THE PROBLEM OF GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PACIFIC PLAN

Submitted by

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Declaration

This is to certify that the research reported here is original work and has not been submitted for credit at any other institution.

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Cathryn Morriss

08/10/2012
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It was a privilege and a joy to engage with the women who formed the heart of this research – those women from varying corners of the Pacific who gave generously of their time, hospitality, and patience. This thesis would have been unimaginable without their willingness to share their knowledge, tell their stories, and give invaluable advice, guidance, and support. They were there to clarify and extend my understandings, share meals in the cafes of Suva and USP, endless cups of the best coffee in Tonga and Vanuatu, and memories, hopes and expectations in Noumea, Cairns, Tanna Island, Port Vila, Christchurch, Canberra and many other places. I thank all of you with deep sincerity.

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Abstract

This thesis examines the way that women engaged with policy-making in the Pacific Islands Forum’s development processes for establishing the *Pacific Plan for Strengthening Regional Cooperation and Integration*. It does so in order to understand women’s perspectives of their involvement in the development processes for building regional inter-governmental policy. It reveals how many Pacific women believed they had been marginalised from some significant aspects of these processes during the development of the Pacific Plan. Using a feminist standpoint framework, the study begins by considering how historical socio-political influences are relevant to contemporary policy development processes. It then focuses on the gendered nature of 2004-2005 Pacific Islands Forum’s public consultation and submission processes for developing the Pacific Plan. The Pacific Islands Forum’s policy of gender mainstreaming is critiqued by considering the way that the policy development processes failed to ensure women’s voices were present at all levels of the process. It defers to the voices of the excluded, and understands them as having an intimate knowledge of why such exclusion occurs.

This thesis builds on existing scholarly work on gender mainstreaming, and gender and policy development and practice. These accounts regularly connect the conceptual chasm between women’s lived experiences as participants in regional and global political environments, and the élite nature of intergovernmental policy-making. The perspectives of those located outside formal political processes generally escape analytical attention, while these studies often chronicle evidence of women’s engagement with political power, or their frequent marginalisation from issue-based politics such as security and economics. This thesis demonstrates that evaluations of women’s marginalisation can provide a more nuanced understanding of the shortfalls in regional policy development processes, and ultimately contribute to meeting international gender equality obligations.
List of Abbreviations

ACFID Australian Council for International Development
ACW ASEAN Committee on Women
ADB Asia Development Bank
ANZAC Pact 1944 Australia–New Zealand Canberra Pact
APCs African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States
ASEAN Association of South East Asian Nations
ASW ASEAN Sub-Committee on Women
BPA Beijing Platform for Action
CARICOM Caribbean Community
CEDAW Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CHR Commission on Human Rights
CPA Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality
CROP Council of Regional Organisations
CSOs Civil Society Organisations
CSW Commission on the Status of Women
DFA Department of Foreign Affairs
ECOSOC General Assembly to the Economic and Social Council
EEC European Economic Community
EPG Eminent Persons Group
EPOC Pacific Operations Centre
ESCAP United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
EU European Union
FAO Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
FEMM Forum Economic Ministers Meetings
FICs Forum Island Countries
FPWRC First Pacific Women’s Regional Conference
FSMed Fiji School of Medicine
FWCfW Fourth World Conference for Women
FWCW The First World Conference on Women
GAD Gender and Development
GII Gender Inequality Index
GPA Global Platform for Action
ICJ International Court of Justice
ICS Import Credit Scheme
INSTRAW International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women
IPR Institute of Pacific Relations
IPU Inter-Parliamentary Union
MDGs  Millennium Development Goals
MOWSWPA  Fijian Ministry of Women, Social Welfare and Poverty Alleviation
NGO  Non-Government Organisation
PACER  Pacific Agreement On Closer Economic Relations
PCRC  Pacific Concerns Resource Centre
PICs  Pacific Island Countries
PICTA  Pacific Island Countries Trade Agreement
PIDP  Pacific Islands Development Programme
PIF  Pacific Islands Forum
PIFFA  Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency
PIFS  Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
PIHRC  Pacific Islands Human Rights Consultation
PILON  Pacific Islands Law Officers’ Network
PIPSO  Pacific Islands Private Sector Organisation
PPA  Pacific Platform for Action on Advancement of Women and Gender Equality
PPA  Pacific Power Association
PPAC  Pacific Plan Action Committee
PPCG  Pacific Plan Core Group
PPTF  Pacific Plan Task Force
PPTF-TOR  Pacific Plan Task Force Terms of Reference
PWB  Pacific Women's Bureau
PWRC  Pacific Women’s Resource Centre
RGASGBV  Reference Group to Address Sexual and Gender Based Violence
RRRT  Regional Rights Resource Team
SGBV  Sexual and Gender Based Violence
SPARTECA  South Pacific Regional Trade and Economic Co-Operation Agreement
SPBEA  South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment
SPBEC  South Pacific Bureau for Economic Cooperation
SPC  Secretariat for the Pacific Community
SPC  South Pacific Commission
SPF  South Pacific Forum
SPNFZ  South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty
SPOCC  South Pacific Organisations Coordinating Committee
SPREP  Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme
SPTO  South Pacific Tourism Organisation
TWNC  Tonga National Women Congress
UN  United Nations
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>UNDAW</td>
<td>United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women</td>
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<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
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<td>UNFWCfW</td>
<td>United Nations First World Conference on Women</td>
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<td>UNIFEM</td>
<td>United Nations Development Fund for Women</td>
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<tr>
<td>UPNG</td>
<td>University of Papua New Guinea</td>
</tr>
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<td>USP</td>
<td>University of the South Pacific</td>
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<td>WAC</td>
<td>Women’s Advisory Committee (Samoa)</td>
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<td>WID</td>
<td>Women in Development</td>
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<td>WIDF</td>
<td>Women’s International Democratic Federation</td>
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<td>WILPF</td>
<td>Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom</td>
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<td>WPA</td>
<td>World Plan of Action</td>
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Aim of the Study

The study focuses on the Pacific Island region, where regional policy-making processes tend to imitate and replicate the historical failings of Pacific domestic state politics in attempts to achieve gender parity in policy development. This study highlights the way that regional processes in the Pacific have denied or severely limited women’s access to, and input into, decision-making processes. A consequence of ignoring the richness of women’s knowledge is that policy outcomes risk disregarding or marginalising the concerns of many women.

The key research question of the thesis is:

What are Pacific women’s experiences of inclusion or exclusion in policy-making processes?

To address this question this study examines a specific recent example of policy development, namely the Pacific Islands Forum’s Pacific Plan for Strengthening Regional Cooperation and Integration (hereafter the ‘Pacific Plan’). In addition to examining contemporary policy-making processes, the study also interrogates the historical context from which the Pacific Plan emerged. Questions directed specifically at this project seek to understand the standpoint of women in the region and consider:

i) How the development processes for the Pacific Plan included or excluded the voices of women, and
ii) How Pacific women believe gender equality could be integrated more effectually into policy-making processes.

It is important to first understand the historical position of women in relation to the emergence of Pacific regionalism because this sheds light on women’s contemporary relationship with regional level policy development. A consideration of the standpoint of women comprises a bottom-up approach. This approach exposes the viewpoints of a socio-political cross section of Pacific Island women in regard to regional planning processes specifically relating to the development of the Pacific Plan. This thesis shows that the development of policy in Pacific regional intergovernmental organisations has been an exclusive practice lacking the added value of female perspectives. It has also been a process of utilising a largely decision-making approach that limits the involvement of women. This thesis seeks to address a gap in Pacific literature by bringing into prominence the perspectives of a broad range of women spanning grassroots, civil society and the bureaucracy. Their diverse perspectives assist in
understanding how and why women remain absent from élite-level policy development processes. More importantly, this study points to the need for a more inclusive approach to be developed by high level intergovernmental agencies such as the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF).

To fully understand gendered approaches to policy development it is critically important to include the invisible or excluded, in this case the politically marginalised women of the region. Analysis of institutional practice or document analyses that centre on end-result policy papers or reports reinforce the exclusive nature of large organisations and their internal processes. Taking an inside approach to research overlooks how less visible factors both shape politics and are subject to it. There is an intrinsic danger that a lack of empathy toward the value of women’s knowledge will lead to it being withheld or alienated due to its form or mode of expression. How women’s knowledge is expressed or passed along community and regional channels needs to be valued and respected by policy-makers, while at the same time, creating opportunities for women to engage with regional processes. The thesis also contributes to theoretical debates on advancing gender equality by applying women’s perspectives to the notion that gender mainstreaming is the only viable solution to the lack of direct representation of women in regional decision-making. It does so by closely examining the gains and losses that gender mainstreaming affords women and considering how state and regional capacity to implement it might benefit from a broadened view of its application.

The thesis therefore begins with an examination of how feminist voice and regionalism have been conceptualised in scholarly literature. The discussion addresses three aspects of the literature. First, I discuss the way feminist scholarship has examined gendered implications for policy-making in regional settings by emphasising how traditional regional power structures constitute a barrier to women’s involvement. I consider how a lack of feminist perspective has rendered gender biases the norm in policy-making processes, and the importance of incorporating gender into initial policy planning and dialogue rather than as an add-on during the secondary processes of planning.

Second, the development of a concept of Pacific feminism is reviewed in terms of how it has evolved and engaged both islander and western women since the early part of the twentieth century. By highlighting the diversity of opinion on the meaning of feminism and its purpose, I show how the emergence of a feminist agenda in the Pacific has similarities and differences to feminism in western contexts. Feminist knowledge in the Pacific relies heavily on personal narratives and symbolism. For example, I draw on Pacific feminist poetry to reveal how women have used an alternate means to voice their opinions on political issues when they are grossly underrepresented in formal politics.
This use of poetry in this thesis is intended as a vehicle for revealing the voices of individual women rather than as representative of any influence this medium has had on policy formulation at a regional level. The public creative voice of women enables a more nuanced and intimate understanding of women’s feelings on issues of power, especially since the historical voice of women has been largely absent in political discourse.

Third, I discuss the evolution of Pacific regionalism through the lens of academic critique that traces the history of the notions of identity and sustainable futures. By identifying gaps in the literature, I consider how a focus on the gendered nature of policy development by feminist scholars extends analysis derived from existing male-centric literature. Although there has been a rise in the amount and diversity of feminist scholarship relating to regional development and policy, there is need to incorporate the experiences of women at the core of policy outcomes – women at grassroots, civil society and those who exist in the marginal positions of élite representation. I contend that the insights of feminist scholars can be extended by applying an ‘outside’ view of policy-making processes. By placing excluded and underrepresented women at the centre of analysis and layering their experiences over institutional processes, women become situated within the process rather than beyond it. As this requires the research to take into account personal viewpoints and reflections on women’s agency in decision-making associated with policy development I take a multilayered approach. I draw on both rigorous academic literature and also honour the value of women’s ‘non-academic’ knowledge by drawing on more unconventional literature such as poetry and stories as a valid articulation of the perceptions and understanding of women.

**Contextualising the Research Aim**

The Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) is a regional, non-sovereign intergovernmental organisation. It was formed in October 1971 by the prime ministers or equivalent office holders of newly independent Pacific Island States (hereafter referred to as ‘the Leaders’) along with the prime ministers of Australia and New Zealand. The Leaders cultivated a view to enhancing cooperation between regional States. It was formed as an alternative to the existing South Pacific Commission (SPC), which was made up of colonial powers, and as such the PIF reflected the changing political landscape of the time.¹ The PIF currently consists of sixteen independent and self-governing member States (see Appendix 1) whose respective leaders meet annually for the PIF Leaders Meeting. Leaders meetings are preceded by the PIF Leaders Retreat where the Leaders

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speak informally about issues and concerns that may be raised at the more formal gathering.

The PIF is supported by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS). The Secretariat has been permanently based in Suva since its conception. It was established in 1972 as a trade bureau and known for some time as the South Pacific Bureau for Economic Co-operation (SPEC). It was officially mandated to ‘facilitate, develop and maintain cooperation and consultation between member governments on economic development, trade, transport, tourism, energy, telecommunications, legal, political, security and such other matters’ under the direction of the Pacific Islands Forum. At this time the role of the Secretary General, who acts as Chair of the Leaders meetings, was established along with its legal status. The role of Secretary General was accorded certain privileges such as immunity from suit and legal process, exemption from most taxes, duties and levies, and the equivalent of diplomatic immunity for the Secretary General and the Deputy Secretary General. PIFS staff who were not Fiji nationals were accorded tax exempted salaries. The subsequent ratification of this agreement by member states signalled a new era in political cooperation in the region.

A later development in 1989 was the addition of a Post-Forum Dialogue where members express their collective views on international issues with selected countries and organisations outside the region. Also, since 1996 a Forum Economic Ministers Meeting (FEMM) has been held prior to the Forum. FEMM have reported on agenda items covering issues of good governance, economic management and structural adjustment, and there has been an ongoing sharing of experiences in economic reform to ‘support coordination of and best practice in the initiation and management of reform processes’. Over subsequent decades of development within the PIFS, there have been numerous partnerships, committees and sub committees formed to attend to issues of relevance to the PIF such as trade, climate change and environmental matters. Current official international partnerships include the Asia Development Bank (ADB), the Pacific Operations Centre (EPOC) as part of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the European Union (EU), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Regional pacific partnerships include University of the South Pacific (USP), South-Pacific Travel (previously the South Pacific Tourism Organisation), South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment

References:
Neither the PIF nor its secretariat have legal jurisdiction over member state activity, however under the mandate of the PIF, the Leaders formulate regional development policy aimed at guiding member states towards a unified stance on development issues, including those related to gender equality. Processes of consultation, policy planning, and final policy formulation are therefore inherently reliant on a shared vision of what a gender equality policy should achieve. PIF member states are diverse in population and geographical size, economy, culture, and political development and this diversity impacts on how perceptions of gender equality are articulated, and also on individual state capacity to address subsequent concerns regarding inequality. Gender equality, or more significantly, the persistent matter of gender inequality, is an issue that resonates far beyond the Oceanic region and therefore the regional approach is tied to international understandings of the concept of equality.

The United Nations First World Conference on Women (UNFWCfW), convened in Mexico in 1975, was a catalyst for reforming gender policy globally. Specific objectives set out within the final declarations of the conference were developed as guiding principles for future national, regional and international development. These objectives were: a) to achieve full gender equality and eliminate gender discrimination; b) the integration and full participation of women in development; and c) an increased contribution by women towards strengthening world peace. New minimum target guidelines for the international community were flagged within the World Plan of Action, which set timeframes for achievement within the 1976-1985 International Decade for Women. Since 1975 contemporary international politics has witnessed a steady rise in the acknowledgment and endorsement of further internationally recognised frameworks for advancing gender equality. At the forefront of these frameworks, in terms of levels of international embrace, sit the United Nations (UN) gender equality and women’s rights mechanisms; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of
_Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)_ (adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly) and associated _Beijing Platform for Action (BPA)_ adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing during 1985.7

Regional intergovernmental organisations including the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the European Union (EU) and the PIF have taken measures to respond to the objectives of the first conference in 1975, and the later Beijing conference in various ways. CARICOM, for example, introduced a Nutrition/Women’s Desk within the CARICOM Secretariat in 1978 as a direct result of lobbying by women’s organisations in the region during the immediate period post-Mexico. The combined nutrition and women’s desk became a dedicated women’s desk in 1980, undertaking regular review meetings with regional Ministers for gender or women’s affairs to monitor gender equality. From 2002, the desk has been located within the CARICOM Programme on Human Resource Development in response to recommendations by the CARICOM heads of Gender/Women’s Bureaux Meeting in September that year.8 The gender desk adopted the BPA and its promotion of a gender mainstreaming strategy as a mandate for the CARICOM Plan of Action which called for the strategy to become a feature of CARICOM institutional culture.9 Similarly, ASEAN held its first Women’s Leaders Conference in the lead up to Mexico and, in 1976 post-Mexico, it established the ASEAN Sub-Committee on Women (ASW). The women’s sub-committee has undergone periodic review and restructuring with its current form being the ASEAN Committee on Women (ACW), established in 2002 that draws on the principles of CEDAW to guide policy development.10

The EU had instituted legislation and policy addressing gender equality prior to the first women’s conference as part of the 1957 Treaty of Rome establishing the European Economic Community (EEC). The Treaty of Rome included Article 119 on equal pay for equal work.11

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develop the equal pay for equal work concept. These included the Equal Pay Directive establishing a link between equal pay and the elimination of discrimination, and the Equal Treatment Directive that broadened the concept even further to include access to employment, professional training, promotion opportunities and conditions of employment.\textsuperscript{12} The EEC then pre-empted the Beijing conference by establishing a Committee on Women’s Rights and Equal Opportunities within the European Parliament in 1984 and a subsequent Equal Opportunities Action Programme between 1982 and 1985.\textsuperscript{13} The EU had been supportive of reform, pushing for inclusion of gender mainstreaming strategies as a principle of the BPA and its subsequent gender action plans were influenced by the outcomes of the Beijing conference.\textsuperscript{14} However, Villagomez\textsuperscript{15} and Holmaat\textsuperscript{16} both argue that the EU had not adequately incorporated CEDAW, the pivotal overarching guiding document of the UN women’s conferences, into its policy foundations. They assert that by failing to explicitly reference it in gender equality law or the EU constitution, the EU had taken a gender insensitive approach to equality policy despite having promoted gender mainstreaming as a key factor in the removal of gender discrimination.

CEDAW was the first of three major gender equality policy documents that guided the PIF in determining how the status of women can be improved in its programs and practices. The PIF responded to the women’s movement of the 1970s and 1980s later than its counterparts at the EU or CARICOM, with the appointment of a Gender Issues Advisor in 1996, followed by the Leaders endorsement of the Forum’s first formal gender policy in 1998.\textsuperscript{17} The policy was a guiding document for improving the culture and practice of the PIF so that gender became a factor to be considered across all aspects of the Forum’s work. One shortfall of the policy was a failure to identify and include a conceptual framework to position the policy goals within. For example, Rees describes three models of gender equality taken by gender policies. The first is ‘equal treatment’ where no individual has fewer human rights or opportunities than any other.\textsuperscript{18} Rees refers to this as ‘tinkering’, which she claims to be ‘roughly equated to liberal approaches to equal treatment (resting on the notion of ‘sameness’).’\textsuperscript{19} A significant

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{14} Ibid. p. 25
  \item \textsuperscript{17} See Appendix 3.
  \item \textsuperscript{19} Ibid. p. 28
\end{itemize}
challenge to this approach is the impact that unequal or discriminatory systems outside an organisation could have on the organisation’s internal function. Hidden patriarchal agendas such as those within the home remain unexposed so that women’s public and private spheres are not taken into consideration. Women remain disadvantaged by this as equal treatment frameworks will only be beneficial to those women whose ‘cultural capital, experiences, family circumstances and share of domestic responsibilities are similar to those of the men of the group’.  

Following the work of Care, who investigated gender inequality in the Pacific, this thesis uses the term ‘patriarchy’ to refer to disparities and inequalities between the lived experiences of women and men. Patriarchy refers to the basic principle of male privilege that underlies the subordination of women to men, which finds common ground throughout the region. Similarly, the use of the term masculine perspective in this thesis is based on Connell’s definition of hegemonic masculinity as the ‘configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees the dominant position of men and the subordination of women’. Patriarchy is an issue of relevance to traditional Pacific societies, and must be understood in relation to colonialism, post-colonialism and westernisation of traditional societies. It is not possible to generalise about a region as diverse as the Pacific where there are many complex social, political and cultural systems, patriarchy can be regarded as an ongoing and dynamic system of inequality. Traditional law throughout the Pacific was, and continues to be, basically repressive and patriarchal. Women are often excluded from leadership roles and major decision-making; they are not able to preside over customary dispute resolution forums, and even in societies that are matrilineal land disputes are often litigated by men. Patriarchal practices are embedded in ceremonies and only men are able to be direct participants of customary ceremonies and allowed to offer sacrifices, or participate in feasting. In some instances, women are excluded from certain ceremonies altogether.

Women are frequently expected to take on subservient roles such as food preparation. They are the providers of goods such as traditional ceremonial garments, baskets, ropes, mats and ornaments. Even though there is an unequal balance of power in as much as men dominate public roles associated with traditional social and customary law, in many Pacific cultures women are still regarded as having high status and the roles of child-bearing, food producing and managing of domestic affairs is

20 Ibid.
23 Ibid.
highly valued. The term is, therefore, used in the theses in the context of how relationships between genders and gender based roles are manifest in practice rather than in law. Colonial systems based on Westminster law, and deference to international human rights instruments, are not overtly exclusionary of women in decision-making. More significantly, it is often the invisible barriers to women’s full participation that characterise western systems. Even where Pacific states have become signatories to instruments such as CEDAW for example, it does not necessarily follow that they comply with its demands. Inequality has been a feature of social, political and cultural lived experiences for women. This is apparent with low levels of female participation in politics, girls’ access to and participation in education, and high levels of domestic violence in the region. The discriminatory nature of western legal systems contributes to the status quo by failing to provide adequate protections for women and girls against physical or psychological violence. Violence is a systemic structural problem that enables legal and constitutional systems to marginalise and silence women, rendering their private concerns invisible and denying the underlying causes of their concerns as public issues. While patriarchy is not exclusive to the Pacific region, it is a key barrier to Pacific women’s equality because it serves to reinforce the assumption that personal troubles are not public issues. Patriarchy is thus a useful way of understanding the embedded social, political and legal systemic problem where women are subordinated by virtue of their sex and where men are not subject to the same barriers. The term patriarchy does not imply or allege that men are not subject to barriers or challenges to full participation in political, social or cultural life; however it is not the purpose of this thesis, or in its scope, to examine the problems of male lived experiences.

The PIF Gender Policy does recognise the diversity of roles within FIC communities under Principle Two: Recognition of the varied and valuable roles played by men and women, and other social groupings, in sustaining traditional and contemporary culture and in contributing to the ongoing positive development of their countries. Principle two takes into account the different impacts of the PIF’s programs on men and women. The policy stops short of identifying how the PIF will achieve gender equality as an organisation however. It specifies that women should be encouraged to participate in Forum events, meetings and decision-making and has

24 Ibid.
26 See discussion on women and political representation on pp. 102-103; girls and education on pp. 105-109, and domestic violence rates on pp. 146-147
27 Corrin-Care, Negotiating the Constitutional Conundrum: Balancing Cultural Identity with Principles of Gender Equality in Post-Colonial South Pacific Societies pp. 51-117. Corrin-Care outlines a number of case studies that demonstrate complex issues where there is an overlapping of customary law with constitutional law.
indicators such as collection of sex-disaggregated data; however there are no specific mandates for women’s participation. For example, Principle Three: Promotion of democratic access to development initiatives promotes ‘equitable participation’ in all PIF programs, and provides a strategy that encourages a ‘balance of qualified men and women’. The notion of equitable participation is insufficient on its own to provide women with any assurance of equality as it relies on the political will of FICs to take steps to fulfil it but there is no avenue of sanction or alternative recourse if they do not.

A second model of gender equality described by Rees is that of ‘positive action/positive discrimination’ where it is recognised that equal treatment can reinforce discrimination and action should be taken to circumvent this by recognising women’s difference from male employees. Rees refers to this approach as ‘tailoring’. Tailoring seeks to integrate women into organisations and cultures structured around the needs of men. Organisations make special provision for the ways in which women are ‘different’ from men. In the positive action model, emphasis is shifted from equality of access to equality of outcomes. Barriers to women’s participation are taken into account, including those of education, training and employment which contribute to women’s possible exclusion from an organisation. The ‘positive action/positive discrimination’ framework seeks to overcome barriers by providing alternate entry pathways or training for women in skills that enable them to succeed within existing structures of the organisation. While this approach may increase numbers of women within organisational hierarchies, it fails to alter the structural status quo that reinforces oppressive systems. The aim is to help women become part of the patriarchal system rather than help the system change to remove patriarchal cultures. The positive discrimination framework goes further than positive action as it acknowledges the existence of passive or active discrimination. Failure to undertake gender monitoring, or to know about the relationship between characteristics such as gender in the distribution of resources, are viewed as passive acts of discrimination. Active discrimination encompasses overt forms of discrimination such as a failure to consider women, officially or unofficially, for specific positions.

The PIF Gender Policy has a strong emphasis on the inclusion of gender analysis and collection of gender disaggregated data methods for programme design, monitoring and evaluation. These are factored across all of the policy principles. While the final principle, Principle Five: Recognition of the importance of modelling best practices and

31 Ibid. p. 28.
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid. p. 27.
*learning from experience* does require that the Secretariat remove any discriminatory practices from its corporate and human resources policies, it does not identify specific strategies to proactively mandate gender equality in the organisation. Changing the wording of policies, providing strategies for gender analysis of existing systems, and monitoring outcomes of current practices does not mean that reform will be achieved. Rees argues that while this model has a focus on ensuring ‘merit’ is a determinant factor for achievement within an organisation it will not alter structural and cultural hierarchies. To do so requires organisations to take specific action to reform values, beliefs and attitudes of management and staff by deepening their understanding of issues surrounding discrimination such as the unequal distribution of power. Gender policy requires the development of a gender desk within the Secretariat and the provision of training materials on gender and policy analysis for staff; however these seem to be for the purpose of helping staff understand how to modify existing policy. Indicators of this include the monitoring process, which is aimed at keeping statistics on how many policies have been reviewed and changed as a result of gender material being available. There is no directive for specific or mandatory use of the materials, or for obligatory gender sensitisation training that could ensure all staff and management are exposed to opportunities for reform.

The third and final model of gender equality described by Rees is mainstreaming equality. This appears to be the closest to the framework adopted by the PIF. Mainstreaming necessitates gender be embedded in all aspects of policy and practice rather than as a stand-alone component. The mainstreaming framework is a transformational one which ‘acknowledges the differences among men as well as those of women, and, by recasting mainstream provision, seeks to accommodate both gender and other dimensions of discriminations’. Theoretically, this is to ensure that gender is considered at every level of decision-making and in every circumstance. The end goal of mainstreaming is the transformation of organisational culture and practice from being exclusive and discriminatory, to being inclusive and non-discriminatory. Gender mainstreaming is a component of this framework alongside other forms of discrimination such as ethnicity, religion and physical ability. The PIF Gender Policy seeks to encourage FICs to increase women’s presence in all programmes and events that are partnered with the PIF, and to embed gender as a cross-cutting issue across all PIF programmes. The policy has a clear intent to improve the status of women in all aspects of PIF work. The challenge is that without including provision for special

34 Ibid. p. 28.
35 Ibid.
36 Ibid. p. 29.
37 Ibid. p. 28.
38 Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, *Gender Policy*, p. 3.
measures such as sanctions to promote a level playing field from which to begin, or specifically outlining how resources will be funded, maintained and guaranteed into the future planning of programmes, there remains no recourse or sanctions for non-compliance, it offers little protection or support to ensure the policy will be successfully implemented.

Following CEDAW and the BPA, the last of the three major policy documents pivotal to the PIF approach to gender equality is a regional agreement on advancing the status of women. The *Pacific Platform for Action on Advancement of Women and Gender Equality (PPA)* is an agreement of Pacific Island governments regarding national, regional and international development policies toward women. It was first developed by the Pacific Women’s Bureau (PWB), a regional organisation representing women within the South Pacific Community, as a major part of regional preparations for the Beijing Conference. At the core of the document is a commitment to preserving Pacific culture through sustainable development and the role of women within that context.\(^\text{39}\) The PPA was endorsed by regional governments in May 1994 via the Noumea Declaration at the Sixth Triennial Conference on Pacific Women.\(^\text{40}\) The Noumea Declaration established the PPA as the region’s plan for the social and economic development of women. It was revised in 2004 at the Ninth Triennial Conference on Pacific Women and is recognised as a guiding document of the PIF Gender Policy.\(^\text{41}\)

These three major documents, CEDAW, the BPA, and the PPA, form the guidelines for domestic policy for Oceanic-based UN member states, and in turn, for regional bodies such as the PIF which is made up of those state’s representatives. However, the agreements forged to honour these documents do not command any legal obligation to implementation. Nor do they necessarily ensure a state’s due process in integrating gender equality into domestic policy. The thesis therefore examines how regional policy utilises these gender focusing frameworks and explores how commitment to them is translated into action. The thesis seeks to understand the gaps between state commitments and outcomes of on-the-ground action.

Oceanic women are among the most underrepresented groups in political bodies globally.\(^\text{42}\) Underrepresentation delivers a double jeopardy situation where women have neither an adequate representative base to promote their concerns, nor are they afforded


\(^{40}\) Ibid.


satisfactory opportunity to bring those concerns to the table independently. Grassroots women are particularly vulnerable to marginalisation in such circumstances as they have the least access to formal processes with few women representing them in political domains who can hear their concerns or act on their behalf. As such, the PIF risk breaching or at least failing to deliver on international commitments they have made to gender equality under CEDAW, the BPA, and the PPA. The use of decision-making methodologies for policy development creates a culture of exclusivity in policy development processes. This research therefore takes into account officially endorsed commitments that indicate a collective commitment to upholding particular standards of inclusiveness in regional politics.

Understanding the standpoint of oppressed groups creates advantages for understanding the predominant reality of the majority of society. Harding argues that that standpoint theories ‘map’ the way in which social and political disadvantage can be reoriented to become epistemological, social and political advantages.43 Through the processes of generating new knowledge that has been previously hidden or invisible standpoint theory enables issues of social justice to be more effectively understood. The contributions of feminist standpoint theory to policy development can be understood as reorienting the status of the oppressed from victim of gender bias to that which valorises the oppressed position as ‘understanding and changing her relationships with the world’.44 Such a shift permits a more inclusive and comprehensive approach to policy-making which in turn highlights the point of difference between the oppressed and the dominant groups, in this case urban, élite, western or bureaucratic standpoints of government representatives.45 While not all marginalised people in Oceania would wish to be classified as ‘oppressed’, parallels are applicable when one considers the hierarchical nature of decision-making processes which favour educated, urban élites with direct access to bureaucratic or political processes over others with little or no access. The argument relies on the idea that élite ruling classes are class insensitive, whereas oppressed classes have a more historically accurate interpretation of conditions that include an understanding of ruling classes. The standpoint of the oppressed

45 Throughout the Pacific region there are distinct class differences that delineate particular levels of education, social status, and/or birth-right. An ‘élite’ refers to those who have had the benefit of a western style education and a high degree of contact with urban lifestyles, and are holding positions with some degree of power attached, as opposed to those who have limited education and live in more traditional village environments. The term ‘élite’ is commonly used in the Pacific and although does not necessarily only refer to determinates of class or status it can take on those meanings in particular contexts. While in this thesis the term is not intended as a gendered one, in some contexts this might be the case due to gendered systems of political and social structures that have created barriers to women’s education or wealth accumulation for example. In many Pacific contexts however, such as in dialogue with grassroots women during my fieldwork, ‘élite’ is a term applied equally to both men and women.
therefore ‘includes and is able to explain the standpoint of the ruling class’.\textsuperscript{46} For this reason, I argue that to avoid the risk of failure to meet international obligations, a bottom-up standpoint approach to policy development is a more appropriate model.

