



Pacific Regional International Waters Ridge to Reef Project

Regional Gender Overview

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Prepared by
Aliti Vunisea

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Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia)
FICs	Forum Island Countries
FSM	Federated States of Micronesia
GBV	gender-based violence
GDO	Gender Development Officer
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
IW	International Waters
IW R2R	International Waters R2R Project
IWRM	International Waters Resource Management
MBC	Mechesil Belau Annual Conference
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
NGP	National Gender Policy
NWD	National Women Department
PCU	programme coordinating unit
PIFS	Pacific Island Forum Secretariat
PICTs	Pacific Island countries and territories
PLGED	Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration
PNG	Papua New Guinea
PPA	Pacific Platform for Action
PWSPD	Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development
R2R	Ridge to Reef
RMI	Republic of the Marshall Islands
SDGs	sustainable development goals
SDP	strategic development plan
SOPAC	South Pacific Applied Geosciences Commission
SPC	Pacific Community
STAR	System for Transparent Allocation of Resources
TSM	temporary special measures
UN	United Nations
UNCRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WEGET	Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality Tonga
WHO	World Health Organization

1 INTRODUCTION

Target countries

Cook Islands, FSM, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu.

Executing agencies

SPC/SOPAC; Various national government agencies in the Pacific Island Countries.

Gender mainstreaming

Gender inclusion work has progressed significantly in the Pacific Islands region in the last 10 to 15 years and a lot of the progress can be attributed to gender-responsive policies, increased awareness, and the requirements under international instruments like the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and other human rights agreements that countries have signed. These commitments include the Framework for Pacific Regionalism, the Beijing Platform for Action, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

There are also requirements by donors and funding agencies to have gender considerations included in programmes and projects. Under the sustainable development goals (SDGs), Goal 5 focuses on gender inclusion and mainstreaming, and all Pacific Island countries and territories (PICTs) have the SDGs as an overarching goal to direct and provide benchmarks and indicators for progress in gender work at the national level. At the regional level, Pacific leaders had supported gender work under the 2012 Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration (PLGED). The Revised Pacific Platform for Action (RPPA) for Gender Equality and Women's Human Rights 2018–2030 considers commitments made by PICTs to progress gender equality under existing regional and international instruments for promoting gender equality, such as the PLGED and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

From 2016 to 2018, the Pacific Ridge to Reef (R2R) project started work in 14 countries in the region: Cook Islands, FSM, Fiji, Kiribati, RMI, Nauru, Niue, Palau, PNG, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. Gender inclusion work is embedded in the R2R programme, which is still on-going, and lessons learned from the regional International Waters R2R Project (IW R2R) have been captured systematically through quarterly and annual progress reports, experience notes, coaching and mentoring workshops, and national demonstration project activity reports (SPC, 2018b). Gender reports on workshops, consultations, stakeholder engagements, assessments and analysis, and participation of women in R2R interventions have also been part of the reporting process.

Effective implementation of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Pacific R2R Programme's Gender Mainstreaming Strategy is a joint responsibility between the regional programme coordinating unit (PCU) and national programme management units (PMUs) of both the International Waters (IW) and System for Transparent Allocation of Resources (STAR) projects. The regional PCU has a key role in coordinating the implementation and gender mainstreaming in regional outputs and takes the lead on developing and adapting reporting mechanisms (SPC, 2020).

1.1 Linking gender to the Pacific Ridge to Reef (R2R) programme

The Pacific R2R programme includes scientific studies, the setting of baselines, production of state of the coasts and country demonstration sites and case studies, Island Diagnostic Analysis (IDAs), rapid scientific assessments and collection of other scientific and social science information. The gender component of the work includes the collection of sex-disaggregated data, gender workshops, capacity building, targeted efforts at including women in decision-making processes, national steering committees and management committees. Gender mainstreaming work also includes gender inclusion in natural resource use and management, research, technical activities, capacity building, and social and economic activities. The social and economic activities include farming and food collection, fisheries activities, pig rearing, waste management and agriculture activities along the river catchments to the reefs. The R2R work also focuses on integrated approaches, which include coordination work by all sectors, and multi-stakeholder approaches to all the work that is undertaken. This means that the different work that is carried out by men and women and other community groups can be addressed holistically and in an integrated manner.

Governance at all levels is addressed through strategic stakeholder consultations and participatory approaches, which ensures the participation of women, youth and other vulnerable members of communities. Cultural and social dynamics at national and community levels can hinder or slow the work on gender inclusion in the R2R interventions; however, countries have identified entry points that enable gender mainstreaming and inclusion.

Different members of the community are involved in different activities. Women, men, youth, the elderly and other vulnerable groups will be impacted differently by the project. By collecting sex-disaggregated data on the socio-economic activities and use of resources, projects can better ensure increased awareness and inclusion of gender considerations from the start of the projects.

It is important to keep in mind the diverse cultural and social backgrounds of PICTs. There may be local dynamics that need to be understood before starting any community engagement work. Local governance systems, traditional institutions, cultural norms and women's status and roles in these institutions need to be understood.

The best way to learn what people need and what they see as possible solutions to their problems is to work directly with them, engage them in consultations, using participatory approaches. Participatory activities build awareness and willingness among the people to take part in any planned action in community targeted work. All sectors of the community should be included, and these include women, youth and vulnerable groups.

2 PROGRESS IN GENDER WORK IN THE R2R PROGRAMME

Progress in gender work in the Pacific R2R programme has included gender mainstreaming, which has been included from the development, planning and review of both the IW and STAR R2R projects. Specific training on Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) has been conducted in five countries while gender inclusion has been a component of all regional trainings, consultations and meetings. Gender strategies and gender action plans have guided the implementation of gender mainstreaming work.

There have been gender-responsive approaches and implementation across all countries. Gender equality and social inclusion work has managed to progress significantly despite the cultural diversity in the different PICTs. Stakeholder engagement and consultations have been gender inclusive and taken the views of all sectors of the communities into account. Generally, there has been an increase in tracking participation of stakeholders by recording disaggregated data in all interventions undertaken.

There has also been sustained stakeholder engagement that is underpinned by participatory and gender inclusion. Gender mainstreaming and community engagement initiatives have been met with strong positive community responses. There has been a development of systems and processes for the inclusion of women in decision-making bodies at the community level, thus empowerment of women and an increased role in disaster response and recovery (Fiji) and in other components of the Pacific R2R programme in other countries.

