



**STATE, SOCIETY & GOVERNANCE IN MELANESIA PROGRAM**  
**THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY**

***Experiencing the Public Sector:  
Pacific Women's Perspectives***

***By***

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report contains the findings arising from a short study undertaken to examine the experiences of women in the public sector across the Pacific. It is part of a much larger initiative aimed at improving the public sector capacity of Pacific Islands' countries.

One hundred women from six Pacific Island countries: Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu were invited to participate, 40 responded. All were senior or middle level public sector employees. Each respondent completed a short questionnaire concerning their: educational background; work history/career path; experiences in the workplace; domestic responsibilities and work/life balance; factors related to success; and leadership aspirations.

Of the 40 respondents, 19 worked in central agencies (Treasury, Finance and Planning, Prime Minister and Cabinet, National Executive Council, and Justice) while 21 worked in line agencies. The youngest respondent was 26 years and the oldest was 59, with an even spread in between.

Twenty three of the respondents were currently married, nine were divorced or separated, four were widowed and four were single. All but four (36/40) had children, and all but one (39/40) said they had additional dependents, with three quarters of the women surveyed (29/40) having more than 5 dependents.

Every woman who participated was well educated and well qualified. They were all at least bi-lingual (often multi-lingual), well travelled and have attended international workshops, conferences, and short courses in order to enhance their skills and knowledge base. Some have travelled to Europe, Asia and the sub-continent in their capacities as senior public servants. In short they are bright, articulate and have a good understanding of what is happening around them (at work and at home).

The real value of this study lies in the insight it provides into the working and home lives of female public sector employees across the Pacific. It provides a solid starting point in understanding just how women experience their workplaces and domestic situations and the challenges they face on a day to day basis. It paints a fairly grim picture of life in the public sector. For example the study reveals that female public sector employees are exposed to a range of abuses in the workplace, including verbal abuse, threats of violence and sexual harassment, as well as harassment from the wives and girlfriends of male colleagues. Many also grapple with political interference.

The study also revealed women experience day to day difficulty at the interface of home and work. Travelling to and from work safely is an issue, and most find they are working two jobs – doing their paid work and maintaining their households with little domestic assistance. Many women reported that they are closely scrutinised by husbands and boyfriends and that they have experienced domestic violence because of the difficulties involved in balancing work and domestic responsibilities. Certainly being well educated and having good jobs had not protected this cohort of women from domestic violence.

On a more positive note the study identifies factors that have contributed towards women's success in the public sector. When asked about the most significant factors in their success, women listed: education, hard work, persistence and perseverance, supportive bosses and families, and Christian faith. In view of this and the other findings contained within this report we offer suggestions for further research. Entry points for donor engagement also emerge out of the key findings. These are outlined in the recommendations that follow.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations arise from the key findings incorporated in this report. The recommendations concern ways to support women's leadership and their career development within the public sector.

- There is a need for increased access to information about educational and career development opportunities. In the case of PNG we recommend the establishment of a donor-funded initiative similar to the Solomon Islands' People First Network (PFNet), so people throughout the country might search and apply for scholarships etc. online.
- Scholarships are a key factor in women's success. Although there are gender parity guidelines in the way scholarships are awarded, filtering mechanisms biased against women are being employed in many sectors. There needs to be increased access to available scholarships for those women already in the workforce. This might be achieved by offering alternate and more direct pathways for women to apply for donor funded scholarships, workshops and courses, or by inviting departments to put forward equal numbers of male and female nominees.
- Women seeking to enter the public sector would benefit from the experience and insights of women who have already achieved success in this arena. Following the lead of the RAMSI Machinery of Government program we recommend recording and publishing the life histories of successful women for the benefit of high school and tertiary students.
- Ongoing donor support for women's networks is encouraged. Women who attended a one day workshop for women in the public sector in Port Moresby found it very useful but were keen for more timely follow-up.
- Donor support for mentoring initiatives is encouraged. Women's career development would be enhanced by a cross sector Pilot Women's Mentoring programs in each of the respective countries. Such programs could provide support and training to senior women willing to mentor younger/junior colleagues.
- There is a need for an independent confidential complaints bureau. Women found existing mechanisms invasive and punitive.
- Political interference in the day to day running of the professional public sector of these countries needs to be actively discouraged by aid partners and donor governments. There were a significant number of women who felt their careers were being undermined by the presence of political appointees to their sector.
- There is a need for further research that might inform initiatives that will better support women's leadership and career progression in the public sector. This study highlights three avenues of further research which would most likely prove productive:
  - An information gathering exercise concerning education and employment pathways of women in the public sector at the provincial or district level, in PNG and the Solomon Islands, to see if there is a significant deviation from urban standards.
  - Further research which examines links between church, faith and women's leadership, particularly given the extent to which churches shore up patriarchy and discourage women to take on key public roles.
  - A retrospective and/or longitudinal study that tracks the career paths of scholarship holders.

*The 2008-09 Commonwealth budget provided significant new funding for a public sector capacity building program in the Pacific. The \$107 million four-year initiative Investing in Pacific Public Sector Capacity, will strengthen public sector administration in the Pacific. This will address a key impediment to poverty reduction, by helping to improve service delivery and enable growth. This program will focus on:*

- *addressing public sector workforce development needs both at an individual and organisational level;*
- *supporting public sector reforms, and*
- *strengthening partnership between governments and tertiary institutions to improve workforce performance.*

*Improving public sector performance requires a long-term, co-ordinated response which tackles the institutional causes of poor performance, while also providing immediate assistance to improve individual and institutional capacity in priority areas.(AusAID 2008)*

*The Australian Government will provide \$6.2 million for the women's leadership program in the Pacific over the five years in partnership with the UN Development Fund for Women, which seeks to achieve gender equality in developing countries. (Media Release 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2008 Bob McMullan MP)*

## **Section 1: INTRODUCTION**

Women make up half of the country's total population and play significant roles in work and public life in Papua New Guinea. However, women are still underrepresented in the overall public sector, overrepresented at the lower levels and poorly represented at the top and middle-management levels. Although the importance of equal employment of women is enshrined in the National Constitution and other related documents, the successive governments have done very little to make this become a reality in the public sector. (Payani 1996)

The core objective of this study was to "examine the role and experience of women in the public sector across the Pacific".<sup>1</sup> The study concerns six Pacific Island countries, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Tonga, Samoa and Kiribati, and was commissioned by AusAID as part of the Commonwealth's *Investing in Pacific Public Sector Capacity* initiative designed to help Pacific Island countries improve public sector performance.<sup>2</sup>

There is only one country within the study group, namely Samoa, with close to ideal representation of women in the public sector.<sup>3</sup> But close to equal numerical representation does not mean there is not inequality. Samoa is a case in point. It demonstrates the importance of examining status and ethnicity alongside gender relations. Samoa aside, women are better represented in the public sector than in the Parliaments in each of these Pacific Island countries. Typically they account for between 15-25% of all public sector employees but are still significantly underrepresented in the higher echelons of the public sector.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Tasking Note 10 (12 December 2008).

<sup>2</sup> Encouraging women to enter the public sector may also be a way of allowing women to move on to private sector organisations which will provide a more balanced work force at all levels throughout the Pacific Islands countries.

<sup>3</sup> According to Liki (2008:5), figures for the Samoan Public sector as at May 2008 show almost parity of CEO positions and that women account for up to 2/3 of the ACEO positions.

<sup>4</sup> Although our opening quote is now twelve years old there seems to be no improvement in the situation for women, not just in Papua New Guinea but all the Pacific Islands Forum countries.

## Research Context

This report arises from a short piece of targeted research. Further in-country research will need to inform country-specific initiatives, because "... the Pacific Islands region contains extreme diversity of political status and structure" (Drage 1994:158). For instance, the Melanesian countries, by and large, are characterised by egalitarian political systems while the Polynesian countries have quite rigid hierarchical systems in which chiefly etiquette is of paramount importance. As such, there are no one-size-fits-all solutions that will improve women's participation in the public sector. Careful attention will need to be given to the structural arrangements and cultures of various groups within the Pacific if headway is to be made with respect to male domination, the effect it has on women's lives and more specifically, on their participation in the public domain as decision makers.