The concept of international obligation is both legalistic and a question of the political will of governments to uphold moral and ethical values espoused by the State. The PIF States have become signatories to a growing assortment of international agreements including arms control, trade, human rights and the environment (see Appendix 4). Consequences for non-compliance range from diplomatic fallouts and sanctions to being brought before the International Court of Justice (ICJ). The ICJ acts as a world court. The Court has a dual jurisdiction: it decides, in accordance with international law, disputes of a legal nature that are submitted to it by States (jurisdiction in contentious cases); and it gives advisory opinions on legal questions at the request of the organs of the United Nations or specialised agencies authorised to make such a request (advisory jurisdiction). According to Ragazzi, there are three pillars of obligation: first, the purpose of the obligation being to protect the community interest; second, an obligation is owed to the community of states; and finally, that all states have a legal interest in their protection. The relationship between obligation and responsibility in the area of gender equality is closely tied to the objective of the thesis to understand how women’s perspectives might be more effectively integrated into the development process for building regional inter-governmental policy. In doing so, it considers specific or implied obligations that accompany agreements such as the Pacific Plan legally, ethically and morally. The bottom-up model is therefore inherently more inclusive and representative in societies where decision-making models remain the domain of the élite. This is particularly so in the case of women’s inclusion given that women are underrepresented at élite levels. Even when some women are present in élite levels of decision-making, or appointed to advisory roles, Penelope Schoeffel’s research revealed how Pacific rural women have been sceptical of levels of commitment shown for women’s concerns when there is no grassroots direct access to processes.\textsuperscript{47}

The thesis illuminates the gaps between élite representation and principles of participatory democratic practice – it does not intend to argue that hierarchical systems necessarily will or should fail, but rather to bring into focus those areas that might be more adequately addressed. It scrutinises processes of development including access and contributions to regional level policy-making by ‘grassroots’ citizens, taking as a case in


point, the Pacific Plan endorsed by PIF leaders in November 2005. It explores the ways that development and planning of regional policy becomes an exclusive process where power to influence policy direction belongs to predominately male, regional élites. The research takes as its reference points the gendered nature of political systems in the Pacific region, and in particular, the gradual adoption by the PIF over the past decade of what I contend are gender-neutral processes which do not necessarily assist in highlighting gender biases, rather than gender-sensitive processes which act to overcome gender bias in regard to policy development.

The trend towards gender mainstreaming incorporates gender into the policy-making process in a way that has, at times, been shown to marginalise women’s voices. Gender sensitive processes intentionally highlight women’s perspectives in an attempt to move towards equality – to enable women’s perspectives to be considered in greater detail where they may have been absent in previous policy-making processes. The objective is to consciously create a balanced approach where one does not exist under usual processes. Examining the processes and success of each of these frameworks in regional policy-making contexts is important because of the current imbalance of gender representation at élite decision-making levels. Avenues for gendered perspectives to be fully represented in regional policy-making processes are severely limited.

The thesis uses feminist standpoint to understand the exclusionary nature of regional politics and policy development. The value of feminist standpoint as a framework for analysis is that it enables gendered processes that perpetuate women’s marginalisation from policy-making processes to be made visible. The Oceanic region, excluding Australia and New Zealand, has had consistently low parliamentary representation, with only 4.2 per cent of seats held by women in recent times, with no women leaders of State. Women’s voices are therefore visibly absent at the PIF Leader’s meetings, the most élite level of decision-making for regional policy. In lieu of women’s direct representation, domestic governments must demonstrate high levels of political will to implement gender sensitive policies. Consideration of low levels of representation raises the question of how States that do not comply with PIF gender

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49 See the discussion in Chapter Three: *Gender Mainstreaming as a Strategy for Gender Equality* for a more detailed discussion on gender mainstreaming in regard to the Pacific context pp. 111-113.

equality commitments, such as CEDAW, BPA and the PPA, can be encouraged to do so, and if there is a need for the PIF to develop a process of legal accountability in this area.

**Conceptual Framework**

This study includes perspectives of women from multiple geographical locations, and diverse social and political positions within the Pacific region. It adopts a conceptual framework that emerges from feminist standpoint theory to emphasise the importance of acknowledging and including such diversity. Feminist standpoint theories challenge the idea that there can be any single, legitimate, scientific model that effectively explains human experiences. Acknowledging the multiple ways that women have experienced the regional policy development process of the Pacific Plan is essential to clarifying the research question, which seeks to highlight Pacific women’s experiences of inclusion or exclusion in policy-making processes.

The experience of the process differs for those involved directly or indirectly, to those excluded from it. Different perspectives are shaped by women’s epistemic understandings of how and why they were impacted by the process. For many of the women represented in this thesis the impact involved struggle. In some instances, the struggle was obvious, and directly related to the policy drafting process. Those women who were clearly in the public domain engaged in public discourse where they called for wider inclusion of women’s perspectives in the process. For example Hilda Lini, Director of the Pacific Concerns Resource Centre, was highly critical of a failure to include women in an early review process prior to the Pacific Plan being developed.\(^5\) The Fijian Ministry of Women, Social Welfare and Poverty Alleviation also acknowledged women’s marginalisation from the process, and actively fought to increase women’s perspectives in the drafting process.\(^2\)

For others, the struggle was less obvious as they were either not aware of the process being undertaken, or not in a position to participate in the broad public discourse. For them the struggle was an indirect one. Their location provides an important standpoint from which to consider the question of how women experience inclusion or exclusion. For example, grassroots women I spoke to during fieldwork agreed that steps should be taken to improve communication between government and grassroots people about opportunities for engaging in public policy-making processes.\(^3\) As outlined in the discussion on political representation in Chapter Three, throughout the Pacific region women struggle to be included in democratic processes of decision-making. A lack of representation diminishes the facility of women to present their

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\(^5\) See Chapter Four, p. 126.
\(^2\) Ibid. pp. 138-139.
\(^3\) Ibid. pp. 164-165.
concerns directly to policy-makers and influence political agendas.\(^5^4\) Pacific women also have varied experiences of negotiating social, cultural and legal barriers to addressing concerns such as domestic violence, equal access to education, or challenging the status quo of authority.\(^5^5\) Their experience of policy-making inclusion or exclusion is therefore a situated one that varies across the multiple locations that women occupy.

Feminist Standpoint theory aims to provide a critical understanding of reality by taking the standpoint of women.\(^5^6\) The following section explains the basic principles of standpoint theory by briefly examining the theories of Hegel and Marx from which feminist standpoint theories were developed. It draws primarily on Nancy Hartsock’s work and argues for the significance of recognising the standpoint of women, both in a collective sense of women’s shared experiences and at an individual level. This is a particularly relevant point of reference for critiquing Pacific policy development process, because most women in the Pacific experience policy development as an outcome of the decision-making processes of others, rather than as participants in the process. Susan Heckman argued that, although the pretext for standpoint theory has been subject to critical interrogation by some feminists who regarded it as dated and a ‘quaint relic’ of early feminism, it has, at its foundation, the objective of justifying claims of women’s oppression.\(^5^7\) The theory was originally based on two mantles: first, that all knowledge is located and situated, and second, that the location of women provides a vantage point for revealing social reality truths. The latter considers ‘truths’ derived from women’s perspectives as being privileged in terms of their position as oppressed citizens who have knowledge of society not held by those who dominate it.\(^5^8\)

Standpoint theory has its roots in Hegel’s classic dialectic of master/slave, and subsequently in Marxist belief that the proletariat standpoint is a superior epistemic position from which to understand and change the capitalist system.\(^5^9\) Hegel argued that through the realisation of self-consciousness the oppressed can attain a state of freedom.\(^6^0\) The act of self-conscious awareness demands a sense of self as subject, rather than object, suggesting that the self-conscious being has the capacity to exercise power and influence over the world they inhabit. This is the critical point of Hegel’s

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\(^5^4\) See Chapter Three pp. 105-111.
\(^5^5\) See Chapter Five pp. 158-167.
\(^5^8\) Ibid.
\(^6^0\) Ibid.
master/slave dialectic. The metaphysical dimension of a self-conscious understanding of one’s own position as a member of the oppressed group (the slave/the marginalised) engenders a state of ‘freedom’. A sense of freedom is enabled through the capacity to participate, willingly or otherwise, in oppressed/oppressor relationships. Even when the relationship is forced as in that between slave and master, engagement with the relationship has consequences for the inhabited world.

Marx subsequently argued that the proletariat’s standpoint offers the most legitimate position to observe and critique reality and following Hartsock it is these standpoints that ‘offer possibilities for more human-friendly and freedom-friendly projects’. There is a potential for groups of people to move beyond their oppression and use their creative forces to better their position. For Hartsock the implication of this is that some knowledge has ‘better’ potential for political action than others. Here, she draws on Chela Sandoval’s notion of ‘oppositional consciousness’ to explore the idea of how the situated knowledge of the oppressed leads to ‘resistant, oppositional, and collective subjects’. Sandoval holds that oppositional consciousness seeks to equalise power relations between individuals and groups. As a response to various structures and exercises of power, it can have many forms. Sandoval’s theories of power relations approximate Marx’s argument that, when awareness of oppression leads to consciousness-raising through analysis of events and political struggle over time, the end goal is a liberated, more equal society. Although Marx was concerned with the standpoints of the ‘worker’, ‘non-worker’, and ‘middle class’, the epistemological significance has particular resonance for feminist standpoint theories. There are five claims to standpoint present in Marx’s account of the production and extraction of surplus value, which Hartsock draws on to develop feminist standpoint theory. However, the most significant element of her line of argument is that women are continuously immersed as producers of commodities and of human beings. Women’s labour is

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63 Ibid. p. 410.
compounded because of their multiple production roles, and their standpoint is thus vastly different in structure, lived experience and knowledge to that of men.

Sandra Harding also argues that women’s standpoint is an important starting point for thinking about the world from the perspective of marginalised groups. Women’s standpoint brings to light critical questions that are not raised by the dominant group. Harding stresses that an integral component of feminist standpoint is the way that it provides a vehicle for thought arising from contradictory social positions:

the subject/agent of feminist knowledge is multiple, heterogeneous, and frequently contradictory or incoherent, not unitary, homogenous, and coherent as they are for empiricist epistemology. Feminist knowledge has started off from women’s lives, but it has started off from many different women’s lives; there is no typical or essential woman’s life from which feminisms start their thought…

Feminist standpoint thus serves to expand the conventional boundaries that assume the possibility of neutral and objective power/knowledge relationships and has become significant in many fields or disciplines. In regard to public policy, Harding argues that traditional conceptual frameworks used for analysis are both socially situated, and ‘complicitous with sexist and androcentric agendas of public institutions’. Such approaches are counter to the needs and desires of women and ensure ‘systematic ignorance and error about not only the lives of the oppressed, but also the lives of the oppressor’. Overcoming these boundaries is necessary to the establishment of public policy that avoids serving the needs and desires of a narrow few.

**Gender Mainstreaming**

Previously I have argued that a gender mainstreaming framework was adopted by the PIF. Gender mainstreaming has long been contested and multiple understandings of the term have emerged since its origins in the 1970s. Over time, these understandings have shifted depending on contexts for use, and as a response to concerns over women’s exclusion from policy and development. In spite of these shifts, there has been a

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67 Ibid. p. 41.
69 Ibid. p. 134.
71 Ibid. p. 5
72 Ibid.
73 See pp. 10-11, this chapter.
relatively consistent approach to the practice of mainstreaming gender across policy making. Sylvia Walby argues that gender mainstreaming, as a form of theory, is a ‘process of revision of key concepts to grasp more adequately a world that is gendered’ and, in light of that, it is not a ‘separatist’ gender theory.75

Gender mainstreaming, as a concept and strategy, emerged out of Women in Development (WID) and later Gender and Development (GAD) approaches to improving women’s material conditions to become a more far reaching practice in broader policy development processes. During the 1970s increasing awareness of the breadth and depth of discrimination against women resulted in previously unparalleled attention to women’s roles in development processes. New efforts to gather and analyse data on women’s roles in the labour force exposed disturbing confirmation that women’s work was immensely undercounted. Specifically, empirical evidence revealed in Ester Boserup’s Women’s Role in Economic Development in 1970 showed how, in developing nations, women’s roles were both reproductive and productive.76 Boserup’s study was the first to systematically study women’s role in the developmental process. She argued that women’s work in development had previously been misrepresented due to embedded stereotypes of gender roles, which served to undervalue the importance of women’s work. In doing so, she brought scholarly attention to the ‘differential impact’ of gendered roles on development by analysing changes in traditional agricultural practices that occurred during processes of modernisation.77 Boserup concluded that women in sparsely populated regions that practise shifting agriculture, often worked longer hours than men producing domestic and cash crops, and fulfilling reproductive roles. Where populations were denser, and where there was a higher use of technologies such as ploughs, men were likely to undertake more work than women. Work was more evenly distributed in areas of intensive, irrigation based cultivation. Boserup’s study was later subject to criticism for being somewhat oversimplified.78

Regardless of criticisms, the study was a seminal contribution toward focusing scholarly attention on the sexual divisions of labour. Irene Tinker credited Boserup’s

work as a ‘fundamental text for the United Nations Decade for Women’. Others claimed it set in motion the WID momentum. To respond to issues emerging from a heightened awareness of gender impacts on development and women’s inequality, the United Nations designated the period from 1976-1985 the International Decade for Women. Central to the Decade for Women were two World Conferences on Women held in Mexico City and Copenhagen. The first of these, the 1975 Mexico conference provided unprecedented opportunity for women to network on a global scale, and has thus been credited as the beginning of a global women’s movement for change. While subsequent conferences influenced the direction of development planning for women, it was the Mexico conference where the Decade for Women was inaugurated. During this decade, the WID movement made a number of inroads into compelling organisations and agencies to recognise the gendered differences in regard to participation in, and benefits of, development processes.

Prior to Boserup’s research, advocacy for women’s rights had been viewed as a worthy cause and in line with international human rights. However, it was the location of data that placed women’s equality in the development discourse that brought about changes to data collection that could inform policy development. For example, the Gender-Related Development Index compared countries based on quality of life indicators, and the Gender Empowerment Measure evaluated women’s power in terms of their share of national income and labour force participation. WID was based on a liberal feminist framework and stressed the incorporation of women into market economies through development programmes that focused on women. Known as the ‘efficiency approach’, the strategy did not directly challenge the dominant paradigm, however, it was successful in terms of generating new research.

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The collection of sex-disaggregated data, that documented discrimination against women, was an important step in expanding existing knowledge bases. Moser argues that international development organisations and UN entities changed their frameworks for understanding development. They developed a methodology to identify women’s exclusion from development, and many began the process of establishing WID advisors or units within organisational structures to both conduct research and develop guidelines on how to integrate women into the development process. In the late 1970s, there was a conceptual shift from a focus on discrimination, to a focus on equality. This enabled a more cohesive approach to awareness-raising and set the groundwork for the introduction of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the first treaty to appropriate the lessons of the women’s rights movement. The treaty laid foundations for developing a human rights language for women. It included private acts in the definition of discrimination, and addressed explicit prejudices, customary practices, and stereotyped roles of men and women as targets for elimination by state parties. However, by the mid-1970s and into the 1980s, the WID framework came under critique from women in the Global South. Post-colonial critique posited that WID, as a northern-defined movement, failed to take into account the ‘complex, diverse, and multi-layered realities of Third World women’. At the Mexico conference it became clear that the needs of women in the south were not being met by the WID framework, and women called for a total transformation of traditional social structure and development paradigms.

The WID framework was eventually replaced with a GAD framework as an alternative to the problematic narrowness of the WID one. In 1989 Carolyn Moser argued that the concentrated focus on women, as opposed to gender had broader implications for development. The incorporation of a gender aware approach to policy planning could allow for the stereotyped roles of men and women to be challenged rather than a women-focused approach which she viewed as insensitive to complex

84 Beetham and Demetriades, Feminist research methodologies and development: overview and practical application p. 201.
85 Moser, Gender planning and Development: Theory, Practice and Training.
86 See this chapter, pp. 5-9 for discussion on CEDAW and later UN strategies for addressing discrimination against women, in particular the pivotal role of the 1995 Beijing conference.
realities of women’s lives.\textsuperscript{90} Moser recognised a triple burden for women of work that includes not only reproductive and productive work as previously considered, but that also includes community managing in both urban and rural settings.\textsuperscript{91} She advocated a deeper model of planning, using strategies that focused on gender roles and relations as structural causes of inequality.

The GAD framework became site for social change within development organisations by shifting the discourse on equality and women’s rights. At the core of such change was the call to move away from the integration of women in existing structures towards fundamental changes to power structures and gender relations that mainstreamed a gender perspective throughout policy agendas. This meant that policy impacts on both men and women would be taken into consideration at every stage of a development process.\textsuperscript{92} Chant and Gutmann hold that the term ‘gender perspective’ is of critical importance. There is a transformative element in its meaning which they state is a ‘form of seeing, thinking about, and doing development’ which moved away from what they term ‘frequently bland efforts implied by labels such as 'gender component' or 'gender dimension'.\textsuperscript{93} Gender mainstreaming does not have one universal understanding of meaning however. For example, in 1997 the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECSOC) defined it as:

the process of assessing the implication for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and valuation of policies and programmes in all political, economic, and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetrated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.\textsuperscript{94}

Mainstreaming gender in some contexts has been co-opted for use where measurable outcomes of equality are the aim, or where there is a focus on the use of tools such as gender analysis rather than as a theoretical underpinning of all areas of policy development and practice.\textsuperscript{95} The result is a highly negotiated application of meaning as

\textsuperscript{90} Moser, \textit{Gender planning in the third world: Meeting practical and strategic gender needs}, p. 1800.
\textsuperscript{91} Ibid. p. 1801.
\textsuperscript{95} Prugl and Lustgarten, \textit{Mainstreaming Gender in International Organisations}, pp. 55-56.
well as a negotiated approach to setting the focus of activities, styles of intervention, types of resources made available, and criteria for evaluation.\textsuperscript{96}

The UN conferences therefore enabled women to collectively identify pressing issues, and provided forums for information sharing with attendance increasing with each gathering. They were viewed as having been ‘key monuments in the founding of women and development… they played a crucial role in mobilising women internationally’\textsuperscript{97}. Importantly though, they paved the way for the debates that led to the introduction of gender mainstreaming as a transformative strategy for development policy and planning. In the period since, the introduction of GAD international approaches to using the framework have seen gender mainstreaming become widely accepted policy practice across broader areas of interest. It is in this context that I draw on gender mainstreaming debates and literature throughout the thesis to understand the complex nature of women’s engagement with the development processes of regional policy-making in the Pacific, and more specifically within the processes for developing the Pacific Plan.

\textit{Methodology: Reflections and Reflexive Understandings of the Research Process}

The feminist standpoint methodology adopted for this thesis positions individual Pacific people as subjects of regional policy, in particular those who are most marginal, located at the peripheries, and who bear the impact of policy decisions as the central focus of analysis rather than the institution or organisation that develops or implements the policy. The importance of developing a gendered analysis that incorporates a feminist perspective is imperative when consideration is given to how inequality impacts, for example, on issues of human rights abuses or security, and how these, in turn, contribute to ongoing injustices and the creation of conflict.\textsuperscript{98}

Another significance of a feminist standpoint approach to a study of Pacific regional policy development is that it enables the incorporation of women’s stories into academic settings. Doing so presents an opportunity to redress the gendered narrative of the lives of Pacific women through the creation of a ‘feminist paradigm’. A feminist paradigm counterbalances dominant knowledge paradigms to illuminate the gendered divisions of society. It informs the key questions of a study from the specific points of

\textsuperscript{96} Ibid. p. 56.
view of women. While the study does not claim to be, or take as its central focus, a rewriting of Pacific history, it does attempt to invoke women’s voices in both the historical and contemporary accounts of how policy has been constructed over the past half century, thus providing a reinterpretation that has balance. It does so by calling on the direct voice of Pacific Island women through their poetry and the inclusion of feminist literature. It brings to the fore women’s opinions and perceptions using first-hand accounts through primary interviews and questionnaires. The use of poetry has been included as a way of extracting from the public discourse some of the concerns that women have spoken about in relation to their personal understandings of gender and power, and the status of women in the Pacific. In doing so I do not intend this inclusion as presenting any claim to a universal truth in terms of women’s perceptions or experiences, rather it provides a snapshot of how some women, some of time, in some locations, perceived their positions of power or subjugation, and in some instances how they perceived the positions of other women to be. It also reveals women’s perspectives of the public processes of consultation and submissions on the draft Pacific Plan through a textual analysis of relative documents.

The third, significant aspect of feminist standpoint methodology, is that it enables an articulation of my situated location within the research process. Walter argues that this is an important element of social research because it recognises how the position of the researcher impacts the way the research process is undertaken. A reflexive approach to the research process is in keeping with a standpoint methodology because it enables examination of how my positionality affects, or alters, the processes of collection, and interpretation, of the data. Doing so subsequently brings to the fore the limitations that are imposed on the research process due to my geographical, social, and gendered status. Reflexivity is a notion that has been understood in a number of different ways, resulting in a methodology that has multiple meanings ascribed to it. For example, it has been adopted by some scholars as a primary methodology for research that focuses on autoethnography and

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100 See Data Collection, Interpretation and Analysis, this chapter, p. 36.
103 Lynch 2000. 'Against reflexivity as an academic virtue and source of privileged knowledge', Theory, Culture and Society, Iss. 17. pp. 26-54.
autobiography, while for others it is more of a procedural approach to the evaluation of data, where the researcher checks for subjective bias.

For this study, I regard the role of standpoint reflexivity as involving a level of critical scrutiny that is applied in multiple ways. Standpoint reflexivity is a variant of reflexive methodology which places emphasis on ‘gendered, racial and cultural standpoints that provide the researcher with existential conditions for reflexive critiques of dominant discourses’. I take a reflexive approach to my own location in the research process, particularly in acknowledging my status as a female, Australian researcher within the Pacific region. However, I also apply a reflexive approach to evaluating texts that inform the historical precursors to Pacific regionalism, and texts of the Pacific Plan development process in particular, from the standpoint of Pacific women. In doing so I am able to reflect on, and interpret, the voices of women who have engaged with the processes of regional policy-making directly and indirectly. Reflexive feminist researchers, such as Etherington and Letherby, argue that when the interactions between the researcher and researched are acknowledged and exposed, the research can be better understood and researcher’s interpretations validated by the reader.

As a feminist researcher, my concern is not a distanced or remote interest in the subject matter of Pacific Island women. I am subject to the ramifications of any regional policy and therefore have a vested interest in how and why policy is developed. However, my Australian status imposes boundaries on both my world view and my more intimate cultural sensitivities towards the impact of regional policy-making processes. By calling on a variety of sources from a broad range of texts and combining these with inside and outside personal accounts from Pacific women, I seek to build on the theoretical idea of inside and outside standpoints providing a rich tapestry of women’s knowledge. I therefore counter my own situated history as an Australian woman and the limitations of my epistemology by locating myself as an outside observer, albeit one who also has a stake in the region’s policy outcomes as a citizen of a PIF member state, and as a friend of the women whose voices permeate the thesis from inside, the less developed island states of the PIF. The thesis is thus premised on an understanding that it is inherently impacted by self-reflexive identification of

insider/outsider. There is a vexed relationship between my situated position as an insider who is from the region, and outsider not directly located in the geographical area of the Pacific Islands.

Historical influences over regional development, women’s status in the region, and States progress toward meeting goals for gender equality under regional and international agreements, inherently shape my personal relationship with Pacific women. It places me in the position of being both an academic critic of policy and an advocate for changes to policy-making processes. Australian colonial influence, discussed in more detail in the following chapter, impacted on the willingness of some Pacific women to trust and collaborate with me during the course of the research. This had some ramifications for the planning and execution of some field research and it speaks to the very heart of the diverse nature of women’s perspectives and experiences in the region. Connections to local communities and the location of self within the research is an important cultural consideration for many Pacific Islanders. As an Australian woman conducting research in the Pacific, where a long history of colonialism has affected current perceptions of western intervention, I was particularly aware that the process of building trust and understanding of the research project was an essential component of the fieldwork. I was able to counter this somewhat as my own background included five years of networking with Pacific scholars and women’s organisations with a focus on gender issues. I was therefore already known to women’s groups in a number of Pacific countries. This was an important point of reference for many women I approached. From 2004-2008, I was secretary of the Pacific Island Political Studies Association, first at regional level and second at Queensland branch level. This role enabled me to meet and network with regional colleagues and to form many friendships with women and men from a wide range of Pacific countries and cultural backgrounds.

When making contact for fieldwork, my interpersonal relationships with Pacific Islanders, as well as friends and colleagues in academia who had already completed work or study in the region, were gateways to conversations regarding my research. For the women I wished to speak to directly, these personal relationships were viewed as living references; trust and credibility were built on the foundations of who I was, who I knew and why I knew them, and less on the research topic or its theoretical background. Research for this study included two trips to Fiji and one each to New Caledonia, Tonga and Vanuatu over a three year period and totalling three months in duration. For the most part, the challenges to field research were not sufficient to hold up the research progress. In some instances, my requests for collaboration with women or organisations were disregarded when made from the distance of location in Brisbane, Australia, and new avenues had to be explored. The field research in-country allowed a more personal approach and this proved a more successful, although a more ad hoc, method of contact.
The relationships between potential participants and/or their domestic political circumstances reshaped my research agenda more significantly than my relationship with Pacific women or my location however. In the initial stages of planning, and putting out calls to women who I envisaged might be interested in participating in the research project, there was a decided reluctance on the part of some of those contacted to be involved in my preferred format of small group discussion. I was advised by women from many different locations to abandon this method of data collection for women in the bureaucratic, civil society and non-government organisation (NGO) sectors. In some instances, this was because women were stretched to find time for researchers due to their own heavy community and work commitments or locations, but it was also due to limited resources they could call on to regain any perceived ‘lost’ time. For women working in the civil society sector, resources for travel or time away from work for meetings not deemed critical to the running of their respective organisations was difficult.

There were also competing views on feminism within the diverse locations of the region due to differing cultural and social understandings of the term, and between individuals that I approached. Some women indicated this would leave themselves or others feeling unable to speak openly in a group situation. This seemed to be due to some women’s status in the community, or their level of education and how that affected their confidence, although there was a resistance to speaking to me in any depth about this. Further to these concerns, there were differing levels of social constraints on speaking out in what was seen to be a public context. This resulted in an unwillingness to participate without complete confidentiality and anonymity being assured. Huffer argues that while women’s reluctance to speak out is often misinterpreted as a result of cultural constraints on women’s involvement in what are perceived to be political affairs, a more pressing issue is the view that women’s silence and absence has become so normalised in some societies that gaining family support and understanding is severely hampered. Participation in a study that was framed within a political discipline was a barrier for some women. To illustrate the gravity of these concerns one example is my contact with a woman who held a respected position in civil society. Her aspirations to work for increased gender equality went against her husband’s perceptions of what a ‘good wife’ should be focused on. When I met with her outside her home country she informed me that she had previously been beaten and ostracised by family members for what were considered to be non-traditional behaviours and that she held a high expectation of this recurring in the future. This woman had been identified as a

potential leader in her community by political mentors in Australia, and subsequently mentored by other women in politics in the region, but the sad reality remained that she could not have an openly dissenting voice advocating for increased gender equality without brutal repercussions. In order to protect the woman involved in this example, I cannot reveal the workshops she attended, but as a co-facilitator of the event I can state there was a grave concern on the part of organisers that her safety would be compromised by her attendance at the workshops, a fact not established until after the event when she revealed her circumstances. This example speaks to the determination and courage of women to make sacrifices for the benefit of future generations of women in the Pacific.

The example above is not untypical of the reasons why, in this study, individual participants have their identities obscured, although I argue that to ignore their voices because of this constraint would be to replicate the failings of conventional methodologies. Their anonymity within the research is for the personal protection of participants only and does not reflect reluctance on their part to speak out. Moreover, it reflects my reluctance to place any participant at risk of danger or repercussions while valuing their voice and opinions. I was also very receptive to the advice being offered to me by participants or potential participants given my need to engage with women’s own experiences of local and regional barriers to gender equality. I subsequently employed a flexible approach to planning, although I found some of the issues challenging as I mapped my research plan. For example, in relation to insights into grassroots women’s experiences discussed in Chapter Five, the stories of women require the identity of the research participants to be protected because, in some circumstances, revealing identities could place the participants at risk of violent repercussions. I have also withheld the precise dates of interview as these could provide identifying markers. I include their stories as a way of honouring women who are often the most excluded; those for whom raising a public voice might be difficult, cause undue anxiety, or even retribution. Some of these issues did not become apparent until I was immersed in my field visits where women disclosed the problems they might face if they were to participate even though they felt it to be a disappointing position for them. The concerns they raised varied from family anger at their public disclosure of ‘private business’, fears that local project funding may be affected by women speaking out critically about development policy, and two women were worried that it might increase the risk they faced of being subject to gender based violence.