In addition, gender inclusive activities in the IW and STAR projects in all other countries, showed increased participation of women and women's groups in community consultations and project implementation. Gender work has been conducted in-country following gender guidelines and ensuring the engagement of women and youth at all levels of development and implementation of projects (Nauru). Projects have taken inclusive approaches and ensured equal opportunities are accorded to men, women, youth and the elderly to participate in planning, implementation and decision-making (SPC, 2021).

Gender equality and human rights approaches promote a process of development that is built on the principles of empowerment, equality, agency, access to opportunities, participation and protection, which are all essential conditions for achieving sustainable development for all (Sen, 2013).

A review of the quarterly narrative reports on gender inclusion in R2R work in 2017 shows that women comprise 45% of the participants at stakeholder events across the Pacific Islands region, with Palau being the country with the highest proportion of women attending these events. It must be noted that this is only representative of the countries that have been recruited and have begun project activities, are reporting when required, and are reporting in the correct format. The true figures may be significantly different (SPC, 2017a). Figure 1, below, shows this ratio of women to men.

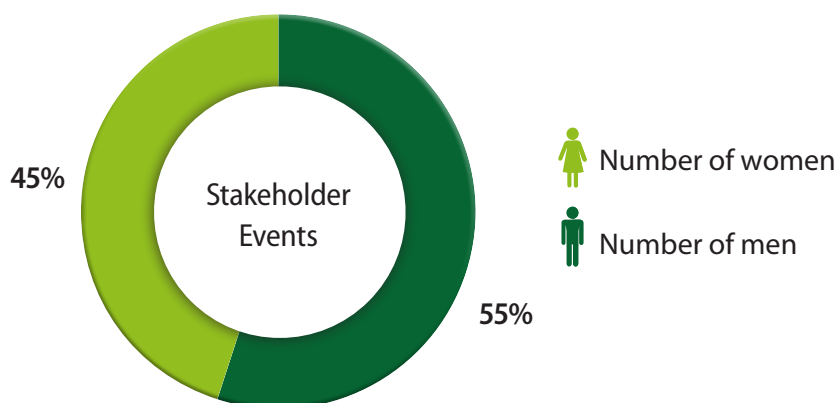


Figure 1. Ratio of men to women at stakeholder events (Source: SPC, 2017a)

In addition, James Cook University's Graduate Certificate in Ridge to Reef Sustainable Development had a total of 47 participants as of 4 July 2017. The analysis of men to women participation is presented below in figure 2.

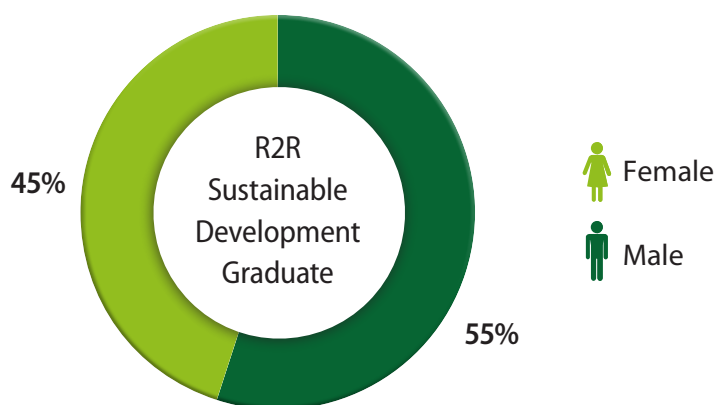


Figure 2. Ratio of men to women participating in the R2R Sustainable Development Graduate Certificate (Source: SPC, 2017a)

The above figures show participation of men and women at an almost equal level; however, this did not include all 14 target countries. In comparison, participation in committees in International Waters Resource Management (IWRM) work in 2013 had figures on the participation of women and men in the IWRM Steering Committee (see Fig 3), which were informally monitored through membership lists that were provided by the Regional Coordinating Programme Unit (RCPU).

Despite the gains in some areas of gender work through the R2R regional programme, the lack of political commitment and local capacity in mainstreaming gender has resulted in a slow achievement of outcomes and outputs – and in some cases there has been no specific mention of gender mainstreaming in R2R work within PICTs (SPC, 2021).



Figure 3. Men and Women in national IWRM steering committees in 2013 (Source: SPC, 2013a).

In the findings of the Mid-Term Review of the Pacific R2R, gender work under the programme had moved from the gender blind rating, gender awareness and is taking account of gender sensitivity and shifting to address gaps identified under the gender analysis exercises carried out, and activities are starting to be gender responsiveness, which is the gender goal of the GEF; that is, that gender work at the national level be gender responsive. The IW R2R Pacific project is at the gender sensitive rating (ensuring the “do no harm approach and does not reinforce gender inequalities.”) and is factoring in the roles of men and women in natural resource management. See figure 4 and table 1 below.

2.1 Gender Rating

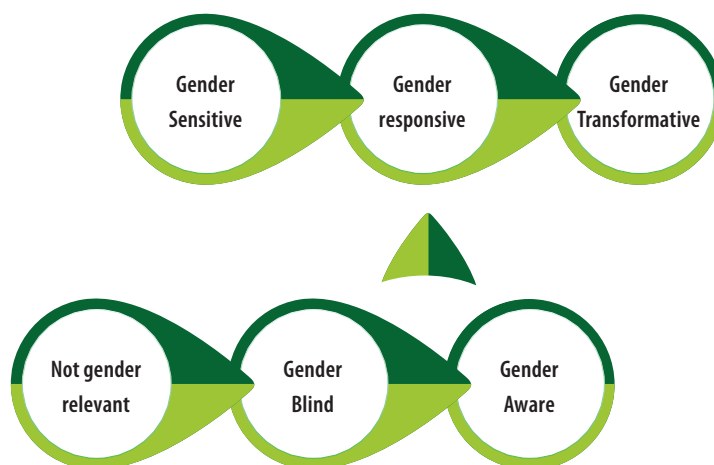


Figure 4. Visual representation of the gender rating scale (Source: SPC, 2013a)

Table 2: Gender rating scale

Gender blind	This refers to a conscious or unconscious lack of attention to different gender roles and responsibilities and, consequently, the failure to analyse policies and projects in terms of the differences in their effects on women and men.
Gender aware	This includes knowledge and recognition of the differences in socially assigned gender roles, rights, entitlements, responsibilities and obligations while accommodating and working around existing gender norms.
Gender sensitive	This adopts gender-sensitive methodologies (a gender assessment is undertaken, gender-disaggregated data are collected, and gender-sensitive indicators are integrated in monitoring and evaluation to address gender differences and promote gender equality).
Gender mainstreamed/ gender responsive	Here, gender-based differences in the main areas of influence and access to resources are considered in the design of strategy developed, and gender-responsive actions are promoted.
Gender transformation	This is when a project goes beyond gender mainstreaming and facilitates a critical examination of gender norms, roles, and relationships; strengthens or creates systems that support gender equity; and/or questions and changes gender norms and dynamics.