For the best part of two decades now various United Nations agencies, the Pacific Island countries themselves and their larger neighbours (Australia and New Zealand) have been engaging in research and formulating strategies to address the paucity of women in Pacific legislatures.<sup>5</sup> Many of the countries included in this study are now moving towards some form of special measures (eg. quotas, reserved seats) to improve women's representation. Simultaneously attention is also being directed towards improving women's participation in the public sector.

The six Pacific Island countries that form part of this survey all entered the 21<sup>st</sup> century with marginal economies and a professional public sector struggling to deliver services using limited funds. Not one of these Pacific Islands countries has reached its economic potential. All of them are dependent on donor support whether it be direct financial assistance or indirectly through such measures as the labour migration schemes. MIRAB<sup>6</sup> countries with outgoing labour and incoming revenue through remittance as well as aid seemed to have weathered the economic vagaries better than those countries such as Papua New Guinea which has a huge resource base but has so far been unable to manage equitable delivery of health care and education throughout the country.

Another point must be made with respect to the Pacific Island countries included in this study. They are all Christian and this has a profound influence not only on individual lives but on gender relations in the public domain. This was evident in the questionnaire responses and in the follow-up interviews. Christianity however cannot be considered a homogenous characteristic as there are many denominations and degrees of fundamentalism throughout the region. Eves (2008) does however make the point that in Papua New Guinea some churches discourage members of their congregations seeking political office, and there are many churches which discourage women from taking on key public roles. That said, the public sector is one arena where women can enter the public domain, earn a wage and generally have security of tenure.

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<sup>5</sup> As Greg Urwin points out in the foreword to the study commissioned by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, A Woman's Place is in the House-the House of Parliament:

*Pacific governments have committed to equality for women in decision-making through a range of international and regional commitments, such as the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the 1995 United Nations Beijing Platform for Action, The Millenium Development Goals (MDGS), the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015, and the 1994 Pacific Platform for Action. Despite these commitments, the Pacific as a region fares amongst the worst in the world in terms of women's representation and participation in Parliaments.(2006:V).*

<sup>6</sup> MIRAB is an acronym (Migration, Remittances, Aid and Bureaucracy) which describes those countries having labour emigration and bureaucracy as a large part of their economic base. Evans (2001:18-21) discusses the usefulness of this term as an analytic tool. Evans locates it in specific situations drawing on the fact that such economies have a dynamic in terms of labour giving countries as well as the global structures within which they are concomitantly located.

## Section 2: THE RESEARCH

### Rationale and Method

We were tasked to undertake a short study examining the experiences of women in the public sector across six Pacific Island countries. Our brief involved considering the issues which underlie or determine:

- female access, or lack thereof, to public sector employment;
- female patterns of participation in public sector employment;
- female 'success', or lack thereof, in terms of promotion.<sup>7</sup>

We were also asked to consider: educational qualifications, career history, success factors, family background, impediments and political aspirations. Because we were explicitly tasked to examine women's experiences we interviewed women not men. Following a series of meetings with AusAID it was agreed that we would conduct a short survey with follow up telephone interviews as appropriate. The research and write up was completed within six weeks.

Drawing on our knowledge of gender relations and the public sector of the Pacific, we designed a short questionnaire (Annex 1) that examined:

- the characteristics and career paths of women who achieved success;
- the difficulties they faced (and still face) in maintaining their positions;
- the ramifications for their work/life balance.

Because of time constraints the survey was administered by email and fax. Potential respondents were identified in several ways: by consulting government websites; using SSGM networks and local contacts<sup>8</sup>, and by officers in respective posts.

One hundred women in all were invited to participate in the survey. Forty responded. Table 1 below provides some information about the women invited to participate and those who did in fact participate.

**Table 1: Contacts and Respondents**

Women Contacted				
Seniority	High <sup>9</sup>	75	Mid	25
Agency	Central	48	Line	52
Respondents				
Seniority	High	22	Mid	18
Agency	Central	19	Line	21
Education	Diploma	6	Degree	34
	Post-graduate	20		
Entry to Public Sector	Direct entry	27	In-direct entry	13

<sup>7</sup> Tasking Note 10 (12 December 2008).

<sup>8</sup> The assistance of Wendy Wakusule is especially appreciated in this regard.

<sup>9</sup> This includes women who departmental heads or higher.

Of the 40 respondents, 23 were currently married, nine were divorced or separated, four were widowed and four were single. All but four (36/40) had children, and all but one (39/40) said they had additional dependents, with three quarters of the women surveyed (29/40) having more than 5 dependents. Given the size of the public service sectors in the respective countries, it is not appropriate to provide further details concerning the contacts and the respondents. By identifying which agencies women were from we would in effect be identifying them. In agreeing to participate respondents were guaranteed confidentiality.

The questionnaire responses reflected the economy of scale with only one each from Kiribati and the Solomon Islands, two from Vanuatu, two from Samoa, four from Tonga and the rest from Papua New Guinea. The data generated from this survey does not lend itself to country specific profiles or comparisons between countries.

Given the nature of the survey we did not expect a particularly high response rate. Firstly we were cognisant that senior officials in understaffed public sectors would be incredibly busy. This proved to be the case. Several women responded indicating support for the research but declined to participate citing work commitments and time constraints. Moreover past experience has shown face to face approaches generate a better response. Initial interest was slow, but the survey gathered momentum after following up with potential respondents using a variety of SSGM contacts.

Realising interesting material and anomalies would emerge from the completed questionnaires, we planned follow up telephone interviews to allow some of the women to elaborate on their responses and reflect upon general trends we found in the responses to the questionnaire. Twelve follow-up interviews were conducted based upon the willingness and availability of respondents.

## **The Questionnaire**

For the most part the questionnaire was designed to gather information that would allow for qualitative analysis. Qualitative research is valuable because it draws on the experience and understandings not only of the researchers but also of the people who respond. For the purposes of this study it was ideal because a group of highly successful women who are extremely thoughtful and articulate self-selected.

The questionnaire was divided into the following sections: educational background; work history/career path; experiences in the workplace; domestic responsibilities and work/life balance; factors related to success; and leadership aspirations. Our substantive research findings are provided in detail in subsequent sections of the report.

The study is essentially a pilot study. As such it has certain limitations, although these do not diminish the key findings. That said we feel it is worth drawing attention to some of the limitations with a view of showing how future studies might be improved. First and foremost we feel overall response rates would have been better if the survey had been based on actual in-country fieldwork and face-to-face interviews.

Using questionnaires to collect information concerning people's experience can also be problematic, in that the information gained is directed by the research team, and may not necessarily reflect the concerns of the respondents. This can in part be mitigated by open ended questions. Our survey contained a mix of closed and open ended questions. Questionnaires can also give rise to misunderstandings due to the wording of questions. Cross-culturally words can be used and understood in different ways. Respondents may supply interesting, albeit misleading information, and may provide contradictory responses. Questionnaires also require truncated responses and a respondent may omit a relevant but complex detail rather than take the risk of being misunderstood.



In this study we sought to mitigate these problems by comparing the responses against already available knowledge and having telephone interviews where we asked selected women why they answered as they did. Obvious misunderstandings emerged from two questions in this survey.

The question, "Have you been subjected to sexual harassment in your workplace?" drew a negative response from all but three respondents. In other words, only three respondents indicated they had experienced sexual harassment. The questions which followed were directed at identifying what sort of harassment had occurred. Interestingly thirty-three of the women then indicated they had experienced one or more of the following: rude/inappropriate/disturbing comments, rude/inappropriate/disturbing emails, rude/inappropriate/disturbing SMS messages, harassing telephone calls, inappropriate touching, requests for sexual favours, threats of violence, verbal abuse, and physical abuse. In follow-up telephone interviews we asked about this discrepancy. There was a twofold problem: none of the categories (even the last) was seen to be "sexual harassment" in and of itself, and some of the women experienced those behaviours not from their male colleagues but from members of the public with whom they had work related dealings.

The question "Which family member/s most support you working?" also drew some seemingly anomalous responses. Thirty of the respondents (30/40) indicated that their "husband" was the family member who most supported them working. Interestingly only 23 respondents (23/40) indicated that they were married. This of course raises some interesting questions about "What constitutes a husband?" Furthermore, many who were married indicated that their husbands offered no domestic assistance and subjected them to: verbal abuse, harassment at work, and domestic violence. It was difficult to see how this constituted support.