The women all agreed that the thesis project would be enriched if their experiences were included and gave me permission to do so if their identities were

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withheld. The Pacific region endures high levels of violence against women, particularly violence perpetrated by partners against their wives, and this has been a major factor in my decision to use anonymous sources. Regardless of the anecdotal nature of the stories I have included, it is important to bring these stories out from the silent margins to illustrate the hidden forms of oppression that women endure at both public and private levels. It is the very fact that there is a need to protect women that renders these stories critical to the aims of feminist research. The decision to include these stories created a dilemma: by identifying other women who did not hold those concerns, there was a risk that a process of elimination would identify their location. In the Pacific where communities are often small and women are known well within their communities, this could be problematic. To overcome this all participants in small group discussions identities and their respective locations have been withheld.

On the other hand, there were women comfortable with the prospect of speaking publicly and openly being identified, while others were comfortable with the format of the small group discussion. These proved to be women located at opposite ends of the political hierarchy. Some women located in elite positions, in particular those embedded in national politics at representative or bureaucratic levels past or present, had no issues with public identification and yet others found this to be a compromising situation and preferred to remain anonymous. Other women came forward from the most marginalised locations of the grassroots community sector where they had experienced little education and were of low socio-economic status. These participants embraced the opportunity to participate in group discussions but were not comfortable with identification. For some, this was based on social oppression where family or personal relationships would become tense if they were seen to be speaking out publicly, as noted above.

Those with the highest levels of concern were located among middle-class, educated urban women with access to some level of economic prosperity. I found this particularly to be the case in Fiji. Although, while undertaking fieldwork in Suva, I was not refused communication with anyone I approached, the underlying tensions of the political landscape presented their own challenges for women. Fiji has remained under rule of a military dictatorship since a coup in 2006. Women in Fiji, who choose to speak out publicly against the loss of democratic process, have been subject to harassment both through direct personal threats and via the abuse of ‘laws and legal process, threats and deportation’. This created a tension that permeated my research experience since some women were guarded in their contact with me despite my research topic being unrelated to the Fijian national context. Having been subject to the scrutiny of military rule, and witnessing a number of women suffering repercussions for speaking out

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publicly on political issues, some women were reluctant to draw attention to their position by being seen to speak out. One concern voiced was that although the study was unrelated to domestic politics, individuals who worked in positions where cooperation with government was critical to their organisational objectives due to funding or other access to resources had to be particularly careful to manage civil society-governmental relations so as not to jeopardise the services they provided in the community.

Not unlike the trepidations of individual women who feared personal retributions, some organisations had to prioritise their own position in a way that was limiting for the research project. This was due to fears they may be targeted unfairly for voicing their concerns. In these instances, I have included data in the study that could be identified; however, in some circumstances data from personal conversations with organisation representatives is included in an anonymous capacity to protect both the organisations and the individual. The point of difference between this decision and that of including anonymous personal accounts lies in my understanding that the nature of work undertaken by local Pacific women’s organisations could render them easily identifiable. I felt it would be difficult to include data from organisations working in the area of policy development or gender equality that did not want to be identified without risk of revealing them though the data itself, or identifying others through a process of elimination, if others were identified. This had little overall impact on the study as much of the data required from civil society was on the public record in the way of published reports or conference proceedings, or available in other archived materials. It may have had some impact on the capacity of the research to incorporate some civil society reflections on post policy development issues, although these are not the major focus of this study.

Taking into account the advice I received from individual women and women’s organisations, I reorganised interactions during my field research so that I could approach and speak to women individually, thus negating the concerns of confidentiality and allowing women to suggest times and dates that placed less pressure on their time and resources. I have also chosen to include perspectives of women who were approached informally rather than through formal interview processes or small group discussions. In these instances, while the women involved were informed of the purpose of the conversations, a decision was made not to conduct formal questionnaires or a semi-structured interview due to limited timeframes for meetings. I was fortunate during field visits to meet some women without prior appointments when unexpected opportunities arose. Those women whose perspectives have been included were happy to provide some comments; however, there was not sufficient time or opportunity to expand on those. Rather than discount their valued perspectives they are included to provide a context to other more formal processes. Thus the outcome for the study is a
collection of diverse points of view, while embracing the need to respect the wishes of some participants for anonymity.

The important lessons I gained here were to re-examine my own understanding of positivist approaches to research which assume that an objective and impartial standpoint is the only valid standpoint, and how this is deeply embedded in academic processes. Taking a feminist approach to negotiating what constitutes valid knowledge, I have reoriented the academic process to include the personal as political, and to welcome the alternate ways of knowledge sharing that are part of the rich landscape of the Pacific – that of verbal communication, storytelling, and creative arts. Anonymous contributions by women which allow freedom to speak candidly, and the inclusion of creative methods of expression like poetry and women’s personal stories, enables a deepened awareness of the fragility of women’s rights to emerge.

The tenuous nature of freedom to speak without fear or anxiety can be understood in the context of Sen’s theory of ‘un-freedom’. In regard to policy planning linked to development, a key focus at regional level is managing regional development in ways that benefit not only states but the region as a whole. At the intergovernmental level this entails development processes that must be negotiated between sovereign states. The concept of development is multi-dimensional in that it is subject to the context in which it is being applied. Understandings of development have undergone a shift from being predominantly about economic progress to a broader perspective of well-being.

Development discourse has adopted theories, ideological standpoints and political frameworks which employ vastly different languages and models. For example, Marxism uses the terms neo-colonialism, imperialism, class and dependency, while liberalism speaks of modernisation, nation-building and integration. During the latter half of the twentieth century, the language of sustainability, capacity building and pro-poor growth reflects an approach to development that aims to move beyond development governed by economic aid alone. It employs a collaborative approach, between developed and developing States, that seeks to advance self-sufficiency, improve governance, strengthen the rule of law, reduce income disparities, elevate the status of women, and protects the environment in order to create long term change.

Amartya Sen argues that any notion of development must also involve the removal of any circumstance or act that contributes to circumstances of ‘un-freedom’, a term which encompasses any forms of social deprivation, poverty or a lack of economic opportunities. Sen perceives these circumstances or acts as being in direct opposition to what had been a singularly economics driven agenda.\textsuperscript{116} Sen’s theory of ‘un-freedom’ is relevant to this thesis as a means of considering the impact of gender as a factor in development planning processes, in particular how gender inequality impacts decision-making outcomes.

There were multiple layers of un-freedom evident to me in the planning stages – un-freedom to speak publicly, un-freedom to give time to the research project due to the scantness of women’s resources, un-freedom to speak one’s mind in the presence of others. Even if some of these concerns constitute ‘perceived’ un-freedoms, and do not necessarily incorporate legal or civil restrictions on women’s rights, the very presence of those perceptions indicates women in some circumstances do not feel free to exercise their legal rights.

While initially I had expected women to be comfortable with the format of small groups and felt there was a degree of safety in being able to speak in a male-free environment, it was not the presence or absence of men that 33ised the experience. For women to feel completely safe to speak with me, the constraints of cultural and political divisions needed to be removed. This could only be achieved through a change in the interview format to be able to accommodate confidential, one-on-one discussion. However, this was not true of all those approached, and indeed some small group discussions were held, notably in Fiji and Tonga. These were less focused on the Pacific Plan but were oriented toward understanding the importance of appropriate and effective communication methods between governments, civil society and grassroots women in rural and urban settings.

When the research progressed from the preliminary stages to in-country field research, I found the major obstacle to be overcome was one flagged by women in my initial planning. Time constraints, my own and those of the women I approached, together with the burden on women to meet the many demands of workplaces with limited resources were a significant challenge. Also considerably frustrating for my research progress was access to public information. This was particularly pertinent in my visit to the PIFS in 2009. I was warmly welcomed by various PIFS representatives who indicated they were willing to give assistance where possible. Unfortunately, the people involved were restricted in their capacity to share information regardless of a desire to do so. Some expressed support for the study and its potential to advance

\textsuperscript{116} Sen, \textit{Development as Freedom}, pp. 3-4.
understanding of women’s engagement in policy development. No current PIFS representative however, was able to access any information for my use on the former gender officer’s involvement in the development of the PIF’s Pacific Plan as all documentation had been removed from the Gender Office. They did not know if records had been destroyed or if none were kept at the time. Furthermore, the PIFS library was unable to obtain permission for documentation to be released from the Pacific Plan archives held on site at the PIFS headquarters in Suva. This is despite all requested documentation having been previously publicly available. I was informed that to access the documents, I would need to furnish a copy of the thesis for scrutiny by the PIFS prior to any publications being released, effectively allowing the PIFS to veto any inclusions they deemed critical of the organisation. Thus, the record keeping practices of the organisation in past years and a lack of access to current documentation presented limitations to the data collection. However, I was able to compensate for this by accessing some copies obtained digitally while records had been in the public sphere during 2004-2007. The challenges presented are not untypical of those faced by women’s desks within larger governmental or inter-governmental organisations as they are notoriously under-resourced, keeping them operating under pressure at the periphery of organisational structures.

The experience of these initial contacts with women from various sectors of Pacific society highlights the relevance of standpoint theory as a useful tool for exploring and examining the variety of positions, challenges and influences of women from such a broad context as a regional setting. Standpoint theory allows for an asymmetry in the research that widens the horizons of analysis by bringing into the discourse a depth of vision that encompasses not only those in privileged positions of power, such as the few women who occupy political positions or have the benefit of education and/or public voice, but those at the margins. Privileging the voices of women at the peripheries of policy-making locates this study and analysis in a new sphere that Hartsock and Harding regard as a premium position that gives a less distorted account of women’s lives than research restricted to the ‘inside’ view.

117 Personal field notes PIFS field visit February 25 2009 PIFS headquarters in Suva, Fiji.
118 Ibid.
Scope of the Study

This study investigates the practice of gender inclusivity in institutional policy-making. It examines the impact of Pacific feminism on the PIF gender policy and its place in contemporary Pan-Pacific Regionalism. Such a focus enables an analysis of the effective use of international instruments for achieving gender equality in the development of regional intergovernmental planning. How this translates into practical implementation and the effectiveness of adopting broad international standards as guides in a region of small-island developing states, raises the topic of moral obligations on the part of those planning bodies such as the PIF.

By utilizing a feminist standpoint for the research, it is intended that the findings will provide a gender balance to current political analysis that informed the development of the Pacific Plan. This approach seeks to bridge the divide between academic analysis of political gender equality, and practical requirements for attaining or improving gender equality through international agreements or conventions. It provides both a feminist perspective from those outside the legal or political boundaries of institutions of regional governance to the analysis and a feminist contribution to academic political discourse. This has particular significance given that feminist research has shown that the foundations of discrimination against women encompass more than legal restraints. Tickner argues that they are in fact ‘enmeshed’ in the economic, cultural and social structures of society and, as such, even the removal of legal restraints cannot ensure the removal of discriminatory practices. Therefore, as PIF states affected by the Pacific Plan are socially, culturally and economically diverse, a multi-paradigmatic, multi-perspective approach to feminist scholarship is taken.

The study employs a chronological framework that utilises textual analysis, primary interviews and small group discussions to investigate the development of the Pacific Plan. It therefore involves a sequential procedure, where understanding of the topic is built upon through the generation of data derived from different research methods. The research examines historical evidence to contextualise the subject matter by exploring the concept of the Pacific region, and how the conceptual idea of a region became a geopolitical reality. It tracks the evolution of the first regional intergovernmental policy-making body, the South Seas Commission, and the way that decolonisation created opportunities for the emergence of the contemporary institution of the Pacific Islands Forum.

The analysis of relevant government processes, national and international machineries and agreements, and documentation of stakeholder observations, also inform the thesis conclusions. The view that aspects of social and cultural life inform and shape the political landscape will direct the research to include a broad range of document analysis. The research is qualitative and draws upon primary information obtained during fieldwork, which includes small group and individual’s responses to semi-structured questionnaires, personal interviews and observational notes alongside academic and non-academic texts. Together these offer a cross-sectional understanding from the standpoint of Pacific women on participation in policy-making. The data is collated using a three tiered grouping that encompasses responses from women representative of multiple standpoints in civil and bureaucratic Pacific societies: grassroots rural and urban women, elite urban women, and women within the political bureaucracy, both State and regional. Situating within the analysis the standpoints of those who did not contribute to formal processes of policy development, yet who are subject to it, gives a rich understanding of criticisms and perceived gaps in the actual processes that did occur. Inclusion of marginalised women’s perspectives opens the discussion to an examination of potential and possible improvement.

**Methods: Data Collection, Interpretation and Analysis**

**Collection**

The data collected for this study falls primarily into two categories; existing literature in historical and contemporary contexts and primary material sources from both structured questionnaires and semi-structured discussions with women from a cross section of Pacific society during field work in Fiji, Vanuatu, New Caledonia, Australia and Tonga.

**Existing literature**

Existing literature was sourced from a wide variety of locations. Historical matter that included archival documents from Australian government sources, non-government agencies and scholarly texts was important to building a rich context for the study. The process of collection was undertaken by visiting sites of major collections of Pacific literature such as university, State, and Commonwealth libraries in Queensland, New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory. Other literature was readily sourced through scholarly databases and government websites. One of the major challenges to data collection and review was, as mentioned in the previous section, the inconsistent nature of online access to public documents. Literature located outside Australia proved to be more difficult to source as I was limited to accessing hard copy documents during fieldtrips undertaken between 2007-2009 to Fiji, Tonga, Vanuatu and New Caledonia.
These locations were chosen for two reasons. First, the opportunities for meeting with a variety of women could be capitalised on by timing field work to coincide with major women’s regional and domestic meetings in New Caledonia, Tonga and Australia. Second, Fiji and Vanuatu have specific significance to the study. They are locations of regional institutional headquarters such as the PIFS in Suva, Fiji, and academic institutions such as the University of the South Pacific (USP) in both Suva and Port Vila, Vanuatu. Tonga and Fiji were also locations where I was able to foster enabling relationships with grassroots women through my work as an activist.

My location as an outsider/insider was both beneficial and challenging to data collection. Access to some materials was limited at times by my location in Australia as many Pacific organisations and governments have yet to comprehensively digitise records. As an outsider, my requests to be furnished with public records that were held overseas in hard copy went unanswered at times. At other times even when a willingness to assist was evident, my own limited knowledge of customary processes for such requests hampered efforts and prolonged timeframes for completion of the analysis. On the whole however, there was a willingness by most agencies and individuals to accommodate my requests. While at times this was restricted by the availability of resources and although this was challenging, it was not debilitating as I had planned in advance for field visits to the Pacific to overcome some of these obstacles. In addition to my own knowledge of Pacific resources, I was able to garner assistance from Australian and Pacific based academics through my affiliations with Pacific oriented academic organisations. I was able to meet with representatives from academia with an interest in policy development both informally and formally, as well as with parliamentarians, representatives of the Pacific legal and justice sector, and foreign based aid and development specialists. Even though encumbered by Australian outsider status, as an academic with a background steeped in Pacific affairs, I was able to locate and access information that would be otherwise obscured.

However, my efforts to gather data from other Pacific countries where I had no personal affiliations or contacts were mostly unsuccessful despite numerous requests for a show of interest in participation in the study. Again, I was ultimately able to fill in gaps in the data by drawing on reports and publications from NGOs and government bodies. The scope and diversity of women and resources I was able to access helped to construct a ‘yardstick’ for comprehending a wider view of women’s perspectives across the Pacific.

Primary data

I used multiple methods of data collection to obtain the study’s primary data. Strategically this allowed me to refine the data collection process to suit the needs of the
researched and to be reflexive with the design and implementation of the data collection process. This was a significant part of the process of building trust as discussed previously.\textsuperscript{124} There were three main methods of data collection: questionnaires, semi-structured small group discussions, and semi-structured individual discussions.

The first method of data collection was the use of two questionnaires, one that was planned to establish the participant’s location within the Pacific Plan policy development process and the second which evolved during the fieldwork in response to concerns that women had put forward during individual discussions. The first questionnaire gathered information on the position of the participant such as how they might have been situated as participants, observers or otherwise in the various stages of the process. The aim was to understand how aware women were of the process, if they engaged with it and, if so, to what extent. The second questionnaire came about because many women who were not aware of the process, or who were but did not engage, has indicated to me that they wanted the research to include their understandings of why that had occurred. The questionnaire therefore focused on how women accessed information on government and intergovernmental policy development, and policy in general in the first instance. The questionnaire also sought to establish women’s preferences for how information should, or could be accessed in the future. This was particularly relevant to the small group discussions held with grassroots women. Conversations with individual women helped to shape the questionnaire so that the standpoints of women were reflected, not only in the answers to questions but, in the questions themselves.

Of particular importance to note here is that neither of the questionnaires were designed, or intended, to gather large bodies of empirical data. This would have been contradictory to the feminist standpoint framework as I applied it to this study. The questionnaires were therefore a voluntary part of the participation process. Questions contained within them were subject to the participant’s discretion as to whether they would be answered or not, without creating limits on the use of the data that was collected. Women who chose not to complete a questionnaire were not excluded from participation in any way, and the information contained in the questionnaire was able to be gathered in alternate ways during either small group or individual discussions if women were willing to do so. I employed a process of thematic analysis that in turn informed the preparation for the next two methods of data collection – individual and small group semi-structured discussions.\textsuperscript{125} From the collection of data contained in the questionnaires I was able to pinpoint key concerns and issues that could then be incorporated into the discussion process. It was this use of the questionnaire data that

\textsuperscript{124} See p. 27, this Chapter.
meant the individual responses to every question were not as critical to the study as the overall picture that was generated of the recurring themes and issues.

The second method of primary data collection was semi-structured individual discussions. These were held with women who had either responded to public requests for participants in the study, or who I had personally approached during fieldwork trips. The purpose of the discussions was to expand on the questionnaire and enable women to identify the themes and concepts that they believed were important to understanding the processes of policy development both in relation the Pacific Plan and as a broader strategy of government or intergovernmental planning. Discussions varied in style and length of time depending on the individual. For some participants, a shorter timeframe with follow up discussions by telephone or email was more manageable than a lengthy one off discussion. Others preferred a single face-to-face discussion, and these tended to be approximately 45-60 minutes in duration.

The third method of data collection was a series of semi-structured small group discussions. These were initially planned as the main method of data collection, however, it became clear early in the fieldwork that many individuals were uncomfortable with the group setting idea, and because of this, the group discussions became a feature of data collection with grassroots women only, rather than as a method used across all women’s spaces. In contrast to the problems associated with attempts to convene small group discussions with participants from urban areas or who were engaged in civil society or bureaucratic work, grassroots women tended to preference the small group approach. The small group discussions were the main site for using the second questionnaire which was completed during the course of the discussions. The points being identified in the questionnaire guided the discussions and stimulated women to add their personal interpretations of, and perspectives about the themes and issues. In this respect, it was an organics process that allowed for the reflexive nature of group discussion.

**Interpretation and Analysis**

Interpreting the data required different approaches depending on the stage of the research process and which data was under scrutiny. The historical data was interpreted through a framework of qualitative text analysis to determine the extent and depth of gendered practices in Pacific regional policy planning and development, and the role of historical circumstances in the emergence, adoption and implementation of gender mainstreaming by the PIF in relation to the Pacific Plan. The collection of primary data predominantly involved fieldwork interactions with Pacific women and incorporated

126 See my discussion surrounding the reasons for this. This chapter, pp. 28-30.
questionnaires and individual or small group discussions. I employed a phenomenological method of analysis to ensure the meanings and interpretations of the participants could be reflected as closely as possible.

**Qualitative text analysis**

Critical examination in a qualitative text analysis highlights how language plays a part in forming the reality of a society. Applying a textual analysis to relevant documents that inform the study enables the researcher to question and interpret content according to societal norms, and with consideration of the boundaries such norms create. The text is used as a tool to reveal circumstances in the society in question, and to provide an understanding of the situation in a wider context.127 Esaiasson argued that three dimensions of analysis are critical to define the phenomena that are being studied: definitions, implementation strategies and expected or achieved outcomes.128 I therefore undertook a methodical approach to data interpretation.

First, I examined how historical texts revealed the meaning of the main themes and concepts under examination. For example, in Chapters One, Two and Three, I considered the inclusion and exclusion of women’s voices in historical documents that related to the establishment of various stages of Pacific regionalism. Identifying gaps in gender balance lead to a reflexive approach to the data analysis. The first attempt to analyse the data prompted a broader and more inclusive revision of what constitutes valid knowledge. It was necessary to include texts from non-traditional sources such as poetry as women’s perspectives and stories were often, although it must be noted not always, absent from traditional sources of historical information. Second, I questioned how meaning had been articulated at an implementation level by analysing more contemporary texts such as agreements, policies and reports that demonstrate action on the part of global, State, and civil society actors. Doing so assisted in revealing the preconditions for current policy-making practices. For instance, by analysing the documentation of the trajectory of a regional and international women’s movement, it was possible to understand the starting point for the policies that guided gender mainstreaming in the Pacific Plan development process.

The overall process of qualitative text analysis was a fluid one. It involved continuous revision of which documents were included, and why some documents may have been excluded. This was guided by the process itself – critical reflection on the findings that were emerging from the analysis revealed unexpected themes and issues. Sometimes, this was due to the rapidly expanding availability of electronically sourced

128 Ibid.
literature. In other instances, it was a response to fieldwork engagement where previously my own positionality as an Australian woman had limited my understanding of the issues that were relevant to a regional context.\textsuperscript{129}

Finally, the analysis must include the dimension of expected or achieved outcomes. While some preliminary expectations were formed after analysing and critiquing the textual components of the study, it was only after the second phase of research, the fieldwork, was undertaken that a more comprehensive understanding of expected outcomes was achieved. The process involved reflection on fieldwork data including thematic coding of field notes, collation of data from questionnaires, individual and small group discussions and identifying correlations between the various data.

\textit{Phenomenological data analysis}

Phenomenological data analysis is described by Keen as an approach, attitude, and investigative posture, with a certain set of goals'.\textsuperscript{130} The primary data for this study is mostly from personal interactions with women located within the Pacific region. To analyse the data, it was imperative to be mindful of the challenges this presented. For example, in terms of communication, English was often not the first language of the participants. English was, however, my only language and I recognise this may have influenced my interpretations of women’s thoughts and responses to the questions or discussion themes. I am also mindful that the context for understanding concepts and ideas may vary from place to place, and that a process of clarification and validation was necessary to the data collection process to minimise misrepresentation of women’s contributions.

These potential challenges in mind, I draw on criteria developed for conducting phenomenological data analysis. The criteria, developed by Hycner, involves fifteen ‘guidelines’ for phenomenological data analysis aimed at assisting the researcher to ‘be true’ to the phenomenon of data.\textsuperscript{131} I do not employ all of the guidelines in the same way advocated by Hycner, as some of the processes in original form are not appropriate for the style and methodology of the research. I do, however, move through the stages of data analysis set out within the guidelines, modifying the processes where necessary.

The first guideline is transcription of the interview data. My research used a process of discussion rather than interview, where the dialogue was fluid and topics

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{129} See discussion this chapter pp. 28-35.  \\
\textsuperscript{130} Keen 1975. \textit{A primer in phenomenological psychology}. New York: Holt, Reinhart and Winston, Inc. p. 41.  \\
\textsuperscript{131} Hycner 1985. ‘Some guidelines for the phenomenological analysis of interview data’, Human Studies, Vol. 8, Iss. 3. p. 280.  
\end{flushright}
under discussion were guided by the questionnaires provided prior to discussion. Dialogue was initiated by both the researcher and the participant to ensure the participant’s point of view was not limited to predetermined issues or concerns on the part of the researcher. During discussions, I made notes on the themes and ideas being discussed and the notes were later transcribed into more comprehensive accounts of the discussion. The second guideline, bracketing and the phenomenological reduction, is a process of being open to whatever meanings emerge from the data. Bracketing and reduction are consistent with standpoint methodology as they require the researcher to use ‘the matrices of that person's world-view in order to understand the meaning of what that person is saying’. As often as was possible, the individual or small group discussions for this study were followed up with personal communication between the researcher and participants to review the interpretation of meanings taken from the data. Where this was not going to be possible, I extended the individual or group discussion time to include some reflection on the dialogue on the day of the discussions. This was facilitated so that I could read back my interpretations and allow participant(s) to respond to any perceived misinterpretations. Doing so also helped participants to gain some understanding of my own subjectivity in the process.

The third guideline is to listen to the interview for a sense of the whole. To do so requires the researcher to listen to recordings or read transcriptions a number of times to provide a context for the ‘specific units of meaning and themes’ at a later stage. I undertook this process while I was still in the countries I visited for the fieldwork, and again numerous times when I returned home. Reading, and rereading, the transcriptions while I was in fieldwork-based countries allowed me to be immersed in the data while I was simultaneously gaining experience of the social contexts of the data collection location. For example, many participants spoke about the challenges of less than efficient communication processes as being a problem with their capacity to engage with policy development processes. There were numerous times during fieldwork where I experienced challenges with communication, and this alerted me to the need for an empathetic approach to interpreting the data. Sometimes the data seemed to be somewhat ‘off track’, but when I was able to reflect on the overall impact of communication issues, I could better understand the reasons that participants had raised particular issues or begun to speak about concerns that I might otherwise have not connected to the discussion topic. When I then reflected on the data back in my own surroundings in Australia I was able to take a more nuanced approach to emergence of unexpected themes.

132 Ibid.
133 Ibid. p. 281.
The fourth guideline is delineating units of general meaning. This is where the data is crystalised and condensed so as to elicit the participant’s meanings. It is an open process in that it is not attempting to address the research question to the data; the aim is to draw out the essence of meaning in the words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs together with non-verbal communications that were revealed in the interview process. For the purpose of this study, it was a process undertaken in tandem with the previous guideline of listening for a sense of the whole. The repeated process of reading and rereading was used to check and record the meanings of verbal discussion data and written answers in the questionnaires.

The fifth, delineating units of general meaning relevant to the research, is where the researcher addresses the research question by explicating the data that is directly informing the key questions. This gives the research clarity and helps the researcher to determine which data is useful to the aims of the research and which is not. The researcher is afforded discretion in this process, and Hycner warns it is better to err on the side of inclusion rather than risk excluding data that is potentially useful. There were a number of instances where I chose to remove data from the study because I judged it to be distracting from the aims of the research. To determine this, I considered how, and why, the data could be related to policy-making processes. This allowed data that was not immediately, and obviously, linked to policy-making to be included where it could be viewed as being impacted by the political structures that set policies. This is a very subjective and broad process of determination, however, Hycner has argued that the danger of inappropriate judgement calls is minimised by the rigour of the bracketing of presuppositions during the implementation of guideline three. Following on from this is the sixth guideline, training independent judges to verify the units of relevant meaning. The study presented no opportunity to undertake this step.

Guidelines seven, eight and nine are related to further reductive strategies for refining the data and include eliminating redundancies, clustering units of relevant meaning, and determining themes from clusters of meaning. These were processes that emerged from the previous processes, and often occurred simultaneously as the data was systematically reviewed. There was minimal need to eliminate redundancies as, once the material deemed to be distracting from the aims of the research had been removed, it was important to keep as much as possible of the remaining data to ensure the standpoint of women was not unnecessarily narrowed. Clustering units of relevant meaning is primarily a renewal of the process undertaken in the earlier bracketing process. Colazzi argued that, in this part of the interpretation and analysis, the researcher is involved in a

134 Ibid. p. 282.
136 Ibid. p. 284.
137 Ibid.
process of creative insight that allows for some latitude with decisions over how the data is themed.\(^{138}\) Clustering is therefore a subjective process, and the researcher needs to take steps to preserve the integrity of the data. One way to mitigate any risk of the researcher’s presumptions jeopardising the credibility of the final study is to use independent reviewers to examine how the data is being used. In this study, that process occurs as the research is passed back and forth for comment by the research supervisory team, particularly during the formative stages of writing.

The next two guidelines refer to strategies that help to shape the final data interpretation process. Guideline twelve, returning to the participant with the summary and themes and, if necessary, conducting a second interview, was not a process that I chose to undertake. Mainly this was because of the practical challenges of making contact again with grass roots women in particular. Many participants lived in areas where there was limited or no access to internet, and distance precluded personal visits. This meant the next guideline of modifying themes and summary was not undertaken as the data was not changed at this stage. The final three guidelines of Hycner’s fifteen criteria are: identifying general and unique themes for all the interviews, contextualising the themes, and creating a composite summary.\(^{139}\) These processes were undertaken in the final stages of data analysis.

Underpinning the interpretation of the data as part of a feminist standpoint methodology, the concepts of exclusion and marginalisation were critical, as feminist standpoint aims to bring to the foreground the perspectives of those at the periphery. Throughout the processes, the data was divided into three categories for analysis that reflected the different layers of women’s engagement – the bureaucratic, civil society, and grassroots levels of participation. This reflected the significance of the different types and experiences of marginalisation or exclusion that impact on the participants, and helped to identify where the emerging themes were common or unique to the different groups.

Marginalisation theory is defined by Hall as the peripheralisation of people either as individuals or groups from the dominant or central majority.\(^{140}\) Hall cited seven criteria for identifying and explaining marginalisation. The criteria include intermediacy, which entails the existence of intermediate boundaries that separate and protect people from living in contested border environments, and the differentiation of people or groups through cultural or personal uniqueness that places them at risk of becoming

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139 Hycner, Some guidelines for the phenomenological analysis of interview data, pp. 292-294.

stigmatised. Other aspects of marginalisation include access to power resources and risks associated with forced conformity (power); access to, and control of information to protect one’s self and group, and the risks resulting from the dominating group’s use of insider knowledge to their advantage (secrecy); risks involved with processes of continued and exhaustive vigilance as a result of leading an ‘examined life’ and to acquire the survival skills associated with constant analysis of new environments (reflectiveness); risk of being silenced or of constantly needing to express validation of a different experience to the dominant (voice); and liminality, whereby experiences not shared by others such as trauma and stigmatisation hold the risk of alienation from the majority or dominant groups.\textsuperscript{141} Marginalisation is therefore a socio-political process that can result in both negative and positive outcomes, such as the construction of vulnerabilities that limit capacity to exercise rights, and alternately or concurrently build resilience as people adapt and strive for survival.\textsuperscript{142}

Feminist theorist, bell hooks, employs the term to highlight the political struggles of women, and to argue against women’s exclusion from political processes.\textsuperscript{143} Hooks expands on Hall’s general definitions, to relate them in a more particular political sense to the struggle for women’s rights. Where Hall developed the definition for the discipline of health sciences, hooks is more specifically interested in marginalisation as it relates to ethnicity, class and gender as sites of political exclusion.\textsuperscript{144}

In this study I am concerned with the depth of exclusion and marginalisation that women experience when regional policy is being developed. I look at the way in which policy was developed and adopted by the PIF, and at the reactions of women who experience exclusion from that process. Their comments and understanding of the process are discussed and analysed, as are their perceptions of what could contribute to changes that would bring more women into the process. By interpreting these two channels of information, I reveal the gaps in process into which women routinely fall, and why their exclusion from the process is more a product of a gender insensitive process than of the gender mainstreamed ideal that the PIF desires.

