepts that men are the decision makers. These are things that cause women to be seen as inferior to the status of men".

At the local government level a community track record is essential. One must visit and work with communities, without which one cannot gain inroads into this level of politics. This is a barrier for most women wanting to stand for local government elections.

Another major barrier identified was the attitudes of women themselves. As a Guadalcanal male councillor puts it: "The women themselves do not have a high regard for themselves. This is reflected during elections where men are not only voting for men but women are also are voting for men. If women make the right choices they will then find their rightful place in local politics". Another male informant noted that: "In most cases women just think of themselves as housewives and have also internalised the notion that men are more important".

The two focus group discussions identified a number of barriers. This list is reproduced below:

- Lack of knowledge about government
- Men and women don't trust women
- Women had to prove themselves to both men and women voters.
- National Council for Women only focuses on women at the national level
- There are personal issues and jealousy – women have personal issues at the family level, and are challenged by women's attitudes towards women leaders.
- Lack of finance
- No listening to women
- Lack of proper electoral policies and poor voter registration.
- No supporting policies
- Low self esteem amongst women/young women e.g. no capacity and confidence for public speaking.
- Lack of preparation – no preparation for campaigns, last minute campaigns
- Absence of women leaders at the local/ward level

Quotas – A Strategy for Change

Responses varied when respondents were asked whether they believed in the use of quotas to boost women's participation at the decision making level and include the following:

- I believe in the use of quotas, however councillors must have the ability and capacity to deliver. This applies to both men and women, as seen currently even some male councillors cannot deliberate on issues or contribute substantively (Guadalcanal councillor)
- To be implemented will require a strong push from national government to introduce a quota system at both national and local government level (Guadalcanal Councillor)
- There should be no discrimination between men and women, because if there are changes towards gender balance in the next 50 years then Solomon Islands will still be where it is now (still the same) (Guadalcanal Councillor)
- I see another perspective; it is better for women to come into local government because they are able to provide a fair and balanced decision. Campaigns, however, can become drawbacks for women because they require resources and they must have good strategies in place to complete successfully (Guadalcanal Councillor)
- If it is to be implemented then what also matters is how it is understood by the people, which would require voter education so that voters can elect the best candidate who would serve their needs (Guadalcanal Councillor)
- Women and men must be equal and both should be involved in politics. This can only happen if there is increased awareness and understanding (Isabel Councillor)

There was at least one male councillor who expressed the view that he did not support any form of special measures towards women. In stating this he believed that the Guadalcanal society (a matrilineal society) is aware of the value of women in the community. He further noted that women themselves need to step out and aspire to higher ideals.

Interestingly both women councillors interviewed did not believe in reserved seats for women:

- If we can come through the normal process of election then other women can also come this way
- I do not believe in reserve seats, I believe in ground work, women doing research, visiting communities even before a woman candidate announces her candidacy. If you announce it at the last minute then you are open to criticism by voters, they will think you only want power. One has to gain the trust of the voters. If we have a heart for our people then one should know the needs of our people and link up with them

- Women's organisations should come and work with us, tour our wards and communities with us. There is no point in talking on radios if people or voters do not see the faces of these people. How are these organisations supporting women at the grassroots levels. There has been no awareness done at the community/family level to show the value of women. It's time we make a difference but if they do not come down how can they make a difference
- If TSM is to be introduced and legislated, the selection criteria must be stringent for women.

ii. Participation

Measuring participation

The team was not able to directly observe women councillors participation during council meetings however, through the questionnaire a number of responses were obtained. Respondents of the Isabel Provincial Council noted that women, despite being appointed on to standing committees such as the Liquor Board and Town and Country Planning Board, did not turn up at all or may turn up for the first few meetings only. It was noted by one of the councillors that women, when they did turn up, seldom speak up in the meetings; however when they do speak they are listened to. It was also noted that women were more sensitive to local concerns than men, were able to manage differences and were better team leaders. While it was acknowledged that men can raise women's issues it was the women who could raise their own issues better. Furthermore it was pointed out that women can raise other concerns that men cannot raise.

Issues of concern raised by the two women councillors in the Isabel Council related to supply of power through provision of solar panels, increasing the disposable income of families, safety for the family, better education facilities for the school children, finding markets for women's produce, for which is linked to shipping problems.

One of the Isabel women councillors said that she is not in this work to be recognised. She becomes recognised at the community level because of what she has achieved through women. Now women and men see changes due to her leadership and they talk about it. For some, being members of the provincial council gives them power and name; however for her the focus is on practical things where everyone benefits for example the solar project now implemented for 600 families. She is a member of the executive committee where she has the opportunity to raise women's and social issues in general, however men dominate the discussion and when it comes to voting she has no power. The debate on timber and logging rights is just one of the many issues where she was outnumbered in terms of votes. The problem of shipping services is directly linked to women's ability to market their produce once a week in Honiara. Communications are poor and often women turn up with their produce only to wait and then be turned away disappointed because there is no ship or it is delayed and all the produce harvested for selling goes to waste. The woman councillor said that as a member of the Island Development Committee she raises this issue because marketing is important to men. But as the only female member in this committee she does not get support from men.

These experiences suggest where there is a "critical mass" of women in decision making the opportunities for them to be heard and taken seriously is greater.

Barriers to participation

Interviews with councillors and focus groups highlighted the major challenges faced by women. Women continue to find themselves operating in environments that are characterised by patriarchal structures and cultural norms. Where there is an enabling environment the political will is low and the organisation culture that exists is not supportive of gender equality and this poses major challenges for women. In all the councils studied there are no gender policies in place, neither are there any programmes in place to promote or advocate for women's participation. Knowledge of international, regional and even national commitments that can lend support to gender equality work at the local

government level is lacking. This also highlights the lack of interaction and dissemination of information between the national entities and local government. Another major obstacle is the lack of resources, particularly in terms of finance to enable the local government to carry out their mandate effectively. For example, in the case of the Guadalcanal Provincial Assembly it is estimated that the province of Guadalcanal provides SI\$330million in revenue to the national government but only SI\$4.6million is provided by national government to the province to service a population of 80,000 people.