### **Section 3: EDUCATION**

#### **Access to Basic Education**

All of the respondents were well educated. The first set of questions addressed their educational history. The ten non-PNG respondents were all educated in their respective capital cities. Likewise most of the PNG respondents were educated in urban areas. However one-third of PNG respondents indicated they had started school in a rural area. When we examined the ages of that group we found that three quarters of them had commenced their primary schooling just prior to or just after independence. We note that education services in rural areas have deteriorated significantly post independence and that the cost of education has risen markedly over the same period. We suspect that it is now harder for rural women to gain the necessary education and qualifications to secure public sector employment and suggest that further investigation into education and employment pathways is required. If such research reveals this to be the case donors might consider offering scholarships for secondary education as well as tertiary to give a solid foundation to women's education.

Given the demographics of the various Pacific Islands countries the smaller ones are certainly better served by a focus on urban education. Donor support for the various distance education schemes already in place and initiatives established to ensure basic literacy and numeracy skills should continue.

#### **Further Education**

All the women who responded to the survey are well educated and well qualified. They are at least bi-lingual (often multi-lingual), well travelled and have attended international workshops,

conferences and short courses in order to enhance their skills and knowledge base. Some of them have travelled to Europe, Asia and the sub-continent in their capacities as senior public servants.

All but four of the respondents (36/40) have held scholarships for tertiary study abroad or have attended donor-funded workshops or short courses overseas. For two their movement outside of their home country started with education at primary or secondary school. Australia and New Zealand were the host countries for these women.

Although the vast majority of respondents (36/40) have held scholarships or have been sponsored to attend short courses and workshops, getting these scholarships has not been easy. In the case of the hierarchically organised countries (Tonga and Samoa) one respondent reported that she had examined leave and workshop attendance in her department for the last five years and found there was no discrimination on the basis of gender. However another maintained being a woman from a lower status group had curtailed her prospects and this was reflected in the day to day operations of her job, although she was amply qualified for her position and has held international scholarships. Jackson (cited in Liki, 2008:9) informs us that in Samoa, a country where governance derives from the title system, that there are 12,031 registered male title holders and only 3016 female title holders.

Clearly the issues of status and class are integral to the lives of women in hierarchically organised countries and the ramifications of this need be creatively addressed. For low status women the hierarchical system presents enormous barriers and is a source of constant frustration. At interview one woman said:

*I don't understand you Australians. You gave me scholarships, educated me, gave me the sense I could achieve anything but what now? I'm back here and I'm stuck. I can't do anything and you won't let me back. GET ME OUT OF HERE!*

One quarter of all respondents (10/40) reported male bosses have actively sought to thwart their progress and frustrate their educational aspirations. While donor organisations have gender parity guidelines with respect to the award of scholarships (e.g. PATTAF) respondents reported filtering processes discriminating against women are being employed in many sectors, preventing women's applications from being lodged. Women established in jobs in Papua New Guinea reported the following filtering processes used by male bosses: refusal to put women's names forward, and insistence that women give up the security of their positions if they wish to take up scholarships:

*My divisional boss attended university in Australia and completed his Masters. While he was away I acted in his position for one year six months. Upon his return, I submitted my application for training overseas. He did not approve my application but threw it in the bin saying that another junior officer, a male, who has just joined the Department, would find it unfair if I were to go for studies.*

*The first time I applied for a scholarship to do my MA, my boss refused to accept my application. My department put forward the names of three men only. The second time the same thing happened. But that time I complained. The boss agreed to put my name forward, along with the three men. Mine was the only successful application.*

*My friend is in Australia doing her Masters. When she told our boss she had got the scholarship he said he would not release her. When she insisted she wanted to go to Australia he said he would not give her permission to go. She resigned from that place. She is now studying in Australia but has no job to go back to. She doesn't know what she is going to do when she goes back home.*

*I have sacrificed my personal life to get ahead in my career by giving up weekends and public holidays. It led to the breakdown of my 10-year relationship. So it was a shock when I was asked to resign [in order to take up my scholarship] to study, as I had sacrificed a lot and I thought my efforts would be recognised and valued. Now I am without a job, I have destroyed my relationship and it was all for nothing.*

To be clear, respondents did not claim bias in the way scholarships are awarded. To the contrary, they appreciated there is gender parity in this respect. *What concerned them was the way women's applications are stymied prior to lodgement and the punitive measures employed once women had successfully secured a scholarship.*

A number of women (7/40) also reported they had been unable to take up scholarships or unable to complete their studies due to personal and family concerns or due to "heavy workloads".

*I was offered a scholarship with James Cook University for Bachelor in HRM program for 2007 to mid-2009 however, due to work commitments my department requested that it be carried over to 2010.*

Whilst it is true that several of the women reported heavy workloads, some also insisted that male bosses use this as an excuse to stop women bettering themselves. They also reported that the process of reapplying is daunting. The hurdles of husbands (see section 6), unhelpful bosses and the sheer time involved in repeating the competitive process becomes too much. Although 3 years is a long time to defer by Australian standards we would suggest a more liberal approach to time-lines would be appropriate with respect to Pacific Island countries scholarships and endowments etc. We also suggest that if time-lines were more flexible male bosses might be more inclined to release female staff in the first instance.

### **Awareness of Educational Possibilities**

As already noted, the majority of respondents (36/40) have held overseas scholarships and/or have been sponsored to attend international workshops and courses. Most have also attended in-country donor sponsored events. Not surprisingly they were generally quite positive about the availability of such educational opportunities.

Several PNG women did, however, point out that information about scholarships and other opportunities was hard to come by. Indeed although there are a range of scholarships available and a great deal of information available on the web, respondents reported it is difficult to access. They clearly felt there is a need for increased access to information about educational opportunities.

One possible way in which information may be better disseminated in PNG, is through a donor-funded initiative similar to the Solomon Islands' People First Network. The People First Network is a rural community communication network designed to provide a sustainable internet service for the 80 per cent of the Solomon Islands population with no access to global information and communications services. It is comprised of: 1) a network of approximately 30 rural email stations using high frequency, solar powered radios with modems, managed by village committees and connecting through the internet gateway at PFnet headquarters in the capital; 2) an internet cafe in Honiara; and 3) a website with news, forums, peace and development information, and a hosting reseller service with advertising, to raise revenue (see Ma'ai and Leeming 2008).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> It has been brought to our attention that the PATTAF office in Port Moresby offers free internet access to people wishing to apply for scholarships. This is not advertised anywhere on their website. On telephone enquiry we found that it offers only limited internet access. In this respect, it does not fulfil the same role the People's First Network does in the Solomon Islands.

### Recommendations:

- Given that education services have deteriorated in several of the Pacific Island countries since Independence, there is a need for further research that investigates current education and employment pathways, especially in relation to women living in rural areas.
- Although there are a range of scholarships available and a great deal of information available on the web, there is a need for increased access to information about educational and career development opportunities. In the case of PNG we recommend the establishment of a donor-funded initiative similar to the Solomon Islands' People First Network (PFNet), so that people throughout the country might search and apply for scholarships etc. online.
- Scholarships have proven to be a key factor in women's success. Although there are gender parity guidelines in the way scholarships are awarded, filtering mechanisms biased against women are being employed in many sectors. There needs to be increased access to available scholarships for those women already in the workforce. This might be achieved by offering alternate more direct pathways for women to apply for donor funded scholarships, workshops and courses, or by inviting departments to put forward equal numbers of male and female nominees.

## Section 4: THE CAREER PATH

### Qualifications and Career Path

On the face of it, then, women who responded to the questionnaire were qualified to hold their current positions. All had post-secondary education. All but six (34/40) had university degrees and 20/40 had a post-graduate qualification as well. The six that didn't have degrees had achieved diplomas. All had held a number of junior positions sometimes in a variety of public and private sectors before achieving their present positions. One third (13/40) had moved from the private sector in to the public sector, while the remainder had entered the public sector and remained there. All had attended in-country events aimed at improving their skills and all but a few have attended international events hosted by donor organisations.