\textit{Chapter Overview}

Chapters Two and Three develop the analytical approach of this thesis by examining the historical context for the study. In Chapter Two, I provide a critical review of regional policy-making. I show how women’s narratives, through the personal voice of poetry,

\textsuperscript{141} Ibid. p. 89.
\textsuperscript{144} Ibid. pp. 4, 32, 60, 144.
and within the public and more objective voice of feminist academic literature, contribute to understanding the locations women have occupied in policy development. The chapter reviews the stages of regional development since World War Two and argues that women’s accounts have been underrepresented due to women’s low numbers of participation in formal politics and decision-making. I conclude that influences of colonialism and associated systems of political governance have worked to marginalise women and exclude them from policy development. The chapter shows how the establishment of the PIF was executed as part of regional development and I argue that it has also been subject to the same gendered history that has been evident in the colonial history of the South Pacific.

Chapter Three begins with a discussion which locates gender in domestic political arrangements in the island states of the PIF. By examining in more detail gendered aspects of policy development, it draws the historical context into a more specific focus on women’s status in politics and political engagement. Again, it points to the exclusive nature of politics in the region, and the marginalisation of women as an embedded part of the political landscape despite the efforts of activists and political advocates. This chapter explores Pacific women’s engagement with global action on gender equality, through their collective and individual actions. It then focuses specifically on the adoption of gender mainstreaming strategies as a method for instigating reform. In this case, I argue that such strategies are vulnerable to misinterpretation or poor standards of implementation if there is a failure to adequately evaluate, resource and monitor at all levels of implementation. I conclude with the argument that the PIF struggles to avoid a gender insensitive outcome when applying gender mainstreaming, as it is heavily reliant on the resources and political will of its member states to implement the strategy and the majority of PIF member states lack both the expertise and political will to allocate proper resources to ensure successful outcomes.

The two remaining chapters provide more specific analysis of the case study, and contemporary aspects of the analysis. Chapter Four has an empirical focus describing the subject of the case study, the Pacific Plan and the PIF commitments to gender equality. First, it continues to question the exclusive nature of regionalism and the PIF, by examining regional efforts to engage with gender equality policies. The chapter maps the evolution of a gender policy within the PIF, from initial discussions to the establishment of a formal gender desk within the Secretariat. Second, it describes the Pacific Plan document and the background to its development. It outlines the PIF review process, and how this led to the recommendation for a long-term development policy designed to promote and guide increased cohesion and integration within the region across areas of security, economics, sustainability and governance. I continue the theme
of women’s exclusion and marginalisation by examining both the nature of the Pacific Plan submission and consultation processes, and the minimal reference to, and prioritisation of, women’s concerns in the final document. I link this to the development and implementation processes of the Pacific Plan by analysing the inclusion or exclusion of women’s submissions in each of the four areas of concern with which the Plan engages. Once again, the themes of marginalisation and exclusion are built upon by debating the effectiveness of the PIF adoption of gender mainstreaming as a stand-alone strategy for addressing women’s issues within the Pacific Plan. I conclude the chapter by drawing attention to the similarities of regional and domestic strategies, and their failings in the application of gender mainstreaming. I argue that gender mainstreaming is only effective when governments are committed to the idea of gender equality, both politically and in practice. Without explicit resourcing through dedicated budgets and expertise, guidelines for inclusion and accountability in implementation gender mainstreaming cannot deliver outcomes that achieve gender equality.

Finally, Chapter Five begins with a discussion of the way meeting commitments to gender equality can be linked to the PIF vision for citizens of the region to be more closely involved in regional decision-making. It draws on human rights obligations as guiding forces for the PIF in the pursuit of such an ideal. I then present reflections and observations from my fieldwork. I reveal here the understandings of women who were both involved in, and excluded from, the development processes of the Pacific Plan. I focus on the voices of the periphery, and analyse their responses to the question of how the exclusive nature of policy development might be overcome. The chapter concludes by arguing that women from all sectors of society face barriers to participation in regional decision-making due to flawed systems of communication and information sharing. The thesis concludes by reiterating some of the study’s most important findings and demonstrating how they have broader relevance to current debates relating to social justice and gender equality in world politics.
CHAPTER TWO: FEMINIST VOICE AND POLICY-MAKING PROCESSES IN PACIFIC REGIONALISM

Equality (Tulaga tutusa)

It matters not/ that I am/woman or man/It matters not/that you are/she or he

It matters only/that in life/there is we

In Chapter Two, I offer a critical review of the way that regional policy-making has evolved from a model of policy imposed from outside by colonial powers to the contemporary arrangement of the Pacific Islands Forum. The chapter shows how the establishment of the PIF was executed as part of a regional development agenda of former colonial powers, and argues that it has also been subject to the same gendered history that has been evident in the colonial history of the South Pacific. The chapter reveals the deep structural inequalities that have resulted from colonialism. I begin by demonstrating how women’s narratives, through the personal voice of poetry and within the public objective voice of feminist academic literature, contribute to understanding the locations women have occupied in policy development. Doing so serves to highlight how structural inequalities have impacted on women. The chapter then reviews three distinct stages of Pacific regional development that have occurred since World War Two, arguing that women’s accounts and perspectives of Pacific regionalism have been underrepresented due to their absence in both formal politics and academia. I conclude that the influences of colonialism, and associated systems of political governance, have worked to marginalise women and exclude them from policy development.

Women’s literature occupies a variety of forms that can inform or influence policy-making. Creative literature such as poetry, stories or prose, which provide textual representations of women’s lived experiences, have the scope to bring to light personal concerns regarding public issues in ways that more formal literature might not. This is of particular importance given there are universally low numbers of women in politics and within academic disciplines where critical analysis of policy occurs. Feminist scholars such as Staudt and Enloe argued that when the lived experiences and perspectives of

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women are absent, then policy outcomes will reflect a gender bias toward the patriarchal status quo.146

Pacific feminist scholarship has often included creative literature vis-à-vis academic literature, with poetry in particular having prominence in many texts.147 Griffen argues that poetry is more accessible for women than other forms of literature, and that it allows women to articulate deeply personal political statements in a mode of writing that is readily adaptable to women’s ‘worldways and wordways’.148 Scholarly validation and inclusion of creative literature therefore, has an important role. It facilitates a form of women’s agency by bringing to light highly personal insights to policy discourse. By doing so, women’s contributions to policy debates are illuminated regardless of a formal level of representation in political decision-making bodies.

Feminist poets in the Pacific region have drawn public attention to intersections between colonialism and structural inequality, and the political agency of women, by using creative language as a tool to critically examine women’s life experiences.149 Grace Molisa’s poetry, for instance, began when she was working with the Vanuaaku Pati, the political rulers of Vanuatu which had led the country to independence in 1981. Molisa’s poetry helped her deal with the frustrations of the political processes, and with her own perceptions of the injustices of Vanuatu’s colonial past.150 In Custom, she assumes an anti-colonialist stance, and asserts links between the language of colonial governance and the oppression of women:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Custom</th>
<th>Inadvertently</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>is an English word</td>
<td>misappropriating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>“custom”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a confluence</td>
<td>misapplied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of stream of</td>
<td>bastardized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is a reservoir</td>
<td>a frankenstein</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of every shade</td>
<td>corpse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nuance and hue</td>
<td>conveniently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sharply</td>
<td>recalled</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

149 See pp. 8-9 for a discussion on the use of the term ‘patriarchy’ in this thesis.
150 Griffen, Women speak out in literature: Pacific and Caribbean voices, p. 23.
Molisa highlights women’s status in Vanuatu as an issue that was both public, due to its links to systems of national governance, and personal, due to her role within the political independence struggle.

The following section examines the political voices of Pacific feminist poets who have been effective in bringing the personal position of women into the public domain. It demonstrates how women’s political voice and engagement with political issues is often located outside formal political discourse. These voices offer critical insights into issues of concern for women located in a region where women’s representation in formal political structures is marginal.

**Pacific Women’s Feminist Voice: Engagements with Feminist Poetry**

Noumea Simi’s poem *Equality*, featured at the beginning of this chapter, contemplates an inclusive approach to gender relations, focusing on unity regardless of difference. Simi emphasises that even where difference prevails, it is inconsequential: difference in gender relations ‘matters not’ as the final outcome of gendered relations should revolve around the desire for unity above all else. Emphasis is placed directly on the idea of moving beyond barriers to equality so that unity and harmony can triumph. Simi is a senior civil servant in Samoa working in the Policy Management Department of the Ministry of Finance as Assistant CEO in the Aid & Debt Coordination Division with the Ministry of Finance. She has been a senior figure in Samoan policy-making for over twenty years. Seeking to deepen understanding of gender inequality in Samoa, her poem, *Misconception*, speaks of women’s oppression, and the way that men overlook women’s resilience in light of that oppression. Another of her poems, *I Remember*, penned as a tribute to Samoan women on the 25th anniversary of Samoan Independence, highlights the social construction of gendered relationships. It is critical of male domination of political spaces and recognises women as marginalised but active agents in Samoan development:

I remember

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how men would wear out the night
clamouring to be heard
while you the silhouette
waited silently
to play your part
the lever to the mountain
moving decisions
I remember
seeing you rise to lead and guide
while the world cried for equality
I remember that
In the global awakening of womanhood
development for you was already
a passing tune.\textsuperscript{155}

Simi’s poetry is embedded with messages of marginalisation, exclusion and the need for political reform. The struggles of Pacific women to reconcile dual roles of being a woman and a leader are also a focal point for Simi. In \textit{I Cannot}, she illuminates the personal hardships women negotiate in daily life, highlighting the need to increase awareness of their struggles with systems that oppress women:

\begin{quote}
I cannot
free myself from the clutches of poverty
firmly grasped in the skeletal touch
of my malnourished children
I cannot
escape the inescapable trappings
of my husband’s dominance
and cultural bindings
I cannot
understand
why I cannot.\textsuperscript{156}
\end{quote}

Simi’s messages are mirrored in her contributions to formal academic literature. She advocates an inclusive style of politics in the Pacific, anchoring her vast experience in policy-making processes to stress that future development funding and aid programs should be more gender inclusive.\textsuperscript{157} Simi endorsed a people-centred approach where the

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{155} Ibid. p. 39.
\textsuperscript{156} Ibid. p. 35.
\end{footnotes}
status of women is used as a visible sign of commitment to equitable development that could assist in overcoming structural inequalities.

Poems such as Simi’s, opened the door to a reframing of feminism in the Pacific in order to find new solutions to women’s oppression, social inequalities and understandings of how institutions influence power relations. As an informal avenue of representation, poetry has enabled women’s perspectives on public policy issues to be present in the public domain where those issues can be debated further. In a collection of scholarly critiques of Pacific development, Dorah Obed questions political gains for women in Vanuatu in the post-colonial era in Who Am I?:

I want love and equality.
I want justice among men,
Women and children.

Education has come to my country
Independence has come to my country,
Has freedom come to my country?

I am the mother of the nation.
I am the producer of life.
I build Vanuatu.
Has equality come to my country?160

Obed’s message that gender inequality is structurally embedded in political systems is echoed by academic literature from the same volume. Orovu Sepoe evaluates gender equality in the political processes for provincial and national elections in Papua New Guinea. Sepoe found the nature of Papua New Guinea’s politics was dismissive of women as political actors and ‘casts women aside’ despite legislation that guarantees women’s political rights. The contributions of Obed and Sepoe are vastly different in:

style, however, they are both equally valid representations of women’s standpoints on political issues.

Jully Makini (also known as Jully Sipolo) wrote of the frustrations of Solomon Islands women’s subjugation in her poem *A Man’s World*, lamenting that men claim privileges of freedom that women do not enjoy:

If he sits on the front steps
I must go round the back door
If the house is full
I must crawl on my hands and knees
I must walk behind him not in front.

The poem was also featured in a report on a 1987 feminist development workshop for women. Participants of the workshop debated the idea of developing a shared a vision for Pacific feminism. Women also analysed regional development progress during the United Nations Decade for Women. Reports were presented to the workshops on topics such as healthcare, education, domestic violence, women’s participation and representation in public office, and women in development both in general terms where strategies and tools for inclusion were discussed, and through examination of country-specific projects from Kiribati, Cook Islands, Tokelau and New Caledonia. The overall workshop findings concluded there were serious shortfalls in achieving gender equality in Pacific development. Participants collectively developed a shared vision statement on issues concerning family, education, religion, the economy, environment and politics.

Jully Makini was also a presenter at the workshop, reporting on the status of early childhood education in the Solomon Islands. She argued kindergartens were a site of empowerment for Solomon Islands women. First, kindergartens run by the YWCA in the Solomon Islands supported feminist values by improving the skills of women who were employed as child care assistants by providing them with skills training. Second, kindergartens enabled women to become more active in the economy because they could enter the workforce when child care services were accessible, and contributed to

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building women’s confidence by offering women a gathering place to ‘exchange views’ and ‘compare notes’. Makini contributed to the workshops as both a formal presenter of a paper on education and as a poet commenting on women’s status in society. Makini’s poem, A Man’s World, published as part of the workshop proceedings, shed light on the significance of having a place such as the kindergartens for women to gather that is not controlled by men:

He can say what he likes when he likes
I must keep quiet
He can order me around like a slave
I must not backchat

A decade later with Mi Mere, Makini again utilised poetry as a vehicle to voice her objections to the systems she saw as detrimental to the progress of women’s equality:

I am a woman. Born in a village
Destined to spend my life in a never ending vicious circle
Gardening, child-bearing, house-keeping
Seen and not heard.

I am a woman, born in a town
Educated, dedicated to a career
Making a name for myself in government
Seen and not heard.

I am the echo heard in the jungle
The conch shell heralding a bonito catch
The reporter writing articles in the Star
The announcer in Radio Happy Isles
At long last! Heard but not seen!

Makini’s poetry reveals the public nature of gender inequality. It reflects her observations and frustrations as a Solomon Islands woman from Gizo in the Western Province, and the fusion of her experiences as both a rural village woman with the feminist activism she pursued as an urban, educated working woman. Makini was

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167 Ibid. p. 35.
168 Ibid. p. 27.
considered to be both ‘bold and a vanguard’ of the women’s movement in the Solomon Islands. Her poetry was instrumental in providing a public voice for women when power structures influenced by both pre and post-colonial political systems and customary gender divisions disadvantaged women’s access to public discourses. In post-colonial Solomon Islands, for example, women were overlooked in favour of men as negotiators by international development agencies during consultations with community members when policy and planning was taking place. In the 1980s, the Australian Council for Overseas Aid conceded that throughout the region women were the ‘least consulted’ group despite being recognised as economically active as ‘producers, manufacturers, market managers and healers’, thus marginalising them in policy-making processes.

Pacific women’s poetry therefore has unveiled women’s experiences of gender subjugation, social exclusion and political inequality. Poets like Molisa, Simi and Makini, by gaining the attention of scholars, have used poetry as an alternate means of bringing women’s perspectives into the public domain and into formal academic debates. This demonstrates that challenging formal processes of communication is important if women’s perspectives are to be included in policy-making processes.

There have been two dominant scholarly approaches to examining women’s marginalisation from policy-making processes. The first critiques theories and practices at the institutional level, emphasising the ways women have been present or otherwise in the machineries of global, state and regional organisations. Strategies to create opportunities for women’s participation are the focus of this approach which in turn highlights widespread institutionalisation of gender mainstreaming over the past decade. The second approach to research applies a subjective methodology that takes the standpoint of the women as an excluded group as its central focus. Pacific feminist

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scholarship has demonstrated a commitment to this approach, with a history of scholarship that places women’s perspectives at the centre of research. This style of research draws directly on the voices and experiences of women at the grassroots. Standpoint research reveals barriers to women’s participation, as seen by women, in masculinised systems of politics and decision-making. The personal positions of women become part of the public discourse by drawing on women’s knowledge based on lived experience to highlight gaps between women’s realities and institutional, pragmatic approaches to policy development not inclusive of social perspectives. Moreover, it enables women’s lives to be understood as particular and located rather than homogenous and universal.

Challenging accepted hierarchies based on perceptions of gender is necessary to reforming the processes of policy-making at the interstate level. State behaviours are


constructed on patriarchal systems which fundamentally ignore women’s experiences. Establishing more gender balanced systems has the potential to increase the range of possibilities for improving interstate relations by creating ‘new ways of thinking about interstate practices’. It follows that regional cooperation and development would therefore also benefit from inclusive approaches to policy development that engaged with women’s experiences. For women located in the Pacific region, this marks a point of difference with other regions. The Oceanic Pacific is part of the region generally identified as the Asia-Pacific, and has been subject to marginalisation within international relations. Traditionally, regions have been conceptualised as being either ‘East or West’ where those concepts determine “‘who we are’ and ‘who is not us’”. Neither of these binaries allow for due recognition of the scope and complexity of the Pacific’s geo-political regional organisation. Women, as an underrepresented group within Pacific State and regional politics, are doubly disadvantaged through their location at the margins of State power, within a region at the margins of globalised international relations.

**Regional Development in Perspective**

While gender analysis of regionalism in the Pacific, and subsequently policies associated with regional development, is still an emerging field of scholarship, its gendered impacts can be examined by analysing how the geopolitical identity of region occurred. A process of carefully controlled change over the past century enabled the emerging status of the region to be founded on peaceful negotiation and shared experiences of colonialism and decolonisation. However, tracking the changes in political relationships highlights regional policy-making as a historically gendered undertaking that rendered women’s perspectives invisible through the absence of women in regional decision-making processes. Three specific stages of development have shaped the agenda for contemporary regionalism; colonialism, decolonisation and independence. The shift from colonial rule to decolonisation in the post-World War Two era, and the subsequent formation of formal regional organisations based on new and emerging independent states, created opportunities for those organisations to consider the interests of the Pacific Island nations above those of their former colonial powers. The result has been a gradual increase in the level of autonomy and/or independence that Pacific governments have experienced, and consequently changes to the way that regional policy was decided.

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179 Ibid. p. 18.


181 Ibid. p.12.
and developed. Where the first stage of regionalism was dominated by colonial control and a strong focus on security, the second and third stages of regionalism have been periods of political reorganisation. While security remained important, development was a central feature of regional focus. Political relations became a site of negotiation concurrently between the governments of newly formed States with each other, and with their former colonisers.182

**Stage One: Defining and Refining the Concept of the ‘Region’**

The South Pacific was the last major geographical region to be dominated by European colonial powers.183 Although there had been considerable contact with western interlopers preceding the onset of colonisation, it was the expansionist, empire building of the nineteenth century that initiated the formalised colonial rule which characterised the first stage of regionalism.184 Australia has been the dominant colonial power in the southern Pacific. It has a unique position both geographically and politically, setting it apart from other major colonial powers. On the rim of both Asia and the south-western Pacific, its relationships with its neighbours created challenges both strategically and diplomatically. Australia was subordinate to Britain prior to Federation in 1901, and as such, its foreign policy was that of British policy.185 After Federation, however, as an independent nation free to form its own foreign policies and establish international relationships in its own right, the Australian government held more than a passing interest in the governance of some Pacific states, administering both Nauru and Papua New Guinea until their independence in 1971 and 1975 respectively.186 The relationship the Australian government had with its neighbours has been described as passing through four distinct phases: colonial power, strategic denial, constructive commitment and cooperative intervention.187 So while the region itself had three distinct stages, Australia’s relationship to the region was even more complex and this greatly influenced regional policy in the twentieth century.

182 The scope of the thesis does not allow for a comprehensive pre-contact historical overview, and thus when discussing regionalism the start point is from the early 1900s onward. In discussing the Oceanic Pacific the scope is also limited to the area that encompasses the member states of the Pacific Islands Forum.
Colonial government attitudes as early as 1827 reflected the belief that Australia was in a prime position to dominate the region. The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser, the colony’s first newspaper, was the official publication of the government of New South Wales with all articles being subject to close official supervision and censorship to ensure they reflected the views of Governor Bligh. The Gazette reported that Australia was ‘destined to hold the imperial sway’ over the islands of the South Pacific, recognising that France and America also harboured a desire to expand their interests across the tiny islands of the southern Pacific ocean. The South Pacific was not as yet officially a recognised geopolitical region, however, this newspaper report points to a clear determination on the colony’s part for movement towards that end. There was an attempt to annex New Zealand to Australia in the 1830s, protests over French annexations in the Pacific in the 1840s and 1850s, and also an attempt at convincing Britain to annex the entire Pacific Islands with a particular focus on the Melanesian islands in a bid to pre-empt hostile powers. The Crimean War and associated perceived threats to trade routes were a challenge to complacency, and a motivation to pursue expansionism. For Australia, dominance and control over the region was critical to the progress and development of the colony. This was reinforced by an Australian monopoly on the phosphate market in Melanesia and the exploitation of indigenous labour in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Thus the notion of the region was a strategic one where colonial interests were concerned with establishing and retaining Eurocentric notions of dominance of the region, and protecting and promoting avenues for future trade and economic development. These priorities drove policy towards a security agenda. Pacific Island people were as much a part of the commodities used for development as was land and the resources gleaned from it.

Australia’s relationship with Pacific Islanders and labour mobility has been of historical significance for the region since the mid-1880s. It illustrates a sense of regional awareness in so much as it demonstrates the extent of the colonial position as one of command over the fate of the islands and their inhabitants. It also has significance for its impact on gendered understandings of Australian-Pacific relationships. The

192 Purcell, Australia’s Policies toward the South Pacific Island States, pp. 60-61.
practice of co-opting islanders into the economy and their contributions to the development of the young colony, paved the way for a later sense of obligation to support a regional approach to development in post-colonial times. Although this cannot be seen as the only, or even the dominant, factor in a regionalist agenda, it does explain in some way Australia’s deep relationship with the islands region. The forced labour migration scheme inextricably intertwined western and indigenous cultures and economies both during and after the policy’s implementation. In 1847, Melanesians were brought into Australia under an indentured labour scheme to work in agricultural endeavours, first in New South Wales and later and to a much greater extent, Queensland.  

It was not until 1863 that there was a significant increase in the movement of islanders for the economic gain of Australian plantation owners. The export of sugar from north Queensland resulted in Melanesia becoming a major labour reserve for plantation owners, providing cheap labour to assist with the growing demands of an increasing global market. Pacific Islanders were recruited by way of inducement, force, fraud, and in many cases, voluntary indenture. For the majority this included repeatedly signing on to the scheme for three year terms. Blackbirding is a somewhat controversial term, with scholars of history divided on the level of autonomy exercised by islanders to make their decision to be part of the scheme. Under the Masters and

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194 While Polynesian and Micronesian were also a part of forced migrations they were predominantly co-opted elsewhere. Polynesians were subjected to Peruvian labour schemes and Micronesians tended to be sent to plantations in Fiji or Hawaii. German New Guinea and New Caledonia like Australia used mostly Melanesian workers. See Firth 1976. The Transformation of the Labour Trade in New Guinea 1899-1914, Journal of Pacific History, Vol. 11, Iss. 1. pp. 51-65.; Price and Baker 1976. 'Origins of Pacific Island Labourers in Queensland 1863-1904: A Research Note', ibid. Vol. 11, Iss. pp. 106-121.


Servants Act and associated legislation designed specifically for the governance of the imported labour, it was a regulated and monitored labour market. In 1868, Queensland passed a major Act to govern the terms of recruitment for Pacific Islander labourers and their conditions while in the Colony. This was subsequently supplemented by a British Act in 1872 specifically to control the manner of recruitment. The 1868 Act remained in force until it was consolidated and revised in 1880. In 1884, the Amendment Act limited Islanders to field-work in tropical agriculture, and excluded them from working in sugar mills, the pastoral and maritime industries, and effectively limited them to the coastal areas. Only islanders who had arrived in Queensland before 1 September 1879 were exempted. This restricted employment opportunities and became the forerunner of racially discriminatory legislation introduced in the first years of the Commonwealth, such as the Immigration Restriction Act, which contributed to the White Australia Policy. The implementation of the Pacific Islanders Protection Act in 1872 made the practice of blackbirding less common, and allowed for legal indentured labour to become commonplace. Approximately 62000 employment contracts were issued to Melanesians from eighty islands, including Vanuatu, New Caledonia, Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea. The mortality rate was high, with an average of fifty deaths per thousand during the time spent in Queensland, ascribed to poor conditions and exposure to viruses and disease not previously encountered by the islanders. At Federation in 1901, Australia’s newly established federal government passed several acts including the Pacific Island Labour Act and The Immigration Restriction Act 1901, ending the employment of Pacific Islanders under the indentured labour scheme. The Immigration Restriction Act was passed by the Federal Parliament in 1901; its aim was to exclude all non-European migrants. The legislation package included the Pacific Islander Labourers Act and Section 15 of the 1901 Post and Telegraph Act providing that ships carrying Australian mails, and hence subsidised by the Commonwealth, should employ only white labour. Its stance was aligned to Australian nationalist sentiment of the late 1880s and 1890s. The majority of workers remaining in Australia after the turn of the century were deported back to their island countries as Australia limited the intake of immigrants who were non-European.

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200 Ibid.
201 Ibid.p. 211.
One aspect of the forced migration issue often ignored, or overlooked, is the impact of the policy on women in the Pacific. The history of Pacific colonialism is predominantly a gendered one, framed from a male perspective. The very knowledge that shapes historical context has been dominated by male accounts and male histories, however, men and women experienced colonialism in different ways. Labour migration, a major factor in shaping early regional relationships between colonial powers and Pacific Islanders, is no exception in this regard. Jolly argued the significance of this in her critique of historical accounts of migrant labour claiming that ‘nowhere is the gender dimension of colonial history clearer than in the history of migrant labour which for the most part, but not exclusively, has taken men away to work and left women in their place in Vanuatu’s villages’. The Melanesian islands had been a major source of forced labour for the Queensland sugar plantations. The workers recruited were mostly males between 16-25 years old, with women representing no more than 8.7 percent of the total recruited.

There are varying accounts for the low numbers of women recruited. Historical anthropologists point to constraints being placed on single women that restricted their agency to travel independently as a result of indigenous sexual politics, and the probability of reprisals against recruiters if women were recruited without the consent of chiefs or husbands. Australian policy at the time was based more around the idea that recruitment of young males both lessened the likelihood of Melanesians attempting to settle in the state permanently, and pari-parsu, ensured a higher profit margin by reducing the cost of supporting workers, as this ensured there would be few extended families to maintain. The managing of race relations in Australia, while acting to placate indigenous Melanesian politics to an extent, was the primary concern for recruiters whose interests lay in production and profit rather than respect for Melanesian sexual politics.

While the policy had the effect of minimising expenditure for Australia, its impact on Melanesia has been attributed to be a contributing factor to the declining population in the region. It reduced the availability of men to contribute to traditional systems of gender relations through their removal for long periods, thus affecting female reproduction. Most significantly, it interfered with traditional gendered parenting activities as young males traditionally took a great deal of responsibility for the care and

204 Corris, Pacific Island labour migrants in Queensland, p. 51.
upbringing of children. It also acted as a means of introducing new diseases to indigenous communities, which in turn impacted on population, health and reproduction. Furthermore, the introduction of new forms of violence in indigenous warfare, for example, access to firearms, to a lesser extent also changed the dynamics for settling. Jolly argued that predominantly male accounts of historical knowledge and contemporary scholarly work on colonial and postcolonial relations have perpetuated those accounts.

The failure to recognise women’s historical engagement with regional policy renders women’s experiences as invisible, which perpetuates the notion that women’s stories lack relevance. By marginalising women’s historical positions within regional policy, contemporary policy is disadvantaged. The failure to include and balance the historical perspectives and voices of both women and men seriously skews analytical understandings of how Pacific Islanders relate to, and participate in, regional policy and policy-making processes. It creates false boundaries for critique and analysis which in turn perpetuate hierarchies of knowledge on which policy is built. This contributes to the cultural impact of colonisation, whereby ideas of gender differences that lead to inequalities have been a by-product of western notions of development and political systems. This does not mean to imply that pre-colonial, traditional systems of politics and governance have not also been gendered, however, it is the imposed colonial and post-colonial political systems which are the locations of regional policy-making that are the focus of this study.

Exposing how women experienced a region-wide policy of forced or even voluntary migration in the early colonial period, opens new spaces for dialogue on how interactions with post-colonial attempts to include or exclude their voices in policy-making processes are shaped by the past. Pacific women often have been historically sexualised and objectified, further adding to the dilemma of how the past undermines the actions of the present if it is ignored or disregarded. They have typically been portrayed as highly sexualised, and it is this phenomenon of sexualising women that is at the heart of practices which minimize women’s participation in policy-making.

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207 Ibid. p. 135.
208 Ibid. p. 122.
209 Ibid.
210 Ibid. pp. 36-137.
Sexualised perceptions of women impacted on the social construction of gender roles in the region and contributed to the subversion of women’s status as Pacific Island countries adapted to western political frameworks for governance, and the building of social structures that support them.

The forced migration scheme typifies the socially constructed perspective of gender; the sexualisation of women who became recruits through the labelling of them as ‘rebels’ or ‘prostitutes’ is in stark contrast to the perceptions of male participation in labour schemes. Women were demonised as sexually deviant or rebellious by historical storying of the blackbirding trade by Holthouse, and in scholarly writing by historians Scarre and Corris, where they were portrayed as having connived with the recruiters to skirt around legislation in order to carry on affairs with male recruits. On the other hand, even though arguably exploited in terms of how they were rewarded for service, men were portrayed as experiencing a push-pull effect of migration that included the temptation of travel to faraway places, and potential to accumulate new forms of wealth. Women were seen to be ‘running away’ and to be less motivated by agency than by their sexual currency. Jolly argued that it was highly unlikely that those same factors motivating males – wealth accumulation and the intrigue of distant travel - were not also major motivators for women. The portrayal of women who participated in the labour trade as rebellious and deviant greatly underestimates women’s actual agency.