Enabling Factors

Clearly for the two women councillors the support of their families has been a crucial factor in their success. The invaluable support provided by their husbands through moral support or assistance in developing and implementing community projects have been immeasurable. For both councillors their past experiences and exposure working in organisations dealing with people have to an extent helped with their political career. The most important factor for both councillors has been the community support. This has come over time; working closely with the community cannot be overstated. This includes being engaged in community work and church activities. The support of their male counterparts has also been a positive factor, especially the mentoring role provided by the Speaker of the Isabel Provincial Assembly.

iii. Partnership in Local Government

What women bring into local government?

As acknowledged by the councillors, both women and men, women should come in and take part in the decision making. They are able to raise concerns that men cannot raise including family and the issues that affect day to day life. As noted by one of the Guadalcanal male councillor: "For some women with their level of education, exposure and experience - they may perform better than some male councillors". When asked whether women have a responsibility to raise other women's issues and concerns, with the exception of one informant, the majority of the respondents agreed with the statement. As noted previously, respondents on the question of whether women were more sensitive to local concerns, an overwhelming majority agreed with the statement.

On the question of whether women were better leaders than men, 50% of those interviewed agree with the statement that the other half did not think there was a difference in the way men and women lead. However, on other issues such as women are less corrupt, more accessible, more honest, are quick to admit they have made a mistake, the majority of the councillors interviewed agreed with the statement. All respondents also agreed that both men and women bring complementary strengths to the decision making forum and therefore should be both represented.

Attitudes of men

Interviews with male councillors revealed substantial support for women's participation at the local government level.

e. ALTERNATIVE POWER STRUCTURES: CASE STUDIES

Introduction

As part of the larger research, the main purpose of which was to study and document effective approaches and options for temporary special measures (TSM) to promote gender balance in Pacific local government contexts, specific projects were selected to highlight the important role of local government in promoting and advancing gender equality through temporary special measures. The project identified under this section is considered as part of the informal measures, through local

government programmes or specific councillor support provided to women's community groups, that has led to the empowerment of women. Other gender equality outcomes identified include improved family or household relationships and social and economic improvement for the community as a whole.

Background

Two projects were identified for the case studies. Based on desk research, the interviews held in Honiara including with the New Zealand Aid Programme, the Solar Project developed, implemented and supported by Hon. Rhonda Sikilabu of the Isabel Provincial Assembly was identified as the project for the case study. The second project was identified through a focus group discussion held with non-government organisations. The case studies were held over five days between 1 and 6 October 2010. For the Isabel case study a number of communication and transportation challenges were encountered but every effort was made to adhere to traditional and official protocol to facilitate the conduct of the research. This is important when one is visiting such rural communities in the Pacific for the purposes of consent and legitimacy of the exercise through the endorsement of official and traditional authorities. Contact was made with the Isabel Provincial Council through the Women's Group to inform them of the research. Contact with Councillor Sikilabu was made by radio announcements as the Horara constituency she represents and resides in can only be reached by a two hour boat ride. After the interview with the Councillor a further boat ride to the village of Ole, a beneficiary of the solar project, was taken to conduct the research into this case study community. The second case study was identified in the village of Mataniko that is under the authority of the Guadalcanal Provincial Council.

Of the two projects studied a total of 21 participants were consulted in Ole (12 women; 9 men) and 14 participants in Mataniko (9 women; 5 men).

Research Methods

A step by step instruction was developed to guide the case study process. A number of principles were considered in developing the guide and includes focusing on the qualitative and quantitative components; a consensus building approach based collaborative participation; a process oriented (and substance) method where a space is created for the participants to bring in their own substance and life experiences prior to and after the project. It focussed on each participant, their relationships, roles and experiences as men and women. In addition the impact on the community as a whole was discussed.

Identification of issues before the project

Small Groups - Sharing Stories or experiences before the project

For the first two steps, participants were divided into separate women-only and men-only groups. Each step was divided into three separate activities. The first of these activities included sharing stories and experiences before the project. Participants were organised into smaller groups of five or six. The session was designed to enable participants to identify important issues and problems facing their community before the project and secondly help build team spirit and mutual understanding.

Larger Group Discussions

For the second activity each small group was then invited to share their stories to the women-only or men-only larger groups. Method of reporting back to the respective larger group was determined by each group and participants were encouraged to ask questions. The presentations were then followed by discussions centred on the main points raised from the experiences shared. The groups were encouraged to share their experiences reflecting jointly on the issues identified.

Ranking

The third activity was asking each group to summarise and record on a large piece of paper the points/issues raised and to rank them in order of importance. Discussions during the ranking exercise were documented. The purpose of this activity was to help the group, upon reflection, to discuss the reasons for the weighting provided to each so as to reach consensus.

Assessment of Impact after the Project – Change/Outcome experienced?

Small groups – sharing experiences after the project

Step two involved the same process but the small group discussions and larger group focussed on the impact after the project, an assessment of the change or outcome experienced. The purpose was to reveal the common gender impacts/outcomes after the project implementation and to increase awareness of gender equality in decision making development.

For first activity the group task was:

“Each pair or small group is to work together and share their positive experiences (or impacts) that have happened for men and for women and for relationships between men and women, and for the community, as a result of the project implementation and to identify the positive factors that made these positive experiences possible. In addition, the pair/group to identify challenges that happened as a result of the project”.

Larger Group Discussions

Activity two required groups to report back to larger group with the remaining participants invited to ask questions and to be responded to by the presenting group. Positive outcomes and causes were recorded on a large piece of paper. On a separate piece of white paper the challenges faced causes faced were recorded.