3 GENDER GAPS IN REGIONAL WORK IN THE ENVIRONMENT AND OTHER SECTORS

Overview and problem analysis

There remains significant gender inequality across the Pacific Islands region, though the extent differs greatly in different contexts. Overall, there are substantial barriers to women's equality, which are evident in current social norms, values and practices, and are influenced by the colonial past and the impact of "modernisation". There are political and power dimensions to gender inequality, which intersect with current underlying beliefs. Lack of consistent and sufficient policy commitment and programme investment by national governments and donors toward gender equity goals and support services for women has contributed to the poor status of women (PWSPD, 2012).

3.1 Data collection and gender statistics

Data collection is being strengthened and capacity is being built in producing and using gender statistics for policy development and monitoring of progress. Most of the countries have begun producing sex-disaggregated data and gender statistics. Barriers include a lack of training in gender issues for public servants, both at induction and as part of career paths, and the absence of systems that require collective responsibility across governments for reporting against gender targets in all sectors (SPC, 2017c)

3.1.1 Lack of sex-disaggregated data

In many PICTs, there is a lack of disaggregated data collection and management to assist with reliable and liable gender-responsive decision-making by national and regional authorities. This lack of information leads to unquantified female contributions and unexplored potential for women to actively contribute to sustainable ocean management as traditional leaders, researchers, or science-based managers and in accordance with traditional customs, cultures and processes (Michalena et al., 2019).

3.2 Leadership and decision-making

Women make up 18% of parliamentarians in developing countries, but in the Pacific Islands region, the proportion is just 3%, which is one of the lowest in the world (PWSPD, 2012).

3.2.1 Unequal distribution of resources and benefits

Unequal distribution of benefits from resource extraction and inadequate land management and tenure systems exacerbates tensions and affect women and men in different ways. For instance, as land is registered during the process of setting up extractive industries, women and girls are often losing what land rights they originally had customarily, since land is being registered in the names of men only and negotiations with companies are dominated by men, even in matrilineal areas (Asker, 2009).

It is important to recognise that across the Pacific Islands region, there are different forms of societal structures; for instance, in Micronesian countries, communities are often matrilineal, in Polynesia countries, they are mostly patriarchal with women playing an important role in community life, and in Melanesia, both matrilineal and patrilineal communities can be found. These are not strict boundaries and may differ within any sub-region or country. It is therefore necessary to keep in mind, when assessing a regional Pacific project, that there will be inherent differences across and within countries as cultural norms differ (SPC, 2017c).

3.3 Economic participation and labour markets

3.3.1 Economic empowerment

Across the Pacific Islands region, men outnumber women in paid employment outside the agricultural sector by approximately two to one. The 2012 Economist Intelligence Unit's Women's Economic Opportunity Index places both Solomon Islands and PNG in the bottom five countries in the world (124 and 125, respectively out of 128) (EIU, 2012).

There is a significant and persistent gap between male and female participation in economic activity and labour markets (UNESCAP, 2007). Cook Islands and Niue are the only countries where women account for more than 50% of employment in the non-agricultural sector (UNESCAP, 2007). In Melanesia, women occupy only a third of jobs within the formal sector (UNDP, 2012). In Pacific Islands region economies, males typically earn 20–50% more than women because they are working in jobs that attract higher salaries.

Women's contribution to the economy is significant. According to a 2010 study conducted by the World Bank in Solomon Islands, the annual turnover at the Honiara Central Market was estimated to be between USD 10–16 million, with women responsible for about 90% of this marketing activity – both as bulk buyers from farmers and as retailers (World Bank, 2010). In PNG, annual food production is largely the responsibility of women and has been valued at USD 55 million per year. In Samoa, 80% of businesses in the private sector are micro-businesses, and women are estimated to oversee 40% of them (IFC, 2010). In Vanuatu, in 2015, Tropical Cyclone Pam affected approximately 3600 female micro-entrepreneurs, who lost an estimated 141,110 workdays between them, or an average of 39 days per female (Government of Vanuatu, 2017).

3.3.2 Labour force

Labour force participation rates for both men and women tend to be lower in the Pacific Islands region than in other parts of the world due to the high proportion of subsistence agriculture and fishing, the importance of the informal sector and the limited labour market. However, there are notable gender gaps in labour force activities in the Pacific Islands region. Most PICTs include unpaid subsistence work in labour force statistics, which artificially inflates participation rates – especially for women (SPC, 2017) For example, in Solomon Islands in 2009, 68% of women participated in the labour force, but 85% of these women were in unpaid work, thereby only 15% worked for wages, salary or profit (Government of the Solomon Islands, 2009)

Some PICTs have begun to address barriers to women's economic participation as employees or entrepreneurs by removing discriminatory workplace legislation. However, the majority of economically active women participate in the informal economy. While this gives them more flexibility in terms of their time and ability to attend to other tasks, disadvantages include low earnings and the absence of any form of protection—including social protection.

Women are frequently home-based workers who rely on subsistence agriculture, marketing of agricultural products and petty trading (IFC, 2010).

3.4 Health

PICTs are generally making insufficient progress against their targets for Millennium Development Goal 5 (MDG5: Improve maternal health), and by region, Oceania ranks the third worst behind Sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia. Over 60% of women in four PICTs report physical and sexual abuse. Several countries are below the developing country average for gender parity in primary education (Tonga, Nauru and Vanuatu) and secondary education (Niue and Solomon Islands). Solomon Islands and Vanuatu are also below the developing country average for gender parity in tertiary education. Quality of education remains a challenge for all PICTs (SPC, 2017).