Another aspect that underestimates the impact of colonial practices on women was the evident negative effect on indigenous gender relations due to the way that men and women experienced the phenomenon:

Male migrant labour entails a set of life experiences which are now unique to men and engage a separate language and subculture which divides men from women in new ways. It involves a form of male solidarity and male domination forged in the experience of hard labour and ethnic interaction.

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214 Corris, Passage, Port and Plantation: A History of Solomons Islands Labour Migration 1870-1914, p. 45.
215 The use of the term agency in reference to women’s motivations is linked to the feminist, social and political theories of how women account for their capacity for individual choices and actions. See McNay 2000. Gender and agency: reconfiguring the subject in feminist and social theory. Malden, Mass.: Polity Press. pp. 10, 58.
Men went so far as to develop a ‘men only’ language that was used as a political weapon to divide women and men in ways previously not experienced in traditional life. On the Vanuatu island of South Pentecost, men ‘increasingly perceived women’s recruitment as undesirable and ... acted to impede it and indeed to inhibit women’s wider contacts’; women’s learning and use of the Bislama language was actively discouraged, and men used this strategy as a means of control over women’s access to and participation in labour migration schemes.218 Women, on the other hand, were expected to fill the male void at home and pick up the shortfall of male participation in sustaining village life.

Women were forced therefore to reconsider their traditional place in society and relocate themselves as the other, or the invisible, in terms of negotiating the costs and benefits of migration for participants. While the traditional status of women varied considerably throughout the Pacific, it had been negotiated by processes of internal cultural politics, this new practice of trading in labour across the region involving colonial powers as a third party can be viewed as an interruption to that pattern of negotiation. Men engaged more directly than women with colonial powers on matters that dramatically affected Pacific economies, social relations and development. This pattern of engagement continued during and after the colonial period and was also evident when formal regional relationships began to emerge within the period of decolonisation. The colonial experience, in general, was by its nature a disruptive one and was fundamentally divisive as it changed the status quo and altered the balance of power in some societies.219

Consequently, in the Pacific, these disjunctions were manifest in gender relations where, in the quest to develop the region, colonial systems of patriarchy were imposed on colonised people with little recourse to, or understanding of, traditional gender arrangements. Rapaport argues that colonialism did not necessarily challenge existing patriarchal arrangements in Pacific societies, but more importantly it altered them in ways that introduced increased levels of disadvantage for women.220 European economic influences advantageously positioned men as the main beneficiaries of new modes of production. Cash cropping in the Solomon Islands, for example, was a masculine domain. Despite women also contributing to the agricultural labour force,

219 Connell 2007. Southern Theory: The global dynamics of knowledge in social science. Crows Nest Australia: Allen & Unwin. p. 46. Connell argues that colonialism introduced ‘fundamental disjunctions into societal experience’ that were catastrophic to the colonised.
they were marginalised from the cash economy and restricted to subsistence farming, which was once a shared enterprise.\textsuperscript{221}

There was also a focus on the feminisation of domestic tasks, mostly by missionaries who imparted the gendered ideals of the Victorian era such as women’s work being located in the home.\textsuperscript{222} Missionary interventions into social life were, for example, a major contributing factor to the alteration of traditional gender relations in Simbo, Papua New Guinea.\textsuperscript{223} The introduction of the concept of the nuclear family living in western styled housing arrangements, and the medicalisation of reproductive health resulted in women being less autonomous than they had been in the past. Men took over control of reproductive health by controlling women’s access to family planning services whereas reproduction had previously been managed by women using traditional methods. Similar to the impact of forced migration in Vanuatu, men also took less responsibility for child care, previously a shared task, alienating women further from cash economies as they managed increased domestic burdens.\textsuperscript{224} This positioning of men as actors in the public sphere of the cash economy, both at home and as migrant workers, and women as increasingly restricted to the private sphere of domestic work or localised subsistence farming, can again be seen as altering local gender relations, and, more importantly, laying a foundation for regional development that replicates western models of development where male privilege dominated decision-making practices.

For the most part however colonial interests and priorities were focused domestically – developing their own economy and securing the region so as to support this and, it was not until international politics dictated that formalising a regionalist agenda became a serious issue in Australia. The notion of planning for a cohesively integrated Pacific region first emerged as a result of changed geopolitical relationships at the end of World War One. One outcome was that the newly created League of Nations directed Western colonial government’s attention to, what Bennet termed, the ‘fate of dependent peoples’.\textsuperscript{225} In the Pacific, this meant an increased degree of responsibility was placed on the Australian government towards its interests in the South Pacific. It also demanded a more inclusive approach to regional development planning, although domestic concerns about security were at the forefront of debate on how to proceed.

\textsuperscript{221} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{224} Ibid.
Political attention to developing a regional identity was apparent by the 1930s when there were periodical calls for special security arrangements in the Pacific Ocean. For example, in 1937, Menzies declared that Australia would ‘welcome a regional understanding in the western Pacific’ as well as a non-aggression pact at the regional level.\textsuperscript{226} In his first speech as Prime Minister, Menzies referred to Australia as having a primary responsibility in the Pacific that should be guided by its own diplomatic relations in the region.\textsuperscript{227} He reiterated the sentiment in his 1940 election speech, furthering the point by noting the progress his government had made since his election the previous year by securing contacts with New Zealand, Canada and South Africa independently from Britain as a strategy to strengthen the nation’s position as a regional power.\textsuperscript{228}

However, there remained sensitivity to the notion that external threats might interfere with progress in terms of economic prosperity through trade and resource exploitation, and that the islands of the Pacific had been a site of vulnerability for Australia in this respect. Australia had, by the early 1920s, dominated entrepreneurial endeavours over many Pacific sites with exploitable natural resources such as phosphate and timber and was keen to preserve its place economically. It had also been forced to accept that the region remained of strategic interest to other states as seen in the Japanese presence during World War One.\textsuperscript{229} Thus, the foundations of regionalism were seen as driven by both economic and security issues and also, to some degree, benevolent in that the more dominant Australia’s role in ensuring peace and stability in the region, the more it would benefit from future development.

Concurrently, there was a change in traditional western academic framing of the South Pacific. Western perceptions of the region began to explore the possibility of a self-evident region not exclusively determined by empire-built political boundaries. The Institute of Pacific Relations (IPR) was established in Hawaii in 1925 as a forum to promote mutual understanding amongst Pacific Rim states by facilitating discussion, research, and education’.\textsuperscript{230} Membership included Australia, New Zealand, Canada,
China, Japan and the United States. At its third conference in 1930, the Kyoto Conference, Felix Keesing, an anthropologist, claimed:

The Pacific area has, during the last few centuries, been a laboratory for a number of very significant experiments in human interaction...Spheres of influence, protectorates, colonies territories and, most recently of all, mandates have come into existence, these diverse political forms being now usually referred to as ‘dependencies’...

Keesing predicted that the regionalisation of the Pacific would progress more along political than geographical lines as this was a natural, predictable, division. He argued it would necessarily be so due to the profound effect of different types of political control over colonial territories and as a result of mandates post World War One. However, when separating the different political divisions into sub groupings, he noted that some Pacific geographical locations corresponded with empire driven political divisions. He believed that governing Polynesian, Melanesian and Micronesian dependencies, and advancing their position within international relations was ‘a delicate one’.

There was a growing perception that the governing of the Pacific Islands would prove difficult, at least in part, due to the artificial boundaries imposed by colonial powers. This view was reiterated by Eggleston, who raised the concern that Pacific Islanders were becoming self-conscious. They insist that, in the consideration of their problems, their own point of view should be respected and not only the interests of powers elsewhere’, a view that was considered controversial at the time. While Eggleston’s paper was concerned in the main with the development of the Australian continent and concerns regarding immigration, he noted the rising public opinion that the Australian government had failed in its duty to indigenous Australians. He warned that Europe and America should heed the Australian people’s expectation, that government should strive to provide new and better policies for the benefit of indigenous people and that this should be extended to all Pacific Islands. He suggests that island territories should be held ‘in trust for civilization’ and that ‘they accept the various limitations on sovereignty imposed on the mandate and themselves responsible

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234 Ibid. pp. 451-453.
to the League [of nations] for their good administration’. Eggleston repeated Keesing’s warning regarding the probability of difficult times ahead for the Pacific Islands, noting that ‘in the future Pacific affairs will probably become increasingly concerned with the Pacific Islands’. He raised the notion that, even though Australia held sway over the region in some respects, this position was not to be considered beyond contestation. These early references to the importance of the Pacific Islanders’ own sense of position and desire for power over their territories signalled the awareness of a Pacific consciousness on Australia’s part, and indicated a developing sense of responsibility for the governance and social well-being of the islands and their inhabitants, at least from within the academy.

Fourteen years later, when international politics was confronted by the added complication of World War Two, the idea of some measure of formal regional governance began to take shape. In 1943, the Australian Minister for External Affairs, Dr Evatt, wrote to New Zealand’s first High Commissioner to Australia, Carl Berendsen, outlining the need to open discussions on post-war security. In particular, he referred to ‘arrangements for the Southern Pacific’. These arrangements included the protection of common interests in the post-war political settlement. Walter Nash, then New Zealand Minister to the United States, went so far as to flag the idea of a regional government for the Pacific Islands. He promoted the idea in the American press that there should be:

an international advisory or consultative council for the Pacific island groups which would be composed of nations having interests in the area, such as the United States, Great Britain, France, Australia and New Zealand.

However, prior to any arrangement that included countries from outside the region, Australia and New Zealand signed the 1944 Australia–New Zealand Canberra Pact (ANZAC Pact), an agreement that officially recognised the need for the establishment of a formal region. The ANZAC Pact would provide a secure zone of defence ‘comprising the Southwest and South Pacific areas’ and that it would be ‘based on Australia and

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238 Ibid.
239 Ibid. p. 7.
240 Post war reconstruction was a major issue for international politics. See Watkins 1943. ‘Regionalism and Plans for Post-War Reconstruction: The First Three Years’, Social Forces, Vol. 21, Iss. 4. pp. 379-389. Watkins analyses the debates surround the construction of ‘regions’ as a strategy for peace. He outlines the debates of the time citing four main categories within which the debates over regionalism as a concept are framed: federalism, continental regionalism, a revival and strengthening of the League of Nations, and the retaining of the war-time institutions of the United Nations.
241 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) 1943. Historical Documents no 305, Evatt to Berendsen: Letter Canberra, 21 October 1943. Canberra: DFAT.
New Zealand’. It was primarily a means of driving and coordinating efforts in the South and South-West Pacific to expedite a successful end to war activities, although it also took into account the welfare of the indigenous populations. The governments of Australia and New Zealand had declared their intention to establish a regional zone of defence at a meeting of Ministers on Pacific Affairs held in Canberra on January 17-21 1944. Item one of the Draft Agenda located the beginning of official dialogue regarding a bilateral agreement to protect both parties’ interests in the Pacific:

6. Agreement between the two Governments to act together in matters of common concern in the South and South-West Pacific Zone, e.g., control of territories, native welfare, and communications between Australia and New Zealand.

7. So far as compatible with the existence of separate military commands, to co-ordinate defence resources for the remaining period of the war.

The proposal covered issues pertinent to regional security during and immediately after the conclusion of the war. As well as covering issues, such as the development of bases and airfields war-time administration and collaboration, it specifically noted that it should consider the effects of war on native labour, social life and standards of living.

It also sought to entrench Australia in the region by taking a role in the disposal of Japanese territories in light of the Japanese defeat in World War Two, and significantly to take a role in any ‘change in the sovereignty or system of the control of any the islands of the Pacific’ thus including the French, British, Dutch and Americans.

The agreement became the vehicle for protecting colonial interests while moving the Pacific toward a process of decolonisation. It provided a framework for encouraging and strengthening international cooperation where the collective focus was on security, as well as promoting the economic and social welfare of the Pacific Islanders living in non-self-governing territories. This model of regional cooperation was initiated and

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245 Ibid. Articles 29, 38.
implemented by colonial representatives with minimal involvement of islanders.\textsuperscript{248} Furthermore, the conference of Australia and New Zealand Ministers that drafted the agreement formally, called for the establishment of a Regional Commission that would oversee development in areas of economics, research and anthropology, and health services. Notably, it included the setting of ‘recognised standards’ for labour conditions for indigenous workers and the participation of ‘natives in administration and social services, education, [and] nutrition’.\textsuperscript{249} During World War Two, the security of the South Pacific and Australasian region had acquired a noticeably higher degree of priority by colonial interests than ever before. Paternal interest in regional affairs had heightened further post World War Two; Australian government, under the Labor Leadership of Prime Minister John Curtin and the Minister for External Affairs Dr Evatt, was determined to play a major role in the reconstruction of Pacific politics. As the region had been a theatre for direct war activity this had sharpened the government’s awareness of the vulnerability of such a vast island region. The recognition and inclusion of indigenous participation in the establishing of a regional identity was firmly entrenched in this period, although the level of participation was dictated by colonial powers and not local indigenous people. Moreover, it was modelled on western understandings of political governance without any substantial deference to pre-existing indigenous political systems.

The eventual outcome of the Australia and New Zealand Ministers conference was the formation of the South Pacific Commission (SPC).\textsuperscript{250} For the first time, the notion of a formalised, collective, regional representative body was tabled by the Australian government in order to protect Australia’s interests in the strategic management of the area. Subsequently, the \textit{Canberra Agreement} of 1947 was implemented as a joint agreement between Australia, the French Republic, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, New Zealand, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America. In a cablegram to the Department of External Affairs, Forsyth discussed the reasons for excluding the Netherlands from discussions:

\begin{quote}
The question of Dutch participation in South Seas Commission came up. The points I made which met their approval were that present was not best time to consider this, that Dutch participation was not essential (Netherlands indeed is not named in relevant clauses of Australian/New Zealand Agreement) that in any event Dutch
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{249} Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), \textit{Historical Document 18, Conference of Australian and New Zealand Ministers: Proceedings of the Conference CANBERRA, 17-21 January 1944}.
participation in South Seas Commission would be at most in respect of Dutch New Guinea only and that it would be best to begin with governmental agreement in principle between the five powers [2] named in the Australia/New Zealand Agreement...’. 251

This agreement moved policy away from the focus of securing the region in direct reference to the conclusion of the war, as did the *Canberra Pact*, and toward a longer term strategy to maintain peace and ensure development. It recognised the need for external colonial powers active in the region such as the UK, USA, France and the Netherlands to work together with Australian and New Zealand. The agreement set out terms for the establishment of the SPC with Article six of the agreement explaining:

> The Commission shall be a consultative and advisory body to the participating Governments in matters affecting the economic and social development of the non-self-governing territories within the scope of the Commission and the welfare and advancement of their peoples. 252

An alternate body, the South Pacific Conference, was also convened as a vehicle for giving indigenous Pacific leaders representation at the regional level. The Conference, first held in 1950, was attended by a delegation of forty three representatives from the fourteen Pacific Island territories: American Samoa, British Solomon Islands Protectorate, Cook Islands (including Niue), Ellice Islands, Fiji, French Oceania, Gilbert Islands, Nauru, Netherlands, New Guinea, New Caledonia, New Hebrides, Papua New Guinea, and Western Samoa. Representatives of the Tongan Government did not attend although they were invited. 253 It was the first time indigenous representatives of the island States had come together in their own right, albeit as an addendum to the colonial power dominated SPC, to discuss issues involving their region. Sir Brian Freeston, Governor of Fiji and Western Pacific High Commissioner, described the gathering as a ‘Parliament of the South Pacific Peoples’ in his opening speech to the first Conference. 254 While the SPC had a strict policy of ‘no politics’, the Conference was free to conduct discussions on the pressing political issues relevant to the region, such as the decolonisation process and nuclear testing. 255 The policies of the SPC were also

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255 For an understanding of the issue of nuclear testing in the Pacific, see: de Ishta, *Daughters of the Pacific*, pp. 17-40.; Keju-Johnson 1998. "For the Good of Mankind". In *Pacific women speak out for...*
discussed at the Conference and the collective membership acted as an advisory body to the SPC making recommendations to the Commission regarding the Commission’s work and research programs. At the conclusion of the first Conference, forty-two resolutions were endorsed covering health, social, and economic issues.

In the early development of the Conference, some interest in engaging with the concept of gender and gender equality at a regional level is evident. The resolutions of the Second South Pacific Conference adopted a number of resolutions directly aimed at improving the education of girls, enhancing communication and collaboration of women’s groups at a regional level, and the production of gender specific material for girls and women. These were meant to address the specific needs of girls and women in terms of education and information. This occurred formally through the development of special textbooks and literature for reading, and less formally through production of a women’s magazine for the South Pacific territories. The overall goal was to encourage ‘full and continuous cooperation between men and women’, and through conference Resolution 40: Role of Women and Women’s Organisations in the Community under the umbrella of Social Development, urged member states and territories to introduce legislative and other measures to achieve this end. The resolutions were not universally accepted however, with American Samoa and the Cook Islands arguing that they already had sufficient legislation to promote equality. The adoption of further legislations was seen as unnecessary as for American Samoa whose delegate argued that women already ‘enjoy equality under the law’, and the Cook Islands delegate stated that the provisions of the recommendations were already in full effect.

The Conference initially met every three years in order to discuss current issues and to make recommendations to the SPC. Indigenous involvement in the SPC itself did not occur until 1956 when an islander was included as a delegate to the Commission. The Hon. Ratu Edward Cakobau O.B.E. M.C., member of the Governors Council of Fiji,
was made alternate Commissioner for the United Kingdom.261 The Conference underwent a series of reforms in the 1960s and 1970s whereby it moved from a purely advisory body to one with some autonomy, where its recommendations to the Commission on SPC work programs and budget would not be altered unless deemed ‘absolutely necessary’.262 Eventually the Conference was merged with the annual Session of the Commission that oversaw the SPC budget, but it was not until 1983 that a review of the SPC by Secretary General Francis Bogotu recommended a major reorganisation of the structure of the SPC. The Saipan Resolution that emerged from the review saw all member states and territories given equal membership status, whereas prior to this only the independent states had voting rights. The South Pacific Conference then replaced the SPC as the supreme ruling body and all member governments were required to assume some degree of financial responsibility under an assessment scheme of their capacity to contribute.263

This first stage of regionalism can be viewed as both an exercise in colonial self-interest in terms of securing the region, and as paternalistic and patriarchal in its approaches to regional development.264 Western powers scrambled for control over land and resources. Pacific women were objectified through their portrayal as sexual beings and marginalised from the economy and decision-making processes in ways that mirrored western gender hierarchies. Policies like the forced migration scheme, cash cropping, and the impact of missionary interventions changed both men’s and women’s social status, impacting on cultural practices such as shared family responsibilities. As a result, outside models of politics rather than local cultural politics determined women’s access to power. During the early years of the SPC and the South Pacific Conference, colonial governments focused on providing technical assistance in areas of health, education, transportation, social welfare, community organisations, agriculture and economic development to newly independent states.265 However, these initial moves toward regionalisation had been a decision-making process where women were marginalised from public affairs. The emergence of the South Pacific Conference, although it enabled indigenous people to be heard, mirrored the SPC in its model of male dominated representation. Women’s concerns were discussed by male leaders and limited to policies such as social development and health. Women’s perspectives were not present in policies that covered issues such as security and economic development.

263 Ibid. pp. 24-25.
264 See Chapter One pp. 8-9 for a discussion on the use of the term ‘patriarchy’ in this thesis.
265 Padelford, Regional Cooperation in the South Pacific: Twelve Years of the South Pacific Commission, p. 394.
Stage Two: Asserting a Pacific Position

Whilst Australia’s post-war relationship with the South Pacific was dominated by colonialism, security and establishing a regional focus and patriarchal in nature, the second phase was one of strategic denial, as Australia premised its actions in the Pacific on a fear of Soviet expansionism. Stage one regionalism centred on strengthening internal Pacific infrastructures and increasing levels of services, and incorporated phases one and two of Australia’s relations with the region, the second stage of regionalism aimed to increase Pacific perspectives in regional planning, including political relationships. It was also a time when the Australian government’s role in regional development changed from colonial power and major overseer of political agendas to a more partner-oriented approach to relations. This phase is therefore defined by an increase in the participation of Pacific people in regional institutional bodies, and a collectively cooperative approach to integrating the diverse interests of new and emerging countries in decision-making at a regional level. This stage was the beginning of a more inclusive style of regionalism; however, it remained heavily focused on security.

Strategic denial was a term coined by Greg Fry in bringing about understanding of Australian policies which sought to deny Soviet expansionism within the South Pacific. Fry argues Australia was concerned that Soviet expansionism in the Pacific region could result in the establishment of a military base, may pose threats to Australia’s sea lines, and importantly could see the Soviets exerting political influence within the region – as Australia was a part of the Western Alliance its commitment to promotion of security in the region was foremost on its agenda. Furthering his earlier observations, Fry discussed the strategic denial policy in terms of misjudged diplomacy. There had been a shift in the way Australia conceptualised its role in the Pacific in that the focus moved from leadership to protectionism over the region as a result of Cold war tensions. The Soviet Union made various overtures toward ramping up relations with South Pacific states including aid offers to Tonga which caused region-wide debate. Comprehensive oceanographic research was conducted both by independent Soviet interests and in collaboration with intergovernmental organisations. While the war in Afghanistan in 1979-80 saw a freeze on Soviet relations, Australia, New Zealand and the United States had all become concerned about Soviet policies of ‘back door’ legitimisation of its presence and worked to offer alternatives via partner oriented

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policies for marine research.\textsuperscript{268} The Cold War also changed the way policy objectives were considered. Fry argued that during this period there was a drift from the global to a more regional orientation which included a heightened focus on internal stability as opposed to external threats.\textsuperscript{269} This signalled a move away from a security-dominated regionalism which had been evident for decades, to a framework that was more inclusive of human rights, democratic principles and sovereignty a non-interventionist approach.

The decolonisation process for South Pacific countries began at the conclusion of the Second World War and ended in 1994 with the independence of Palau, the last of the islands to gain independence to date. New Caledonia, French Polynesia, and Wallis and Fortuna remained territories of France, and Tokelau is a self-administering dependency of New Zealand. Others, though independent, retained compacts of free association with western states: Niue and the Cook Islands are self-governing in association with New Zealand, and Palau and the Republic of the Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia have an independent compact of free association with the United States. Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu all gained independence during a period of rapid decolonisation that took place during the 1960s-1980s and this impacted upon Australia’s position in, and relationship to, the region.\textsuperscript{270}

Prior to decolonisation, development across the Pacific in locations that had been colonised by Europeans created opportunities that favoured the external interests of the colonial powers, in particular those of Britain, France and Germany.\textsuperscript{271} For example, natural resources such as sugar cane in Fiji, copra from the Solomon Islands, gold from Papua and phosphate from Nauru were used as a source of income for colonial powers. Infrastructure was developed to support associated enterprises that allowed the colonisers to participate in the global economy but it did not necessarily enhance the living standards of the indigenous populations as workers were paid low wages, a practice sustained by colonial governments who supported employers rather than their indigenous employees.\textsuperscript{272}

Social development was managed by religious groups with a paternalistic approach rather than supporting traditional cultural systems.\textsuperscript{273} Christian missionary endeavours to bring about changes to customary practices were widespread throughout

\textsuperscript{269} Fry, Australia's South Pacific policy : from strategic denial to constructive commitment, pp. 27-28.
\textsuperscript{270} See Appendix Two
\textsuperscript{272} Ibid. p. 184.
\textsuperscript{273} Ibid. p. 182; Langmore, The object lesson of a civilised, Christian home, pp. 84-89.
the region, and subsequently religious values were adopted by locals. This contributed to the reshaping of many cultural and hierarchical systems of village life. For instance, typifying the influence Christianity exerted in Vanuatu, Christian missionaries undertook programs designed to change the lives of women and girls so that they became more oriented toward western conceptualisations of womanhood. Missionaries redirected local women away from traditional communal lifestyles to that of the nuclear family unit, and changed the way women dressed to conform to western notions of modesty. The results of this were mixed. For many women, a new focus on home-based duties changed the domestic structure of village life, whereby women’s workloads increased with the addition of new domestic tasks to pre-existing duties. Laundering and maintenance of cloth needed for new western styles of clothing was, for example, a more burdensome task than the work associated with traditional tapa cloth and pandanus mats. The wearing of westernised clothing increased in tandem with the spread of Christianity, and thus the burden on women increased over time. On the other hand, there were few changes observed to mothering styles as a result of missionary influences, with shared parenting duties remaining a strong part of village kinship bonds. Also, despite missionary interventions aimed at reducing existing instances of domestic violence, new imposed western models of male dominance meant women had little recourse for retrospective justice. Women’s influence and authority was diminished as they became devalued as merely ‘domestic beings’ and men were extolled as ‘public beings’. Women therefore were also restrained as members of nation-state building as they were excluded from public life in favour of male dominated western institutions of public life.

As Pacific States have been among the last to achieve independence, development in the context of state-building is a relatively contemporary issue. One of the tasks required to form an independent state is the establishment of a constitution, and some Pacific states set out their vision for moving forward from their colonial past

275 Ibid. p. 44.
277 Jolly, ‘To Save the Girls for Brighter and Better Lives’: Presbyterian Missions and Women in the South of Vanuatu: 1848-1870, p. 44.
278 Ibid. p. 45
279 Ibid.
within a constitutional framework. The Preamble to Fiji’s constitution, for example, is committed to moving the country forward by ‘economic and social advancement of all communities, respecting their rights and interests and strengthening our institutions of government’.\textsuperscript{280} Tuvalu’s Preamble places emphasis on the significance and importance of retaining traditions and culture, though it also stated that its values and how they could be expressed were fluid and subject to change over time.\textsuperscript{281} The Papua New Guinea government went so far as to identify a number of National Goals and Directive Principles in its constitution, with Goal Two calling for ‘all people’ to be involved in the development of the country which indicated an intention toward gender equality in development practice and Goal Three, which is focused on economic independence stated that all governmental bodies were required ‘to base their planning for political, economic and social development on these Goals and Principles’, further indicating that gender equality should be integral to policy decisions.\textsuperscript{282} The task of translating such ideals into reality has proved impossible without outside assistance however, as developing States face the challenge of limited resources.

At the same time that Pacific states were beginning to realise independence through decolonisation, the United Nations began to turn its attention to the capacity of underdeveloped, poor nations in an effort to advance development opportunities. In 1961, it declared the first United Nations Development Decade with an aim to accelerating economic growth among member states, including those new, or imminently, independent states such as those in the Pacific who aimed to become members of the United Nations.\textsuperscript{283} Although economic growth was a focus of the United Nations, concern for social development and human rights was also evident in the Secretary-General’s report \textit{The UN Development Decade – Proposals for Action}. The Secretary-General’s report warned that positioning a focus on the provision of economic aid, over or at the expense of a focus on human rights, could have the result that the well-being of people intended as beneficiaries may become secondary to the aid itself or that they become ‘seen only as instruments of production rather than as free entities’.\textsuperscript{284} The report also flagged the need to incorporate changes into the type of aid made available in order to improve social and cultural aspects of development alongside economic development. In terms of women’s significance in international policy-making, Connell and Pettman’s arguments that international institutions operate from a

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gendered orientation resonate clearly. The declaration fails to pay attention to gender inequality or the development concerns of women through its omission of any reference to women or gender. In its early history, the United Nations embodied the notion of a gendered male institution. Even though it did recognise some need to address women’s issues, these were handled within a framework of human rights, and were confined to the Commission on the Status of Women or the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly that dealt with social and humanitarian matters.285

The idea of women or gender being an integral category of analysis in mainstream development policy was not considered necessary until the second UN Decade of Development called attention to the issue. Development policy at the international level had largely marginalised women’s perspectives as separate to mainstream policy. The International Development Strategy for the Second Decade called for women to be fully integrated into development efforts.286 In 1970, when the United Nations declared a second Development Decade to begin in 1971, the preamble to the declaration noted that little had been achieved in developing countries during the time of the first Development Decade. It highlighted in particular the poor living conditions of ‘countless millions of people’ in the developing world.287 While the resolution noted the onus of responsibility for development progress lay with individual states; it gave clear direction to the international community to support and assist developing states.288

Despite the United Nations’ focus on development and increasing women’s status in development, the Pacific Islands remained one of the most underdeveloped regions in the world.289 Echoing the move to escalate the status of the South Pacific Conference decades earlier, by 1970 there was agitation to create a new and more autonomous political body that would give the region a forum for political debate and an avenue to collaboratively address issues of regional growth and development. Visiting Australia in April 1970, the Premier of the Cook Islands, Albert Henry, took the

288 Ibid.
289 United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) 2004. Development and Globalization: Facts and Figures. New York: United Nations Publications. p. 2. The region had a number of countries figuring in the United Nations Least Developed States (LDCs) list in the 1970s and 1980s including Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Kiribati, Samoa, and Tuvalu. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) first used the phrase ‘Least Developed Countries’ (LDCs) in 1971. It denotes countries that are classified as ‘poor and considered highly disadvantaged in their development processes’. Listed countries are recognised as being at high risk of failing to combat poverty and in need of high levels of international aid support. The aim of the list is to draw international attention to structural problems and encourage development partners to give ‘special concessions and benefits in their favour’.
opportunity to nudge Australia into action to initiate a new look regional body. Henry was concerned about the potential for the existing South Pacific Commission to be politicised as independence became a reality for more Pacific nations, and he proposed that the South Pacific Conference should become the vehicle for political discussions between states. In a discussion paper for the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) in 1970, the desire for Australia to retain a high level of influence over any increased regionalism was outlined with some clarity. Kieran Desmond, a section head with DFA, argued that Australia should move swiftly to establish itself in a political forum so as to gain the ‘balance of advantage’. Desmond’s paper explained that while leaders from the South Pacific Commission member States had increased their engagement with existing regional meetings they were also increasingly unhappy with the level of debate and restrictions on content; the arrangements of the post-World War Two period were seen by those leaders as antiquated and inadequate for the needs of independent, or aspiring sovereign nations. The region could no longer afford to ignore the politics of economy and trade and the inherent difficulty of discussion that lacked political content. SPC leaders, he claimed, had argued that while ‘the territories had come of age’ there was a feeling that the SPC was not in step.

