

Pacific Community Communauté du Pacifique

SPC Women in Leadership Programme Highlights



January - April 2024

From the desk of the **Principal Strategic** Lead-Pacific Women & Girls

Dear SPC Community and Partners,

Welcome to the first edition of the SPC Women In Leadership Programme newsletter. I am pleased to share with you the progress made in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment within the SPC and across the Pacific region.

The WIL Programme is the first institutional programme in a CROP agency focused on institutional strengthening to support women's leadership and gender equality. This was made possible by the recognition of this support by our Executive Team and our donor, the Australian Government. Our journey has not been without challenges. We acknowledge the obstacles encountered in promoting gender equality but remain steadfast in our commitment to fostering an inclusive organisational culture and enhancing accountability.

Last year was a pivotal year for us as we embarked on a journey to strengthen our commitment to gender equality through the Women in Leadership (WIL) Programme. The endorsement of the Revitalised Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration in November 2023 marked a significant milestone in our collective efforts toward gender parity and social inclusion, to complement the Pacific Platform for Action on Gender Equality and Women's Human Rights. Throughout 2023, we established institutional structures to support gender equality, paving the way for increased advocacy and policy dialogue on this crucial issue. We worked tirelessly to influence institutional and regional agendas, ensuring the integration of gender equality and women's leadership priorities.

In the first few months of 2024, our efforts have continued to bear fruit. From the Director General's participation in the Gender Equality Community of Practice meeting to the vibrant celebrations of International Women's Day, we have remained actively engaged in advancing our goals.

In April, we had the opportunity to showcase our women in Leadership priorities at regional forums and culminated in the launch of the SPC Women in Leadership Webpage, marking another significant step forward in our journey.

As we move forward, let us continue to champion diversity, inclusion, and equality in all aspects of our work and beyond.

We welcome your contributions and ideas on how best we can support gender equality and women's leadership in our organisation and beyond.

Vinaka and warm regards, Mereseini Rakuita



SPC's gender equality programme encompasses a range of projects and activities, the largest of which is Pacific Women Lead. Funded by the Australian government, Pacific Women Lead is a 5-year (2021-2026) AUD 170 million regional development programme. SPC entered into a partnership with the Australian Government to manage and deliver the regional component of the Pacific Women Lead portfolio, valued at AUD 56.8 million. This includes both the Pacific Women Lead at SPC and WIL Programmes. The programmes contribute to the Pacific Women Lead programme goal that Pacific women and girls, in all their diversity, are safe and equitably share in resources, opportunities and decision-making, with men and boys.

The WIL Programme has an allocation of AUD 3.02 million over 5 years (2021-2026). It is managed through the SPC Executive Office, with support from the Human Rights and Social Development (HRSD) Division.

The WIL Programme aims to support a change in organizational culture, strengthening of accountability mechanisms, policies, and procedures that not only support women's career progression but creates a culture in which all staff can thrive. It will position SPC as a regional/global leader in accelerating gender equality, inclusion, and diversity in the workplace.





SPC is leading the Way in Gender Mainstreaming

2023 marked a pivotal year for SPC as it geared up strengthen its institutional framework and mechanisms to support and empower its female workforce through the Women in Leadership (WIL) Programme.

Regionally, the endorsement of the Revitalised Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration in November 2023 underscores Pacific Island States' renewed commitment to gender equality and broader social inclusion priorities.



Establishment of institutional structures to support gender equality and women in leadership

2023 saw the development of a plan to implement the recommendations from the SPC 2022 Leadership Audit and the establishment of working groups to lead these. The Interim SPC Domestic Violence policy and standard operating procedures were endorsed for immediate action. Work began on the development of a training module on the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Harassment (PSEAH) for inclusion in the SPC Induction programme.

The WIL Programme Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework (MELF) was approved for roll-out across SPC in 2024 to support strengthened coordination and coherence across planning, implementation, and MEL for investments in women's rights, leadership, and equality. The MELF is organised under three pillars - Our Organisation; Our People; and Our Influence led by SPC's two Deputy Director Generals, Maria Fuata, and Paula Vivili, and Mereseini Rakuita and the Principal Strategic Lead- Pacific Women and Girls.