In section 3.1 of the questionnaire we asked women to identify the three most important factors involved in their decision to pursue a career in the public sector. More than half (21/40) indicated that one of the key factors was "wanting to serve the community". The other key reasons cited were job security (17), family responsibilities (15), financial rewards (13) and working conditions (12).

Career paths vary over time. This was most evident when we compared the trajectories of women who had entered the public sector before and after independence. One older, very senior woman pointed out the opportunities for women had decreased when her country became independent.

*Many of my achievements were obtained when my superiors were expatriates. Since the head of the institution was localized, I feel that it is harder for women to succeed.*

Currently in Papua New Guinea, the fast track to seniority seems to be having a Journalism degree or having undertaken an undergraduate degree in Media Studies – seven of the 30 PNG respondents fell into this category. Recent graduates from Divine Word University appear to have been particularly successful in securing public sector employment, having entered various departments as media officers but quickly progressed to policy making positions.

Every one of the respondents felt it was a combination of their qualifications, hard work and persistence and perseverance that was responsible for their success. We have already pointed out education does not come without effort, in terms of hard work and persistence there are a number of points we want to raise.

### **Working Hard for Success**

More than half of the respondents (25/40) considered they worked longer and harder than their male colleagues. In some very senior positions we were told that women had to emulate men as well. In order to be considered successful their work had to be evaluated by men to be “as good as men”.

*As a woman I must be strong and brave and show that I am capable just like men. We must not allow men to dictate to us. And most importantly we must respect other people and prove ourselves to them in action, not only in words.*

We deal separately with male/female relations in the workplace and at home in a subsequent section. The structural impediments to women’s success are an important factor in service delivery and aid requirements. These affect the degree of durability a woman needs to achieve success in the targeted countries where women across the board are considered “less than men”, “unfit to make decisions”, “less reliable in public matters”, etc. Several respondents reported that performing well is somewhat of a double edged sword in that if they do a job as well as a man and insist on their work being recognised, they are often labelled a “complaining lady”.

Striking the balance between doing their jobs to their own satisfaction and to be evaluated by men in the public sector is often very stressful. One woman said:

*I make my decisions and if people don’t like it they let me know. The press has come after me at times. I survive by not thinking about it, just taking no notice. Because I know I do my job well and I am right. Work is work and home is home. It is the only way!*

This sort of compartmentalisation seems to be a facet of most of our respondents’ lives. It also applies to time where they are expected by their families to leave work at the end of the public sector day and not engage in extra work at home. They also reported that they have to plan their time well.

*I am committed to my job and have accepted my responsibilities at home. I am continuously trying to balance my time. My official working time is committed to my job. My after hours time is also committed, in this case to my family.*

For our respondents the hard work has clearly paid off. They are all holding senior positions or are very much on their way to being senior members of the public sector in their respective countries. Without wanting to in any way diminish their hard work and achievements, it is very much the case that mentoring has played a part in these women’s success.

Women certainly feel mentoring in the workplace was a positive factor in their lives. A number of them pointed out that now in positions of power, they use their experience to help other women achieve their potential. Although responses tended to be in the negative when answering the question about having help to gain their positions, respondents tended to be positive in terms of having a specific referee. In the open question about how they achieved their success, many of the women referred to the recognition of their hard work by their superiors at the time.

*The most relevant factors in my success were the capacity building and mentoring of senior civil servants and also continuous training and education throughout my career.*

One young woman attributed her success not only to her hard work but also to good planning. She reiterated this position at interview. Most other women, however, felt that it was hard work coupled with a willingness to take opportunities as they arose that was more important than a plan. The other women we put the “plan” notion to laughed and asked how that could possibly work.

### **Persistence and Perseverance**

Persistence and perseverance are necessary at two levels, firstly in getting the job and then in making sure the opportunities come your way. The following accounts demonstrate the difficulties involved in getting it right. One younger woman graduated with a law degree and applied to an appropriate government department when jobs were advertised in the newspapers:

*After a number of weeks with no response I decided to go to see the head of the department at his office... For three days I sat just outside his office as he came and went, going off to court and everywhere else, finally he gave in and asked me why I was there. I said, “I want to know what happened with my application”. He asked me into his office and went through a huge stack of papers on his desk. He said, “I don’t have it... Have you got a copy your application there?” I really did. He read it then and there and told me to start next Monday. So that’s where I work now.*

The same young woman told us there was much movement of personnel through the public sector in Papua New Guinea with qualified people moving into the private sector. The main attraction of the private sector, she thought, was not a bigger salary *per se* but access to well subsidised housing.

Even with years of experience women sometimes are kept out of the information loop. In her mid-40s and at a senior level in her field, one woman seemed to have hit the “glass ceiling”. She noticed that junior male colleagues in her workplace were being promoted before her. A colleague pointed out that the more senior positions were not being gazetted and the men were being told of vacancies as they came up. He told her to put in for a promotion position even if they weren’t available and to continue doing so until she got promoted. It took a couple of tries but in the end she too was promoted.

Sometimes persistence can go awry as in the case of woman who was granted an AusAID scholarship and was then forced to resign in order to take it up (see section 3). In a separate case another woman reported that all her hard work and persistence had come to naught since she refused her bosses sexual advances. He refused to support her scholarship application and now refuses to confirm her contract.

*I am in an office where contracts are made yearly, the rest of my office have had this year’s contract confirmed. I haven’t. I am nowhere at the moment. I am just “floating” in different departments. When I asked my boss, “What is happening?” He just shrugged and said, “I don’t know, sometimes it’s just like this.” The real reason is because I would not “have coffee” with him.*

This particular woman feels particularly vulnerable in a workplace facing restructuring. She also feels that her attempts to gain further qualifications have badly misfired.

Hard work, while it provides a solid base for employment and promotion opportunities, needs to be coupled with good superiors willing to mentor and a great deal of good luck and timing in the egalitarian cultures with the added bonus of good birthright in the hierarchical ones for women to succeed.



### Recommendations:

- Women seeking to enter the public sector would benefit from the experience and insights of women who have already achieved success in this arena. Following the lead of the RAMSI Machinery of Government program we recommend recording the life histories of successful women in narrative form and publishing these for the benefit of high school and tertiary students.
- Donor support of mentoring initiatives is encouraged. Women's career development would be enhanced by a cross sector Pilot Women's Mentoring program. Such a program could provide support and training to senior women willing to mentor younger/junior colleagues.

## Section 5: EXPERIENCES AT WORK

Several of the questions in section 4 of the questionnaire (see Annex 1) concerned employer provided fringe benefits. Women were specifically asked if they are provided with a vehicle and housing subsidy as part of their employment. They were also asked if they felt they worked harder than their male colleagues and whether men at their level get more support from others in the workplace. In respect of all these questions the responses from Melanesian women differed markedly from the responses of the other women surveyed.

The respondents from Tonga, Samoa and Kiribati indicated that neither they nor their male colleagues received vehicles or a housing subsidy as part of their employment package. These same women felt they got no less support than their male colleagues. In the Melanesian countries, however, vehicles and housing form part of the employment package for many public servants. The responses we received indicate that where this kind of assistance is provided, it is more readily available to male employees.

Almost without exception, women from the Melanesian countries reported that they feel they work harder than their male colleagues and that men at the same level get more support from senior management and from others at the same level or below. With a couple of exceptions these same women felt that men in their workplaces have greater access to professional development opportunities including study leave, courses and seminars.

### Working with Women

After working hard to get qualifications, persisting to get the position and having to work harder than their male colleagues to get ahead, what happens to women senior public servants in this group of Pacific Island countries on a day to day basis? This section includes senior women's and middle management perspectives. In most respects they are similar but there is a significant difference which may be age-related as well as showing differential seniority.

The youngest woman who responded to our questionnaire has had a dream trip to nearly the top and had planned every step of the way. Seemingly she has had no problems in her workplace nor domestically. Reflecting on this she provided the following insight:

*I feel that the fact that I do not have children and because my family are very supportive makes it easier for me to handle any pressures at work, as well as balance work demands with family/personal demands. In my current employment, I have never felt that my male colleagues are favoured or respected more than I am. However, given that*

*our office is predominantly female my experience may be different from that of other females who work in predominantly male workplaces.*

Her reflexivity about her own situation, she felt, had been enhanced by attending two recent workshops for middle management, one in 2007 and one earlier this year. Her insight about feminised work places was confirmed by other respondents.