**Establishment of the Pacific Islands Forum**

The South Pacific Forum (SPF) and its administrative arm, the South Pacific Bureau for Economic Cooperation (SPEC, 1973), were established in response to both the limitations to initiating regional cooperation within the South Pacific Commissions’ restrictive agenda as perceived by Pacific leaders, and an Australian government perception that they needed to pre-empt any alternative body from forming. Australia was supported by Charles Barnes, the then Minister for External Territories, who supported the move through co-opting the New Zealand and British approval for the forum through consultations between the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and counterparts in Britain and New Zealand. In May 1970, the Department of Foreign Affairs Acting Deputy Secretary, C.T. Moodie, held talks with G.R. Laking, the Secretary of the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to ensure that Australian and New Zealand governments would play an equal role in guiding the discussions on regionalism. According to a Department of Foreign Affairs Central Office briefing paper

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291 Ibid. p. 2

292 Ibid. pp. 2-3

293 Desmond 1970. *A South Pacific Regional Organisation which could “discuss political matters”*. Canberra: Department of Foreign Affairs.


295 Doran, *Australia and the origins of the Pacific Islands Forum*, p. 5.
prepared for Australia’s Deputy Prime Minister, J.D Anthony, the New Zealand government had concerns over Australia’s motives.\footnote{Ibid. pp. 6-7.} Despite this, Moodie reported that he had ‘clarified a number of questions’ of concern and that the New Zealand government was ready to proceed as an equal partner with the Australian government.\footnote{Ibid. p. 11.} By April 1971 Australia’s new Foreign Affairs Minister Leslie Bury, serving under Prime Minister William McMahon, was nervous about British withdrawal from the region and, moreover, that it might compromise Australian security by not moving the issue forward. He argued that there needed to be an increased capacity to influence the future of regional development. This, he claimed, should be linked to Australia’s association with Papua New Guinea, bolstered by a demonstrated interest in welfare, and a sympathetic approach to the aspirations of the islander people. Bury was concerned there would be a deterioration in Australia’s ‘strategic situation’ if some of the Territories of the South West Pacific were to come under the influence of countries perceived to be unfriendly to Australia.\footnote{Australian Government 1971. \textit{National Archives, Cabinet Papers 1971, Submission No 47, Bury to Cabinet, 8 April 1971.}}

The first meeting of the South Pacific Forum was held in Wellington in August of 1971, attended by representatives from the five independent states of the time (Cook Islands, Fiji, Nauru, Tonga and Western Samoa), together with representatives from Australia and New Zealand. The group immediately took up the challenge of discussing French nuclear testing in the Pacific by petitioning France to end atmospheric testing in the region, showing from the outset that it would debate and take action on issues of concern to the islands of a political nature. It also had a strong focus on trade and education, regionalism and matters of transport, and notably floated the idea of forming an economic union.\footnote{Doran, \textit{Australia and the origins of the Pacific Islands Forum}, pp. 4-14.} Forum Leaders, comprising Prime Ministers of Pacific Islands Countries (PICs) or their appointed representatives, together with Australia and New Zealand representatives formed a primary decision-making group, convening annually for discussions. The outcome of those meetings was articulated in the release of a non-binding communiqué outlining the various agreements reached during their meetings. The Leaders also reviewed guiding policies suggested by members to assist individual states in meeting PIF aims.\footnote{See the Pacific Forum website for electronic copies of all Forum Communiqué since 1971: http://www.forumsec.org/} The Forum was soon recognised by regional Pacific Island governments and international organisations, such as the United Nations, where it
has held official observer status since 1994 as the pre-eminent regional political organisation.

The South Pacific Bureau for Economic Cooperation (SPBEC) was established in 1972 by the SPF with the aim of encouraging trade and promoting regional economic development. It became the Forum Secretariat in 1988 and is now the implementing body for the PIF’s agenda. The Secretariat is headed by the Forum Secretary General who is appointed every three years by the Leaders. Also in 1988 the South Pacific Forum established the South Pacific Organisations Coordinating Committee (SPOCC) to foster cooperation and to assist in developing partnerships within the region. SPOCC later became the Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific (CROP). CROP is comprised of ten Pacific intergovernmental regional organisations that meet annually prior to the Leaders meeting and at other times throughout the year as deemed necessary by the Forum Secretariat, who acts as the permanent chair. This grouping consists of the heads of the University of the South Pacific (USP); the Pacific Power Association (PPA); Fiji School of Medicine (FSMed); Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (PIFFA); Pacific Islands Development Programme (PIDP); Secretariat for the Pacific Community (SPC); Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP); and the South Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO).

As the decolonisation process unfolded, members of the PIF grew from an initial group of seven to sixteen members including Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. This second stage of regionalism had retained a strong focus on technical assistance to the new grouping of independent Pacific states for specific economic, scientific, educational, agricultural and health issues and concerns. There were coordinated efforts to inter-connect issues at a political level that had been lacking previously, particularly through the establishment of CROP and partnerships with external regional

303 Peebles, Pacific Regional Order, pp. 59-60.
305 Ibid.
organisations. This stage of development had included little female representation in formal politics at the élite level.

**Stage Three: Pan-Pacific Regionalism**

The complexity with which third stage regionalism planning was integrated across existing institutions sets it apart from the previous two stages. I refer to the third stage as Pan–Pacific Regionalism as it involves a holistic approach to multi-state regional cooperation that spans economic, social and political considerations. This differs to existing literature on ‘new’ or ‘progressive’ regionalism where the focus is centered on regional trade agreements or internal economic growth. Pan-Pacific Regionalism has three distinct characteristics not present in previous regional arrangements: a) a regionalism that springs from globalisation, or the pressures brought to bear on the region by globalisation; b) regionalism focused on increased commitments to integration and cooperation; c) regionalism that sees the devolution of leadership and power from a colonial or post-colonial power base to a more localised power base. The existing model of regionalism emanating from the PIF satisfies all these criteria in that, while the characteristics may have been factors of past models of regionalism at some point, they are all present concurrently and all have a deep bearing on policies developed by the PIF. As previously discussed, past models of regionalism had the central aim of assisting newly emerging states during the period of decolonisation with a tendency to be led by the metropolitan member states. Pan-Pacific Regionalism differs in that the decolonisation process has, for the most part, been concluded and those territories such as Tokelau, Palau, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Niue, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, New Caledonia and French Polynesia, which remain under the mandates of larger states such as New Zealand, the United States and France, do so through cooperative negotiation (see Appendix 1).

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307 It should be noted here that the ongoing tension over sovereignty for West Papua is not included in this assessment. While some PIF members have at times shown support for an independent West Papua it is not a member of the PIF or its observers and is therefore currently an issue that sits outside that of South Pacific regionalism. The debate becomes more significant however, when the notion of regional ‘Oceania’ is presented – while the South Pacific is a region identified by geographical and political groupings/alliances Oceania is a much more inclusive term that connotes a connectivity of island states and nations of people through the ebbs and flows of the vast southern waters. West Papua in that case could then be considered a part of the Oceanic family of peoples, however, support for including West Papua in Forum dialogue has been minimal to date. In 2000 however, the PIF had waded in to the debate
Pacific Regionalism are discussed in detail in Chapter Three and because gender is addressed in more detail there, the following discussion offers a more general overview of how the third stage evolved.

Globalisation has prompted Pacific states to rethink ideas of cooperative integration and initial efforts have been directed at increasing national capacities to participate in global markets; multilateral cooperation had produced visible benefits such as the establishment of regional institutions and organisations that provided much needed assistance to developing member states. 308 These include, for example, the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA), University of the South Pacific (USP), Committee of Joint Prospecting for Mineral Resources, Pacific Forum Line (a multi-government run shipping line) and agreements such as the South Pacific Regional Trade and Economic Co-Operation Agreement (SPARTECA) and the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty (SPNFZ). SPARTECA has particular significance for Australia. It came into effect in 1981 as a nonreciprocal trade agreement under which the two developed nations of the South Pacific Forum, Australia and New Zealand, offer duty free and unrestricted or concessional access for products originating from the developing island member countries of the Forum.309 Australian companies in the 1990s, for example, were able to dominate the garment manufacturing industry in the region and gain significant tax concessions. Australian companies that sourced raw materials from Asia could claim a duty drawback under an Australian Customs export concessions scheme, the Import Credit Scheme (ICS), which enabled exporting companies to obtain a refund of Customs duty paid on imported goods when those goods were to be treated, processed, or incorporated into other goods for export, or were exported unused since the time of their importation.310 Australia then exported garment manufacturing goods, such as fabrics to Fiji for offshore processing which they then imported back to Australia as finished products under SPARTECA. Together with SPARTECA, the ICS enhanced the

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opportunity for the Australian garment industry to strengthen ties with the Fijian garment sector. Fiji became a key supplier for major Australian brands including Rip Curl, Country Road, Lee Jeans, Just Jeans, Hot Tuna, Voodoo Dolls and Wet Wet Wet.\(^{311}\)

While SPARTECA engaged negotiations with the region’s metropols, the SPNFZ had a much more international focus. It was an outcome of the region’s rejection of the nuclear testing that had been undertaken by the United States, Britain and France in the post-World War Two era and it was the second such treaty established globally - the other being the 1967 Tlatelolco Treaty by Caribbean and Latin American states.\(^{312}\) Fry argued it was the catalyst for further zonal negotiations among ASEAN states which resulted in the Southeast Asian Nuclear Free Zone.\(^{313}\) The SPNFZ Treaty sought to ban all forms of nuclear testing, although despite its global acceptance as a major step forward, it fell far short of the expectations of some members of the PIF. Concessions to the treaty insisted upon by Australia meant that it continued to permit nuclear weapon transit, nuclear weapon control infrastructure and bases, and nuclear capable delivery systems within the region.\(^{314}\) These set up the foundations for enhanced capacity for international engagement by proving the region’s commitment to important international issues like nuclear threats, and by providing a consistency in operation of services that could support state development.

Since 1989, the Forum has also held ‘Post Forum Dialogues’ with key partners including Canada, People’s Republic of China, European Union, France, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, United Kingdom and the United States.\(^{315}\) Huffer argues that by using a triple-pronged approach to international relations, especially those with dialogue partners which included international law, diplomacy and regional cooperation, states working at a regional level were able to promote regional interests and assert regional viewpoints on matters of international concern, thus establishing important credentials in the international community as actors in, rather than subjects of, globalisation.\(^{316}\) For example, tactics including legislative, diplomatic and regional coordination were employed in the


\(^{316}\) Ibid. pp. 74-95.
collective approach to managing the tuna industry. Island states introduced legislation for exclusive economic zones in anticipation of the introduction of the 1982 Montego Bay United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. The PIF encouraged regional cooperation on the management, conservation, and exploitation of biological marine resources by establishing the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) in 1979, and in 1998 the FFA signed a multilateral treaty with the United States that resulted in the United States agreeing to pay the FFA $60 million over a period of five years.\footnote{Ibid. p. 87.}

Sustainable development is a key aim of regionalism and one that underpins the notion of maintaining successful future international relations. It first appeared as a priority focal point for the PIF in the 1976 Communiqué following the Nauru Leaders meeting, although the language was that of increasing development cooperation and taking a more uniform and measured approach to development in the region.\footnote{South Pacific Forum 1976. \textit{Seventh South Pacific Forum: Nauru, 26 - 28 July 1976, Forum Communiqué}. Suva, Fiji: South Pacific Forum.} This was the same year the Forum made a joint declaration on the Law of the Sea calling for a regional response to protection of sea resources. Thus, the Forum was indicating a move in the direction of long-term visions of localised regional control over resources and how development impacts on these. Inter-state cooperation has moved from colonial dominance in the first stage of regionalism, colonial patronage in the second stage, to post-colonial moves to empower Pacific Island states as makers of their own destinies. Recognition of sovereignty and increased democratic rule now enable Pacific states to engage in a reformed style of regionalism that was impossible when colonial powers controlled development.

points to an Australia that is somehow the centre of the region, which in this case spans the Asia-Pacific rather than the South Pacific. This becomes problematic in two ways: it has limitations on what falls within the scope of any foreign policy devised on the premise of the ‘arc’ and, it marginalises the centrality of the States in question as it represents all experiences in the region as being Australia’s ‘problem’. However, it was a catalyst for changes in Australian foreign policy, and in particular, the move from one of complacency over Australia’s security to a heightened sense of urgency to shore up the stability of regional governments so as to avoid vulnerability in the region. The Dibb Report released in the 1980s stated that Australia was “one of the most secure countries in the world” due to the nature and structure of its geopolitical environment. In stark contrast, by 2003 the Government White Paper on Australian foreign policy claimed that instability is likely to be characteristic of Australia’s immediate region for the foreseeable future.

Characterising the era of Cooperative Intervention is the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI). In July 2003, RAMSI provided in excess of two thousand armed services personnel, police and public servants to Solomon Islands following the request for assistance from Solomon Island’s Parliament. The Parliament had voted unanimously to support legislation which authorised the presence of the Mission under the auspices of the October 2000 Biketawa Declaration of the Pacific Islands Forum and which was also supported by the United Nations. The Biketawa Declaration outlines guiding principles for good governance and courses of action for a regional response to crises in the region. It also commits Forum members to some key fundamental values including, among others, a “belief in the liberty of the individual under the law, in equal rights for all citizens regardless of gender, race, colour, creed or political belief” and to “upholding democratic processes and institutions which reflect national and local circumstances, including the peaceful transfer of power”. This followed escalations of civil unrest that had become violent in nature and beyond the means of local authorities to control. A political coup had replaced the legitimate Prime Minister, the economy was in free-fall, and law and order had severely diminished.

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Australia led the Mission, and provided a majority of personnel in cooperation with member states of the PIF. Cooperative Intervention in this case involved the response to an appeal for assistance in the first instance, a partnership with the states involved in the intervention, and the implementation of the intervention under the guiding principles of the PIF agreement on regional responses to crises.

**Key Developments in Regional Policy**

As well as the landmark regional agreements on trade (SPARTECA), the nuclear situation (SPNFZ) and on responses to crises (Biketawa), the PIF made significant policy guidelines and declarations on a number of diverse issues. These include the 1989 Tarawa Declaration that ended driftnet fishing in the region. It was the first regional denunciation of driftnets as an unsustainable fishing practice and was a result of concern over Japanese and Taiwanese distance-water driftnetting. By November of 1989, a complete ban on driftnetting was implemented under the *Convention for the Prohibition of Fishing with Long Driftnets in the South Pacific*.325 This was a milestone for the PIF and a catalyst for other regions to act. The North Pacific and the Caribbean both responded with their own declarations and the Pacific action was further endorsed by the United Nation’s resolutions that at first called for greater regulation but eventually mirrored the Pacific Convention in imposing a ban on driftnets under the same framework for limitation.326

In the 1990s, declarations were made on issues such as law enforcement cooperation to counter transnational crime (the Honiara Declaration) and the banning of importation of hazardous and radioactive waste to PIF countries, as well as the control of movement and management of hazardous material in the region through the endorsement of the Waigani Convention.327 There was a marked increase in regional declarations and agreements in the early 2000s after the establishment of the Pacific Islands Forum under the 2000 Agreement Establishing the Pacific Islands Forum and the new PIF Secretariat. These include the Pacific Agreement On Closer Economic Relations (PACER) and the Pacific Island Countries Trade Agreement (PICTA) 2000;

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The Nasonini Declaration 2002 which was a follow on from the Honiara Declaration; The Pacific Oceans Policy in 2002, which focused on sustainable use of the Pacific Ocean and its resources; and the 2003 the Pacific Islands Air Services Agreement that included the establishment of a Pacific Aviation Safety Office.\textsuperscript{328} The adoption of a set of Forum Principles of Good Leadership in 2003 outlined nine principles of ‘good leadership’ that take into account both ‘traditional Pacific values and Forum Leaders commitment’ to principles already agreed upon under the Biketawa Declaration.\textsuperscript{329} In the later part of the decade, there was a focus on contemporary concerns such as HIV/AIDS, climate change, and sustainable economic growth, all major challenges in the region.\textsuperscript{330}

\textit{Conclusion}

As this chapter has revealed, the development of a cohesive geopolitical region occurred as a result of western colonial policy that focused on securing the Pacific in the interests of colonial powers. By reinforcing how, throughout all stages of developing a Pacific regional identity, male perspectives have dominated political processes, it has highlighted how such structural inequalities have impacted policy decisions. The resulting gender imbalances in political representation, both in the past and in the present due to imposed western political systems, bears consequences for contemporary policy-making processes; the construction of gender relations within the region impacts on who yields power, and how power is subsequently exercised in political agendas.

In accounting for how Pacific women’s voices found agency outside formal political channels through creative writing, such as poetry, conceptualisations of women as political agents that challenge structural inequality has been illuminated. Feminist scholarship embraced women’s poetry as an important and valid contribution to the public access of women’s knowledge, drawing attention to the marginalisation of women within formal processes. Poets such as Simi, Makini, Molisa and Obed, who introduced women’s private lives and struggles into the public domain, highlight how the construction of regional institutions and systems occurred without consideration of

women’s concerns. Women were sexualised and marginalised under early colonial policies that favoured men.

This is not to say that women were silent, or that women did not influence regional development. The three stages of regional development outlined in this chapter are limited to political development along formal channels, and this in turn limits the examination of agency by those who reside outside those channels. The conceptual distance between formal institutional politics and women’s agency cannot be readily addressed by foregrounding formal processes and the role of western systems in the geopolitical development of the region; while regionalism might be seen as a series of events and processes that occurred outside women’s sphere of influence, this is not the case. Women have engaged with processes from within their own spheres of influence. Women’s organisations and institutions have emerged and coexisted alongside formal political institutions. The following chapter therefore investigates how women engaged with a broader global feminist agenda that advocated gender equality. It focuses on the post-independence era and examines, in particular, how gender mainstreaming, as a contemporary strategy for gender equality, fits with the politics and identity of the Oceanic Pacific region. I contend that as a predominant means of meeting gender equality aims that cannot easily fit the Oceanic Pacific’s cultural or political diversity, and that there is a risk of gender insensitive outcomes for the region where women could remain underrepresented and marginalised from mainstream policy-making processes.
CHAPTER THREE: PACIFIC WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY

This chapter explores Pacific women’s engagement with a globalised feminist movement for achieving gender equality. It begins by considering how major international agreements and conventions focused on gender equality were initiated, and places these events in a Pacific context. The discussion charts the contributions of Pacific women to the international women’s movement by examining the impact of those international agreements and conventions on the establishment of similar regional initiatives. The progress of Pacific governments in meeting obligations to gender equality is critically examined in light of these agreements. The value of a regional approach to understanding gender policy is highlighted by showing the interconnectedness of women’s issues across the region. The challenges women face in engaging with policy-making processes are revealed by critically examining the reasons for women’s exclusion in political representation. An argument is made for more careful consideration of how governments communicate with women, particularly those in rural areas where these issues remain a challenge by building an understanding of the constraints for women in accessing education, or negotiating socio-cultural expectations in regards to gender equality. The chapter also examines the adoption of gender mainstreaming strategies as a method for ensuring women’s concerns are considered equally with men’s at all levels of policy formulation and implementation. It is argued that gender mainstreaming strategies are vulnerable to misinterpretation or poor standards of implementation when there is a failure to adequately evaluate, resource and monitor at all levels of implementation.

International and Regional Developments in Gender equality

The acknowledgement, embedding and institutionalisation of women’s interests within the domain of policy development has been a focus of the United Nations for over six decades. Beginning as a subcommittee of the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) in 1946, the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) soon became a full commission in its own right. It had a mandate to respond to perceived urgent problems within the area of women’s rights by making recommendations to the United Nations General Assembly, and to propose strategies for implementing the recommendations. During the 1960s, the rise of the international women’s movement foreshadowed a new era for women, in particular in the recognition of women’s rights as equal rights. The adoption of resolution 1921 (XVIII) in 1963 by the United Nations General Assembly, prompted a directive from the General Assembly to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) inviting the CSW to prepare a draft declaration that would amalgamate previous arrangements in the area of women’s rights. The CSW was to produce a single instrument that integrated international standards

articulating the equal rights of men and women.\textsuperscript{332} The resulting \textit{Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women}, adopted by the General Assembly on 7 November 1967, was a culmination of four years of planning, activist support, and drafting processes.

In 1972, the Women’s International Democratic Federation (WIDF) proposed to the March session of the CSW that 1975 be set aside as an international year for women, with the aim of raising women’s issues to the forefront of international agendas. The Commission took the proposal to the General Assembly where it was adopted in December 1972 and subsequently International Women’s Year was proclaimed for 1975. A working group was appointed in 1974 to consider a subsequent proposal by CSW. The CSW proposal advocated a binding treaty that could give normative force to the existing declaration. The committee also discussed the value of introducing institutional mechanisms for advancing women, although it was not until 1975 that this was articulated with a formal endorsement of the concept. The First World Conference on Women (FWCW) was convened in Mexico in July 1975.\textsuperscript{333}

The FWCW was a vehicle for Pacific oriented women’s activism to gain international currency. Women from all parts of the world joined forces at this foundational meeting to consider their common struggle for recognition and advancement. It was the first time that a United Nations conference or major event was dominated by female delegates with 73 percent of the twelve hundred participants being women.\textsuperscript{334} Not all Pacific states were independent at this time so some Pacific women were represented in Mexico by colonial government representatives.\textsuperscript{335} Fiji and Papua New Guinea were the only countries to send a delegation, with Papua New Guinea having observer status as it did not become independent until September of 1975.\textsuperscript{336} The FWCW concluded with attendees endorsing a World Plan of Action (WPA) for the Implementation of Objectives of International Women’s Year.\textsuperscript{337} The WPA was aimed at advancing women’s rights and gender equality under the umbrella of the themes of equality, development and peace, which were considered by conference delegates to be interrelated and mutually reinforcing.\textsuperscript{338} The conference report included a recommendation for a proposed Decade for Women and Development that would both support the WPA as a vehicle to ‘provoke, stimulate and provide guidance’ for the implementation of actions by governments to advance women’s rights and equality.\textsuperscript{339} The United Nations General Assembly subsequently endorsed the Declaration of Mexico and the

\textsuperscript{332} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{335} Only Tonga, Samoa (Western Samoa), Fiji, Nauru, and Papua New Guinea had gained independence by 1975. See Appendix 1.
\textsuperscript{337} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{338} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{339} Ibid.
WPA by proclaiming the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality Development and Peace to be held from 1976-1985. Governments were urged to formulate national strategies, targets and priorities and the World Plan of Action incorporated strategies for review and appraisal of States progress at international, regional and domestic levels. This led to the establishment of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), which served as an institutional framework for research, training and operational activities in the area of women and development.

A parallel event to the conference, the International Women’s Year Tribune, provided a forum for non-government organisations to bring their concerns to international attention. This signaled the opening up of the UN to non-governmental organisations, which enabled women’s voices to be heard in the UN’s policy-making process. The Pacific’s participation in the NGO forum was the foundation for creating a sense of regional coherence in the Pacific women’s movement. Pacific delegates addressed the Tribune on the issues of French Nuclear testing in the Pacific and independence for the remaining colonial territories. The conference enlightened Pacific delegates on the power of collective action and revealed the perceived benefits of a regional approach to promoting the concerns and needs of women at national and international levels. It also gave the delegates a sense that the women’s movement transcended the barriers of location and cultural difference; it was not a movement that was exclusively western or ‘white’, and Pacific women could participate by bringing their unique agenda to the broader movement.

During the same year the UN conference was held, the First Pacific Women’s Regional Conference (FPWRC) also convened. Initially proposed by the Young Women's Christian Association’s Public Affairs committee in Port Moresby in 1974, the concept was endorsed by a regional meeting of female students at the University of the South Pacific (USP). The FPWRC conference focus was the examination of the institutions in society and covered areas such as the family and traditional culture, religion, education, the media and the law and politics. Some forty-seven resolutions passed at the meeting reflected the concerns of participants on topics as diverse as domestic violence, economic autonomy for women, parental attitudes towards education and the preservation of traditional culture. Of the resolutions that concerned the advancement of a regional approach to women’s engagement in Pacific development, the most significant was a call to establish a Regional Pacific Women’s Resource Centre, and for a Pacific Women’s Association to be established to ‘support the struggles of women in the colonial territories of the Pacific and that women in self-governing countries be made more aware of the double difficulties facing women in

colonised countries’, further noting that financial support be a function of the Conference. It was resolved to hold triennial conferences with the executive meeting annually to plan and monitor the progress.

Following the regional FPWRC conference in October, the SPC convened a sub-regional workshop that focused on future trends in developing women’s programs. Held in Suva, Fiji, in December 1975, the conference was presented with country reports that outlined the spheres of influence women were involved in, various programs being undertaken and initiatives of NGO groups around the region. Recommendations from the conference proactively sought the promotion of women’s training in service delivery and community development, and that cross-institutional knowledge sharing be encouraged. It also advocated strongly for increased budgeting to enhance community development programs and for assisting the advancement of the role of women in these areas. Thirteen of forty-nine recommendations were related to training and nine related directly to calls for increased funding. While many other recommendations were not specifically targeting these areas, their implementation would also require training, additional funding, or both of these to ensure they could be realised. The Pacific Women’s Resource Centre (PWRC) opened in 1976, although it was later suspended in 1978 due to a combination of factors including communication difficulties, a lack of active support for women, funding inadequacies and structural problems. In an effort to maintain some momentum within this emerging women’s movement, USP hosted satellite linkups for women from around the region and internationally. Subsequent women’s conferences continued to advocate for a more formal and permanent forum for women.

In 1981, the SPC convened a regional women’s meeting in Tahiti to discuss how the Commission could best serve the needs of women within its program. The result was a proposal to establish the Pacific Women’s Bureau (PWB), however, the meeting was not without some discord between the SPC as organisers and participants. The SPC, based in New Caledonia, was unhappy that women raised the issue of French nuclear testing in the Pacific, however, discussions did proceed and women were able to debate the issue. The Conference approved the proposal at their annual conference held in Vanuatu in October 1981. Subsequently, the SPC was able to bring to light a focus on women’s participation and contribution to development and other sectors of the community. This was assisted by the convening of women’s workshops and conferences, and the Centre’s publication of material that highlighted women’s issues. For example, in 1983 the SPC published an Occasional Paper that examined the role of women’s associations in the rural economy of different parts

344 Ibid.
347 Ibid. p. 521.
348 Ibid. p. 522.
of the Pacific. Case studies from Western Samoa and the East New Britain Province of Papua New Guinea offered a diverse range of issues including social organisations, specific women’s organisations and their relationship to areas of health care, churches, village projects, women and work, and women within the respective national systems of economic development. Acknowledging the volume of work that had been undertaken globally since the 1975 International Women’s Year, in particular the increased quantity of studies in the area of rural development, it pointed to the value that Pacific women placed on the international women’s movement. It also examined how, in the case studies, Pacific governments were taking steps to meet their obligations under the World Platform for Action.

In Western Samoa, national pressure following the 1975 UN International Women’s Year led to the Samoan government appointing a Women’s Advisory Committee (WAC) to advise government on rural development policy and to consult with women on project proposals. The WAC was provided funding for a full-time secretary, a typist and a vehicle and driver to support the Committee. Attached to the Prime Minister’s Department, it had eight members including nursing representatives from the Departments of Health and women from the home economics section of the Ministry of Agriculture. A change in government in 1982 saw this reduced to three committee members as a result of amalgamation with the village mayors committee. Subsequent to the amalgamation, secretarial support declined when the administrative support was shared with other committees. The WAC supported projects that aimed to assist women into the rural economy such as the promotion of traditional handicrafts. In Papua New Guinea, a Women’s Adviser was appointed in 1974 as a direct result of the international women’s movement in time to represent PNG at the international conference. As a result, Papua New Guinea held a women’s convention in 1976 in Rabaul where it was agreed that every province would establish a Provincial Council of Women. The same year, the Women’s Affairs section was transferred from the Prime Minister’s Department to the Office of Home Affairs, and a full-time officer appointed to coordinate women’s programs. It was later restructured as the Department of Community and Family Services.

Focusing specifically on women’s issues and how they are impacted by development or other types of policy, creates the potential to uncover challenges that might otherwise not be taken into account. In concluding her report to the SPC, Penelope Schoeffel warned that there was a cost factor involved in overlooking the contributions of women to the rural economic sector. She argues that some aspects of their contributions to development planning would be reduced if women were not equally considered during planning processes. Schoeffel cites the case of Samoa, where in 1979 women’s committees had decided to abandon the management of community sanitation programs in a protest over inequities in

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350 Ibid. p. 7.
351 Ibid. p. 21.
352 Ibid.
353 Ibid. p. 31.
the reward and recognition that those involved in the sanitation scheme received for their involvement. The local health inspector and village pulenu’u (a representative of the village elected from local chiefs) both received cash gains for managing sanitation. The health inspector was salaried and the pulenu’u received a stipend, however, women, who had been responsible for managing sanitation since the 1930s appointment of a public health nurse, were expected to continue to perform their tasks as volunteers without reward or recognition. Schoeffel argues that when women were undervalued or not recognised for the work they perform, there is a danger that services will suffer. When women reject the assumption that their work is part of their private sphere, governments would need to pick up the cost of replacing their labour. Reports and studies, such as the case studies from Western Samoa and Papua New Guinea, moved women’s concerns on policy issues forward from the margins of women’s conferences and meetings to being a visible part of the broader SPC.

Another direct outcome from the FWCW was the SPC’s project *Strengthening the Planning and Implementation of Women’s National Programs in the Pacific*. This was a joint activity of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the SPC and was the result of recommendations from a 1980 ‘Follow-up Meeting for Pacific Women’ in the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women. It was recognised as the first activity within the region aimed at realising the goals set out during the decade, in particular that of establishing precedents for national policy-making and introducing mechanisms for ensuring their integration into national plans. By providing many first instance experiences for women in processes of decision-making, it was a historically significant project for the Pacific women’s movement and was also the first major undertaking of the PWB. The project involved a number of strategies to assist the implementation of women’s programmes. These included the establishment of policy frameworks and national machineries across the region. Examples include the establishment of the Niue Women’s Advisory Committee with a coordinator in the Office of the Secretary to the Government; in the Northern Mariana Islands the adoption of a resolution to appoint a task force to oversee the establishment of national programs for women, establishment of a national machinery for women, and appointment of a liaison officer; the Solomon Islands established a National Council for Women that had seven provincial branches, and an associated representative in the Central Planning Office; Tuvalu created a post of Women’s Development Officer in the Department of Local Government located within the Prime Minister’s Office; and Palau set up a task force to formulate a policy statement and proposals with the aim of establishing a national representative women’s council strengthening their existing Women’s Interest Office. Training programs were also developed to meet the specific needs of particular communities, the design and implementation of workshops, and substantial monitoring and evaluation of progress.