2023 Highlights

Increased advocacy and policy dialogue on gender equality and women in leadership

Advocacy and policy dialogue on gender equality and women in leadership increased across SPC in 2023. The SPC Executive team championed women in leadership activities and provided opportunities for discussions and forums. Exhibitions by the gender equality Community of Practice and the Library & Information Services showcased the gender equality work throughout the organisation and by SPC throughout its history.



Influencing institutional and regional agenda to integrate gender equality and women's leadership

The WIL Programme Coordinator, Julie Bukikun and I led over 40 presentations, briefings and engagements across SPC in 2023 and facilitated the design of the Gender Equality Flagship. Highlights included supporting the Pacific Islands Development Forum Coalition of Women Leaders Meeting and fisheries, energy, transport police and customs forums and continuing to support the Geoscience, Energy and Maritime Division's Women in Maritime.

I represented SPC at several key meetings throughout the Pacific to promote gender equality priorities and provided guidance to CROP agencies and across a range of sectors. SPC supported the CRGA to hold its first-ever side event focusing on women in leadership and gender equality.

The establishment and support of women's leadership mechanisms within SPC and CROP agencies through the CROP Women of the Wave (WOW) network has increased knowledge and capability among network influencers to support equality behaviours and practices.



Building a shared understanding of gender equality's significance, enhancing organizational accountability, and fostering institutional strengthening strategies are essential to challenges in regional effectiveness, governance arrangements, and program implementation.

The engagement of the SPC Executive and Senior Leadership Teams through the WIL Taskforce remains pivotal, ensuring the advancement of WIL priorities across divisions. SPC recognises the importance of sustaining momentum, investing in capacity building, and fostering an inclusive organizational culture. Through collaborative efforts and a steadfast commitment to gender equality, SPC paves the way for a more equitable and empowered Pacific region.





Warm Pacific Greetings,

I am pleased to deliver the first update on SPCs achievements in implementing its commitment to gender equality through the Women in Leadership programme. The purpose of this newsletter is to provide information on the programme as well as key initiatives SPC is supporting on advancing gender equality and women's empowerment.

This first newsletter is a special edition as it covers work the programme supported and implemented in 2023 and up to April 2024.

We've worked very hard in the past year to commence rollout of the WIL Programme after its inception in 2022. A number of you will remember the 2022 Leadership audit which is the basis of the implementation of the WIL Programme. With the support of our Executive Team and WIL Taskforce we worked on putting in place the governance structure of the programme and developed its implementation plan. At the same time, we have also been active in supporting the design of the Gender Equality Flagship for SPC.

We continue to work closely with the Human Rights and Social Development Division and other divisions, the Social Responsibility and Environment Policy Team. We are also developing our relationship with the Staff Representative Council and look forward to joint activities with them.

The program has developed a Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Framework to provide lessons learned for SPC and CROP agencies. The programme is now implemented under three pillars with long term outcomes:

Our organisation: SPC's organisational culture is safe, inclusive, and empowering for diverse Pacific women and all staff.

Our People: Gender equality is a norm at SPC where women are in leadership roles and contribute meaningfully to the strategic direction of the organisation.

Our Influence: SPC demonstrates strong engagement with CROP and PICT leaders in advancing women's leadership, women's rights, and equality across the regional architecture.

Since inception, we have received requests to share information on our work both from our CROP agencies and other partners. We will continue to support these requests as means for extending our work and support.

Thank you for reading the SPC Women In Leadership Program Newsletter. We welcome your contribution and feedback. Stay tuned for the June 2024 update. Our WIL Programme webpage is also live where you will find news and updates on our work.

With best regards,

Julie Bukikun



SPC Women in Leadership Programme | Highlights





The Gender Community of Practice (Gender COP) commenced its activities for 2024 with its first meeting attended by our Director General, Dr. Stuart Minchin.

The Gender COP was established in August 2022 as part of SPC's response to the recommendations from the 2022 Women in Leadership audit. It is support by the WIL Programme and Pacific Women Lead in close coordination with HRSD.

The Gender COP is led by the SPC Principal Strategic Lead and is supported by the WIL Programme Coordinator. It brings together gender champions and women's empowerment advocates from across the various SPC divisions. It provides an opportunity to work across divisions, share information and elevate what divisions are doing around gender equality to a broader audience. This enables participants to see synergies in what they are doing, share learnings, and strengthen organisational commitment to gender mainstreaming.