3.4.1 Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

While several PICTs (including Cook Islands, Tonga and Niue) have already achieved universal access to improved water sources, others, including FSM, Solomon Islands and Kiribati, remain some distance away from achieving the sixth SDG, which means that improved access to water is not available in all parts of the countries. To ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all by 2030, some 96% of the urban population of PICTs should have access to improved drinking water, compared with 88% of the rural population. Populations living in urban areas range from 100% in Nauru to 13% in PNG and rural to urban migration continue to rise (ADB, 2021). Data from 2016 suggests that on average 75% of the population of PICTs use improved sanitation facilities. Open defecation is still practiced by around 10% of the population, but large country disparities exist, with Solomon Islands at 54% and Kiribati at 36% (UNICEF, 2017). Limited access to water, proper sanitation and hygiene has a significant impact on the lives of women and children in communities.

3.5 Poverty

The increasing feminisation of poverty is a major challenge in the region, especially for the women in outer islands, rural areas and those in squatter areas in larger Pacific and countries who live in rural areas and outer islands, as well as women who live in urban squatter settlements (AusAID, 2012). Women have a higher risk of poverty due to labour force discrimination, lack of property rights and heavy domestic and community responsibilities. Recent prevalence studies in the Pacific Islands region show that two out of three women face intimate-partner sexual and physical violence in their lifetime (WHO; UNFPA; SPC).

3.6 Advances in legal and human rights

Many countries have made progress in reviewing their legislation to ensure compliance with CEDAW, and there are encouraging examples of governments acting on discriminatory provisions that have been identified during the gender mainstreaming stocktakes.

The revision of customary laws and the practices of traditional (male dominated) courts is also taking place in, for example, PNG and Vanuatu, but this has been a challenging undertaking. Apart from the French territories, the Pacific Islands region has the world's lowest percentage of women representatives in national legislatures. French Polynesia, New Caledonia, and Wallis and Futuna continue to benefit from the French Parity Law, which was introduced in 2000. Other PICTs are considering introducing temporary special measures (TSM) to provide seats for women, but only Samoa (10%) and PNG's Autonomous Region of Bougainville (8%) have succeeded in doing so at their national levels. In 2013, Vanuatu introduced a 30% quota for women's representation in municipal governments. (Barker, 2019).

3.7 Violence against women

Violence against women prevalence surveys in Solomon Islands, Kiribati, Vanuatu and Tonga reveal that the incidence is the worst in the world with over 60% of women and girls having experienced violence at the hands of intimate partners or family members. This violence is an abuse of women's human rights, leaving many women physically and emotionally scarred for life. Such violence traps women in abusive relationships, limits their ability to earn an income and enforces cultural norms that prejudice men's power over women's human rights. Prevalence studies have revealed the fact that violence is most often inflicted by men to reinforce cultural gender roles; for example, ensuring the dinner is on the table at the 'correct' time. Many countries do not yet have adequate domestic violence legislation. There are few services that provide emergency accommodation and longer-term support, and access to justice is difficult even in countries where there is basic legislation that protects survivors of violence (Ellsberg et al., 2012).

4 CHALLENGES TO ACHIEVING GENDER EQUALITY IN PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES

Women's participation in decision-making and their leadership are progressively being recognised and supported. Nevertheless, PICTs share several challenges to achieving gender equality. As a measure of these challenges, the region in general made little progress towards achieving Millennium Development Goal 3 (MDG3) on gender equality. The *2013 Pacific Regional MDGs Tracking Report* noted that only three forum member countries were on track to achieving the goal on promoting gender equality and empowering women. In many cases, there is lack of political will to advance gender equality, which may be partly due to the level of understanding of it and its implications for achieving sustainable development goals.

The *2015 Review of 20 years of Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (SPC, 2015)* noted that "in most PICTs, attention, resources and capacity committed to gender equality have been insufficient to achieve substantive gains." Pervasive problems remain, including vulnerability to poverty; high levels of violence against women; poor access to reproductive health services; increasing rates of non-communicable diseases; and low levels of political participation.

Government departments in charge of women's affairs/gender equality are typically under-resourced and understaffed, and often do not have the capacity to effectively implement their mandate, especially that of working across the 'whole of government' to integrate gender perspectives. Many government departments have a high turnover of staff. Although collection of data on gender gaps is improving, there is little analysis or use of the data to inform policy or programme development.

Promotion of gender equality concerns everybody—women and girls, and men and boys. Yet women and girls continue to be disadvantaged economically, politically and socially by a combination of historical, cultural and religious factors. The impact of these interconnected factors on the achievement of equality and the advancement of women and girls across PICTs calls for a regional framework to accelerate the implementation of gender equality commitments so that women and girls can develop their full potential and have equal access to opportunities, with resulting benefits for the whole of society.

4.1 Development and review of gender policies and plans

PICTs have made considerable progress in developing and reviewing national gender policies and plans. All policies have shifted from the approach of "women in development" to "gender equality and women's empowerment", with specific targets for addressing the causes of gender inequality. Most policies also support the development of a government's capacity to mainstream gender as a key policy outcome. Revision of these policies has provided an opportunity to adapt the mandate of the government institutions that oversee women's affairs to focus more on a coordination and policy advisory role. This is a major shift for these institutions, and they need support from government, civil society organisations and development partners to make the transition, which requires different capacities, adequate resources and strategic positioning within government (SPC, 2017c).

5 GENDER PROGRESS IN COUNTRIES

At the regional level, the PICT leaders have supported gender work under the 2012 Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration (PLGED). The Revised Pacific Platform for Action for Gender Equality and Women's Human Rights 2018–2030 considers existing regional and international instruments for promoting gender equality, such as the PLGED.

According to the *Regional MDG Progress Report, 2013*, only Cook Islands, Niue and Palau are on track to achieve the broader goal of promoting gender equality and empowering women with most Forum Island Countries (FICs) having recorded slow progress on empowering women. Women's representation in parliament in the Pacific Islands region is the lowest of any region in the world. While all FICs – except for PNG, Solomon Islands and Tonga – are on track by achieving parity in education, there are concerns that this is not leading to better employment outcomes due to gender barriers in labour markets and gender stereotypes.