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354 Ibid.
356 Ibid.
Despite progress in bringing women’s concerns into public domains throughout the 1970s, women remained on the margins of political decision-making. The inaugural Pacific women’s conference acknowledged this and evolved during the 1980s to become a triennial event. Women’s representatives from government portfolios responsible for women, non-government women’s organisations and members of academia gathered to discuss challenges and constraints to women’s advancement and participation in the development of newly independent states. At the fourth regional conference, it was agreed that sub-regional meetings would be held in the period between the trienniums to enable a wider cross section of women to engage with the PWB and to ensure that the triennial meetings remained relevant to Pacific women.\textsuperscript{357} Since 2001, there has been a Pacific Ministers Meeting in women held at the conclusion of each triennial meeting. Pacific women continued to attend international events in the 1980s with delegates contributing to the subsequent international women’s conferences convened by the United Nations. Fiji, Papua New Guinea and Samoa sent representatives to the second conference at Copenhagen in 1980.\textsuperscript{358} As with the FWCW, the issue of nuclear testing was once again raised by Pacific delegates, this time resulting in a resolution calling for the cessation of all forms of nuclear testing in the Pacific.\textsuperscript{359} In 1985, Fiji, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu attended the third conference at Nairobi.\textsuperscript{360}

\textit{Shaping and Embracing Frameworks for Gender Equality in the Pan-Pacific Era}

Since the advent of the international women’s conferences in the 1970s and 1980s, three international agreements, in particular, emerged to become pivotal to shaping local regional agreements, including those developed by the PWB at their women’s conferences: the \textit{Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)}; \textit{Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality (CPA)}; and the \textit{Millennium Development Goals (MDG’s)}. These three agreements have influenced local and regional frameworks for gender equality and have become benchmarks for evaluating policy on gender equality. The first of the agreements, CEDAW, was a direct outcome of the United Nations women’s conferences and the work of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). The CSW, established in 1946, sought to define and elaborate general guarantees of non-discrimination from a gender perspective. Originally, through the \textit{Charter of the United Nations} and the \textit{International Bill of Human Rights}, the work of the Commission on the Status of Women resulted in a number of important declarations and conventions that sought to protect and promote the human rights of women. CEDAW was the equivalent of an international bill of rights for women. It defined what constitutes discrimination against women and set a framework for national action to end such discrimination. It was the first

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international treaty to address fundamental rights for women in political, social, and economic spheres of activity.\footnote{United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women, \textit{Short History of CEDAW Convention}, United Nations http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/history.htm (Viewed, 11/03/2007).} The text for CEDAW was drafted by working groups within the CSW during 1976 guided by the recommendations of the 1975 FWCW. The Convention attracted a vote in the General Assembly of 130 for, none against, and ten abstentions. It was entered into force in 1981 with twenty states having ratified it, proving to be the fastest ever human rights convention to have been ratified.

CEDAW was complemented by the \textit{Beijing Platform for Action (BPA)}, an outcome of the FWCW whereby all governments that were member states of the United Nations pledged to ‘set specific targets and implement measures to substantially increase the number of women with a view to achieving equal representation of women and men, if necessary through positive action, in all government and public administration positions’.\footnote{United Nations 1995. \textit{Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September, 1995: Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action}. New York: United Nations.} The BPA called upon Governments, the international community and civil society, including non-governmental organisations and the private sector to take strategic action in twelve areas identified as being of critical concern.\footnote{Ibid.} These encompassed issues related to poverty, health, violence against women, security, economic insecurity, unequal power relations, poor mechanisms to protect women’s and girls’ rights, and inadequate methods of communication.\footnote{United Nations 1995. \textit{Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Section III Critical Areas of Concern}. New York: United Nations. p. 16.} The Platform was considered a necessary step by the conference delegates as they acknowledged progress for improving the status of women had been disappointing. This was despite the fact that, by that time, there had been three world conferences for women aimed at accelerating progress.\footnote{Ibid.}

During the era of Pan-Pacific regionalism, the Pacific regional women’s movement embraced CEDAW through the umbrella of PWB.\footnote{Pan-Pacific Regionalism is explained and discussed in detail in Chapter Two pp. 92-96.} It was the official coordinating body for ratifying, implementing and reporting on CEDAW among SPC member countries. The PWB supported governments and their associated women’s national machineries to work toward ratification of CEDAW.\footnote{Pacific Women’s Bureau, 2006, \textit{CEDAW: The UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women}. http://www.spc.int/Women/cedaw.html. (Viewed, 23/04/2007).} By 2012, only two countries were still to do so, Tonga and Palau.\footnote{United Nations, 2012, \textit{Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women IV8. Human Rights}, UN Women, New York. http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/ (Viewed, 11/09/2012).} In September 2009, the Parliament of Tongan government issued a press release that stated that it voted eighteen to one, with four abstentions, against ratification of CEDAW.\footnote{Matangi Tonga Online, 2009, Tongan parliament decides not to ratify CEDAW. http://www.matangitonga.to/scripts/artman/exec/view.cgi?archive=9&num=5353 (Viewed, 11/12/2009).} Prime Minister Sevele stated that ratification of CEDAW would cut across Tonga’s ‘cultural and social heritage that make up our unique Tongan way of life’ and that women in Tonga

were ‘cherished’ and not in need of further legislative measures to ensure equality.\textsuperscript{370} The ratification of CEDAW Palau is a ‘pending issue’ according to the non-government group, VOICES Palau Incorporated, in their submission to the United Nations Human Rights Council Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review.\textsuperscript{371}

The second international framework endorsed by Pacific governments, the \textit{Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality}, was drafted as part of the Commonwealth Secretariat’s contribution to the Beijing Conference and \textit{Platform for Action}. It set out strategies for incorporating gender into policies on democracy, human rights and law; poverty eradication and economic empowerment; HIV/AIDS; and peace and conflict. The 1995 version shifted the Commonwealth’s focus from ‘women’ to ‘gender mainstreaming’ in line with the outcomes of the Beijing conference. It was reviewed in 2000 and again, the Commonwealth Secretariat undertook a paradigm shift to group its priority focal points under the two policy areas of human rights, peace and political participation, and macoeconomics and social development.\textsuperscript{372} The revised version of the CPA was agreed to by a meeting of Commonwealth Ministers in Fiji in 2004 and governments were ‘encouraged to take action’ on increasing women’s representation in parliamentary and local government decision-making by 30 percent, and to review appointment criteria for public and private decision-making bodies.\textsuperscript{373}

More recently, the \textit{Millennium Development Goals} (MDGs) became a focal point for Pacific governments. The third goal aimed to ‘promote gender equality and empower women’.\textsuperscript{374} The MDGs were adopted when member states of the United Nations endorsed the \textit{Millennium Declaration} on September 8, 2000 committing them to a series of time-bound and quantified targets for addressing extreme poverty and exclusion. The majority of targets are set within a timeframe to be achieved by 2015. As Member States of the United Nations, the Pacific governments are bound to incorporate MDG Three in planning for regional development.\textsuperscript{375}

The 1990s also saw the provision of two significant regional advances in addressing the status of Pacific women. The Pacific Platform for Action (PPA) was developed by the PWB. The PPA was approved at the Sixth Regional Conference of Pacific Women and the Ministerial Conference on Women and Sustainable Development, both held in Noumea in 1994. The original plan included thirteen goals, thirty three objectives and in excess of one

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\textsuperscript{370} Government of Tonga, 28 September 2009, \textit{Prime Minister Sevele’s Statement at the 64th Session of the UNGA} http://www.pmo.gov.to (Viewed, 05/06/2012).
\textsuperscript{373} Huffer, \textit{Desk Review of the Factors Which Enable and Constrain the Advancement of Women’s Political Representation in Forum Island Countries}, p. 9.
\textsuperscript{375} Ibid.
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hundred and fifty indicators to assist with the monitoring and implementation of actions to support the goals. Further reviews of the PPA led to the later incorporation of the outcomes of Beijing+5, established following international monitoring and evaluation of progress since Beijing, and commitments under CEDAW. The Sixth Triennial Conference of Pacific Women in 1997 regrouped the thirteen critical areas of concern into five strategic areas: physical quality of life; empowerment of women; enhancement and protection of women’s and indigenous people’s rights; women’s contribution to the realisation of just and peaceful societies in the Pacific; and institutional arrangements and mechanisms (including CEDAW). The signing of the Jakarta Declaration and Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women in Asia and the Pacific, adopted by the Second Asian and Pacific Ministerial Conference on Women in Development in 1994, also became part of the document presented on behalf of the Asia Pacific region as a background paper for the Beijing meeting. Highlighting a concern for the need to monitor and evaluate implementation of gender mainstreaming practices, the declaration stated:

Critical elements for mainstreaming gender concerns in public policies and programs are: (a) assigning well-defined responsibilities, and strengthening the institutional capacity of all government agencies to undertake gender-responsive development planning in their sectors or areas of responsibility; (b) timely and reliable statistics on the situation of women and men to provide a basis for formulating policies and programs, and for monitoring and evaluating them.

Areas of particular concern for this declaration included agricultural activities with a focus on incorporating women farmers’ concerns over agricultural and rural development policies, plans and programs. The emphasis was on ensuring food security and the ability to create or sustain an adequate livelihood for rural women, a particularly important focus in terms of Pacific women as a majority live in rural areas and Pacific Island economies are based primarily on agriculture, fishing and related activities. The declaration also noted reluctance on the part of some developing nations to recognise the fact that gender roles were socially constructed. There remained an assumption that gender roles were fixed or

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determined biologically. This belief had become embedded in cultural understandings of what constitutes normal behaviour for males and females thus, resulting in attitudes and behaviours of both women and men that have proven particularly resistant to change.

**Women in Politics**

Throughout all stages of developing a Pacific regional identity from the early twentieth century when colonialism dominated to the Pan Pacific era of independence, male perspectives have dominated political processes. Pacific women are among the lowest in the world in terms of percentages of women in parliament, second last only to the Arab states. In addressing the issue of representation, the FWCW Platform for Action categorically stated ‘If women are to play an equal part in securing and maintaining peace they must be empowered politically… and represented adequately at all levels of decision-making’. The ability to choose to participate is central to the concept of empowerment. The United Nations has found that even though differences in electoral systems appear to have a marked impact on women’s representation, information collected thus far has remained heavily European and/or western and, as such, creates difficulties in determining if any specific electoral system has promoted women’s participation in politics.

In 2004, the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (UNDAW) convened an Expert Group Meeting to examine the role of national mechanisms in promoting gender equity and the empowerment of women. As this body of experts critically analysed the effectiveness of various infrastructure, programs and legislative changes that occurred as an outcome of the Beijing Platform for Action, their resulting critiques and recommendations provide a foundation for dialogue about policy formulation. The report refers specifically to the term ‘national machineries’ which include women’s ministries and women’s departments, bureaus or desks in other ministries with broad mandates covering a diverse scope. The experts recognised that Government structures differed between countries and regions, and it followed that individual machineries established to promote women’s advancement were found to be diverse in nature and composure. The aims of national machineries were identified as being to ‘advocate for attention to women’s advancement, provide policy direction, undertake research and build alliances’. One challenge the group identified was the ability of political parties to become more responsive to women’s concerns. In particular

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385 Ibid.
the meeting was concerned with the ability of women to influence party platforms and so improve ‘political will’ to support gender equity in government.386

Underrepresentation of women in political spheres is not unique to politics in developing nations. On the contrary, it is evident in countries of every level of socio-economic development. The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) reported in 2005 that some of the most prosperous developed nations have low percentages of women in political leadership roles. From 187 parliaments worldwide, women average 16.2 per cent representation in lower house, or unicameral positions, and just 14.8 per cent of upper house positions. This represents an increase of only three per cent over a ten year period despite targeted efforts of women’s advocacy groups, NGO’s and the United Nations.387 These figures fall far short of the benchmark target of 30 per cent set in Beijing and endorsed by regional bodies.388 There is, however, significant evidence to show that countries identified by the IPU as being in a phase of post-conflict reconstruction, rate among those with the highest percentages of parliamentary representation for women. Of the top twenty countries with 30 per cent or more female representation, one quarter are deemed to be ‘post-conflict’ nations. The IPU reported in 2006 that there is often a rapid political gain for women during transition phases, sometimes realised in as little as one election cycle.389 Furthermore, they emphasise increased opportunities for women when they are engaged with the ‘drafting of electoral and political party laws’, particularly during the processes associated with drafting new constitutions and related legislation.390

As of 30 September 2005 just prior to the implementation of the PIF’s Pacific Plan, a total of eight countries had no women in their national parliaments; five were Pacific Island states namely: the Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, the Solomon Islands and Tuvalu.391 The average for the Pacific region (excluding Australia and New Zealand) was 3.2 per cent.392 At national levels, the Pacific region has had the lowest percentage of women’s representation in the world of countries where women have the legal right to stand as candidates in national elections.393 Women have never comprised more than ten percent of national parliaments since the advent of independence for regional elections.394 On average

390 Ibid.
391 Ibid.
392 Ibid.
394 Ibid.
regionally, women have not held more than five percent of local government seats, meaning women are underrepresented both locally and nationally.\textsuperscript{395}

The Autonomous Government of Bougainville has been an exception to figures below 5 percent when, at the election of the first parliament in 2005, women won three out of forty seats securing 7.5 per cent representation. Bougainville implemented special measures for women allocating three dedicated seats in the parliament after aggressive lobbying by women during the process of developing Bougainville’s constitution. While still well short of the 30 percent target set by the United Nations, this marks a significant increase in political representation for women as it is well above the regional averages. In the majority of Pacific societies therefore, the political inclusion of women is not a reality. Even though democratic institutions do not exclude women in political processes and there are not necessarily any legal impediments to participation, women are subject to a number of social, cultural and traditional impediments.\textsuperscript{396} Resistance to women standing for political office is often masked by gendered suppositions - or the application of pre-supposed attributes to and perceptions of male/female roles. Morgan has noted an implied conflict between ‘Christian principles’ and women in leadership roles.\textsuperscript{397} Francesca Semoso, former Deputy Speaker of the House in Bougainville’s first parliament, recalled how these were issues during her own campaign in 2005. Semoso was subject to criticism by some constituents for her status as a single mother. During the 2005 election, women did not contest open seats and restricted themselves to the seats reserved for women. Francesca claims this was due to intimidation by men.\textsuperscript{398}

In 2012, women remain severely underrepresented, constituting only 2.95 percent of members of parliament regionally, excluding Australia, New Zealand and Fiji. The Federated State of Micronesia, Nauru, Palau and the Solomon Islands have no females in national parliaments and the highest number of representatives is in Kiribati, with four members of parliament equating to 8.7 percent of parliamentary representation. Comparatively in 2012, the world average is twenty percent.\textsuperscript{399} Gender equity discourse and practice therefore, remains a critical area of concern some eleven years after the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women.\textsuperscript{400}

While the number of elected politicians is an important aspect of assessing women’s political gains, it is critical to consider how perceptions of politics have operated. Doing so illustrates how the shaping of women’s own notions of identity influenced their decisions to either participate in, or refrain from entering into, political activities. Resulting gender imbalances in political representation have repercussions for contemporary policy-making.

\textsuperscript{395} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{399} Inter-Parliamentary Union, \textit{Women in National Parliaments}.
\textsuperscript{400} Inter-Parliamentary Union, \textit{Women in National Parliaments; Situation as of 30 August 2007}.
processes as they severely limit who holds the majority of political power. Traditionally, in many Pacific locations, control over resources and decision-making has been the dominion of men, while girls and women took responsibility for most of the productive and domestic labour. Gendered socio-political hierarchies have persisted in contemporary times. In some parts of the Pacific, particularly the sub-region of Melanesia, tradition such as bride price remain a feature of social organisation that effectively lowers the status of females. In the bride price system, a groom’s parents receive a sum of money in exchange for the bride subsequently being considered the property of the groom, commoditising women and girls as a resource to be traded. Martha MacIntyre revealed how some Melanesian women experience a loss of power due to the impact of bride price. The poetry of Melanesian women was used by MacIntyre as a way to critically understand how some women feel objectified by the practice. One poet from Vanuatu likened her own experience to that of an inanimate object redundant of rights:

Bride Price makes me feel just like a speedboat
Or a truck that can be bought...
It makes my husband think that I must always obey him...

The objectification of women is in direct opposition to human rights instruments such as CEDAW ratified by Vanuatu in 1995, and the Vanuatu Constitution which guarantees men and women equal rights under law. Not all women agree that the practice is a negative one however. A study released by the Vanuatu Women’s Centre in 2011, which surveyed close to one thousand women across Vanuatu on women’s rights issues, revealed complex attitudes toward bride price. The majority of women agreed that bride price had a positive effect on how women were treated by their husbands. Despite this the study also revealed that women who married under bride price practice were more likely to be subject to violence in the home than those who were not. Regardless of how women married or where they lived, they were also less likely to be involved in decision-making about finances and were subject to male control over their movements including what meetings they attend and which organisations they can join. Such control over women’s actions by male partners, whether

403 MacIntyre, ‘Hear us, women of Papua New Guinea!’ Melanesian Women and Human Rights p. 166.
406 Ibid. p. 80-81.
motivated by bride price or otherwise, therefore inhibits the ability to participate in socio-political activities of a woman’s choosing.

For women, the ability to participate in, or contribute to, policy-making processes by government is dependent on the extent to which a woman is able to independently make decisions and take action on those decisions. When women have developed solid literacy skills they are more likely to be aware of their legal rights and have higher levels of political participation. Women and girls who have low levels of education are often disempowered from decision-making processes and political representation and therefore are less likely to participate in policy development.\(^{408}\) Regional data for gender and education shows that, across the Pacific, girls are less likely to complete primary and secondary studies than are boys. For every one hundred boys in primary school there were eighty-nine girls which was a decline from ninety one in 1991. Similarly, the data for secondary school showed a drop from 89 girls per hundred boys in 1999 to 87 in 2009.\(^{409}\) Recent research released by Strachan in 2009 presented the limited value placed on girl’s education; families in Vanuatu are more likely to budget to educate boys to a higher level than girls when finances are strained as education for girls is not highly valued.\(^{410}\) Girls are more often required to take on domestic duties than to complete secondary schooling.\(^{411}\) In an effort to overcome gender disparity, the Vanuatu government introduced a gender equality policy through the Education Act of 2001 which legislated against discrimination based on gender.\(^{412}\) Although the Act ensured schools could not discriminate on the grounds of gender, female attendance is still a concern. Female students are less likely to continue into higher education in vocational, technical and tertiary levels and fewer females apply for scholarships than males.\(^{413}\) The Ministry of Education’s corporate plan and expenditure framework draft report for 2007-2009 identified Tanna Island schools as having serious problems delivering education to primary and secondary level students.\(^{414}\) In primary schools 33 percent of teachers were not qualified. Poor school facilities and a lack of schools in walking distance for village children, coupled with social attitudes to education where domestic chores take precedence over school attendance, have


\(^{411}\) Ibid.


\(^{413}\) Ibid.

led to high levels of non-attendance. Overall on Tanna, there is a 74 percent student enrolment rate with only 91.2 percent of those enrolled attending school regularly.\footnote{Ibid.}

Field visits to Tanna reinforced the importance of girls’ access to education and revealed the impact this has on women’s engagement with policy-making. In Vanuatu, a business woman from Tanna Island explained that low levels of women’s literacy meant that women found communicating with government difficult.\footnote{Field Notes: Tanna Island 14/12/2007.} She pointed to the issue of education as a reason that many women were limited in their involvement in national level government processes. On Tanna, as in other parts of Vanuatu, girls are often encouraged by family members to leave school earlier than boys in order to contribute to domestic duties and they are less likely than boys to leave Tanna to pursue higher education on the main island of Efate.\footnote{Ibid} In the South-West area, 65 per cent of children do not attend school and there are also high levels of student drop-outs, repeats and withdrawals reported.\footnote{Natuman and Lamoureux, Issues and Constraints Facing the Education Sector : Appendix 1, p. 33.} Low literacy levels among females and cultural constraints that result in women being reluctant to speak out, publicly create challenges for women’s participation. The businesswoman claimed local women were interested in participation, however, but conditional to policy-makers adapting communication methods between governments and grassroots women. A lack of infrastructure for access to modern technologies meant women have a high dependence on face to face communication and struggle to negotiate complex government documents without this type of support. Women missed out on accessing policy-making processes for this reason as their villages were remote and visits from government authorities were uncommon. These points were reiterated by a Vanuatu government worker who had travelled to Tanna regularly to speak with local communities and found that girls and women were highly motivated but sociocultural constraints, coupled with low levels of education often prevented young women from fully participating in political processes.\footnote{Field notes: Vanuatu 5/11/2007.} Research by the World Bank into challenges that Vanuatu women face as business entrepreneurs had similar findings: women on Tanna struggled with access to internet and telephone communication and less educated women struggled to understand bureaucratic processes.\footnote{Bowman, Ellis, Cutura and Manuel, Women in Vanuatu: analyzing challenges to economic participation, p. 90.}

Comparative longitudinal studies of women in Nepal and Bolivia demonstrated that this was the case regardless of other challenges such as time constraints and domestic commitments.\footnote{Stromquist 2006. The Political Benefits of Adult Literacy: Background paper for EFA Global Monitoring Report 2006: UNESCO. pp. 5-8.} Over a three year period in each of the studies, women were found to be more likely to participate in the economy and develop skills for social and political engagement when they participated in adult literacy classes. Women who did not have basic literacy skills were likely to cite issues related to poor self-esteem such as feeling ‘not very
knowledgeable’ and subsequently avoiding community meetings. In terms of impact on women’s access to, and participation in, policy development, the studies indicate that where girls are not encouraged to complete their education they may find themselves marginalised from community engagement and political processes as women. When governments fail to consider this in policy development, women’s capacity to engage with consultations or other means of government communication may be at risk. The observations of the Tanna Island businesswoman interviewed were that it would be helpful if communication was occurring at a local face-to-face level rather than through the use of technology. Her observations indicate that, for grassroots rural women without access to new technologies, governments may act to distance some people if other means of communication are not made available.

Matrilineal systems of land ownership, where land is passed on through the female family line, are another feature of some Pacific societies that impact women’s status and access to power. In Vanuatu, for example, women in matrilineal societies have held only limited rights to land. Matrilineal land tenure systems have been in place in Raga, North Pentecost, and Mele village on South Efate. Matriliny does not always equate with equality however, as women do not necessarily control management rights over the land. Women have been marginalised from decision-making on issues such as mortgage loans for development and leasing land out to third parties as economic management issues have been the domain of male members of the family or community. A study of matrilineal land tenure and land management in the Pacific region commissioned by the PIF found that, in Vanuatu, rural women were distinctly disadvantaged in terms of securing land rights in comparison with men, and also with urban women. In rural areas, land is managed under customary law and, while the land tenure system is matrilineal, society is patriarchal - men are predominately the decision makers on land use. In urban areas however, some women do have opportunities to exercise more control. Women with access to cash can secure primary leasehold land and when this occurs a woman is more likely to be included in decisions surrounding land use.

Similarly in the Solomon Islands matrilineal systems of land tenure operate within patriarchal constraints and women have been accorded less power in political decisions surrounding land. This has been a consequence of colonialism where women’s status was eroded by the imposition of western ideas surrounding gender roles. During colonial rule,

424 Ibid. pp. 84-86.
426 See pp. 8-9 for a discussion on the use of the term ‘patriarchy’ in this thesis.
427 Naupa and Simo, Matrilineal Land Tenure in Vanuatu: “Hu i kakae long basket?” Case Studies of Raga and Mele, p. 85.;
women were undervalued in their traditional roles of agriculturalists and encouraged towards developing domestic home-based tasks such as cooking and handicrafts. Christian missionaries encouraged the central importance of nuclear families in society that positioned men as authoritarian heads of households. Men were trained in technical skills and academic education while women were denied such training, thereby distancing them from the developing economy.\(^{429}\) Consequently, in the decolonisation period, women’s status deteriorated with a failure to include women in development dialogue, particularly on issues surrounding the use of land and resources. In other parts of the Pacific, for example, in Polynesia and some parts of Micronesia, social standing was determined by family connection and the inheritance of chiefly status. Girls born into high ranking families were viewed as ‘socially superior’ to boys from lower ranking families.\(^{430}\) They remained inferior however, to boys and men within their own social ranking. Young girls held the lowest status in society. The 2006 UNDAW report on discrimination and violence against the girl child in reference to the Pacific claimed that:

> In Pacific Island countries children generally have the lowest status in society. Given the lack of gender equality in most countries of the Pacific, and particularly in Melanesian societies, the girl child is typically at the very bottom of the social hierarchy.\(^{431}\)

Thus due to the impact of social hierarchies, girls become socialised towards a belief in their own inferiority. Girls often do not gain an understanding of the choices available or how to access resources. Significantly, in countries where girls are of particularly low status in society, they have been socialised to accept rather than challenge male authority. The report also claimed that in many Pacific Island societies, culture and custom are regularly used as justification for discrimination against, and even violent and abusive treatment of, women and girls. However, the customs and traditions that are invoked, such as bride price, are ‘often distorted versions of the original’, adapted to suit the needs of the males in the family.\(^{432}\)

In the Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu in some instances bride price has been adopted as local policy by clans or groups that have not previously done so in order to make cash demands for a daughter’s marriage.\(^{433}\) This has occurred as a side effect of the mining industry, where families living in poor conditions have, in some situations, arranged the marriage of their daughters to itinerant workers with the expectation of breaking the poverty cycle. Young women and girls have been exchanged in return for cash or gifts under the bride price premise; however, the arrangements have often been short term with husbands moving on to other work locations abandoning wives for a new arrangement

\(^{429}\) Ibid.

\(^{430}\) Ali, Violence against the Girl Child in the Pacific Islands Region, p. 5.

\(^{431}\) Ibid. p. 6.

\(^{432}\) Ibid.

elsewhere. The practice of forced marriage for the procurement of bride price or other gifts constitutes a form of human trafficking as it involves the sexual exploitation of girls and young women, where the practice is predominantly against the will of the female involved. In extreme cases documented in Papua New Guinea, there have been incidents of girls under legal marriage age being sold. The United Nations defines human trafficking as ‘an act of recruiting, transporting, transferring, harbouring or receiving a person through a use of force, coercion or other means, for the purpose of exploiting them’. The legal age for marriage without parental consent varies across countries and marriage laws are in some places quite complex with multiple legislative acts recognizing indigenous marriage, expatriate marriage and customary marriage. For the most part parents have control over marriage decisions until a female is aged between 18-21 years, depending on location, the minimum age requiring parental consent varying. Papua New Guinea has the lowest age for females at fourteen, although due to a lack of awareness of legislative conditions some marriages are conducted in customary ceremonies where the female is younger. This is also complicated by difficulties of enforcing marriage laws when, due to low birth registrations, there is often no way to legally confirm the age of a child. The exploitation of females by forcing them to enter into marriages they do not consent to, contradicts the goals of gender equality by reinforcing the female status as one that is subject to social and cultural influences regardless of legal rights.

Since the 1995 Beijing women’s conference and the endorsement of the subsequent PPA, most Pacific governments have committed to action towards achieving gender equality by adopting national plans of action. These promote gender equity through constitutional protection against sex discrimination, and enhance provisions for women in national planning. An evaluation of thirteen critical areas of concern for Pacific women’s status in 2004 by the PWB found that Pacific governments had made little progress in many areas. Although governments regarded National Machineries for Women to be responsible for implementing the regional PPA, and commitments under CEDAW, the BPA, CPA where ratified, they were not providing adequate resources or support for this to happen. Women’s underrepresentation in parliaments was found to be a major constraint to advancing women and gender equality, and in countries where conflict had occurred women had not

434 Ibid.
435 Ali, Violence against the Girl Child in the Pacific Islands Region, p. 17.
438 Ibid. pp.181-182
439 Ali, Violence against the Girl Child in the Pacific Islands Region, p. 16.
been included in formal high level post-conflict processes for restoring peace despite having been recognised as being instrumental in peace-making processes. In response, UNIFEM Pacific noted that:

…according to data, despite governments’ strategic plans and public statements in support of the Millennium Development Goal to increase women’s participation by the year 2015, progress towards achieving this target has been slow and governments’ political will often erratic.

This prompted UNIFEM to develop a strategy to further promote women’s political empowerment in six Pacific Island countries.

The components of the resulting program were to provide training in politics for women and ensure that such training is institutionalised through the establishment of National Women in Politics (WIP) organisations in each program country. They also aimed to identify potential women leaders in key government decision-making bodies and strengthen their capacities and political skills and develop a database on the participation of Pacific women at all levels of decision-making. The WIP program incorporated a number of activities aimed at training, strengthening, and identifying women leaders across the Pacific. For example, Bougainville was included in the Papua New Guinea program and received training on voter education and leadership prior to the election of Bougainville’s first Autonomous government in 2005. The workshops were conducted in Arawa, Bougainville during 2003.

Francesca Semoso, commenting at a WIP workshop on the lessons learnt from the 2005 election, pointed out that there needed to be a stronger emphasis on educating women, especially in leadership, campaign and voting systems, to assist women to make informed choices. In the lead up to the election, she claimed women had to contend with negative attitudes of some men during the process of writing a constitution for the new autonomous government and the WIP workshops emphasised the need for educating women to negotiate for reform. Semoso revealed that men were openly hostile to women securing a high number of reserved seats: ‘I was involved in the formulation of the reserve seats for women on Bougainville. When we started we asked for 12 seats and the men asked what the hell do you want 12 seats for women for? That was the language that they used’. This indicates that the difficulty in providing women with equal opportunity lies deeper than legislative measures or the endorsement of agreements and conventions. Education of women to strategise for inclusion

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443 Ibid. p. 15.
444 UNIFEM-PACIFIC, UNIFEM’s Women in Politics Programme for the Pacific.
445 Ibid.
446 Ibid.
447 Ibid.
in political spheres is a starting point; it is also necessary for men to be educated on the benefits of gender equality and the right of women to claim equal status with men.