Ranking

Activity three required the participants in each group to summarise and record on a large piece of paper the outcomes/impacts experienced. Each group was asked to rank these in order of importance.

Whole group presentations and discussions

Plenary Discussions

Step three involved bringing together the whole group to present and discuss the findings and discussions conducted up to this point within the men-only and women-only groups. Facilitators facilitated the discussions focussing on the important issues raised and points of differences between men and women. Ensuing discussions were documented.

Initial Collaborative Analysis

Step four entailed conducting an initial analysis based on outcomes raised in the stories and ranking exercises to identify pertinent issues for examination in subsequent exercises.

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information is collected by identifying their position through their vote. By placing their token they were identifying the type of individual they are and their position. Different coloured papers to be used for different ages. Participants were encouraged to respond honestly and a scale of answers on changes was grouped as: *no change, minor, moderate and major*. The pocket chart was set up in such a way that participants can place their tokens without being seen by others. After all the votes have been cast, tallies should be made and presented visually to the participants to consider and discuss the results. Facilitate the discussions emphasising where women and men differ on the same issue.

Findings

More respect for women and their roles

The two projects studied revealed that there was improvement in gender relations within the household and community. This has led to increase respect for women and their roles. According to the Chief of Mataniko:

Lily Poznaski was the first woman to be appointed by the Legislative Council to become the first ever woman councillor. Lily's legacy has impacted the Mataniko community in many ways through her water project. Lily organised and implemented the water supply project to service the Mataniko people with drinking water. The water project is of "long term benefit" despite being implemented in the late 1970s.

The male respondents noted that the opportunity to share this success story of Honourable Lily Poznaski is enlightening and opens understanding of the role of women in provincial and local government. The men and women both believed that women should be part of any decision making structure because they would represent women's needs differently to men. Women and men valued the contributions of women in the informal sector but at the same time shared their views on the lack of participation of women in local government or provincial government since Lily Poznaski.

According to the men in Ole Village - Councillor Sikilabu as a woman and a mother herself, was able to identify with the community's need for electricity and to mobilise the various stakeholders to come together for this project. Women are part of the decision making forum. A committee was set up, made up of equal numbers of women and men, to oversight the sustainability of the project. Responsibilities include maintenance of the solar panels, batteries and power house and to ensure that the facilities are not misused. Planning for fundraising to assist in the maintenance of the project is also the function of the committee.

With the provision of electricity through solar power, the extended time used for activities such as fishing and marketing so as to get enough money just to buy kerosene and the time spent just looking for kerosene which can mean rowing to other villages, has greatly reduced. Money saved has greatly increasing the disposable income for the family and whilst men still continue to be engaged in these activities, the income produced is now channelled to other needs of the family.

The positive impacts on the family for both communities are numerous. With better conditions, through the supply of electricity, it was reported by the men of Ole Village that the children are now getting better results evidenced by the better score cards/grades that they bring home. For the Mataniko community, safe water for drinking was available to the community; water was more accessible with stand pipes built near to the homes; time spent by women to collect water from the river for washing, drinking and cooking was substantially reduced. Safe drinking water is now always available, even during the rainy season and floods.

The Mataniko village has two committees in place: the church committee and the fundraising committee which have more than 50% of the women members. It is evident through the responses of both men and women that women are active participants in community and church work, assisting youth with social problems and strengthening their leadership roles in the village.

Reduced tension/violence in the homes

The provision of electricity in Ole has greatly improved the relationship between husbands and wives and reduced the tension, especially when after a hard day's work by men in the garden or fishing, the women would ask their husbands for help to look for and buy kerosene. As one man put it:

"Before the solar power project I have to always worry about getting home early to check on the supply of kerosene for the family. It was stressful and caused tension at personal and relationship levels. Now I do not have to worry about this. I can stay in the garden or fish for extended periods of time".

Impact on Men's Role

This outcome highlights the positive impact on men's role. The men of Ole noted that prior to the project men were doing twice as much work in farming and fishing, to be able to sell the produce to get enough money to buy kerosene and meet other needs. Now men are able to manage time better focus on other needs.

Improved community relationship

This outcome is concerned with changes in men's attitude to women. The inclusion of women in the committee to oversight the maintenance of the solar systems is an indication of the acceptance of men and the community of women in the decision making level. The provision of water, electricity and the increased focus on money generating activities has changed the standard of living for the community as a whole. In both communities, both men and women discussed and acknowledged the value of women's contribution through these projects.

f. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDED INTERVENTIONS

A number of TSM options exist for Solomon Islands. These temporary special measures, however to be effective should be accompanied by other measures and must be carefully considered within the development context of Solomon Islands.

- Consideration can be given to creating new additional women-only reserved seats. This requires careful deliberation as to the criteria used for voting, such as population, province-wide or ward-level constituencies. This option may necessitate a review of boundaries at ward levels which the minister has the power, in consultations with the provincial assembly, to amend or vary.
- Another option would be to target nominated positions either appointed by the minister or the councils as stipulated in the act. This would include appointments to councils, town, village and area committees are also under responsibility of councils. This option would increase the minimum number of women in the councils' respective committees. As nominated members, women would, despite not having voting rights, have opportunities with this platform to articulate women's issues; it would be a training ground to become elected members and provide the much needed experience in local government systems, structures and issues.
- For a gender responsive environment, consideration could also be given to developing the local government administrations' policies and strategies that are gender inclusive. This option

would require the active participation of the NWM and other development partners to provide technical backstopping to the local government administration.

- Considerable support and training is needed to assist women to learn the way in which the political environment works and support is also needed to help them fulfil both their public and private roles.
- Voter education should accompany the various options discussed and capacity building is necessary for members of the local government targeting councillors and administrations of councils.
- Identification of male champions would be critical to such initiatives and provides the unique opportunity for males to take collective responsibility for gender equality.