*Because there are three of us (females) at a senior level we are able to bring such matters to attention of our boss and male colleagues at meetings and ensure that these matters are dealt with quickly.*

It is the absence of men, or the presence of a cohort of senior women, that makes these workplaces comfortable. This is an important observation, although one that is somewhat at odds with at least one other finding. Our results show that where there is jealousy or resentment towards women in the workplace it comes primarily from other women. Several women reported that other women had sought to thwart their career ambitions.

*My female boss is trying to do all she can to try to suppress my professional progress. First she extended my one year probation to two years. She has reallocated my successful projects to other inexperienced junior officers who then mismanage them. She promoted inexperienced junior male officers “two levels below me” to my level and made them permanent while I was still acting in the position after three years. Within months she promoted them further to become my bosses/supervisors. Because they lack experience and are unreliable I am expected to step in and complete their tasks, especially work required by other government agencies.*

As women move up the public sector hierarchy they increasingly have to work closely with male colleagues on a day to day basis. This unfortunately exposes them to rumour and innuendo as well as harassment and verbal abuse arising from mistrust and envy. While there will always be rivalry in competitive workplaces in egalitarian societies, more emphasis should be placed on transparency in allotting pay increases or sending people off to workshops etc. so that women who are rewarded for good workplace performance are not derided as being “upwardly mobile”.

In most cases the jealousy women experience comes from other women in the workplace:

*When I got my salary increment, the other female officer was stand offish towards me. My employer also sponsored me to go for a course. My female colleague was jealous.*

*Since my promotion the other female workmates have tended to be reserved and keep away from me. This is unusual I have worked with these women for a long time and have been with this organisation for the last 23 years.*

*Since I was promoted other women inside and outside of my workplace were jealous and wanted my position – they then influenced a senior politician’s daughter to get rid of me. She tried talking to my boss... but this position is a public sector position and not a political one.*

Increasingly, though, jealousy and suspicion also come from the wives and girlfriends of male colleagues. Very recently telecommunications in the Pacific have been revolutionised by the availability of affordable mobile phones. With landlines often being out of service due to bills not being paid, more and more workers are having to use their personal phones to make work related calls. Some workplaces even provide staff with mobile phone credit to facilitate this. Curious spouses often check their partner’s mobile phone records and several respondents had the unfortunate experience of receiving harassing phone calls from suspicious wives and girlfriends.



*While working in my last job, I had regular telephone contact with a colleague in another province. When he returned to Port Moresby I started receiving harassing and threatening phone calls from his wife. She would ring at all hours of the day or night swearing and carrying on saying, "You stay away from my husband, stop ringing him. Why does your number keep showing up on his phone" In the end, my husband – who happens to be his boss – had to go and see the woman. Things settled down for me but she kept giving her husband a hard time. She smashed his mobile phone and physically assaulted him. She made all kinds of trouble for him at work. It made it impossible for us to keep working together. More recently, my husband used a workmates mobile phone to ring me when he ran out of credit. Within hours I started receiving hostile phone calls from his workmate's wife - demanding to know who I was and why her husband had called me. This went on for two days before she grudgingly accepted that my husband had used her husband's phone.*

## **Working with Men**

Working with men exposes women to a range of abuses in the workplace and at home. Respondents had the following things to say about working with men:

*You go to a meeting and they shout you down.*

*They ignore all the women and only take notice of the men.*

*They sleep with the junior women staff and then get rid of them.*

*They keep information that should go to me as a senior woman. They bypass me and go directly to the minister and then they say I am not doing my job properly.*

*They make sexual advances and then get angry and abusive when we refuse.*

*They don't know how to act professionally.*

It is perhaps tempting to examine this list and see it in terms of Australian working conditions and say "that's more or less what happens here". It isn't, because these women are facing these situations on a daily basis. Shouting down is literally that: bombastic, abusive and agonistic it emerges from deep seated beliefs about the value of women and appropriate roles for women. Several of the women we interviewed suggested that the way men interact with women in the workplace has much to do with the value placed on "big men" (even in chiefly systems where "big men" as such don't exist) and the positive value accorded to the loud, aggressive delivery of political oratory.

Several women reported that they found having to travel with male colleagues particularly stressful. Not only did they experience harassment from their colleagues' wives and girlfriends upon return, many had had the unfortunate experience of having drunken male colleagues pound on the hotel room door and make inappropriate sexual advances. Women who had refused such advances reported punitive measures being taken against them.

Sexual Harassment emerged as one of the most significant challenges women have to deal with in the workplace.

*I was once approached by two senior men in my office in an inappropriate manner. One wanted to go out with me, the other wanted "to do lunch". I said no. The ramifications of which were – one led to my demotion and transfer, the other led to me being told to resign and pursue my scholarship to study.*

When asked whether they had experienced sexual harassment in the workplace all but three (37/40) women said “no”. However, 31 of the 37 women who answered the question in the negative then went on to indicate that they had experienced one or more of the following: rude and inappropriate comments, emails or SMS messages; harassing phone calls; inappropriate touching; verbal abuse; physical abuse; threats of violence and requests for sexual favours. Some had experienced all of the above. Specifically half of the women (20) reported being subjected to rude/inappropriate/disturbing comments; a quarter or more had been subjected to verbal abuse (12) or threats of violence (10); seven women reported that they had been asked to provide sexual favours, and three reported physical abuse and inappropriate touching.

For some, the harassment they had experienced came as a result of their work, that is, because of decisions made in their official capacity. For others, it was just part and parcel of their work environment. At interview one woman suggested that shame stops women labelling these behaviours as sexual harassment. Another noted that these things happen “*all the time – all around us. It’s just what we have to put up with.*”

Another likely explanation for the seemingly anomalous responses is that women may well be viewing sexual harassment as rape, in much the same way that questions about domestic violence often elicit only the most extreme examples of violence – assaults that result in broken bones or hospitalisation.

We also note that when women were asked, at interview, about sexual harassment they generally told us about other more junior staff being harassed rather than applying it to themselves. However, a couple of women were forthcoming about horrendous experiences they had had while working away from home. Very few women who reported sexual harassment had complained about it for fear of losing their jobs. Job security was especially important as almost all of the women surveyed have children and, as we shall discuss below, are expected to provide for them.

In the Pacific some departments have equal opportunity legislation, and *some* women felt that the various complaints mechanisms worked. Invariably though these were women who had not sought to utilise such services. The most senior women and those who had sought to use these services generally found them ineffective. They also found that trying to navigate the complaints system “wears you down”. In the smaller hierarchically organised communities of the Pacific where anonymity is all but impossible one woman found just how tiresome and ineffective the putatively transparent equal opportunities mechanisms are:

*It was hard, so hard. I had to go to every level above me. Eventually he was reprimanded but now I am stuck in this position forever. His line is higher than mine you see.*

Even in the larger public sector community of Papua New Guinea we found women were specifically asking for access to an anonymous, independent grievance body where their complaints would not be dealt with by the people they were complaining against. There are different bodies either mentioned in legislation or seemingly in place in most of these countries but from the experiences of these women they are not transparent, nor are they confidential. Women also complained there is a big time lapse in dealing with complaints and that some of the policies exist in name only.

*EEO legislation is mentioned as a sub-policy to be developed under our Gender Equity in Education Policy for the Ministry of Education, but it has not been developed or applied.*

The most senior women in our survey tended to hold the view that women have to be strong and overcome such matters as sexual harassment. They further pointed out that in their current positions they were senior to most of the men they dealt and that as such sexual harassment was no longer a problem *for them*. They acknowledged that it was a problem for junior women.

*It is definitely a big problem, but a lot of the females who are affected by this are junior staff, especially secretaries or administrative assistants. They are too scared to come out in the open in case they lose their jobs.*

The most senior women did however report ongoing problems such as a general lack of respect and cooperation from their male colleagues. This brings us to the divide we noticed between the responses of the senior and middle-management women.

