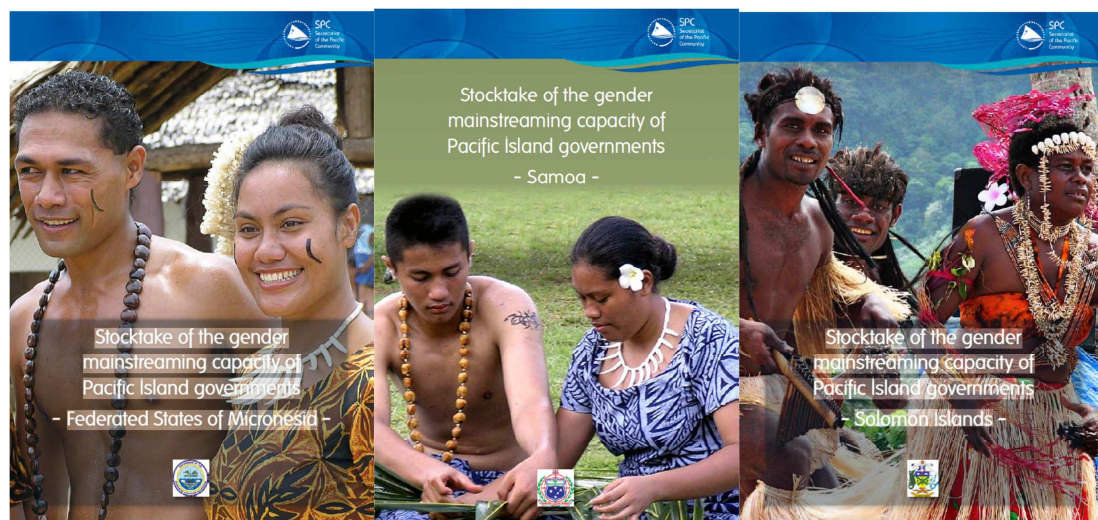


Stocktake of the capacity of the Governments to Mainstream Gender across Policies, Programmes and Services



Key findings from 15 Pacific Island countries and territories

Gender equality is widely acknowledged as a condition for achieving development goals. The need to 'mainstream' gender and women's human rights across all multi-sectoral development and governance work was universally recognised in 1995 at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China, as a critical strategy for achieving government commitments to gender equality and sustainable development.

Gender mainstreaming gained significant momentum in the Pacific in the lead up to, and the years immediately after the Beijing Conference. However, perceptions are that the momentum was not maintained and that national governments do not have the necessary capacity to systematically integrate gender perspectives and women's human rights into development processes as part of their strategy to achieve national, regional and international commitments to gender equality.

Recognising this, government officials at the 10th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women (2007) requested the SPC to generate information to support strategic planning and coordinated action by national governments, regional agencies and development partners. SPC was tasked with developing a methodology to identify areas where change could be initiated to support an enabling environment for gender mainstreaming at the national level and identify constraints, areas of strength, and actions required to increase government capacity for gender mainstreaming. Member countries recognised that this information and subsequent follow up action, would in turn facilitate achievement of gender equality objectives identified in the Revised Pacific Platform for Action for the Advancement of Women, the Pacific Plan and other guiding regional frameworks.

Following this recommendation, SPC commissioned a series of assessments known as a Gender Mainstreaming Stocktake (Stocktake). These Stocktakes were not intended to audit or evaluate how effectively PICTs are doing gender mainstreaming but simply to take stock of the current capacity and environment, which underpin and are instrumental to the success of gender mainstreaming efforts. Twelve Pacific governments have now undertaken this exercise. Collection and analysis of information for the Stocktake was done in 2009–2010 in Cook Islands, Tonga, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, Republic of the Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia, and in 2013-2014 in Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, New Caledonia, Niue, Palau, Samoa, Tuvalu and Wallis and Futuna. The Stocktake involved interviews and focus groups with a range of stakeholders including with ministries and divisions responsible for gender equality, line and central ministries, key donor and development partners and civil society organisations working on gender equality and women's empowerment

This Stocktake, was designed and built on the findings of international research and experience conducted by civil society, governments and multilateral development agencies. These include qualitative and quantitative findings that demonstrate that:

- ❖ Promotion of gender equality will result in improved development outcomes
- ❖ In order to achieve results on gender equality, National Women’s Machineries (NWMs) need to operate as integrated and influential agents of change within their respective governments.
- ❖ The existence of six ‘enabling environment’ factors for gender mainstreaming across government are required to support NWMs and can result in the effective promotion of gender equality through government services and systems, to the benefit of all citizens.
- ❖ Assessment of each enabling environment factor requires understanding and analysis of social, cultural, political and organizational variables.
- ❖ Sustainable change for increased gender equality requires i) that government commitments to gender equality be entrenched in international agreements, law, policy and organizational culture across the ‘whole of government’ and ii) that the section of government charged with facilitating change toward increased gender equality be empowered and supported with resources and authority corresponding to the magnitude of the task and in line with governments’ international, legislative and policy commitments.

Factors of an enabling environment for gender mainstreaming

Legal and policy framework: The extent to which gender equality and mainstreaming commitments have been put in place through ratification of relevant international human rights treaties, and the existence of constitutional and legislative provisions and government policy mandates

Political will: Demonstrated political will means that action is taken on stated gender equality commitments and that action is formalised within systems and mechanisms to ensure mainstreaming is sustainable

Organisational culture: The extent to which the attitudes of staff and institutional systems, policies and structures support or marginalise gender equality as an issue

Accountability and responsibility: The ways in which action on commitments to gender mainstreaming can be traced and monitored within organisations, and the mechanisms that individuals at different levels use to demonstrate gender equality related results

Technical capacity: The depth of skills and experience that organisations can draw on to support gender and human rights mainstreaming initiatives across and within their operations and programmes

Adequate resources: The allocation and application of human and financial resources in relation to the scope of the task of mainstreaming

Findings

The enabling environment

An assessment of the above enabling environment for gender mainstreaming found some existing supports in place for gender mainstreaming.