The February meeting was well attended by divisions across SOC. Among these were Margaret Fox, representing Gender and Fisheries; Shane Harrison, advocating for Gender and Energy; Litia Gaunavou, leading the Pacific Geospatial Women Network; and Mary Alalo, dedicated to Gender and Water Security.

SPC Principal Strategic Lead key message was that:

"Gender equality won't just happen on its own. As One-SPC, we commit to ensuring every program, community activity, and team formation integrates gender considerations."

The Gender COP serves as a nexus for gender champions and advocates across various SPC divisions. It facilitates cross-divisional collaboration, information sharing, and amplification of gender equality initiatives to a wider audience. This platform fosters the identification of synergies, exchange of insights, and fortification of organisational commitment to gender mainstreaming.





The Gender Equality Flagship successfully wrapped up a transformative two-day meeting on February 26th and 27th, marking a significant milestone in its journey towards its design process. The event, aimed at reflection and strategic planning, saw participants assess past initiatives while laying the groundwork for the Gender Equality Flagship's design phase, with gender mainstreaming at its core.

Structured around comprehensive objectives, the meeting leveraged SPC's wealth of experiences, including:

(i) Sharing insights gleaned from SPC Flagships and its Strategic Plan.

(ii) Understanding SPC's historical efforts in advancing gender equality institutionally and regionally.

(iii) Contributing to the design process of the Gender Equality Flagship through a Futures-Foresight approach.

The gathering yielded invaluable outcomes, including an enriched understanding of SPC's gender equality approach and identifications of next steps for the design process. The agenda encompassed diverse sessions such as Futures Thinking workshops, collaborative reflections on past achievements, and strategising for integrated programming.

The active participation of flagship leads, directors, and key SPC members underscored the organisation's steadfast commitment to fostering gender equity. As the design process concludes, SPC stands confident to drive tangible change, guided by regular consultations and a collective vision for a more inclusive future.





Talanoa Sessions Launched to Engage Male Allies in Advancing Gender Equality

Over February 2024

The WIL Programme has commenced a series of informal Talanoa sessions, aimed at fostering dialogue and engagement with male colleagues across the organisation. These sessions will serve as a platform for open discussion, providing a space for male colleagues to express their perspectives and identify areas for improvement in promoting gender equality.

The primary objective of these sessions is to cultivate male champions who actively support gender equality initiatives within SPC. These champions will play a vital role in raising awareness about the WIL Programme and the Gender Equality Flagship, thereby amplifying the impact of gender equality efforts across the organisation.

An initial brainstorming session took place with staff from the Human Rights and Social Development Division (HRSD), and Corporate Communications. Subsequently, Paula Vilili, Deputy Director-General – Science and Capabilities and Miles Young, Director of HRSD convened a session for Directors in Noumea Executive to gather their thoughts and perspective. The WIL programme will be organising sessions and events in the coming months.





2024 International Women's Day

With the theme 'Invest in Women. Accelerate Progress' for the 2024 International Women's Day, SPC's Principal Strategic Lead delivered thoughtprovoking speeches and took part in impactful dialogues at various events in the region.





No single fix will erase the entrenched and often unconscious systems of gender bias in our societies; there must be many fixes, tailored to the specific conditions that prevail in each country and each region.

SPC's Principal Strategic Lead – Pacific Women and Girls, Mereseini Rakuita shared this during the UN Women Australia's International Women's Day event held in Canberra, Australia.







If you are in this room, man or women, you hold power and responsibility... As individuals, as members of CROP WOW, what can we do? Hold the door open for the next leader, mentor that young leader in your workplace. You can have a role in shaping up the next leadership ranks of the region.

SPC's Principal Strategic Lead – Pacific Women and Girls, Mereseini Rakuita at the CROP WOW IWD Breakfast

Women's Economic Empowerment

12 March 2024

The economic empowerment of women does not exist in a silo and in a similar vein – it must not be treated as such. To be effective, investing in women must take an approach that encompasses a holistic understanding of the myriad barriers women can often encounter in their lifetime. This can vary from gender-based violence to the woman's role in the care economy

Policy Coherence Dialogue: Accelerating the Implementation of the Development Agendas in the Pacific

12 March 2024

Listening to rural communities about the need for genuine, inclusive and holistic approaches that work to empower the woman in her context.