A scoping study by the Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development Programme (PWSPD 2016) examines gender-responsive and evidence-based research conducted in PICTs since 1994. Specifically, it deals with research on eight critical areas of concern that are covered in the RPPA. The areas addressed in the study were education, health, climate change and environment, economic empowerment, gender mainstreaming, leadership and decision-making, violence against women, and human rights. While research on each issue exists in one way or another in the Pacific Islands region, there are many unknowns as to the scope, nature and quality of this research.

Of the eight areas of research studies that were reviewed, climate change and environment had the lowest number of publications identified. This indicates sporadic research attention to gender in newly emerging areas (PWSPD, 2016). This also indicates the need for vigorous sex-disaggregated data collection and identifying the various gender differentiated knowledge and engagements under the R2R projects to have in-country information on gender issues.

Most countries in the region have ratified CEDAW and there are reporting mechanisms that countries report to, which ensure that the requirements on discrimination against women are addressed. Ending all forms of discrimination against women and girls is not only a basic human right, but is also crucial to accelerating sustainable development. Since 2000, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) together with UN partners and the rest of the global community have made gender central to any work that is done. There have been a lot of achievements since then and the SDGs (Goal 5) aim to build on these achievements to address inequalities and other areas of work that need participation and inclusion of women.

Gender mainstreaming

SPC conducted a gender mainstreaming stocktake of countries from 2008 to 2013 and these have provided baselines for gender mainstreaming work in countries. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has produced gender reports for PICTs and these reports have summaries of gender progress in the different areas within a country. The Pacific Island Forum Secretariat (PIFS) has also developed gender profiles for PICTs and these also look at the status of gender mainstreaming in countries and the status of women in different sectors within a country.

5.1 Regional gender mainstreaming stocktake

Gender mainstreaming work has been undertaken at the national level in most countries, and in 2008 SPC, in collaboration with national governments, had undertaken stocktakes in countries to monitor and document the progress of gender mainstreaming. This gender mainstreaming stocktake was to determine the extent to which political will, supportive mechanisms, financial and human resources and capacity for effective gender mainstreaming existed at the national government level and to identify potential areas of strategic intervention to strengthen such capacity. The first phase of the stocktake, which was initiated in 2008, covered six countries: Cook Islands, FSM, RMI, PNG, Solomon Islands and Tonga. The second phase commenced in June 2013 and covered seven countries: Palau, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Tuvalu, Samoa and Vanuatu.

Gender mainstreaming is about strengthening institutions in order to advance gender equality. Political will must be demonstrated in concrete gender strategies in different sector policies with adequate resources to support the advancement of women. Because gender mainstreaming is a “people-centred approach”, it looks at how policies and services can have a greater impact on the women and men who work in the sector. Hence, this approach is not beneficial to women only; it contributes to the improvement of the whole sector by improving how the decisions are made and services are delivered so that more people involved in sector work can directly benefit.

(Source: GEF, 2018)

Technical capacity, work culture, accountability and human and financial resources

The national gender mainstreaming stocktakes looked at the technical capacity, the work culture, accountability, and the human and financial resources that are required to conduct gender mainstreaming.

Work culture and accountable mechanisms are not in place, and there are little available financial and human resources to enable gender mainstreaming. Most of these challenges stem from minimal understanding of gender mainstreaming as a development issue and the lack of awareness and training on gender issues. The capacity of civil society to advocate for increased government accountability for progress towards gender equality, and systematic mainstreaming of a gender perspective across governments through collective responsibility and enhanced ownership need to be strengthened.

The National Women’s Department (NWD)

Responsibility for national gender mainstreaming work sits with the National Women’s Department (NWD) in each country and there are enabling policies and initiatives in place that facilitate this work. The NWD mostly does not have enough human and financial resources or capacity to carry out gender mainstreaming work. PICTs are also increasingly integrating a gender perspective in national development and sector plans. National gender policies prioritise issues related to gender mainstreaming and institutional strengthening, including compliance with CEDAW, ending violence against women, shared decision-making, and economic empowerment. Other policies include issues such as climate change and peace building.

6 COUNTRY GENDER BRIEFS

Cook Islands

In Cook Islands, despite the fact that CEDAW and other international instruments have been ratified, political will for gender mainstreaming varies across ministries, with the social sectors demonstrating a relatively higher level of awareness and understanding. A measure of a government's political will for gender equality and mainstreaming is the extent to which national and sectorial policies recognise, prioritise and seek to address gender imbalances. National and sectorial policies and action plans in Cook Islands generally do not integrate gender perspective or refer to women's human rights. Although the *Cook Islands 2007–2010 National Strategic Development Plan* refers to the integration of gender equality policies into sectorial strategies, it lumps gender almost entirely into one section, social welfare, rather than mainstreaming it across all strategic goals (SPC, 2012b). In addition, even though Cook Islands women are now more educated, they benefit from a land succession system where they can claim customary land (in most cases), are able to access credit and feature significantly in paid employment, they do, in fact, still face unequal access to productive and economic resources (SPC, 2017c).

There is little data available on women's economic opportunities in Cook Islands. Women make up 55% of Cook Islands' non-agricultural sector and unemployment rates for women are 7.3%, compared with 6.7% for men. The balance of male to female employment is more equitable on the island of Rarotonga when compared with the Northern and Southern Island groups (76.2%/71% compared with 56.7%/46.4% and 59.5%/45.5%, respectively) (UNDAF, 2012).

Federated States of Micronesia (FSM)

The Gender Development Office (GDO), under the Department of Health and Social Affairs (DHESA), is the government's focal point agency and is responsible for gender issues in the FSM. The GDO is not strategically located within a central government structure to be able to influence the integration of gender issues across policy, programming and resource allocation. This is in relation to human resources and capacity to provide research and statistical support, gender-related planning and analysis, project management, information management and dissemination and evaluation (SPC, 2012).

According to a recent review conducted by the Government of Australia, in the PWSPD Programme, FSM is in "the early stages of introducing and implementing a legislative framework for gender equality", which includes legislation to support TSM to increase the number of women in parliament. Obstacles to mainstreaming gender at the legislative and policy levels, which have been identified in previous studies, include the lack of sex-disaggregated data and analysis to inform gender-responsive policy decisions and the lack of political will to ensure equality at the policy-making level (SPC, 2012).

