

International Women's Day 2016

Pledge for Parity



It will take until 2095 to achieve global gender parity in the workplace:¹ **that's around eighty years – or four generations – until companies and governments are equally led by men and women!**

The global theme for International Women's Day, to be held on 8 March this year, is 'Pledge for parity!' In the Pacific region, despite key advances over the past 20 years, women and girls are still faced with cultural, social, economic and institutional barriers to developing their full potential. The equal participation of women and men in society is key to the sustainable development of the region.

The objective of this paper is to illustrate how SPC can contribute to improving opportunities for men and women in the region and bring about more equality.

Gender equality is both a condition and an outcome of achieving the three strategic development goals of SPC²:

1. Pacific people benefit from sustainable economic development
2. Pacific communities are empowered and resilient
3. Pacific people reach their potential and live long and healthy lives.

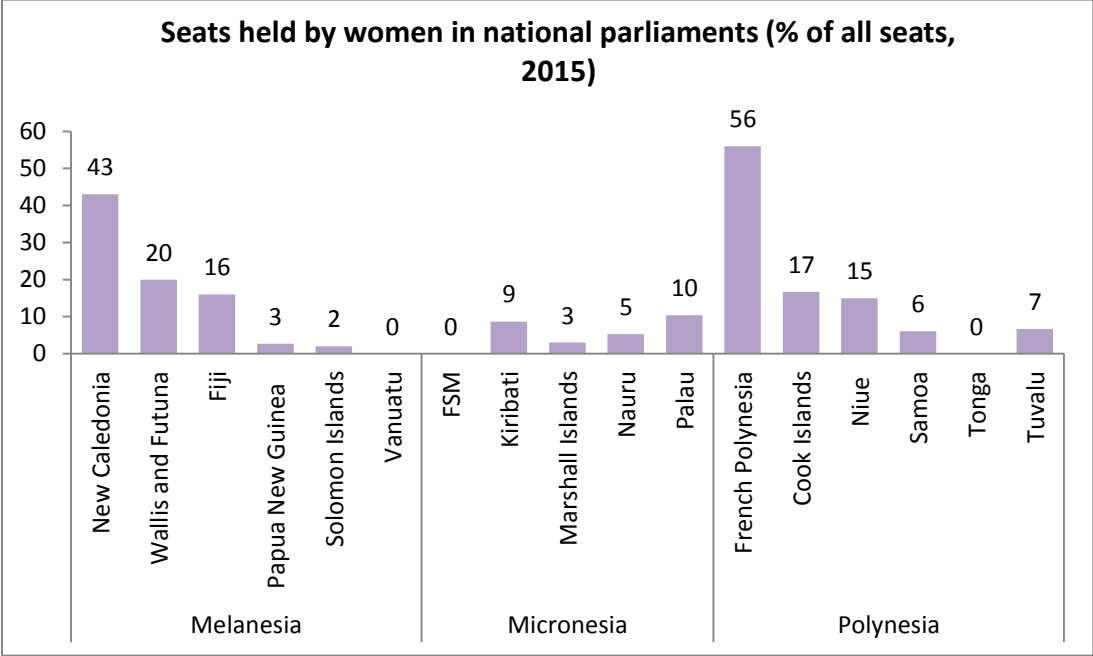
Where are the gaps in the region?

1. Leadership and decision-making

¹ Estimated by the World Economic Forum in its Global Gender Gap Report 2014.¹

² Pacific Community Strategic Plan 2016–2020.

Ms Hilda Heine’s election as President of the Republic of Marshall Islands, in January 2016, represented the **first election of a female head of state in Pacific Island countries**. At the parliamentary level, the French Pacific territories have the highest rates of seats held by women in the lower house, with 56%, 43% and 20%, respectively, in French Polynesia, New Caledonia and Wallis and Futuna, through the ‘parity law’ adopted in France, and applied in the territories in 2000.



In the rest of the region, the generally small numbers of seats in elected assemblies, the small number of ministers and high-level public officials, and the high costs of campaigning, constitute additional barriers to women’s entry to such positions. Electoral systems based on the British ‘first-past-the-post’ model are common among Pacific Island countries and territories (PICTs), but this system has been shown to disadvantage women in favour of long-established candidates.

Women’s participation in management roles, including senior government officials and corporate and general managers, is lowest in Solomon Islands (19%) and highest in Cook Islands (48%) and Samoa (47%).³ Having more women involved in management could have an important impact in the ways the public and private sectors operate and to their awareness of and attention to women’s needs.

What can we at SPC do to support the full participation of women in political and public decision-making?