4. Vanuatu

Port Vila Town Council and the Shefa Region Local Government were identified for detailed study. The research coincided with the Pacific Regional Local Government Symposium 2010 held in Port Vila, Vanuatu from 11 – 14th October. With most of the informants engaged in the symposium, the research did not start in earnest until the second week. The research team through interviews with the Shefa Region Local Government identified the Road Markets of Paunagisu and Emua to be the subjects of detailed studies.

a. Statutory Provisions

The *Decentralisation and Local Government Regions Act (1994)* [Cap 230] makes provisions for the decentralisation and establishment of Local Government Regions, their composition and powers and all matters connected to local government regions. *Section 5* details the composition of the local government council to be composed of both elected and appointed members. *Section 7 (1)* declares that members of the council, appointed by the Minister, in respect of each council region to consist of:

- Chiefs from among members nominated by representative bodies of chiefs;
- Women from among persons nominated by representative bodies of women;
- Youth representatives nominated by representative bodies of youth; and
- Church representatives nominated by the representative bodies of the church.

Sub-section (2) stipulates that nominated members shall hold office for a period of four years, are eligible for re-appointment, and requires that for any matter coming before the council for decision, that they be consulted. They are not entitled to vote and their total numbers are not to exceed more than half the number of elected members. *Section 11* makes provision for the setting up of committees for general or specific purposes, from time to time; as the council thinks fit to be dealt with by such committee and of which members are to be drawn from among its members. *Section 18AB* the Minister is empowered to divide each Local Government Region into several constituencies for the purposes of the local government election. The Minister is also empowered to prescribe the numbers for each local government region on the basis that each member for each constituency must represent at least 1,500 people in that constituency. If however, this condition cannot be satisfied then the Minister can prescribe the number of members for such constituency so as to enable their fair representation in the local government council.

Section 18E – 18G provides for the appointment of a secretary, accountant and treasurer who are employees of the government public service, to be seconded to the local government. *Section 18I* provides for local government councils to make staff regulations including appointments and promotions and terms and conditions of services generally such as duties and responsibilities.

Local Government Constituencies Order of 2000 and the *Local Government (Area Council Divisions) Order 41 of 2003* makes provision for the six Local Governments constituencies, their boundaries, total number of elected member and the area council divisions for each constituencies as follows:

Table 3: Vanuatu Local Government Constituencies and Area Councils

Local Government Region	No. Of Constituencies	No. of Elected Member	Area Council Divisions
TAFEA	5	19	11
SHEFA	9	18	17
MALAPA	3	21	10
PENAMA	3	16	10
SANMA	2	18	9
TORBA	7	7	3
Total	29	99	51

Municipalities Act [Cap 126] provides for the establishment of municipalities, elections to municipal councils, the powers of municipalities and other all matters connected to municipalities. In total there are three urban municipalities: Port Vila Municipal Council, Luganville Municipal Council and Lenakel Town Municipal Council²⁴. *Section 4* set out the composition of municipal councils and the authority of the Minister for the following:

- prescribe the composition of a council and the number of councillors;
- divide a municipality into territorial wards and vary the boundaries of any such wards;
- prescribe the number of councillors to be elected in respect of each ward;
- provide for the election of a mayor who shall be chairman of the council;
- provide for the election of a deputy mayor or mayors from among the councillors;
- prescribe the terms and conditions of office of councillors including the mayor and the deputy mayor;
- provide for any other matter not hereinbefore specified which may be necessary for the proper establishment of a council.

Section 7 stipulates the term of councillors to be four years and *s. 12* makes reference to standing committees and any other committees as may be set up by the council, the regulation and the conduct of such committees. *Section 17* provides for municipal councils, from time to time, the power to appoint and dissolve committees for any general or specific purposes that it deems, in its opinion, to be better regulated and managed by such a committee. *Sub-section (5)* further states committees, other than the finance committee, may include persons who are not councillors.

Section 19 provides for the appointment of a clerk by the council to be responsible for the administration of the council. In addition *s.19A of the Act* states the powers of the municipal councils to appoint wardens, *s.20* provides for the appointment of treasurer, medical officer of health and engineer to be appointed under the terms and conditions defined by the council. *Sections 22 – 23* set out the powers of the council to employ agents, servants and workmen and to make internal staff regulations.

Under the *Port Vila Municipality Order 21 of 1980*, as authorised under *section 7* of the *Municipalities Act [Cap 126]*, the Port Vila Municipality is composed of fourteen members to be elected from four wards (multi members constituencies) as follows:

²⁴ Lenakel Town Municipal Council was established by Order 33, details of which were not available to the researchers.

Table 4: Port Vila Municipality

Ward	Number of Councillors
Malapoa - Tagabe	3
Anabrou – Melcofe-Tassiriki	4
Centre	4
South	3

Port Vila Municipal Order issued in 1993 s.3 makes provision for the committees to be established. This includes the Town Planning Committee, whose term is for one year, shall consist of five other members, of whom not more than two are non council members.

Luganville Municipal Order issued in 1982 provides for the composition of the Luganville Municipal Council (LMC) as authorised under *section 3 and 6* of the Municipalities Act [Cap 126]. Section 1 states that the LMC shall be made up of 13 elected members. It further notes under s. 2 that the municipality will be divided into four wards

Table 4: Luganville Municipality

Ward	Number of Councillors
West	2
Centre	4
Sarakata	4
East	3

b. Options for Special Measures

There are in total six local government regions made up of 29 constituencies and represented by 99 elected council members. These are further divided into area councils and there are 51 area council divisions altogether. Consideration could be given to reserving existing seats in multi-member constituencies. Multi-member constituencies include:

Table 5: Multi-member Constituencies

Local Govt Region	Constituencies	Boundaries	Elected Members	Local Govt Region	Constituencies	Boundaries	Elected Members
Shefa	Efate	Efate Is.	8	Sanma	Malo/Aore	Malo/Aore	3
	Epi	Epi Is.	3		Santo	Santo	15
Penama	Ambae	Ambae Is	6	Malapa	Paama	Paama Is	2
	Maewo	Maewo Is	2		Ambrym	Ambrym Is	4
	Pentecost	Pentecost Is	8		Malekula	Malekula Is	15
Tafea	Tanna	Tanna Is	15				