The *FSM Strategic Development Plan (SDP) 2004–2023* includes a strategic goal for mainstreaming gender issues into decision-making, policies, and strategic development plans. Included in the SDP is a gender matrix that guides the work on gender in FSM. FSM is committed to the SDGs that were adopted in 2015, which introduced a dedicated goal on gender equality (SDG 5). FSM has prioritised five targets under SDG 5 on gender to achieve an equal and just society where the rights of women and girls are respected, violence in the home is talked about and addressed, and the voices of the most vulnerable gender are heard and listened to.

There is also focus on SDG 13, which is on combating climate change, and aims to promote mechanisms for raising capacity for effective climate-change-related planning and management in the least developed countries and small island developing states like FSM, and includes a focus on women, youth, and local and marginalised communities. Women, in many aspects, have their own power in traditional settings, however, this is changing and there is now a shift towards a market-oriented economy and the widespread western influence has started to change traditional gender relations (GCF, 2017).

Fiji

The gender context is described as “complex and multi-dimensional due to factors such as the ethnic composition of the population, socially and culturally assigned gender roles, recent political history, and the country’s geography” (ADB, 2017). Men and women in Fiji have different access to and control over social, political, and economic resources. Gender inequality constrains the influence and control of many women and girls over various aspects of their lives, including their access to resources such as finance, food, agricultural inputs, land and property, as well as in relation to education, health (including sexual and reproductive health), secure housing and employment. There have been several legislative developments in Fiji to support and progress the inclusion of people with disabilities. Fiji is party to the UNCRPD, which provides for protection of the rights of persons with disabilities, by stipulating that disability is not grounds for discrimination before the law.

Fiji has ratified international instruments like CEDAW, SDGs and CRC and, at the regional level, is committed to the revised Pacific Platform for Action (PPA), and these are instruments that guide gender work in the country. The National Gender Policy (NGP) (Fijian Government, 2015) defines national gender work. In addition, gender equality is also identified as a goal in national strategic planning documents. Despite these commitments and progress in achieving gender targets under SDG 5, and the NGP, gender bias remains a challenge across various sectors. Gender inequality is rooted in traditional norms, customs and models of decision-making that give more power to men than to women. It is perpetuated by discriminatory practices, legislative and policy biases, and unequal access to resources and services (DFAT, 2017). The NGP provides a framework for gender mainstreaming in all sectors of government and civil society, thereby promoting the full and equal participation of men and women in the development process.

Kiribati

The Government of Kiribati is committed to improving the livelihood of all citizens and to eliminating discrimination across all sectors through providing equal opportunities, equal human rights and equal access to services and justice so that everyone can reach their potential in their economic, political, cultural and social lives.

The Kiribati Vision 20 (KV20) highlights gender as a cross-cutting issue and that “gender will be mainstreamed in government policies, plans, budgets and programmes to enhance equal opportunity for men and women.” Gender mainstreaming work involves all ministries and departments who are responsible for ensuring that the different needs of women and men are considered in all projects or activities that are undertaken (Government of Kiribati, 2019).

Women bear more responsibility for water and food security; consequently, infrastructure for water, transport and environmental engineering, to reduce land degradation and mitigate climate change, are gender inclusive. Most of these activities are addressed through donor-funded initiatives, and are coordinated through gender mainstreaming activities to improve decision-making health and economic empowerment (SPC, 2013d).

Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI)

RMI is a matrilineal society and, culturally, women have high status, although there are high rates of intimate-partner violence, with 51% of women having reported intimate-partner violence and physical violence. For children, this is 61% for girls and 62% for boys. The government ratified CEDAW in 2006 and endorsed the NGP in 2015. In 2016, RMI had the first woman president of the PICTs, however, in 2018 women had only 9% political participation (ADB, 2020). The UNDP does not calculate the gender equality index for RMI (UNDP, 2019).

Traditionally, women of a chiefly rank in RMI had significant influence in decision-making processes. RMI traditionally has a matriarchal society, with land rights traditionally inherited along the matrilineal line, however, this tradition is being steadily eroded as Marshallese society urbanises, which makes the tracking of lineage and land rights more difficult (SPC, 2013c). The Council of Iroji (COI) used to be composed of almost equal numbers of men and women. The influential role that these traditional women leaders have through the council could be an avenue for progressing gender equality – especially in matters that relate to domestic violence and

family issues. It is also a forum where there is discussion on land use, natural resource management, conflict resolution and community cohesiveness, and thus it has a direct impact on people's lives. There are a growing number of women in the public service, though men dominate the most senior positions. National gender-related priorities include eliminating high levels of domestic violence, providing adequate maternal and child health care services to rural and fast-growing urban areas, reducing teenage pregnancy, retaining young men in education, and promoting equal access to economic opportunities (ADB, 2020). The National Gender Mainstreaming Policy addresses capacity gaps to deliver gender-responsive programs and reduce GBV while promoting an equitable participation of women in decision making. It acknowledges prejudices against women and their disproportionately small role in civic life (Government of RMI, 2021).

Nauru

The *Republic of Nauru National Sustainable Development Strategy (RNNSDS 2005–2025)* focuses on a just society that recognises and respects the rights of women, promotes equal opportunities and commits to integrating gender across all sectors. Nauru has matrilineal inheritance traditions and awareness of women's rights as landowners. Nauru has had some positive influence on girls' education and has resulted in a degree of openness to women's advancement in the public sector; however, women are still in the minority at senior levels. This is despite the fact that the Department for Human Resources and Labour (DHRL) regularly notes in its advertisements that women are encouraged to apply (SPC, 2017b).

Niue

The 2013 Pacific Regional MDGs Tracking Report (PRMDGTR) notes that Niue is one of the three countries that is on track towards achieving gender equality. The ratio of girls to boys in secondary school is less than parity, but this is likely to be due to out-migration rather than students dropping out. More girls than boys are attending tertiary institutions.

Niue records a high participation of women in the non-agricultural sector and good representation of women in parliament (25% of parliamentarians are women (AusAID, 2017)). The objective of increasing women's participation in decision-making in Niue is in line with the *Niue National Strategic Plan 2016-2026* good governance pillar to ensure participation and inclusiveness in Niue. While women have been represented in parliament since the Niue Legislative Assembly (NLA) was first established in 1974, they have never held more than four of the 20 seats available. Most frequently, they hold village council roles as opposed to common roll seats, which indicates that there is less country-wide support for women in national office. In addition, women are under-represented on national boards, in church hierarchies and in senior public service posts. Women have demonstrated, however, that they can be effective in leadership roles in all sectors of society (SPC, 2019a).