Younger women who have already achieved a degree of seniority were apt to say:

*I don't know why but women do not talk to me as much as they used to.*

*Women gossip that I climbed the ladder quickly.*

*I want to help them but I cannot know what they want. They resent my success and think I did something wrong.*

The women in the middle were seemingly frustrated:

*Higher management go off to courses and come back. They know what is going on but don't tell us. How will we know how to get on if we don't go to workshops and courses?*

Older senior women were likely to write:

*I am involved in Coalition for Change, which aims to assist in making a difference to minimising violence in the family, in particular violence against women and children.*

*I want to help women because there wasn't much around for me.*

*I now help women write applications for scholarships etc and we have about a 70% success rate.*

*Our senior woman's group: Shares and updates women's groups and other senior women in the public sector about the work of my organization in order to let women become aware of issues that affect women and children.*

What is interesting is that all these responses are from women who thought that being a woman was immaterial to their success. When specifically asked whether being a woman had helped you achieve your current position most women said no. We suspect the question was interpreted as "Did you use womanly wiles to get your current job?" This of course reveals one of the problems with questionnaires. Interpretive problems aside, the responses reveal a need for more awareness, perhaps in the form of targeted workshops, on the way meritocratic appointment works and how qualifications and a good work record are rewarded. In terms of male dominated offices these workshops also need to be directed at men.

Women from the PNG public sector felt strongly that they need a sector wide support group for women. Their attendance at a workshop for women earlier this year convinced them they would have a better time of it in the workplace if they had a strong female only organisation to back them up. We note that the Vanuatu Women's Council seemingly has a positive influence on the life of women in that country. Its value lies in the fact that although its funding is from outside, indigenous women are seen to be the powerhouse behind its action plans.

## Political Interference

It seems somewhat ironic to point to Papua New Guinea's public sector as being susceptible to political influence given the hierarchical organisation of a number of countries in this study. However, where rigid hierarchical structures are in place the political underpinnings are far too involved, pervasive and subtle for a short study like this one. We direct your attention to the work of Asenati Liki from the University of the South Pacific who is currently conducting research concerning women in the Public sector in Samoa. She will be taking up a fellowship with SSGM in January 2009.

In Papua New Guinea every new administration has thus far brought an influx of political appointees to the Public sector. These appointees are usually, but not invariably, men and have family as well as work relations with the ruling party. A number of women complained about the ignorance of political appointees saying:

*They know nothing about the situation in our workplace but won't listen to what the professional staff have to say.*

*They abuse me for having a degree and knowing what is supposed to be done in the department.*

Others complained that their jobs are not safe, and that with political change there is a risk of losing your job.

*With the sacking of the previous provincial administrator – my boss - I was also terminated from my employment with the provincial administration... Of course you don't necessarily keep your job if your contract expires but in this case they actually broke my contract. Public servants with contracts should be kept even when the government changes.*

Others still complained about the way politicians and political appointees have sought to control the public sector and undermine the decisions of professional public servants appointed on the basis of merit:

*A female colleague, who is a politician's daughter, has trouble working with females who are at the same level. She is a (politically appointed) adviser in our officer. While I was acting director, she refused to cooperate with me and tried going against my decisions.*

*The staff in our office report to the director, who is a public servant. This female colleague is political staff and is part of the political office. However, she used to try and control my office while I was acting... Just because of her father's position she thought she could run my office as she would her household.*

Clearly there is a need for greater public sector probity. There is also a need for greater awareness around this issue and around the importance/value of a separation of powers. Awareness programs would need to start at the very top and include members of parliament as well as the public sector.

### Recommendations:

- Political interference in the day to day running of the professional public sector of these countries needs to be actively discouraged by aid partners and donor governments. There were a significant number of women who felt their careers were being undermined by the presence of political appointees to their sector.

### Recommendations:

- There is a need for an independent confidential complaints bureau. Women found existing mechanisms invasive and punitive.
- Donor support for women's networks is encouraged. Women who attended a one day workshop for women in the public sector in Port Moresby found it very useful but were keen for more timely follow-up.

## Section 6: DOMESTIC RESPONSIBILITIES

### Safety Issues

The interface of home and work is where many women experience day to day difficulty. There are two overriding issues. The first is the trip home in a number of the countries, and the second is the expectations of spouses when they get home. We deal with the issue of travel first.

There is ample evidence to suggest that women, especially those working in Port Moresby, find travelling to and from work particularly risky. Typical responses included:

*I work long hours. Travelling home at night is not without risk.*

*It is not safe for women to go home alone after 5-6 pm or even late (after dark) because they can get harassed, kidnapped, raped or even worse killed without any good reasons by men.*

*It (travelling home after dark) is not safe as crime in the city is becoming very sophisticated where criminal are kidnapping and demanding ransom from family members.*

PNG was not the only place where women felt vulnerable on their way home. Respondents from at least three other countries noted that they employ strategies to get home safely. For many this meant being escorted by a family member.

Women in positions that involve making decisions about people's lives e.g. making judgements, assessing liability or imposing fines etc. felt particularly vulnerable, especially when travelling home alone. One non-PNG woman who lived only five minutes walk from her workplace felt that she needed an escort whenever she had made a significant decision at work.

The second point of danger for some women was at home. Here they are expected to meet the demands of husbands and children regardless of work pressures. If they do not meet those expectations they can expect to be chastised. In the most extreme cases it leads to physical abuse:

*Sometimes my husband gets suspicious and angry and verbally abuses me when I get home after working late. He complains that I might not be paid overtime, so why work after normal hours. He comes home whenever he likes, and his behaviour is unpredictable.*

*Well my job takes up a lot of time. I sometimes need to travel. One week I had a full load during the week and was going out to the provinces the next week... I had to prepare. I was so tired I didn't do my housework. On Sunday night my husband was sick of me... He beat me up and threw me out. I went to my office. My husband and children put up with a lot from me... He took me back when I asked "Do you want me to come back or what"?*



When we asked about this husband's employment we were told he, too, had a very responsible public sector position. This woman along with all the others who responded to our questionnaire said that her husband was supportive of her working.

In the main, husbands and boyfriends are seemingly viewed as supportive if they allow women to work. Given the way everyday expectations dovetail into Christian doctrine in the Pacific Islands countries a woman who goes out to work needs to compensate, not only with the very welcome pay packet but also by complying with the view of women and caretakers and nurturers.

*When I get home my children want me to cook food they see on T.V. When I can't or have to work they get angry with me. My daughter, she's twelve, she does a lot though.*

Another significant trigger situation in the domestic lives of these women is the presence of males other than their husbands in their working lives. Some men take to dropping in at work to make sure of their wife's whereabouts and to whom she is talking. Others keep an eye on the clock.

*I must leave work at 4:06 exactly (that is public sector knock off time)*

*As a married woman, my husband may be inquisitive of the lateness.*

One woman was still subject to her jealous ex-husband dropping in to check on her at work and home five years after her divorce.

### **Education and Domestic Violence**

The results of this survey reveal that education and financial independence are not protective when it comes to the issue of domestic violence. Educated men seem as likely to consider women inferior to men whether at home or in the workplace, and many hold that it is acceptable to hit their wives. This is consistent with the PNG Law Reform Commission findings arising from research undertaken more than two decades ago. That research revealed that two-thirds of all PNG men, 95 percent of men in the Highlands and 40 percent of urban men considered it acceptable to hit their wives (Rank and Toft 1986:24). The same survey also revealed that 23 percent urban elite wives who had been hit by their husbands, reported being hit with a weapon or implement (PNG Law Reform Commission 1992:16-17).

Educated women are not immune from gender violence. We note the ODE report *Violence Against Women in Melanesia and East Timor* has many recommendations based on raising awareness and education (AusAID 2008:108-112). While commendable objectives in and of themselves, we are doubtful of their efficacy in curbing violence (male to male let alone male to female). Such measures may also reinforce women's sense of grievance which maintains the agonistic relationship. Detailed research that seeks to investigate and address the root causes of violence remains critically important.

### **Housework, Children and Other Responsibilities**

There were no surprises in the answers to the sections on housework etc. Women undertake the majority of the housekeeping and childrearing tasks even when they hold senior public sector positions where they are expected to work hard. Many (21/40) said that giving to the community was an important factor in deciding to enter/stay in the public sector and this coupled with a sense of "doing right" by their husbands and children certainly seems to sustain them.