Gender COP Learning Event: Understanding and applying Stats and Data to support gender equality outcomes 22 March 2024



The Gender COP Learning Event delved into the vital role of statistics and data in advancing gender equality outcomes. The session led by the Director of the Statistics for Development Division (SDD), Peter Ellis and his team, Evelyn Wareham and Akhona Nkenkana covered pertinent issues and consideration on how data and statistics can support planning, program development and implementation. The session also looked at addressing challenges, regional initiatives, and optimising data utilisation. Participants actively engaged in interactive sessions, leveraging Slido polls and practical demonstrations.

The event underscored the importance of accessible gender-relevant data and empowered attendees with resources like the Pacific Roadmap on Gender Statistics and the Pacific Data Hub Gender Dashboard. With a focus on practical application, the Gender COP members left equipped to harness data for impactful gender equality outcomes. The WIL programme is working with the SDD to organise further sessions during the year based on positive feedback received and requests for further training.

Gender Equality Flagship Design

In progress

Work has commenced on the development of the Gender Equality Flagship framework with the support. The Gender Equality Flagship (Flagship) will provide an overarching framework for action on the cross-cutting issue of gender inequality. It will serve to connect the critical resources (projects, funding, and people) that support gender equality in pursuit of the goals outlined in SPC's Strategic Plan 2022–2031. It is a vehicle for implementing the 2050 Blue Pacific Strategy and other regional, national, and international commitments.

The working group convenes fortnightly for an update on the progress and co-develop the design.

Micronesian Gender Equality Framework development

In progress

Work has commenced on the development of the framework to support Micronesia. The working group convenes monthly for an update on the progress. WIL programme facilitation of the dialogue for Micronesian States to begin developing their Gender Equality Framework will lead the way sub-regions organise and approach work on gender equality.

A presentation on the Framework will be made during the Micronesian Ministers for Women Conference by chair, Stuard Penias





Opening remarks at the Gender & Social Inclusion (GESI) in Pacific Fisheries Symposium

9 April | Honiara, Solomon Islands

The Principal Strategic Lead addressed the Gender & Social Inclusion in Pacific Fisheries Symposium with a message of unity and progress. Recognising the interconnectedness of Pacific peoples and the importance of sustainable economies rooted in Pacific values, she emphasised gender equality and social inclusion as central to the region's vision. Ms. Rakuita highlighted the inaugural regional Talanoa as a milestone, advocating for a shift from siloed approaches to integrated gender equality efforts in all sectors.

With a call for intentional leadership and innovative solutions, she urged collaboration towards a more inclusive and gender-responsive fisheries sector, echoing the region's commitment to advancing gender equality and social inclusion.



We are one Pacific people sharing one Ocean that connects us. Connecting our dreams. Connecting our destinies. Our challenges are the same. Our aspirations are shared ones. The rich tapestry of cultures and traditions that clothe us and the strength and resilience of Pacific people provide us with a unique pathway to unlocking sustainable economies within the Blue Pacific Continent





Micronesian Ministers for Women Conference & Presentation on Micronesian Gender Equality Framework

16-18 April | Nauru



The Micronesian Ministers for Women Conference convened in Nauru from April 16-18, 2024, initiating crucial discussions on gender equality. Addressing a diverse audience, the Principal Strategic Lead – Pacific Women and Girls, emphasised the urgency of innovative approaches, transcending gender stereotypes to achieve true equality. She underscored the significance of cultural context and collaboration in driving progress, highlighting the role of CROP agencies in supporting regional gender equality agendas.

The conference, held amidst the region's milestone anniversaries, underscored Micronesia's commitment to accelerating gender equality efforts, focusing on key priorities such as economic empowerment and combating violence against women. Participants pledged collective action, aiming to translate discussions into tangible outcomes for the subregion's women and girls.

At the conference, Assistant Secretary Mr Stuard Penias presented progress in the design process of the Micronesian Gender Equality Framework.

A working group collaborates with design consultants and convenes monthly to ensure timely tracking, feedback, and support for this important initiative







Presentation on gender Equality Flagship at the 16th Head of Fisheries Conference

22-26 April | Noumea, New Caledonia

The sixteenth (16) Heads of Fisheries Meeting featured a significant deliberation, with a session dedicated to gender and social inclusion in fisheries.