Palau

Palau is a matriarchal, matrilineal society where women have always held positions of power and respect in a spirit of equality with their male counterparts. According to a situation analysis on women and children, although the roles and responsibilities of men and women differ, these are not the differences of a dominant subordinate relationship, but rather a duality in which each gender depends on each other. Palauan women maintain significant traditional roles in this matrilineal society. Palauan women have progressed in the area of education, in both public and private sector employment and in other areas of public participation. Women make decisions on the selection of traditional chiefs and the allocation of resources.

Palauan women have higher levels of education attainment than men, with 46% of women having post-high school education compared with 37% of men (Palau Census, 2015). Palauan women, however, are under-represented in science, technology and engineering fields. Of Palauan citizens who are educated in engineering or construction, only 6% are female. In information and communication technologies, the disparity is 47% female to 53% male. Women, however, are over-represented in business and law (71% are women and 29% are men). There is approximate gender parity in natural science, mathematics and statistics, where 48% are women and 52% are men (Government of Palau, 2019).

Assuring women's rights through legal frameworks is a first step in eliminating discrimination. Title 1(407) of the *Palau National Code* (PNC) provides for gender equality and non-discrimination. Palau National *Gender Mainstreaming Policy* (PNGMP-2018) further guarantees the equal rights of men and women to participate in all spheres of life in an atmosphere of equality and respect. The women of Palau come together annually in the *Mechesil Belau Annual Conference* (MBC) to advocate for policies and programmes that support women and families. The outcomes of this conference include decisions affecting tradition (e.g. birth ceremonies, funerals, house buying and other customs) as well as modern life. The MBC recently celebrated its 25th anniversary, having successfully advocated for 25 national laws, three constitutional amendments, and one traditional law on culture, health, education and the environment (ADB, 2016; Government of Palau, 2019).

Papua New Guinea (PNG)

The Constitution of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea guarantees equal access to politics and economy to all citizens. In PNG, social, economic and gender relations are deeply influenced by kinship. Kinship principles determine membership of a kinship group, and what rights male and female persons have to the property of that group. Traditional societies in PNG typically have different and unequally valued spheres of gendered activity. Traditional gender relations in many cultures in PNG are characterised by inequality and the subordination of women. Modernisation of PNG has modified the relationship between men and women where the roles of males and females have evolved in response to the money economy, modern forms of education, urbanisation and the impact of the global market. While people remain attached to many aspects of traditional and ancestral rules, the expansion of a state-based political system has created new aspirations for women that have generally challenged the traditional relationships between men and women.

In the *Second National Progress Report for PNG on the MDGs*, the summary on MDG 3 notes that PNG's gender culture places women in a disadvantaged position. Gender-based violence (GBV), in particular, is widespread and this is one of the factors that fuels the HIV/AIDS epidemic. This poses an enormous threat for future development and must be considered as a cross-cutting challenge for the achievement of all MDGs. Moreover, PNG's very high level of maternal mortality is another clear indication of the lack of empowerment of women (Government of Papua New Guinea, 2009).

Samoa

The Government of Samoa (GoS) is party to many international and regional commitments that are non-gender specific. Several of these commitments have reporting requirements and some include gender specific reporting. Samoan women who are engaged in economic activities face the challenge of balancing this role alongside their social and family obligations. The GoS recognises that gender equality cannot be achieved by the Ministry for Women alone. This work is long term and requires a "whole of government" approach. It is a strategy that the GoS believes will make a difference, which is why it decided to undertake a stocktake of the government's capacity to mainstream gender (SPC, 2013b).

The GoS has acknowledged the existence of gender inequality in Samoa. *The Strategy for the Development of Samoa (SDS) 2016–2020* stipulates, under Outcome 8.1, that the "inclusion of vulnerable groups (women, youth, people with disabilities, children, elderly and disadvantaged people) in community planning and governance activities will be enhanced" (Government of Samoa; UNFPA, 2020).

As a result of gender inequality, including high levels of GBV, Samoa faces a low number of women in political decision-making roles at all levels, high unemployment levels among female youth, high rates of teenage pregnancy, and increasing levels of sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Addressing these challenges necessitates the need for reliable data and robust analyses to better understand the disparities, poverty gaps and critical needs that exist in Samoan society (Government of Samoa; UNFPA, 2020).

Solomon Islands

The Constitution of the Solomon Islands (CSI) protects the rights of individuals and protects against discrimination based on sex, age and other factors. There is, however, no specific mention of gender discrimination in the *Constitution Bill of Rights (CBR)*. Solomon Islands has ratified CEDAW and is party to other international and regional instruments and agreements, including the SDGs, the PPA, and the PLGED. Men outnumber women in participation in the formal labour force (80.3% and 62.4%, respectively) and women in Solomon Islands earn almost half that of men (USD 1569 versus USD 2467, respectively) annually (PWSPD, 2017). While fewer women spent time doing paid work than men, those who did averaged more daily hours of paid work than men (IWDA, 2020). Solomon Islands is a patriarchal society and gender inequality means that women are affected more by adversities than men. This is evident in all aspects of life. Women are more than twice as likely as men to have no schooling. In rural areas, only 14% of women have functional literacy, compared with 21% of men (PWSPD, 2017). For women, access to services is further hindered by heavy workloads at home, limited funds and social norms that place varying degrees of restrictions on women's movements outside the community. The patriarchal nature of Solomon Islands culture is supported by social norms and customary values that establish a hierarchy in which women often play a subservient role. Entrenched male dominance of state, faith-based and traditional institutions result in a situation where men often make decisions on behalf of women (Wood, 2019). Even in matrilineal parts of Solomon Islands, where women hold the rights to land, women can be excluded from decisions regarding land and resource management. Women therefore have limited agency and constrained opportunities to change the power dynamics.

In the Solomon Islands, key policies to support gender mainstreaming exist at the national policy level through the Constitution and the National Development Strategy. The Ministry of Women, Youth and Children Affairs (MWYCA) is mandated to work on gender issues within the Solomon Islands government and has policies in place to support gender mainstreaming.

Tonga

In Tonga, although the legal framework is progressive and relatively liberal with regard to the promotion of gender equality, some laws discriminate against women—notably those related to land ownership and the distribution of property and wealth during divorce. Traditional gender stereotypes in Tonga are consistent with those of other PICTs, where women's roles are based around the home, family and extended family, predominantly in caring and nurturing, while men's roles include providing food, income and security for the home and family as well as in leadership and politics (Government of the Kingdom of Tonga, 2019).