In the main, the responses we received reveal women are responsible for the housework and childcare:

*My husband is irresponsible although he works I am the primary carer for my children and responsible for taking them to medical care when they are unwell. I leave home early to catch the bus home and buy the evening meal as well.*

*Men finish work when they go home. Women work all day then have to go home and do everything.*

Regardless, most of the women described their husbands as supportive. There were a couple of interesting responses, though, where supportive did mean supportive:

*My former in-laws support me and help me with the children. They do what my former husband is supposed to do*

*The children's father and I have an understanding to put our children first in order to have a good balance: personal and work life. My ex-husband is very supportive in me progressing in my career life for the sake of our children to grow up healthy and be well educated.*

As well as working inside and outside the home, supporting husbands and children, all of the women, except one were supporting additional adult dependents. Ten women reported having up to 5 additional dependents, 18/40 reported that there were 5-10 extra people dependent on their income, and 11/40 said they had more than 10 additional dependents. Clearly employment does not equal financial independence.

## **Section 7: DISCUSSION**

As AusAID embarks upon a public sector capacity initiative in the Pacific the above information should be carefully reflected upon. While the public sector in the Pacific may bear many of the hallmarks of the Australian public sector, and women in the Pacific may appear to be juggling work and family responsibilities in much the same way that Australian women do, there are critical differences. Female public sector employees in the Pacific find themselves in very difficult work environments. Many struggle too with difficult home environments. Almost without exception they are supporting large extended families, and so are not financially independent. This keeps women in difficult work and home environments.

One of the striking things about the responses to the open ended question asking women about what specific characteristics were responsible for their success was the assertion that it was their Christian faith that helped them. They cited all the characteristics we have elaborated above in this report in terms of education, perseverance, the presence of supportive bosses and families but also there was this quite significant insistence that faith got them through. As one woman put it to us at interview:

*We endure we have hardships you don't have. To have faith is to have something to hold on to, sometimes grimly, when things are bad.*

Faith also emerged however as a double edged sword – although many women felt it was key to their success in the public sector, it also presented as a source of internal conflict. We suggest then that there is a need for further research examining the link between church and women's leadership, particularly given the extent to which churches shore up patriarchy and discourage women to take on key public roles.

To be a senior woman in the targeted countries means the woman must have a degree of integrity (not because women are innately more honest but because they will be made the scapegoats if

anything goes awry so they tend to read the fine print carefully), be very bright and persevere. Currently In the Pacific, senior women exhibit the same characteristics African public servants showed in their immediate post colonial period. They are, in the main, professional, urban, articulate and well educated (Mitchell1956). Being senior at work does not change their position at home where besides being wage earners they take the full brunt of housekeeping and childminding chores.

At the last we asked women about their political aspirations. Specifically we asked whether they would take the step into the political arena. The answer were a resounding NO, with only one young woman saying she would consider standing as a candidate and another saying in interview that she would not mind running a campaign.

In conclusion, we want to reiterate the need for further country specific research. Until December 2008, when she retired, Winnie Kiap was the most senior female public servant in the Pacific. .As this research concerned the experiences of Pacific women working in the public sector, it is only fitting that Winnie Kiap, former Cabinet Secretary to Papua New Guinea's National Executive Council (NEC) has the final say.

*The difficulty PNG women confront in reaching higher positions is threefold, as I see it. The first is that decision-makers are men beginning from department or agency level to the political level. If the woman is not promoted easily and on merit through the ranks in the department/agency, she is not likely to reach a position of visibility. The second difficulty women face is related to the first. If you know you merit promotion but tend to be continuously overlooked, then you either conform to the idea that you do not deserve promotion, or you lose interest in the job and your performance deteriorates. The third relates to the culture of marriage in PNG. A working husband will require his wife to put him and children above her own self development. Man is the common denominator in the failure of women to hold high office. Like minority groups elsewhere, women have to strive hardest and jump many hurdles in order to attract the attention of liberal minded men in decision-making positions (Paine 2007).*



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## Annexure 1

# Women's Participation in the Public Sector Questionnaire

Name: _____	Age: _____	Ethnicity: _____
Country: _____	Respondent ID: _____ (researcher to allocate)	

Thank you for agreeing to help us with our research. You may complete an electronic or hard copy of this questionnaire. Details on where to send the completed questionnaire are on the final page.

Should you wish to complete the questionnaire electronically, please delete the responses which are NOT applicable for the yes/no questions.

If you are completing the questionnaire by hand in hard copy, please circle the appropriate response for the yes/no questions.

If you feel uncomfortable answering any of the questions please leave them unanswered.

<i>EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND</i>						
1.1	<b>Where were you educated?</b> Please complete the following table by filling in course details and marking appropriate boxes.					
	<b>Years</b>	<b>School/Educational institution</b>	<b>Course</b>	<b>Urban</b>	<b>Rural</b>	<b>Capital</b>
	<i>eg. 1975-80</i>	<i>East Goroka Community School</i>	<i>Gr. 1-6</i>	<i>x</i>		
	<i>eg. 1987-00</i>	<i>SICHE</i>	<i>Dip. Ed</i>			<i>x</i>
1.2	<b>Have you ever held any educational scholarships (including overseas grants from Australia/New Zealand)?</b>				<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
1.3	<b>If yes, please provide details:</b>					

<i>WORK HISTORY</i>			
2.1	<b>Please provide details of your work history for the past ten years (1999-2008) starting with present position?</b>		
	<b>Years</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Level</b>
	<i>eg. 2003-08</i>	<i>Provincial Education Officer</i>	<i>6</i>
	<i>eg. 1999-03</i>	<i>Education Officer</i>	<i>2</i>

<i>WORK HISTORY (Continued)</i>					
2.2	Is your current position a full-time position?			Yes	No
2.3	Have you had the opportunity to attend short courses, workshops or similar to enhance your skills?			Yes	No
2.4	If yes, please provide details by completing the following table:				
	Year	Course	Where	Funding Agency	
	<i>eg. 2005</i>	<i>Communication for Managers</i>	<i>Cairns, TAFE</i>	<i>Employer</i>	
	<i>eg. 2007</i>	<i>Improving Computer Skills: A Course for Managers</i>	<i>SICHE Solomon Islands</i>	<i>AusAID</i>	
2.5	Have you experienced any major career interruptions of 6-12 months or more in the past 10 years? ( <i>eg. child bearing, civil strife, domestic issues</i> )			Yes	No
2.6	If yes, please specify:				

<i>ABOUT YOU IN YOUR CURRENT POSITION</i>					
3.1	Please identify/tick the three most important factors involved in your decision to pursue a career in the public sector.				
	Financial Rewards	Job security	Family Responsibilities		
	Working Conditions	Job Availability	Training/Development Programs		
	Allowances	Mentors	Wanting to serve the community		
	Overseas Travel	Good Bosses	Other (specify):		
3.2	Concerning your current position?				
	Was this position created with you/your skills in mind?			Yes	No
	Was your current position advertised?			Yes	No
	Were you interviewed for the position?			Yes	No
	Did your appointment involve promotion?			Yes	No
3.3	How many times did you apply for this position?				