Due to the uneven distribution of population and size of constituencies a possibility would be for constituencies that returns five seats and above to consider reserving one seat for woman for every four seats for males. For example for the Sanma Local government, three seats would be reserved for women out of the 15 elected members for the Santo constituency, likewise for the Malakula constituency under the Malapa local government region and Tanna under the Tafea Local government. Only Pentecost would reserve only one seat for woman for the first five seats. This option would guarantee a minimum of 11 women to be returned for the regions of Tafea, Penama, Malapa and Sanma, representing a minimum of 18% for the five constituencies, excluding Sefa²⁵ and Torba²⁶ local governments or a minimum of 20% for each of the 15 elected member constituencies. This option should be introduced as a minimum requirement to be increased over time. Elections for such women - only reserved seats could be elected at large by all voters in the relevant constituency.

Alternately consideration could be given to creating new additional seats for women in the multi - member constituencies. The same principle (as discussed in the reservation of existing seats) could be considered whereby one additional seat is reserved for women for every four seats for men.

For the Port Vila and Luganville town councils consideration could be given to reserving one seat for women for each of the existing multi – member ward. This option would result in four seats each for Port Vila and Luganville municipal councils; or 28% for Port Vila and 30% for Luganville.

Alternatively consideration could be given to creating additional seats for women in the two municipalities. These seats would be in addition to the existing 14 seats for the Port Vila Municipal Council and the 13 seats for the Luganville Municipal Council. For both options women could be elected from each of the wards. It has been proven world – wide that the likelihood of women winning elections at the ward levels is relatively higher because they are known to the voters and their contribution to community is also recognised.

There is already special provision is already provided for women under *section 7 of the Local Government Act* whereby it states that the Minister has the power to appoint a women's representative as member of the council. In addition there are provisions for standing committees and special committees in the act, to be appointed by the respective councils as they deem fit for any specific or general purposes. For example the Town Planning Committee under the Port Vila City Council makes provision for two noncouncil members. Consideration could be given to lobbying the councils to allocate a certain percentage of these nominated positions to women. As nominated positions without voting rights they still present women with the platform to articulate women's issues and act as a training ground to become elected members, providing the much needed experience in local government systems, structures and issues. This would require up-to-date database to monitor committee's membership and profiles of eligible women candidates for such positions.

For a gender responsive environment, consideration could also be given to developing the local government administrations' policies and strategies that are gender inclusive for the local government regions and municipal councils. This option would require the active participation of the NWM and other development partners to provide technical backstopping to the local government administration. Furthermore, closer interaction between the NWM and local government through information dissemination and advocacy is called for to address the existing gap identified during the research and to raise awareness at the local government level. Shefa Region Local Government has set the pace for these initiatives including:

²⁵ Shefa Local Government is not included in the analysis as it has recently announced reserving 5 seats for women in the next 2011 election.

²⁶ Torba Local Government has single member constituencies only.

- The development of the 2010 – 2012 Shefa Strategic Plan for Women,
- Shefa Disability Strategy 2010 – 2012: Promoting Inclusive Development,
- Shefa Region Local Government Corporate Plan 2007 – 2011,
- The adoption of the CEDAW in 2004 by the Council,
- The appointment of a female council member (nominated),
- The MOU signed between the Council and Disability Promotion & Advocacy Association in March 2009,
- The quota system for women – reserving seven seats for women in the next up-coming 2011 election, and
- The building of Road Markets for income and employment opportunities for women in the rural areas.

c. The Enabling Environment pilot

Administrative Policies and Programme

Gender equality as a goal demands an enabling environment that is supportive to gender mainstreaming. This requires genuine organisational gender commitment and accountability and a supportive organisational culture. The political will and organisational culture of the responsible organisations were researched to ascertain this level of commitment. Four organisations were interviewed to establish the level of gender equality commitments in these organisations. The choice of the organisations was based on their core mandates: the Ministry of Internal Affairs as the ministry directly responsible for local governments, the National Women's Machinery (Department for Women) as catalyst for gender mainstreaming and Port Vila Local Government administration and the Shefa Regional Local Government administration being directly responsible for management of local governments including terms and conditions of employment.

Political will across the three of the four organisations interviewed is high. A number of specific activities were cited to demonstrate this level of commitment. The Shefa Region Local Government has adopted the CEDAW as part of its work programme, a gender policy endorsed by the council drives the gender equality work for the organisation. In addition the appointment of a women's representative to the council and a women's development officer in the council and in the other constituencies are a demonstration of this level of commitment. Recently the Shefa Region Local Government has endorsed the reservation of seven elected council seats to be implemented in the 2011 local government election. The Ministry of Internal Affairs is currently engaged in capacity building for its staff and for those that are seconded to the provincial councils. The Department of Women has developed a draft national policy for women and is working very closely with political parties to review their manifestos with the aim of integrating gender. Work is underway to develop policies and legislation on TSM. As a prelude gender training are currently conducted for parliamentarians and through the BRIDGE support a workshop for the electoral commissioners was also undertaken. Collaboration between the NWM, the Council for Women, government ministries and parliamentarians has been critical to these national efforts.

The informant for the Port Vila City Council acknowledged that political will is low within the organisation. There is a lack of usable data to inform policy and development programmes and lack of consultations during planning processes. While there are some initiatives in place to integrate women into the decision making of the council, the progress is slow demonstrating a relatively low level of awareness and understanding of gender as a development concept and how it is linked to positive development. This lack of understanding is attributed to lack of awareness and cultural overtones of the clearly defined roles for men and women.