The Principal Strategic Lead virtually delivered an inspiring presentation on the Gender Equality Flagship. Her focus was on a strategic integrated approach to framing SPC and the region's strategy for addressing key regional development priorities cohesively. The aim was to facilitate scaled-up investments to accelerate progress towards gender equality and social inclusion commitments. Ms Rakuita also provided insights into the first Regional Pacific Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) in Fisheries Symposium, organised by FFA in collaboration with SPC, outlining key priority themes and sharing highlights and outcomes from the meeting.



The Second SPC Heads of Maritime Meeting and the First Steering Committee Meeting for the Pacific One Maritime Framework convened in Nadi, Fiji from 22-26 April 2024, marking a pivotal moment for maritime cooperation in the Pacific region. At the Head of Maritime meeting, the Principal Strategic Lead-Pacific Women delivered a compelling presentation on "Gender Equity and Inclusivity in the Region." This was complemented by a presentation from Rifat Tanjila, Gender Advisor-Maritime Transport, who outlined the "Pacific Women in Maritime: Way Forwarding Plan for 2025-25: Regional Strategy for Pacific Women in Maritime."

SPC showcased its unwavering commitment to advancing gender equality through its Gender Equality Flagship initiative, which serves as a comprehensive framework for addressing the pervasive issue of gender inequality.



PNG Women Leads Annual Learning and Reflections Workshop

22-26 April | Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea



The WIL Programme Coordinator, Julie Bukikun, participated in the PNG Women Leads Annual Learning and Reflections Workshop as part of our broader PWL@SPC programme. The PNG Women Lead programme is a component of the AUD170 million DFAT investment aimed at advancing gender equality and women's empowerment in the Pacific. The WIL programme's participation contributed to the workshop's objectives of sharing lessons learned in the region and institutional strengthening initiatives that can support gender equality outcomes.

The meeting also provided an opportunity to learn about developments taking place in PNG and to network. Promising initiatives around youth development, capacity building, disability, and women's economic empowerment through skills building and entrepreneurship support were discussed and showcased. It was a highly informative meeting covering various aspects from women's leadership to gender-based violence prevention and supporting the voices of young people. A significant takeaway was how civil society partners and faith-based organisations are making advancements in their work through their networks. Additionally, the private sector's response to supporting women by conducting research on workplace issues affecting productivity and performance resonated with the work done by the WIL programme through the 2022 Leadership Audit.





Get Creative!

Join our Motif Design competition for the WIL Programme. Your design could be the symbol of empowerment, diversity, and inclusivity of our WIL Programme's goals and objectives. Submit your designs and be part of shaping the visual identity of leadership and equality. Let your creativity shine!

The competition is open to everyone over the age of 18 and within SPC's member countries, inclusive of individuals who are employed full-time or part-time by SPC.

Submit your entries via this link: <u>https://forms.gle/S7AKQu8hDQuwAYK46</u>

For competition guidelines, visit: <u>https://www.spc.int/events/women-in-</u> <u>leadership-programme-motif-competition</u>

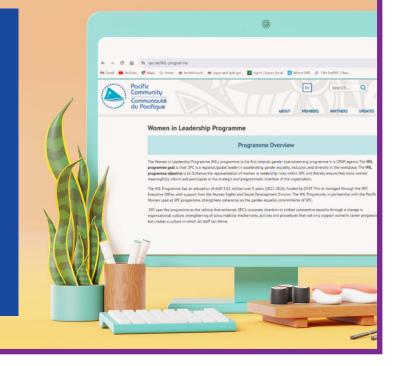














Coming up next! ——

30 April - 2 May	WIL Programme Coordinator will present at WEE Conference, Honolulu
7 May 2024	SPC's PSL at Regional Forum on Women's Entrepreneurship at UNESCAP, Bangkok
20 May	Presentation to CEDAW Committee. SPC's PSL with HRSD Director, Miles Young and PROJECT GOvernance Chief of Party, Ashley Bowe, Geneva
23 May	SPC's PSL will Chair the FP2030 Board meeting, London
25-26 May	SPC's PSL at the Gender Equality Forum on margins on SIDS 4 Conference, Barbuda
30 May – 3 June	GEC and Micronesian Islands Forum, Guam
12 June	Festpac13, Hawaii