Tongan women are traditionally expected to be virtuous, dignified, submissive and dutiful, mindful of her place in the family, and daughters are expected to accept that they have no right to the family home or land, which will be inherited by their older brothers. The policy on *Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality for Tonga (WEGET)* is the outcome of the review of *Tonga's National Policy on Gender and Development*. With Tonga's vision for gender equity by 2025, the WEGET policy contains five priority outcomes that cover gender mainstreaming in government policies, programmes and services, corporate budgeting, and monitoring and evaluation; domestic violence and Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR); women's access to economic assets and employment; women's participation in decision-making and political representation; and gender responses to natural disasters, environmental challenges and climate change (Government of the Kingdom of Tonga, 2019).

Access to land for women is thus temporary, and limited by their gender and kinship relationships. Women are subject to the good will and continuance of the traditional *fahu* system, where the brother is obligated to take care of his sister and her children – a system that is fast eroding with the transition to a commercial and cash-based society. The leasing of land has provided some respite and women now hold the highest number of leases (70%) in Tonga (Government of the Kingdom of Tonga, 2019).

Tuvalu

While the laws provide equal opportunities for men and women, the 2012 *Tuvalu CEDAW Report*, highlights the cultural barriers women need to overcome when contesting elections. Such barriers include the traditional and stereotypical perceptions of women's roles as home makers, care givers and nurturers of the family; financial constraints linked to the cost of running a campaign; and the nature of voting, which tends to be linked to relational and family lines rather than based on the merits of candidates. The situation is exacerbated by the absence of political parties, which could be a tool for affirmative action through allocation of safe seats to women in a patriarchal society that has strong religious rules and morals imposed by Christianity. These set the regulations on men and women's behaviour and concepts of the family structure and contribute to gender relations or the social constructs of relationships between men and women (SPC, 2013b).

According to the Government of Tuvalu's third and fourth periodic reports of Tuvalu to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (Government of Tuvalu, 2012), daughters are protected and treated with respect in their families and are expected to move into the husband's family once they are married and their children will be included in their father's clan and have access to his land. When following their traditions, many women choose to remain at home and forgo the opportunity of a career, with difficulties in balancing family life with the demands of full-time employment being an underlying reason.

The Government of Tuvalu recognises the importance of gender equality, as demonstrated through several significant achievements. New legislation and policies have been developed and implemented as well as legislative changes. Numerous initiatives and activities have also been undertaken and contributed to gender mainstreaming, increased opportunities for women and girls and raised awareness on gender equality in different sectors (PWSPD, 2019).

Vanuatu

The Government of Vanuatu recognises that gender equality is part of the fundamental right and duty that is enshrined in the *National Constitution of Vanuatu*. Chapter 2, Part I of the Constitution recognises the rights and freedoms of all individuals without discrimination on the grounds of sex, race, place of origin, religious or traditional beliefs, political opinions or language. It also has provisions for the "special benefit, welfare, protection or advancement of females, children and young persons, members of under-privileged groups or inhabitants of less developed areas." Gender equality and women's empowerment are also critical to the achievement of the national development vision: "a Just, Educated, Healthy and Wealthy Vanuatu." (Government of Vanuatu, 2014)

Rigid social norms in rural areas reinforce the decision-making power of males, including natural resources, land and other productive resources. In Vanuatu, women's participation in decision-making on land use is limited to informal discussions within the household and in community gatherings. Men control formal community decision-making, and community chiefs are the final decision-makers on the use of productive and natural resources. The National Council of Chiefs, or *Malvatumauri*, must be consulted by the Parliament on any matters related to land. Since women cannot be high chiefs, they are not part of the *Malvatumauri* and do not have a say in decisions related to tenure of customary land (FAO, 2020).

7 SUMMARY

Work on gender mainstreaming in the Pacific Islands region has been assisted greatly by the systematic information collection on gender and the attempt to create gender profiles for most countries. Gender profiles have been developed by Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), PIFS and the ADB, and SPC continues to be engaged in gender mainstreaming stocktakes in PICTs. There is continuing implementation of recommendations from these stocktakes through the work of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and PWSDP programmes. Most countries have signed and ratified CEDAW and other international instruments relating to gender. All countries are part of the SPC RPPA and have this as a check mechanism for on-going gender work. Most national development plans have included gender considerations and most sector policies have gender mainstreaming included. The challenge will be in monitoring change in gender relations at the community level and in programmes such as the R2R.

From the above snapshots of what is available on gender work in-country, it is evident that there are international instruments like CEDAW and SDGs, which the countries have signed or ratified, and there are regional mechanisms, policies and commitments carried out by regional leaders, which provide key enabling mechanisms for gender work. At the national level, there are gender profiles, gender mainstreaming stocktakes reports, gender policies, and gender assessments, which have been carried out by ADB, UNDP, UN Women, Australian Aid (AusAID) and other major partners. The last decade has shown a significant commitment and progressive steps in the work on gender in PICTs. The work on climate change, disaster risk management, responses and preparedness, and environmental issues in general, has helped raise the profile of gender inclusion and mainstreaming in the different resource sectors.

Barriers and challenges that are faced are mostly tied to social practices, cultural beliefs and norms, and traditional expectations. These are part of societal dynamics and will take a long time to change or influence; however, targeted and smart strategies can begin to identify opportunities for change and how to sustain that which is already working. Gender mainstreaming has largely been constrained by the lack of technical expertise in-country to do the work, the limitations faced by the departments of women who have the national mandate to do gender mainstreaming, the lack of accountability in workplaces for gender inclusion, and the limitations posed by the lack of resources and finance to carry out gender mainstreaming.

The R2R work should build on existing mechanisms and dynamics that are in place. Numerous training and awareness work has taken place, thus there is a need to map what has already happened, what the key gaps and needs in the work that has already been done are, and identify opportunities to further progress what has already been done. Having standalone gender inclusive strategies will not be an efficient use of resources and time. The country gender action plans and reporting templates are designed to assist PICTs to map and monitor progress on their gender inclusive work. The action plans and reports that are received from countries can help to map progress in gender within sectorial work and lessons learned can be used to address barriers and challenges that have been faced.

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