The focus on organisational culture revealed that senior executives are aware of gender as a development issue. Interactions with development partners, women's non-government organisations and the NWM are ongoing and have resulted in gender being mainstreamed into the organisation's programmes and activities. Shefa Region Local Government provides a 'best-practice' model in terms of collection of sex disaggregated data for development projects, breakdown of men and women as recipients for local government services such as health services and school children, males and females, attending francophone and anglophone primary and secondary schools. Gender equality activities within the Port Vila municipal council is attributed to individual efforts demonstrating the need to institutionalise gender into the policies and plans of the council.

d. Women and Local Government

i. Accessing Local Government

Women's absence from local government

Of the two local authorities studied only the Port Vila Municipal Council has a woman councillor in place. It is important to note that in 1979 the first Lord Mayor of the Port Vila Council was also a woman. However the endorsement of seven seats reserved for women in the 2011 election, if implemented, would place the Shefa Region Local Government at the forefront of gender equality at the local government level.

Barriers to access

A number of factors exist as barriers to women's participation at decision making level. This includes culture and tradition, religion, violence against women, finance, workloads and lack of opportunities.

The patriarchal belief system that continues to dominate politics contributes to the hostile environment that is disempowering and does not encourage women to enter politics. Four of the male councillors interviewed cited as a barrier to women's access to local government politics the attitude of men that continues to shape the political arena. As one of the male councillors stated:

"Born in a very traditional society in the islands it is very difficult to accept women into the decision making levels. Even women are not accepted in the Nakamals (men's meeting house), which are considered as the meeting houses of chiefs (men). This practice is reflected in the political arena. Things are changing especially in the cities and towns however there is a need for awareness raising at all levels of society to change people's attitude and to understand that women need to be with men inside the council".

Other factors identified include the culture and structures of political parties which continue to be dominated by men. This is especially relevant in Vanuatu where the endorsement of a political party for candidature in an election plays a major role. As Councillor Noel Lango put it: "Political leaders need to speak out about gender equality issues. Our party has begun to advocate and publicly support this in our last political rally".

Women's own attitude was cited as a major deterrent for women entering the political arena. Councillor Jenny Tasale noted: "women themselves need to step out, they must start to build their own support base. I had to do that, being engaged in community work as a volunteer". Councillor Billy Bakokoto stated that: "Women must come out and speak for themselves. We have one or two outstanding women in the community but the majority are not speaking out. They have to come out and be involved and participate. Women's experiences are different from men and they need to stand to make their issues and concerns known".

Quotas – A Strategy for Change

The Shefa Region Local Government has recently endorsed quota of seven seats for women in the upcoming 2011 local government election, setting the pace for other provincial and municipal councils. Interviews with councillor revealed a high degree of support for quotas in both local government councils. Comments received include:

- Under the constitution women have equal rights and women have a right to stand for elections and be represented at the decision making level. But this is a long process and quota is a good idea
- Women must come and speak for themselves, to be involved and participate but it must be accompanied by capacity building
- From when this council was formed men have been part of the council and there is very little change. It would make a big difference if women come in
- I believe in the use of quotas, it would be even better if we adopt the parity law as done in other French territories.

One of the male councillors considered that the use of quotas may not work in Vanuatu because politicians still do not recognise women's contribution to national development. He quoted the example of Hilda Lini (former Member of Parliament) where she tried her best to make a difference but was not acknowledged by some of her contemporaries. The informant acknowledged, however, that changes were taking place.

ii. Participation

Measuring participation

The team was not able to directly observe women councillors' participation during council meetings, however through the questionnaire a number of responses were obtained. One of the male respondents noted that through the female nominated member in the Shefa Region Local Government women are able to raise issues concerning them. During administrative and budget sittings she contributes to the discussions. It was also highlighted by the same councillor that women's participation is recognised by the council. The approval of the budget for the Women's Division is evidence of this.

Within the Port Vila Municipal Council, issues raised by Councillor Jenny include the seafront. As she put it: "When we talk about project for example the seafront, I see it as a place where women, children and families can come and spend time. The men councillors, they look at how we can build a marina so that it can bring money for the council". Other projects that she has been involved in include the cleanup campaign for the city, an initiative that has been hailed as a success with the support of the business community and donors. Other issues raised by her include the lack of school buses for children, there are no proper footpaths for children to walk on which poses a danger to their safety when travelling to and from school. The non-adherence to environmental impact assessment for new construction sites is becoming a major problem and through her participation these issues continue to be raised in the council.

Barriers to participation

From the responses received, one of the major factors that could be identified by the research team is the issue of 'critical mass' theory. While there is obvious support from male councillors for the only woman councillor on Port Vila Town Council and she is able to raise issues of concern to women in this forum, during voting time she is quite powerless as she is only one amongst the many male councillors. In the case of Shefa Region Local Government the nominated member can raise issues within the council but cannot cast a vote on issues discussed. These examples confirm the need to

increase the numbers of elected women at local government level to influence decision making processes.

Enabling Factors

The support of families cannot be understated as highlighted by the only woman councillor interviewed. In addition community engagement is critical to the success of any councillor in a country like Vanuatu. Above all women must have the skills, experience and confidence to be able to stand up and speak for the community which can be gained through years of participation at the community level.

iii. Partnership in Local Government

What women bring into local government?

It is generally acknowledged that women's issues and concerns differ from their male counterparts. To determine how councillors, male and female, view this issue, informants were asked whether women in local government have different concerns and interests to men. An overwhelming majority concurred with this view. A Port Vila male councillor stated that: "The way they look at things is more constructive than men. We overlook things most of the time but when it comes to details women tell us". Another councillor noted that women can bring in new ideas and in decision making, like in the homes, it is a partnership.