**ABOUT YOU IN YOUR CURRENT POSITION (Continued)**

3.4	<b>Do you feel the following factors helped you gain your current position?</b>		
	Qualifications/Competitive skills	Yes	No
	Being next in line for the job	Yes	No
	Working connections	Yes	No
	Family/Friends/ <i>Wantoks</i>	Yes	No
	Other (please specify):	Yes	No
3.5	<b>Did anyone help you gain your current position?</b>	Yes	No
3.6	<b>If yes, what is their relationship to you</b> (eg. wantok, mentor, boss)?		
3.7	<b>Does this person continue to support you?</b>	Yes	No
3.8	<b>Did anyone help you in the following ways?</b>		
	By bringing the vacancy to your attention	Yes	No
	Encouraging you to get extra qualifications	Yes	No
	Being a referee	Yes	No
	Supporting your application with pre-interview training	Yes	No
	Helping you write your application	Yes	No

**BEING FEMALE IN YOUR CURRENT POSITION**

4.1	<b>Are you the most senior women in your department/agency?</b>	Yes	No
4.2	<b>If no, how many women are senior to you?</b>		
4.3	<b>Are there other women currently employed at your level?</b>	Yes	No
4.4	<p><b>Briefly describe the organizational structure of your department/agency and where you fit within it.</b></p> <p><i>eg. There is a departmental secretary, two assistant secretaries and five divisional heads. Two of the divisional heads are women. I am one of them.</i></p>		
4.5	<b>Are you provided with a vehicle as part of your employment?</b>	Yes	No
4.6	<b>Are male colleagues at the same level provided with a vehicle?</b>	Yes	No
4.7	<b>Do you receive a housing subsidy as part of your employment?</b>	Yes	No
4.8	<b>Do male colleagues at the same level receive housing assistance?</b>	Yes	No
4.9	<b>Do you feel you approach management tasks differently to your male colleagues?</b>	Yes	No

<i>BEING FEMALE IN YOUR CURRENT POSITION (Continued)</i>			
4.10	Do you feel you have to work harder than your male colleagues?	Yes	No
4.11	Do you feel your workplace is supportive of women in senior/management positions?	Yes	No
4.12	Does your workplace have a supportive policy framework such as Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) legislation?	Yes	No
4.13	If yes, is this legislation or policy actually applied?	Yes	No
4.14	Do you think men at your level get more support from others at more senior levels?	Yes	No
4.15	Do you think men at your level get more support from others at the same level or below?	Yes	No
4.16	Is your workplace supportive of professional development for women?	Yes	No
4.17	Do you feel men in your workplace have greater access to professional development opportunities (eg. overseas study leave, courses, seminars etc)?	Yes	No
4.18	If yes, please give an example:		
4.19	Have you experienced any jealousy, resentment or negative feelings toward you due to your position the workplace?	Yes	No
4.20	If yes, briefly tell us what you experienced. <i>eg. Since I was promoted the other women in my workplace gossip about my private life.</i>		
4.21	Who are you more likely to experience jealousy, resentment or negative feelings from?	Men	Women
4.22	Are you more likely to experience jealousy, resentment or negative feelings from within or outside your own ethnic group?	Within	Outside
4.23	Have you been subjected to sexual harassment in your workplace?	Yes	No
4.24	Specifically, have you experienced any of the following problems?		
	Rude/inappropriate/disturbing comments	Yes	No
	Rude/inappropriate/disturbing emails	Yes	No
	Rude/inappropriate/disturbing SMS messages	Yes	No
	Harassing telephone calls	Yes	No
	Inappropriate touching	Yes	No
	Requests for sexual favours	Yes	No
	Threats of violence	Yes	No
	Verbal abuse	Yes	No
	Physical abuse	Yes	No

<i>BEING FEMALE IN YOUR CURRENT POSITION (Continued)</i>			
4.25	Does your workplace have procedures for dealing with problems of this nature?	Yes	No
4.26	If yes, are these effective?	Yes	No
4.27	Are you involved in a support network with other senior women?	Yes	No
4.28	If yes, please provide details: eg. intra or inter departmental, formal or informal etc		

<i>ARRANGING YOUR LIFE</i>				
5.1	Are you ....?	Married	Single	Divorced
5.2	Do you have any children?		Yes	No
5.3	If you have children, how many do you have?			
5.4	How many people are dependent on your income in your immediate family?			
5.5	How many people are dependent on your income in your extended family?			
5.6	How many people are able to make demands on your income?			
5.7	Do family members support your work life?		Yes	No
5.8	If yes (to 5.7), do family members support you with your domestic obligations (eg. child minding, housework, cooking)?		Yes	No
5.9	If yes (to 5.7), do family members support you by ensuring you get to and from work safely?		Yes	No
5.10	Which family member/s most support you working?			
5.11	Has your work given rise to family problems?		Yes	No
5.12	If yes, have you experienced any of the following?			
	Lack of domestic assistance (eg. with childcare or housework)		Yes	No
	Verbal Abuse		Yes	No
	Harassment at work by a family member		Yes	No
	Domestic violence		Yes	No
	Other (please specify):		Yes	No
5.13	Has this affected your performance in the workplace?		Yes	No
5.14	If yes, please specify: eg. Though my husband doesn't work he expects me to look after the kids when they are sick			

<i>ARRANGING YOUR LIFE (Continued)</i>			
5.15	Which family member/s are most opposed to you working?		
5.16	Do you find it difficult to balance work and family responsibilities?	Yes	No
5.17	Does your workplace offer the option of part-time employment?	Yes	No
5.18	Does your workplace offer flexibility to meet family commitments?	Yes	No
5.19	If yes, is this flexibility a formal arrangement?	Yes	No
5.20	Does this flexibility...		
	... mean you have flexible working hours?	Yes	No
	... mean you can access time off to attend to domestic responsibilities?	Yes	No
	... allow you to bring your child to work?	Yes	No
	... allow you to breastfeed in the workplace?	Yes	No
5.21	Does your workplace have any initiatives which help women balance their responsibilities or resolve difficulties they might be experiencing?	Yes	No
5.22	If yes, please specify: <i>eg. We have a crèche and can access free legal advice from the departmental lawyers</i>		
5.23	Are you ever required to work late or after hours?	Yes	No
5.24	If yes, does your employer provide transport so you get home safely?	Yes	No
5.25	If yes (to 5.23) does having to work late or after hours expose you to any personal safety issues?	Yes	No
5.26	If so, please specify:		

<i>YOUR CAREER AND YOUR FUTURE</i>			
6.1	Do you consider your achievement in your career so far to be:		
	... a final destination.	Yes	No
	... a stepping stone to more ambitious projects.	Yes	No
	... satisfactory, but I could be tempted to try for other positions.	Yes	No
6.2	Do you think being a woman:		
	... helped you achieve your present position.	Yes	No
	... hindered you in pursuing your career.	Yes	No
	... was irrelevant to your success.	Yes	No



<i>YOUR CAREER AND YOUR FUTURE (Continued)</i>			
<b>6.3</b>	<b>Given the time frame for you to achieve your present position were you:</b>		
	... surprised you moved so quickly to this point.	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
	... frustrated at times at how difficult it was to get ahead.	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
	... content with the career path in terms of time.	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>6.4</b>	<p><b>We have presented you with a set of questions which we hope will identify some common themes in the ways women operate successfully in the public sector. You, of course, have the experience and expertise in your own arena so at this point we are asking for you to write a short paragraph on what you consider to be the most relevant factors in your success.</b></p>		
<b>6.5</b>	<b>Would you encourage your daughter or a close female relative or friend to embark upon a career in the public sector?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>

<i>OTHER LEADERSHIP ISSUES</i>			
<b>7.1</b>	<b>Has success in the public sector led you to consider entering the political arena?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>7.2</b>	<b>If yes, in what capacity (eg. campaign manager, candidate ...)?</b>		
<b>7.3</b>	<b>Have you ever engaged in political action at the local, provincial or national level?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>7.4</b>	<b>If yes, in what capacity (eg. campaign manager, candidate ...)?</b>		
<b>7.5</b>	<b>Are you currently involved with any NGOs or women's groups?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>7.6</b>	<b>If yes, what group or groups are you involved with?</b>		
<b>7.7</b>	<b>If yes (to 7.5) in what capacity are you engaged (eg. advisor, group member ...)?</b>		

**THANK YOU!**

8.1	<p>Thank you for participating in this exercise thus far. Our brief extends to telephone interviews to follow up the information provided on the questionnaire.</p> <p>Would you be prepared to give up approximately 30 minutes of your time for a telephone interview between 03-07 November 2008?</p>	Yes	No
8.2	If yes, please provide your telephone contact details:		

**RETURNING YOUR COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRE**

	<p>Please return your completed questionnaire by 31 October 2008.</p> <p>You can return your questionnaire either by fax or email.</p> <p>If you wish to return it by fax, please fax it to +61 2 6125 9604 Attention: Sue Rider</p> <p>If you wish to return it by email, please email to <a href="mailto:SSGM@anu.edu.au">SSGM@anu.edu.au</a></p>
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