- ± *Key human rights instruments ratified:* All but two countries involved in the stocktake, had already ratified Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) the globally recognised human rights instrument for advancing gender equality. The Convention of the Right of the Child (CRD) has been ratified by all countries. Many countries had already aligned their national strategies to key international and regional policy frameworks including the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action (BPA), 2000 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Revised Pacific Platform for Action on Advancement of Women and Gender Equality 2005–2015, and Pacific Plan (2005, revised 2007).
- ± *National constitutions state the principle of non-discrimination based on sex:* In most PICTs there is no mechanism for making the provision enforceable and neither the constitution nor any other legislation contains the principle of equality between men and women or a definition of discrimination against women. The French territories are the

exception – for example, there are legal measures and specific laws in New Caledonia’s labour act that prohibit gender-based discrimination.

- ± *Legal instruments that support gender equality:* Many countries had or were in the process of developing legislation to criminalise violence against women; and had in place maternity leave provisions in the public service. Several governments were also taking a collaborative inter-agency approach to addressing their CEDAW concluding comments.
- ± National women’s/gender policy: Most are in the process of being reviewed and updated.
- ± National machineries for women are established in all countries.

Whilst some supports were identified, a number of constraints were noted, for example:

- There are important gaps between international and regional commitments and national legislation, which contribute to perpetuating gender inequality and violating women’s human rights. While legislation conforms to international standards in the French territories, the issue remains the ineffective application of the law in some cases and the distance between formal and substantive equality. In addition, customary laws and gender stereotypes tend to affect the application of formal laws.
- There is little government awareness of the legal and policy framework for gender equality and women’s human rights.
- The gender dimension is not properly reflected in strategic development plans and gender equality is not mainstreamed across sectors.
- Gender issues are rarely discussed as part of development issues among government agencies.
- There is overall lack of awareness, and misunderstanding about gender equality and gender mainstreaming approaches.
- Inadequate financial resources are allocated for mainstreaming gender.
- There is limited production and use of sex disaggregated data.
- No guidelines and systems are in place for mainstreaming gender.
- Despite agreements at the highest political level and recognition of gender equality, little has been done to translate these commitments into action.
- Performance management and reporting systems in several countries are quite weak thereby making it difficult to integrate and monitor the extent to which gender is mainstreamed in each sector, and to make institutions and people accountable.

National mechanisms for the promotion of gender equality

Although gender mainstreaming is the responsibility of the whole of government, national machineries for the advancement of women (ministries and/or divisions responsible for gender equality) are necessary as they act as catalysts, advocates and facilitators of gender mainstreaming and the advancement of women. Despite national machineries for women’s advancement in each country, the institutions are poorly resourced and have very limited capacity to play a substantive role in catalysing promotion of gender equality and women’s rights across government programmes and services.

Most national machineries are not well located to exert influence across the government. They are usually in a division of a ministry without the power to influence programmes implemented by other ministries (or even divisions within their own ministry).

They are poorly resourced in terms of human and financial resources. An average of less than 0.1% of the national budget is allocated to these divisions and they receive very limited financial support from development partners.

They lack technical capacity to analyse and integrate gender equality principles in national and sectoral policies and planning, and to drive the required changes in government systems and processes.

Linkages with other government institutions are weak overall, which further impacts their capacity to influence and support the promotion of gender equality in various sectors and in national programmes.

Similarly, linkages with civil society could be stronger. Women's organisations have often played an important role in promoting the creation of the national machinery. Although there is interaction with civil society on some levels, mutual support could be better structured by clearly defining mandates.

Strategic actions for strengthening national capacity for mainstreaming gender equality

As requested by governments, the stocktakes propose a series of measures to strengthen national capacities in mainstreaming gender.

Capacity development – One of the main obstacles to gender mainstreaming is lack of capacity. This view was expressed by both national machineries for women and the line and central ministries interviewed. There is a clear need to raise awareness about the impacts of gender inequality on different sectors of development and to build capacity to mainstream gender in all sectors.

Establishing mechanisms and systems – Mainstreaming gender can only be effective and sustainable if the appropriate mechanisms and systems are put in place. For example, job descriptions tied to public service performance management system could support gender mainstreaming to occur. Similarly, government processes to develop or review policies, conduct national planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation processes could be strengthened by enhancing the gender perspective. A coordination mechanism is needed in each institution as well as in the national machineries.

Producing and using sex disaggregated data – The production of sex disaggregated data is usually limited to the education and health sectors and is far from being widespread. These data are nevertheless critical because they provide information about gaps and should be used to inform decision-making on priorities and strategies. The production and use of sex disaggregated data needs to be systematic in all sectors and at all levels.

Integrating gender equality perspectives in national policies and development plans – The promotion of gender equality cannot be the sole responsibility of national machineries. Therefore, gender equality goals, outcomes and strategies should be fundamental to national development strategies, policies and plans and the appropriate resourcing allocated to achieve gender equality. There is still a strong tendency to relegate what are considered as 'women's issues' to the social sectors, thus reinforcing a welfare approach instead of an empowering approach.

Alignment of national legal frameworks – Many improvements are needed to ensure national laws conform to the commitments made by countries and territories on gender equality and women's human rights. There are several examples where laws either discriminate against women or contribute indirectly to discrimination.

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Stocktake Reports can be found <http://www.spc.int/en/featured-publications.html>

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