Attitudes of men

As already noted, interviews with male councillors revealed substantial support for women's participation at the local government level. In addition there is an enabling environment that currently exists within the council to advance gender equality and women's participation. The Shefa Region Local Government has all male councillors and the Secretary General position is also held by male, yet it has progressed substantially both in terms of formal and informal special measures for women as evidenced by the support given by male councillors in these councils.

e. ALTERNATIVE POWER STRUCTURES: CASE STUDIES

Introduction

As part of the larger research, the main purpose of which was to study and document effective approaches and options for temporary special measures (TSM) to promote gender balance in Pacific local government contexts, specific projects were selected to highlight the important role of local government in promoting and advancing gender equality through temporary special measures. The project identified under this section is considered part of the informal measures, through local government programmes or specific councillor support provided to women's community groups, leading to the empowerment of women. Other gender equality outcomes identified include improved family or household relationships and social and economic improvement for the community as a whole.

Background

Based on interviews, the Road Markets project under the Shefa Region Local Government was identified as the subject of the case study. Two Road Markets were identified: Paunagisu and Emau Road Markets. In 2004 gender equality work, and in particular initiatives on TSM, began in earnest in the Shefa Region Local Government, through the work of the Secretary General. In that year, prior to the 2004 election discussions with women's associations began with encouragement to mobilise themselves for election. The Women's Development Officer played an active part through the

Women's Association. Despite these efforts no female candidate was elected and again in 2008 another effort was made. Two main reasons were identified as contributing to this scenario. Though they may appear to be separate the two issues are closely linked. Women were not organised, which affected their ability to work together. There was no forum where they could come together. Secondly this contributed to their lack of organisation during elections which resulted in no women being elected into office.

In response to this and based on consultations, the Road Market concept was developed on the advice of the Secretary General. The objectives of the Road Markets include to:

- create a forum where women could come together, organise themselves
- capacity building for women to assume additional responsibilities that may arise as a consequence
- identify potential women leaders
- fulfil Shefa Region Local Government's commitment under Article 7 & 14 of CEDAW after the adoption of CEDAW
- create outlets for market produce as a substitute for Port Vila market.

With the Road Markets in place, setting up cooperatives is in the pipeline as the next step of the project. Of the two Road Markets studied a total of 18 participants were consulted in Paunagisu (8 women; 8 men) and 15 participants in Emua (9 women; 6 men).

Research Methods

A step by step instruction was developed to guide the case study process. A number of principles were considered in developing the guide and include focusing on the qualitative and quantitative components; a consensus building approach based collaborative participation; a process oriented (and substance) method where a space is created for the participants to bring in their own substance and life experiences prior to and after the project. It focussed on each participant, their relationships, roles and experiences as men and women. In addition the impact on the community as a whole was discussed.

Identification of issues before the project

Small Groups - Sharing Stories or experiences before the project

The first two steps, participants were divided into separate women-only and men-only groups. Each step was divided into three separate activities. The first of these activities included sharing stories and experiences before the project. Participants were organised into smaller groups of five or six. The session was designed to enable participants to identify important issues and problems facing their community before the project and secondly help build team spirit and mutual understanding.

Larger Group Discussions

For the second activity each small group was then invited to share their stories with women-only or men-only larger groups. Method of reporting back to the respective larger group was determined by each group and participants were encouraged to ask questions. The presentations were then followed by discussions centred on the main points raised from the experiences shared. The groups were encouraged to share their experiences reflecting jointly on the issues identified.

Ranking

The third activity was asking each group to summarise and record on a large piece of paper the points/issues raised and to rank in order of importance. Discussions during the ranking exercise were

documented. The purpose of this activity was to help the group, upon reflection, to discuss the reasons for the weighting provided to each so as to reach consensus.

Assessment of Impact after the Project – Change/Outcome experienced?

Small groups – sharing experiences after the project

Step two involved the same process but the small group discussions and larger group focussed on the impact after the project, an assessment of the change or outcome experienced. The purpose was to reveal the common gender impacts/outcomes after the project implementation and to increase awareness of gender equality in decision making development.

For first activity the group task was:

“Each pair or small group is to work together and share their positive experiences (or impacts) that have happened for men and for women and for relationships between men and women, and for the community as a result of the project implementation and to identify the positive factors that made these positive experiences possible. In addition, the pair/group to identify challenges that happened as a result of the project”.

Larger Group Discussions

Activity two required groups to report back to larger group with the remaining participants invited to ask questions and to be responded to by the presenting group. Positive outcomes and causes were recorded on a large piece of paper. On a separate piece of white paper the challenges faced and their causes were recorded.

Ranking

Activity three required the participants in each group to summarise and record on a large piece of paper the outcomes/impacts experienced. Each group was asked to rank these in order of importance.

Whole group presentations and discussions

Plenary Discussions

Step three involved bringing together the whole group to present and discuss the findings and discussions conducted up to this point between the men-only and women-only group. Facilitators facilitated the discussions focussing on the important issues raised and points of differences between men and women. Ensuing discussions were documented.

Initial Collaborative Analysis

Step four entailed conducting an initial analysis based on outcomes raised in the stories and ranking exercises to identify pertinent issues for examination in subsequent exercises.

Quantification Activity

This was designed to measure the gender impact/outcome. Two sets of questions were developed, one for men and one for women, with many questions similar to both groups. A participatory activity using ‘pocket chart’ was used. Once the chart was set up the participants were shown how the information is collected by identifying their position through their vote. By placing their token they were identifying the type of individual they are and their position. Different coloured papers to be used for different ages. Participants were encouraged to respond honestly and a scale of answers on changes was grouped as: *no change, minor, moderate and major*. The pocket chart was set up in such a way that participants can place their tokens without being seen by others. After all the votes have been

cast, tallies should be made and presented visually to the participants to consider and discuss the results. Facilitate the discussions emphasising where women and men differ on the same issue.