- ☞ Ensure the views and priorities of women of all ages are heard in consultation processes at all levels, notably by encouraging the participation of women (managers, scientists, women in civil society, stakeholders, etc.)
- ☞ When supporting activities for and with communities ensure equitable participation of women of all ages in decision-making and management processes

³ Based on the most recent population census or employment survey. Source: Pacific Gender Statistics Data Booklet (SPC), forthcoming.

- ☞ Take proactive measures to increase the number of women in leadership positions in SPC (i.e. band 12 and over) so that strategic decisions are more likely to be representative of the diversity of the Pacific population.

2. Wage gaps

There is very little data available on hourly wage gaps in the Pacific region. However we know that, across the region, **women remain under-represented in the formal workforce**, with a significant impact on their ability to earn decent incomes, and to access social protection and health benefits. For example, in Fiji, only 9% of professional and technical workers are women.⁴ It is estimated that Fijian women in paid employment earn, on average, only 38% of the income of Fijian men (in parity of purchasing power).⁵



What can we at SPC do to support the full participation of women in the labour force?

- ☞ Support PICTs in collecting and using sex-disaggregated data for policy formulation
- ☞ Contribute to eliminating all forms of discrimination against women through technical assistance in revising legislation and policies that contribute to either direct or indirect discrimination against women (including sectoral policies and programmes)
- ☞ Increase the visibility of women's contributions in key development sectors (e.g. agriculture, fisheries, food security) through the dissemination of data and analysis
- ☞ Conduct qualitative and quantitative gender analysis of poverty and the disproportionate impacts of economic crises on women, to better inform policies and programmes.

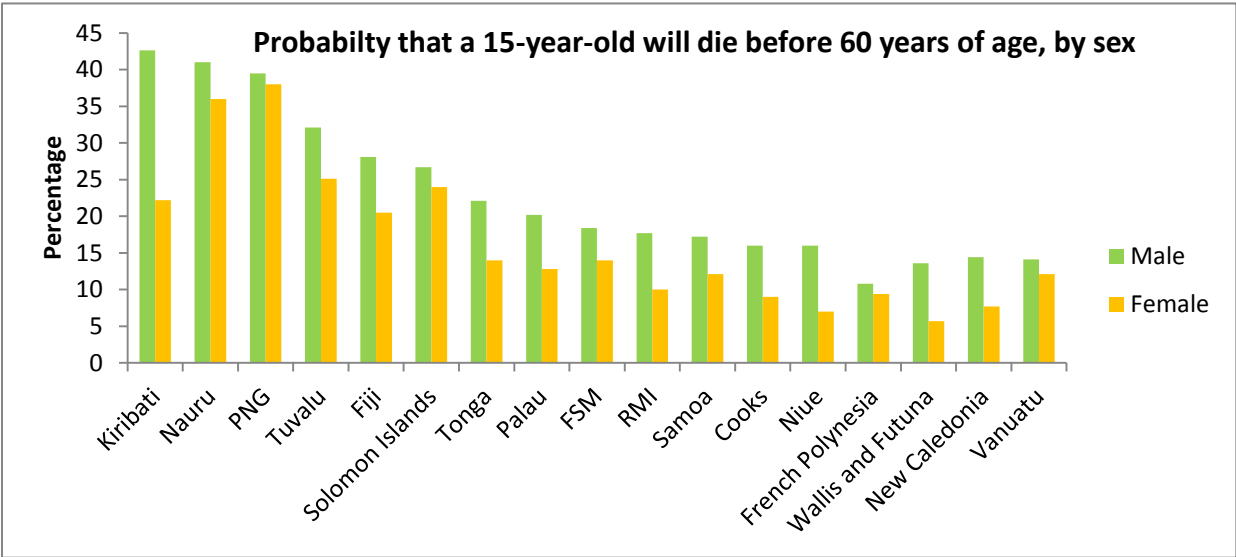
3. Safety

Men and women are exposed to a different set of risks to men throughout their lives. These risks are often linked to the engendered roles, responsibilities and behaviours that are expected of them. Many communities view risky behaviours and substance abuse as 'manly'. Boys and men are more

⁴ The Global Gender Gap Report 2014, p 180 http://www3.weforum.org/docs/GGGR14/GGGR_CompleteReport_2014.pdf

⁵ Ibid.

likely to be involved in road traffic crashes than girls and women.⁶ Three-quarters of all road traffic deaths in the western Pacific region are males. This translates into significant gender disparities. For example, in Kiribati, 4 boys in 10 will die before reaching 60 years of age, compared to 2 girls in 10.



In addition to general mortality trends, there needs to be an analysis of gender-specific risks: women in the Pacific, including New Zealand and Australia, face the highest levels of violence in the world. **Over 60% of surveyed women and girls in the region have experienced violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime, compared to 30% globally.** It is estimated that intentional injuries are among the 10 leading contributors to the total health burden in the region. For example, in Fiji, 43 women are injured every day as a result of domestic violence. One woman every day, on average, will be left permanently disabled.

What can we at SPC do to ensure the safety of men and women?

- ☞ Promote respectful models of masculinity, including through the White Ribbon Campaign
- ☞ Support campaigns to reduce alcohol and substance consumption
- ☞ Promote equal partnership and decision-making at every level in communities
- ☞ Raise awareness of the SPC Domestic Violence Prevention Policy

4. Health:

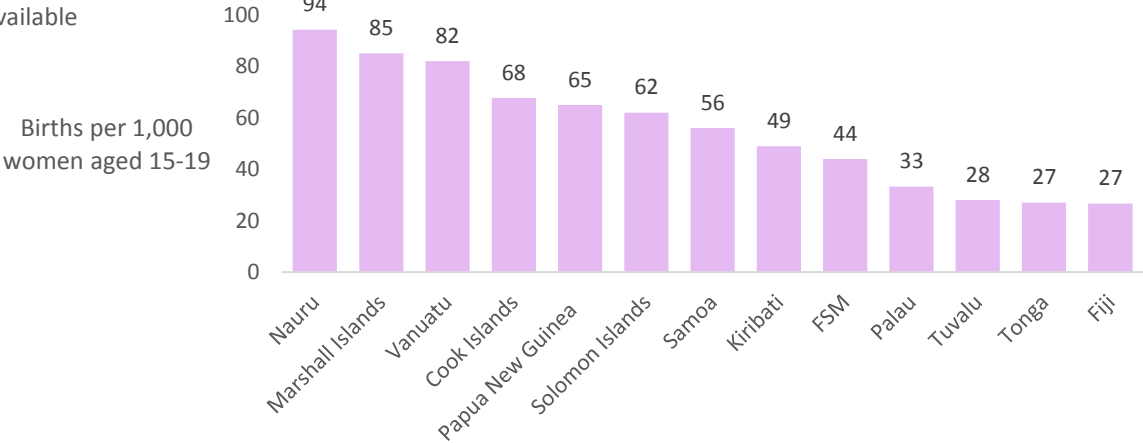
Despite considerable improvements in public health in general, and in key dimensions of women’s health, Pacific women face a variety of preventable health issues throughout their lives. Access to reproductive health services remains uneven across the region, for both women and men. Gender norms, abusive sexual relationships, geography, cultural barriers and disability are some of the

⁶ See Western Pacific Region Road Safety Factsheet (WHO), September 2015: http://www.wpro.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs_20130627/en/

barriers that contribute to high levels of teenage pregnancies, with profound effects on girls' educational opportunities and future prospects in all areas of their lives.

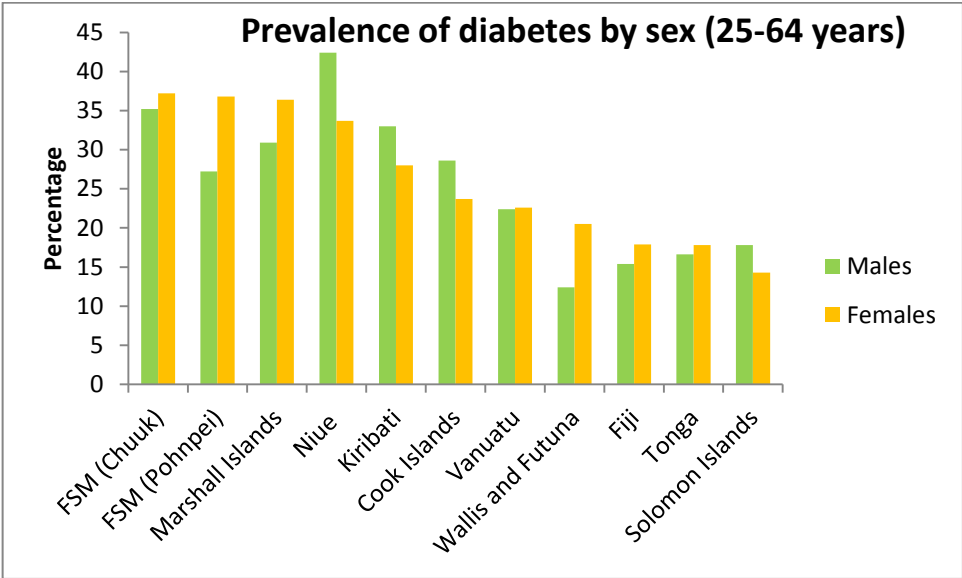
Teenage pregnancy rates - highest in Nauru, Marshall Islands and Vanuatu