Findings

More respect for women and their roles

Through the Road Markets women have put in place basic management and financial systems for the operating of the markets. The market is open to the whole village to bring their produce to be sold. This includes fathers, mothers, children, single mothers and the handicaps. A roster has been drawn up so that two women are tasked with the responsibility of selling and attending to the book keeping each day. A 10% commission is deducted from all income received and deposited into the women's association bank account and the balance is given to the vendor. As a result women are learning new management and accounting skills which have increased their self confidence and knowledge. As a consequence women have gained increased respect from their husbands and children and everyone is benefitting from the project. A women is appointed president of the organisation who is charge of the whole operation.

Reduced tension/violence in the homes

Prior to the Road Markets being built, women travelled all the way to Port Vila every week to sell their produce. At times, depending on the sale, women were required to stay in Port Vila between 3 and 5 days until all the produce was sold. Often at the end of the trip, due to the high cost of transportation and expenses in Port Vila, women came back home with very little income. As admitted to by both women and men participants, this was a source of much tension and violence in the homes. With the building of the Road Markets women did not have to travel long distances and did not have to stay away from the homes for extended periods of time. Money previously used for transportation and up-keep in Port Vila could now be saved and be channelled to other household priorities. When this source of conflict was removed so was the tension and/or violence or they were substantially reduced.

Impact on Men's Role

Previously men played a supportive role to their wives in collecting and preparing the market produce for their wives when they travelled to Port Vila. While still fulfilling these roles, men are now able to also bring their produce or other items to be sold at the road markets. Previously children were left to the care of the fathers when mothers were away in Port Vila. Because of this men were 'forced' by circumstances to play both roles as fathers and mothers to the children. With the building of the Road Markets, the problem of 'absentee' mothers is greatly reduced, leaving the men to focus on other economic activities for the families.

Improved community relationship

Prior to the building of the road markets, the community was segregated along denominational lines, part of the reason why women could not work together. The road markets have become the rallying point for women and the community as a whole and have the impact of bringing together the women from the various denominations who are now working together. Families are now able to contribute to community and church levies due to the increase in income and women can now take part in church and community activities because they are not away from the village on days that are allocated for community work.

Improved Health Indicators

Women participants related the stress they had to go through when they had to travel to Port Vila for marketing. There are no sleeping quarters for women in Vila or are too expensive for the women to

afford decent accommodation. As a result women slept under the tables in the market. It was unhygienic with dust everywhere and very congested. In addition, the cost of tables, three meals a day and transportation became a source of worry and affected the health of many women. They spoke of how women were on occasions admitted to the hospital for stress related illnesses and three deaths occurred this year when the women were in Port Vila for marketing. With this negative impact eliminated and women now operating from the comfort of their homes, they have testified that their health has greatly improved and they are happier.

There was also the tendency for mothers to buy 'junk food' as treats for their children when they returned from Port Vila. Now everyone is eating healthier, with natural food a major part of their diet and children's snacks is now substituted with local nuts and fruits harvested from the garden. Children are also now able to enjoy balanced meals with mothers who are not absent from home for extended periods.

Impact on Children's Education

Parents testified to their children coming home from school with better score cards. Discipline and supervision of children is better and they are not left to their own devices as previously experienced. Basic mathematic skills are honed as children take part in selling and calculating the proceeds that they are able to earn.

Economic Benefits to Women, Family and Community

One of the greatest advantages of the road markets experienced by the two communities is the economic benefit which has substantial gender impact for both men and woman as increased income due to increased savings raises the standard of living for the families as a whole. The amount budgeted is based on the actual figures provided by the participants and was verified by a male participant who said that in a week both he and his wife are able to save and deposit into their account 3,000 Vatu since the road market began operating. For the Paunagisu and Emau communities total amounts saved in a week are as follows:

Table 6: Total Economic Benefits per Week

PAUGANISU			EMAU		
Transport	20 x 2,000	40,000	Transport	15 x 2000	30,000
Tables	450x20x3	27,000	Tables	450 x 15 x 3	20,250
Food	610x20x3	36,600	Food	610 x 15 x 3	27,450
Total		103,600 Vatu	Total		77,700 Vatu

Notes:

1. Total transport cost is 2,000 Vatu (return) per person
2. Market tables is 450 Vatu per person per day
3. Food expenses for three meals for 3 days
4. Costs are worked out on the basis of 20 women for 3 days for Pauganisu; for Emau for 15 women for 3 days

f. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDED INTERVENTIONS

A number of TSM options exist for Vanuatu. These temporary special measures, however to be effective should be accompanied by other measures and must be carefully considered within the development context of Vanuatu.

- Consideration could be given to reserving existing seats in multi-member constituencies. This includes the local government regions of Penama, Tafea, Sanma and Malapa. A possible option is for every four seats for males one seat for women to be reserved. Elections for such women-only reserved seats could be elected at large by all voters in the relevant constituency. This option would guarantee a minimum of 11 women to be returned for the regions of Tafea, Penama, Malapa and Sanma.
- The Shefa Local Government Region has endorsed the reservation of seven seats for women to be effective from 2011 election, an example that can be emulated by other local government regions.
- For the Port Vila and Luganville town councils consideration could be given to reserving one seat for women for each of the existing multi – member ward. This option would result in four seats each for Port Vila and Luganville municipal councils; or 28% for Port Vila and 30% for Luganville. Alternatively consideration could be given to creating additional seats for women in the two municipalities. These seats would be in addition to the existing 14 seats for the Port Vila Municipal Council and the 13 seats for the Luganville Municipal Council. For both options women could be elected from each of the wards.
- Another option would be to target nominated positions either appointed by the minister or the councils as stipulated in the act. This option would increase the minimum number of women in the councils' respective committees. Consideration could be given to lobbying the councils to allocate a certain percentage of these nominated positions to women.
- For a gender responsive environment, consideration could also be given to developing the local government administrations' policies and strategies that are gender inclusive for the local government regions and municipal councils.
- Considerable support and training is needed to assist women to learn the way in which the political environment works and support is also needed to help them fulfil both their public and private roles.
- Voter education should accompany the various options discussed and capacity building is necessary for members of the local government targeting councillors and administrations of councils.

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