Adolescent fertility rate (number of births per 1,000 women aged 15-19), latest year available



Source: Ministry of Health (MOH) publications; national MDG reports; Demographic Health Surveys

Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are the leading causes of death and disability in the region, and are responsible for 80% of all deaths. Women in the region are particularly affected by long-term, mostly chronic, conditions, such as diabetes.



Diabetes prevalence is higher among women than men, with the exception of Solomon Islands and Niue. The region-wide NCD epidemics is aggravating the burden of care that women already face, with evidence of women leaving the workforce to provide full-time care to family members. **The social, cultural and economic impacts on the lives of women and their families are staggering,** and are likely to challenge some of the progress made on women's advancement.

What can we at SPC do to ensure men and women lead healthy lives?

- ☞ Strengthen the gender perspective in NCD prevention-related public health initiatives
- ☞ Consider NCD prevention measures that have targeted women, and learn from their successes as well as from their failures
- ☞ Promote increased access of women to reproductive health services, especially to youth-friendly health services
- ☞ Promote legislation and practices that allow teenage mothers to continue their education

5. Care work:

Almost universally across the region, women do more unpaid work in the home than men, in their role as primary family care givers. These responsibilities impact on women's capacity to engage in productive, income-earning activities.

In the region there is very limited data on how men and women use their time in terms of unpaid household work and paid economic activities, but we know that women are more likely than men to be full-time homemakers. For example, in Solomon Islands, of the nearly 11,200 full-time homemakers, almost 9,400 – 84% – are women⁷.

Progressing equal roles and responsibilities for domestic duties, or unpaid household work, profoundly transforms gender relations, and not only provides greater possibilities for women to engage in paid work, but also brings additional benefits for family life and in the upbringing of boys and girls.

Changes in men's behaviour towards caregiving are often linked to having had a role model.⁸ Research⁹ shows that **men and boys who have seen their own fathers engage in domestic duties are themselves more likely to be involved in housework**, pointing to an 'intergenerational transmission of care'.

To support this change, conditions of employment and policies that encourage equal sharing of domestic responsibilities are of paramount importance. Despite noticeable improvements in maternity and paternity benefits in the Pacific region, **only one¹⁰ of the seven Pacific Island countries offering maternity leave benefits have developed paternity leave or parental leave mechanisms.**¹¹

What can we at SPC do to promote equal sharing of care work?

- ☞ Support countries in advancing both maternity and paternity leave benefits
- ☞ Support countries in conducting time-use surveys to better document care work along with all the other productive and reproductive work done by women and men

⁷ Solomon Islands 2009 Population and Housing Census: Gender Report

⁸ Qualitative data from the *Men Who Care* study found that men who are engaged in caregiving often credit their fathers and other men who were their role models. See Levto R, van der Gaag N, Greene M, Kaufman M, and Barker G (2015). *State of the World's Fathers: A MenCare Advocacy Publication*. Washington, DC: Promundo, Rutgers, Save the Children, Sonke Gender Justice, and the MenEngage Alliance.

⁹ United Nations, *Multi-country Study on Men and Violence in Asia and the Pacific*. 2013

¹⁰ In Cook Islands public sector employees who become new fathers are entitled to up to five days' paternity leave. Source: *Leave Policy*, Government of the Cook Islands, January 2015.

¹¹ Source: ILO Database on Conditions of Work and Employment Programme, accessed on 8 February 2016: <http://www.ilo.org/dyn/travail/travmain.byCountry2>

☞ Raise awareness of SPC paternity leave benefits and other flexible working arrangements

As an SPC staff member what can I do to promote equal opportunity for women and men?

Staff should keep in mind the following in their daily work activities:

- Learn about how women and men are involved in your sector of intervention, and how gender inequality impacts your sector
- Be aware that every intervention potentially impacts women and men differently. Contact your colleagues from the Gender Culture and Youth division for support in anticipating and responding to these impacts
- Ask for technical support or advice for supporting gender perspectives in your work
- Work with women; involve women in your programmes; develop partnerships with organisations that can support your work and help you reach out to women in PICTs
- Do not support interventions or approaches that will contribute to excluding women or that maintain gender inequality

We all have a role to play to make these advances a lived reality for Pacific women and men!