**Gender Mainstreaming as a Strategy for Gender Equality**

As a direct result of the various mechanisms for policy and program planning outlined in this chapter, gender mainstreaming became a widely adopted policy internationally as a strategy for advancing women’s rights and improving the status of women. The concept of gender mainstreaming was identified as the most important mechanism to achieving the goals of the BPA. Gender mainstreaming became more than merely a desirable phrasing in a new constitution or reform of government policy. It also became a requirement of any country that had ratified CEDAW, and was in accordance with the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, ‘Women, Peace and Security’. By ratifying CEDAW, state governments indicated their recognition of the existence of discrimination and inequality, and the need for state action to respect, fulfill and protect women’s human rights and freedom. State governments committed themselves to legally binding obligations of the Convention and had to be willing to be held accountable at state and international levels for compliance standards defined by the Convention.

The Beijing Declaration identified mainstreaming as a strategic objective for policy and program planning in areas of education, health, violence against women, armed or other conflict, economic potential and independence of women, for achieving an equitable distribution of power and decision-making at all levels, and for addressing the issue of establishing mechanisms for the promotion of women’s advancement. Governments worldwide also became signatories to the BPA and gave a commitment to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women by adopting the recommendations, including the establishment of women’s desks, national machineries, and adopting policies of gender mainstreaming. The goal of mainstreaming a gender perspective in such a way was purported by ECSOC to be achievable by including the concerns and experiences of both women and men in all aspects of designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating policies and programs across political, economic and societal spheres.

Debate has been divided on the success and appropriateness of gender mainstreaming. Rowley argues that gender mainstreaming has the potential to be a successful strategy if resources are adequately provided for implementation. She cited the experiences of

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Caribbean countries with the implementation of gender mainstreaming following the Beijing Declaration. For Rowley, three main components were necessary to successful implementation: there must be inherent authority and influence of the department or division itself with viable levels of credibility through its mandate; there should be an overriding political will evidenced by Ministerial support and an enforceable policy position; and it must be supported by the implementation ‘tentacles and distributive authority/influence’ of gender focal points throughout the entire scope of state machinery.454

The issue of measuring success or failure in regard to gender policy based on the implementation of gender mainstreaming practices should be centered on the quest for a more detailed understanding of the concept and its processes. Caroline Moser argued that in hindsight, the BPA was ambitious in its goal and due to a lack of clarity in defining the concept:

The issue, therefore, is not so much one of the failure or success of gender mainstreaming, as it is of deconstructing the concept and its different stages into a viable implementation process, with appropriate indicators to monitor or evaluate it.455

Others have also questioned the outcomes for women since Beijing. Longwe and Cornwall argued that despite mainstreaming policy and other gender-aware development strategies being adopted, many societies have remained stagnant in their progress in advancing the status of women.456 Woodford-Berger also argued that in spite of decades of struggle, there remains strong male bias within societal structures. She claimed there had been a reinforcement of ‘misogynist and oppressive structures’ which resulted in their being strengthened via an ‘increasingly militarised and polarised world community and the effects of conservatism and of neo-liberal economic reformism’.457 The United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) also concluded in its 2005 report Gender Equality: Striving for Justice in an Unequal World, that in many countries, both developed and developing, the gap between rich and poor households has grown, thus indicating an increase in inequalities. The report warned that gender justice may well decline in prominence unless women’s movements forged new alliances with both governmental institutions and social movements.458 It was critical of those states which had not adopted gender equality measures and policies and noted the important role of women’s movements, especially those not necessarily identifying as feminist or gender focused in promoting

454 Ibid.
change both at institutional level and within the activist domain.\textsuperscript{459} The report indicates that there needs to be more substantive engagement of women’s activists in high level negotiations for state domestic policy-making processes and more active knowledge sharing between gender-focused activists and other lobbyist groups.

\textit{Conclusion}

At the regional level, the PIF will struggle to avoid a gender insensitive outcome in its regional policy-making endeavours when applying gender mainstreaming as its strategy for achieving gender equality. This is due to the PIF’s reliance on both the resources and political will of its member states to implement such a strategy. Continued inequality in political representation throughout the Pacific, demonstrates that there has been a lack of political will to adequately address gender equality at national levels.\textsuperscript{460} Regular triennial conferences on Pacific women have confirmed that Pacific governments have not allocated enough resources to ensure successful outcomes. This finding reinforces the exclusive nature of politics in the region and the marginalisation of women as an embedded part of the political landscape despite the efforts of activists and political advocates. The PIF, due to its regional status and its public commitments to international agreements on improving gender equality and the status of women, therefore has an obligation to uphold a high moral compass that sets an example for the states it represents in respect to meetings those commitments.

\textsuperscript{459} Ibid. p. 17.

\textsuperscript{460} See pp. 19-24 for a discussion on how gender mainstreaming emerged as a common strategy for attempting to secure gender equality.
CHAPTER FOUR: THE PACIFIC PLAN, GENDER, POLICY,
AND INCLUSIVE PROCESS

The period from the early 1970s until 2005 encompassed significant changes in the way gender was incorporated into regional policy-making processes. The previous chapter showed how the international women’s movement brought women’s rights and gender equality into the public domain. The endorsement of CEDAW by the PIF Forum Island Countries (FICs) mandated reforms in political systems and practices to improve the status of Pacific women. This chapter shows how the gendered development of Pacific regional policy during that period by examining how the PIF engaged with gender equality policies as a result of Pacific women’s activism. It details the relatively recent inclusion of gender policy within Pacific regional policy-making is a contemporary occurrence, beginning in the late 1990s when most of the FICs had become independent. Chapter Two argued that the emergence of Pacific regionalism was a complex process that resulted in the marginalisation of women. By examining the development of the PIF’s Pacific Plan for Strengthening Regional Cooperation and Integration, this chapter shows how decision-making approaches to policy-making are ineffective in addressing the concerns of Pacific women and continue to reinforce their marginalisation.

Part One of the chapter maps the development of a gender policy within the PIF from initial discussions to the establishment of a formal gender desk within the PIF Secretariat. It demonstrates how the PIF was influenced by local and international ideas about gender equality and about ways to incorporate gender equality goals into policy-making processes. It examines the PIF’s adoption of gender mainstreaming as its primary strategy for achieving gender equality. In doing so this chapter reveals the fraught nature of the mainstreaming approach. The approach is particularly problematic when national governments lack the strong political will to ensure genuine outcomes are achieved. The chapter shows how poorly executed gender mainstreaming approaches can result in the increased marginalisation of women by rendering their voices silent in policy processes and implementation.

Part Two turns attention to the processes undertaken by the PIF to establish the format for the Pacific Plan. First, it critiques the gendered nature of the PIF review process from which the Plan emerged. Second, it examines the consultative process the PIF used during the Pacific Plan’s development, including in-country official consultations conducted by a specially appointed task force, non-state actor consultations that took the form of public forms and meetings, and the public submission process that generated critique on early Pacific Plan drafts. Women’s exclusion from, and marginalisation in, policy development processes is scrutinised by examining both the gendered nature of the consultation and submission processes and the minimal reference to, and prioritisation of, women’s concerns in the final Pacific Plan document.
Part One: Gender Equality Policy and the Pacific Islands Forum

This section shows how the development of gender policy within institutions and organisations aiming to overcome inequality, can translate into effective programming only if there is a genuine political will to do so.\(^\text{461}\) It argues that the underlying principles guiding policy development will not enable sustainable outcomes unless they are inclusive of strategies to address gender inequality. How a policy is framed corresponds with whether it is primarily designed to address specific issues of gender inequality in service delivery, inequality in terms of human rights, or, if it has the broader goal to create social or structural change. Regardless of the policy goal, addressing gender inequality is a critical factor in ensuring the policy is successfully implemented. To consider these issues, academic debate has revolved around whether reforms to gender disparities should be based on women’s difference from or equality to men. Pateman, for example, argues that policies should be guided by respect for the difference that occurs as a result of gender discrimination. She bases this on the philosophy of Mary Wollstonecraft, an eighteenth century women’s rights advocate, who argued that women are so specifically different from men their difference should be recognised by law.\(^\text{462}\) This approach affords women special attention due to the oppressive nature of patriarchal constructions of society.\(^\text{463}\) On the other hand, Malleson contends that the notion of difference is fundamentally flawed as an approach to changing the status of women’s inequality. She claims that a rationale for gender equality based on equity and legitimacy would ultimately be a more sound approach. Malleson views equal participation of men and women in the justice system, for example, as an inherent and essential feature of democracy.\(^\text{464}\)

In the Pacific, as in other regions, contemporary societies have been heavily influenced by colonial histories. Pacific cultures reflect a mixture of Island and European or Asian traditions, norms, and values. There is no single view among Pacific Island women, academics or government agencies of what is meant by the term gender, or how it should be applied due to the many and varied differences in the political and cultural histories of FICs. To understand gender in the Pacific context, it is necessary to recognise the significance of those cultural and historical factors and how they have become interwoven over time. In Chapter Two, for example, the poetry of Pacific feminists like Grace Molisa, Noumea Simi and Jully Makini showed that gender was a political notion shaped by systems that encompassed both traditional and colonial politics. These systems construct feminine identity and therefore women’s identity as belonging to private domains of home and family, effectively excluding them from public life and creating cultural and social barriers to achieving gender equality. In terms of policy development, this complicates matters as


\(^{463}\) See pp. 8-9 for a discussion on the use of the term ‘patriarchy’ in this thesis.

without due consideration to ensuring both women and men are equal participants in and beneficiaries of policy, the development of policy is a critically flawed process.

Pacific women actively engaged with policy development at local, regional and international levels, despite the barriers to political representation as shown in earlier chapters of the thesis. They facilitated women’s groups such as church based groups and local organisations, that aimed to improve the lives of women and to promote women’s participation in local economies. Women were also vigorous in their efforts to influence local development and the policies that impacted on their communities. For example, in Bougainville in 1969, women protested about the impact the Panguna copper mine would have on the Mekamui communities. They pulled out survey pegs that they believed were symbols of their land being stolen by the mining company; lay down in front of bulldozers and ‘fastened’ the land. While these examples show how women were concerned with local issues, the beginning of a regional feminist Pacific women’s movement to tackle broad issues of gender equality and women’s status in regional affairs can be traced to the early 1970s. International debates about women’s liberation gained the attention of female students at the University of the South Pacific (USP) and the University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG). Students exploring feminist approaches to gender began to apply a Pacific context to debates on gender and women’s issues. Vanessa Griffen recalled her early days at USP where a small cohort of female students published a special edition of the student paper dedicated to issues on the position of women in Fiji. Among the first female students of the university, Griffen noted that they ‘defended’ their articles about the economic exploitation of Fijian women, placing emphasis on the notion of women’s liberation, and have been ‘defending ever since’. Similarly, she recalled the case of UPNG student Nahau Rooney who challenged a development seminar in 1973 by addressing the issue of women’s forgotten status in development planning. In the 1980s and 1990s, Pacific women spoke out publicly on a number of regional issues including nuclear testing, land rights, peace processes, violence against women within conflict settings, and importantly on the status of women in leadership

465 This has been discussed in detail in Chapters Two and Three.
468 Griffen, All it Requires is Ourselves, p. 518.
469 Ibid.
and decision-making roles. Thus, Pacific women who were from a diverse range of lived experiences, such as the remote mountains of Bougainville to urban formally educated women with an interest in feminist ideology, were active in their endeavours to create new knowledge, and engaged with debate on public policy for over three decades.

In the decolonising era women were well placed to act in tandem with governments to advance the status of women in the region. They remained critically underrepresented within governments of the day however, and this affected their ability to be at the forefront of policy-making and change. Griffen argued in 1984 that women needed to ‘define their own solutions’ and to do so they needed to be empowered to see the oppression that held them back from political power. Three years later she reasoned that intersections between difference and equality which stifled women’s access to and control over power were reflected in their own perceptions of their roles, rights and status. Later, in 1987, she was a co-convenor of a regional workshop that introduced the debate about the relevance of these issues to Pacific women in the context of regional development. The workshop had two overarching aims: to assess and consider strategies for women’s empowerment, and to try to define a feminist perspective that was both meaningful and relevant for Pacific women. Both of these aims were ultimately linked to improving the social, economic and political well-being of women. The workshop participants debated the concepts of difference and equality. For example, they questioned the idea that violence against women had been normalised by a ‘social view’ that it is a domestic problem and ‘part of Pacific cultures’, and that this view had been unchallenged in many countries. Through these discussions women voiced their concerns about the need to balance traditional gender roles in society with the recognition that legislation and policy should respect and adhere to obligations of state to uphold women’s rights, such as those founded on CEDAW. Griffen described this part of the workshop as ‘tense and strained’ with some participants openly angry about the ambiguity that surrounded the notion of feminism. In the first session when the idea of feminism was being discussed, Griffen found the participants to be uncooperative in that they were often silent and unresponsive when asked to give their point of view. She described the tension as a ‘difficult but necessary’ process that served to confront women.

Workshops such as this which discuss the role of women in service delivery, and hence policies of how services are provided, are important as processes that act to inform and educate policy-makers on women’s concerns. Workshop participants and facilitators acknowledged that women had made considerable progress in some areas, for example in

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470 Ibid. pp. 521-524.
471 Ibid. p. 524.
473 Ibid.
475 Ibid. p. 4.
476 Ibid. p. 12.
agriculture, small market businesses and various ‘projects’ administered by women’s organisations, such as National Councils of Women, in many countries. However, the disjunctions between women and government were considered problematic. Participants stressed how a lack of women in decision-making roles and the way governments communicate with women at grassroots are starting points for the critical changes needed to shift the balance of power from male dominance to a more gender-equal model. The processes of policy implementation often act to disempower women and it is an imperative of gender equality that the processes are reversed so that women are empowered to take control over their lives. For example, participants discussed how changes to health care policies from top-down instructive models where women are ‘receivers’ of information, to more cooperative models would increase the power women had over services. When grassroots women become involved in defining needs and processes for health care in collaboration with service providers, they would be empowered by the two-way process of sharing knowledge between each other and between women and professional health care providers.

At a regional level, the PIF did not have a history of prioritising women’s concerns at the annual Leader’s meetings. Women’s or gender issues had not been included in annual communiqués from the time the PIF began in 1971 until 1998 when gender was recognised as a contributing factor in the region’s social and economic development and a gender policy was adopted by the PIF. The policy was initiated by women attending a regional meeting convened immediately prior to the 1998 PIF Leader’s meeting. The Fourth NGO Parallel Forum, an initiative of the Pacific Concerns Resource Centre (PCRC), brought together representatives of community groups, churches and indigenous people’s organisations from around the Pacific one week before the official South Pacific Forum Heads of Government meeting. Among the outcomes was a recommendation that the PIF Secretariat should develop a gender policy. Participants specifically stated that a policy document should be established in consultation with regional women’s NGOs with a view to creating a Forum Secretariat Women’s Division. The PIF agreed in principle and adopted the organisation’s first Gender Policy in December of that year. The policy acknowledges the importance of gender balanced participation in development for reasons of social justice and economic benefit, recognising the 1994 SPC PPA and its contribution to the Beijing Platform for Action. It also acknowledged that many Pacific member states were already using CEDAW as a guide for promoting gender equality and as such, supporting state’s obligations to CEDAW was incorporated into the goals and objectives of policy. The Secretariat appointed a sub-committee of staff representing each of its divisions. The sub committees included both women and men tasked to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the policy. In 2003 the gender policy was revised to include performance indicators. These were to provide a framework for ongoing monitoring and evaluation (see Appendix 3).

477 Ibid. pp. 117-120.
478 Ibid. p. 119.
479 Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Gender Policy.
481 See Chapter One for discussion on Pacific member states and their commitments to CEDAW, pp. 7-13.
mechanisms such as creating new policies is founded on the premise that women cannot depend on states, or state feminism, to deinstitutionalise male privilege or to prioritise budgets to do so. Staudt argues that introducing new staff and reorienting organisational values and practices is also a necessary step to ensure that policies do not become token gestures. While this was not identified as an indicator for the PIF, a Gender Issues Adviser had been employed in 1996. This move signified the PIF was open to the idea of elevating the status of gender issues in the organisation. By the time the Pacific Plan was imminent in 2004 the Leaders had admitted to past shortfalls in this regard:

There is a view within the region that Pacific institutions and processes are not as gender sensitive as they should be. Given the changing roles and responsibilities of men and women, and the increasingly recognised role that women play in society, the Forum needs to acknowledge and encourage the participation of women in decision-making at all levels.

While the PIF stopped short of specifying a target for the advancement of gender equality, there was recognition that the organisation should be more forthcoming in reaching out to women. The integration of women into national and regional decision-making processes and the improvement of participation in government processes by women were considered essential in addressing low rates of women’s representation in government. Given that prior to establishing the Gender Policy in 1998, the PIF had not publicly recognised the need to address gender inequalities within the region, these moves were a significant step forward. The PIF Gender Policy, supported by a dedicated gender desk and subcommittee, promoted a mainstreaming approach to PIFS programs by locating gender as a cross-cutting issue throughout the work of the PIFS and in the support it provides for FICs.

The idea of a gender mainstreaming approach to advancing the status and equality of women has been subject to academic debate about its overall effectiveness as a strategy for change. Real outcomes of the process have been questioned and it has been argued that the strategy may be detrimental to the position of women at grassroots levels in some circumstances. Susan Hawthorne argues that gender mainstreaming is a form of assimilation, similar to the racial assimilation of migrants implemented by Australian governments during

483 Nelson 2002. ‘What Does Gender have to do with Ecotourism’, Tok Blong Pasifik: News and Views on the Pacific Islands, Vol. 55, Iss. 3&4, pp. 7-8. Gayle Nelson was the first Gender Issues Adviser for the PIF. She held the position from 1996-2000.
485 Ibid. p. 10.
486 Ibid. pp. 18-19.
the 1950s and 1960s, or the removal of Indigenous Australian children from their parents.\textsuperscript{488} Her argument is based on the premise that gender mainstreaming operates in a similar way to that of assimilation. Australian assimilation policy actively discouraged the use of native languages and cultural practices in order to create a society that was uniform in its cultural aspirations and devoid of personal histories that reflected cultural diversity. Hawthorne discusses the concept of racial assimilation in Australia by exploring 1950s and 1960s mainstream attitudes where it was considered a progressive move to support the policy of racial assimilation. She recalls that in Australia, assimilation required that ‘the people - Black people, Indigenous people, Asians, Europeans from a non-English speaking background - should be very happy to ‘fit in’, ‘to blend’ and be invisible within the local Anglo-centric white culture’.\textsuperscript{489}

The Australian example of assimilation policy resonates with Hawthorne’s notion of gender mainstreaming as a form of neutralising the unique aspects of gender that may benefit from explicit consideration. Promoting gender neutrality through mainstreaming would mask the specific and diverse issues associated with feminine roles. Hawthorne’s critical view is that:

Based on a liberal view of the world, in which differences are smoothed out and diversity is denied, gender mainstreaming suggests that feminist demands be toned down so that the men who benefit from the institutions and power structures of patriarchy do not really have to change, do not have to give up their privilege. Gender mainstreaming encourages feminist projects to have the same aims as projects that benefit men. Gender mainstreaming asks feminists not to rock the boat, not to go too far, not to demand anything other than equality of treatment in a badly skewed system, rather than equality of outcomes.\textsuperscript{490}

Mainstreaming denies the diversity and individuality of women’s stories due to the merging of individual voices into those of the broader collective. To achieve equality, this is insufficient to advance the status of women as histories of women’s disadvantage then become buried under bureaucratic systems and practices that inhibit women’s empowerment. It is the patriarchal nature of political and bureaucratic systems which perpetuate male advantage and maintain women’s subjugation that need to be reformed rather than the processes that occur within them.\textsuperscript{491} Furthermore, gender mainstreaming allowed bureaucracies to simply appropriate feminist language, introduce it into official ‘gender’ documents and then consider this enough to satisfy public expectations. Thus, there was an inherent risk that bureaucracies would then fail to take any further action. The result would be

\textsuperscript{488} Hawthorne 2004. “The political uses of obscurantism: Gender mainstreaming and intersectionality”. In \textit{Development Bulletin, no. 64}. pp. 87-91.
\textsuperscript{489} Ibid. p. 120.
\textsuperscript{490} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{491} See pp. 8-9 for a discussion on the use of the term ‘patriarchy’ in this thesis.
a loss of feminist language, together with a ‘watering down’ and undermining of feminist projects.\textsuperscript{492}

Language plays an essential part in the process of negotiation. It is critical to the way policy theory, and the actions resulting from policy, are negotiated and enacted.\textsuperscript{493} In terms of creating alternatives to the status quo, language plays a critical role as mediator between feminist and activist rhetoric, and the machineries of political decision-making and policy making. Contested versions of what is defined as gender mainstreaming, and gender itself, make translating rhetoric into policy fraught with difficulty. Carney argues the only language that existed to address gender mainstreaming occurred in the realms of political rhetoric within feminism.\textsuperscript{494} The loss of feminist language to political systems that lack the political will to take action to implement reforms for gender equality is reductionist in so much as adopting the language becomes an act of tokenism; it could be damaging to outcomes for women if programs or policies fail to meet their needs.

In addition to language, Corner argues that the image of mainstreaming was inherently masculine and that this could not change by adding gender to existing decision-making processes as these serve to reinforce the status quo. Moreover, systems and structures of the mainstream need to be fundamentally transformed as a prerequisite for achieving gender equality. Doing so would require a paradigm shift away from simply adding women’s concerns to the existing mainstream agenda, to women’s ‘proactive engagement with the mainstream’ in areas that move beyond what are seen to be specialised women’s spheres of engagement.\textsuperscript{495} Translating an ideal, such as improving the status of women without falling prey to the complexities of political positioning and localised agendas, has proved a seemingly impossible task for policy-makers adopting the gender mainstreaming strategy. Cornwall argues that rather than empowering women in the development sector, mainstreaming had exacerbated existing exclusion and intensified unequal gender roles.\textsuperscript{496} While in the context of gender and development, mainstreaming theoretically embraced the ideals of participatory development and an inclusive approach to development, she argues the real result was the subjugation of women’s voices. Women are often the most likely to be left out, marginalised or overlooked in such participatory processes.\textsuperscript{497} The use of gender as a framework for increasing participation for women has been ineffective at least, and gendered approaches to development can create obstacles to reform:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{492} Ibid. p. 122.
\item \textsuperscript{493} Carney 2003. ‘Communicating or just talking? Gender mainstreaming and the communication of Global Feminism’, Women and Language, Vol. 26, Iss. 1. pp. 52-60.
\item \textsuperscript{494} Ibid. p. 54.
\item \textsuperscript{495} Corner 2004. ‘Women transforming the mainstream - a think piece’, Development Bulletin, no. 64, Iss. p. 23.
\end{itemize}
Unless efforts are made to enable marginal voices to be raised and heard, claims to inclusiveness made on behalf of participatory development will appear rather empty. Requiring the representation of women on committees or ensuring women are consulted are necessary but not sufficient... The need for advocacy on gender issues is evident, at every level. Yet there is perhaps a more fundamental obstacle in the quest for equitable development. The ethic of participatory development and of GAD is ultimately about challenging and changing relations of power that objectify and subjugate people. Yet ‘gender’ is framed in both participatory and ‘gender-aware’ development initiatives in ways that continue to provide stumbling blocks to transforming power relations.498

It cannot be considered enough to have women represented in decision-making processes or as participants in the planning or implementation of programs, for example. The mere presence of a minority group does not necessarily ensure the voice of that group will be heard or carry any influence. Margaret Alston reveals that in Australia, under the Howard government regime, far from improving the status of rural women in agriculture the introduction of gender mainstreaming as national policy in Australia disadvantaged women and deprived them of access to policy-making processes when dedicated women’s policy units were downsized or closed. Alston argues that a move toward gender mainstreaming within state and federal agricultural bureaucracies in the 1980s, that saw the installation of dedicated Rural Women’s Units with agricultural departments, had the opposite effect to that intended. She claims it resulted ‘whether by design or omission (and certainly by a lack of political will)’ in a scaling back of attention to the ideals of gender equality and an overall lack of women’s empowerment.499

The research undertaken by Alston exposes a considerable lack of understanding of gender mainstreaming principles by government department heads and bureaucratic staff, which enabled a culture of resistance to form during the implementation process. She describes agricultural sector departments as ‘profoundly gendered’ institutions. The predominantly male staff failed to consider women as clients and became cynical about the work of the women’s units.500 In a 2002 survey on women’s experiences working within the units, employees reported systemic obstruction to their work on gender equity and felt ‘worn down by the organisational cultural resistance and lack of support they received within their departments’.501 The units materialised only after a targeted campaign and were perceived as having become ghettoised with females entering the masculinised environment. They operated at a distinct disadvantage as they were viewed as ‘organisational migrants’ rather

500 Alston 2009. ‘Drought policy in Australia: gender mainstreaming or gender blindness?’, Gender, Place and culture, Vol. 16, Iss. 2. p. 145.
501 Ibid.
than accepted as equals. The gender mainstreaming strategy reoriented language away from concepts of gender equality and fairness, which would have enabled women’s concerns to be considered specifically, to more gender neutral language of ‘economic indicators of success’. This resulted in women’s equity issues becoming a hidden issue that could find little fertile ground for serious corporate attention. In 1995, the women’s units were downsized and the word ‘women’ was removed from the title, leaving women with a sense of disconnect. The new title, ‘Industry Partnership, Training and Leadership’ made the units more generic in nature. Marginalising the purpose of women’s units by broadening the focus in this way led to rural women losing their ability to connect with policy formation processes. Under the previous regime, they had direct access to specialised gender units where they could participate in policy dialogue. Under gender mainstreaming they were subsumed in the category of rural people rather than rural women:

The units and their staff are not viewed, and do not view themselves, as sites for gender analysis of departmental policy and nowhere in the departments are there gender experts focusing on gender mainstreaming. In the agricultural and regional sectors at least, there has been a move away from attention to women, and gender equity in the context of agriculture is little understood or analysed.

With the shift away from gender equality, Alston points to a consequent lack of gender analysis in recent years as contributing to the failure of governments to respond effectively to the poverty arising from drought in Australia between 2003 and 2007. Her analysis of drought policy shows that women’s work, often not acknowledged as an economic contributor to farming, is rendered invisible in the documentation for rural families applying for drought relief payments. No provisions had been made for assessing the value of women’s contributions to income generation as they did not fit the criteria of ‘the farmer’ but were relegated to that of ‘partner’ or ‘off farm income generation’ and thus ineligible for consideration under policy guidelines. For women, the decision to work off-farm was often not one of choice but one of necessity in order to support farming incomes. The gender insensitive approach of the department failed to take this into account as government departments were not sensitised to performing analysis through a gender equity lens.

The marginalisation of women’s rights under the Howard government’s mainstreaming policy also saw a shift away from specialised groups and consequently led to the failure of the Australian government to sign the CEDAW Optional Protocol, or to take the advice of the Sex Discrimination Commissioner on introducing legislation supporting maternity allowances. Forty percent cuts to the Office of the Status of Women’s budget in 1996 and its removal from the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet to the Office for

503 Ibid.
504 Alston, Drought policy in Australia: gender mainstreaming or gender blindness?, p. 144.
506 Ibid. p. 147.
Women within the Department of Family and Community Services, meant that access to cabinet documents was revoked and the focus was realigned to meet a family and community emphasis, effectively removing gender equality issues from government agendas. Such examples show that the policy of gender mainstreaming has demonstrated pitfalls that can damage the progress of gender equality if the process is not sensitive to the specific inclusion of women’s perspectives. Where gender mainstreaming occurs without due resources allocated to the specialised training that staff require to both understand and implement its principles, positive outcomes for women are jeopardised. The example also shows how, when grassroots rural women were cut out of the policy dialogue, their perspectives were marginalised and their needs overlooked. Rather than providing a solution to closing gaps in gender equality, gender mainstreaming served in this case to widen gaps. This builds on the previous argument that a political will is necessary for effective implementation as without that resource allocation may be difficult to attain.

Obiora claims the security of women is compromised by the process of gender mainstreaming as it serves to encourage the mainstream to speak for women, rather than allowing women a voice of their own. She argues that failing to place the problems of poor governance, imperialism, global capital penetrations, and a range of similar forces as agents for perpetuating gender inequities constitutes a form of epistemic violence. It places women outside policy and decision-making processes and buries their agency ‘so deeply that it becomes nearly impossible to locate’. The translation of the ideal of equality into real outcomes for women is therefore dependent on more than just the use of rhetoric by governments and bureaucracies. It is inherently dependent on the intersections between government capacity to deliver real outcomes and the political will of policy makers to reflect the needs and concerns of stakeholders by being connected to people at all levels and inclusive of their input into policy-making processes. For the PIF, this signifies a need for caution in adopting mainstreaming strategies, given the difficulties the region has faced adapting to the challenges of globalisation and establishing governance practices.

Part Two: The Pacific Plan – Development, Structure and Gender

The following pages now address the development of the PIF’s Pacific Plan for Strengthening Integration and Cooperation. First, the PIF review process that led to the idea of developing a regional plan is critiqued. I contend that this was a gendered process that reinforced systems of regional politics in the Pacific that perpetuate women’s subjugation. Second, critical analyses of the development process and women’s contributions to reviewing drafts of the Plan prior to its implementation, determines the ineffectiveness of the PIF’s

508 See Chapter One pp. 10-15, 46; and this chapter, pp. 102, 110, 113.
510 Ibid.
gender policy. The chapter shows this by critiquing the processes of bureaucratic and public consultations on the draft Pacific Plan undertaken by the PIF in 2005. These processes were multilayered and took place in all FICs. Some were official workshops, meetings and forums convened by the PIF exclusively for government representatives and others for both government and community representatives. Alternate workshops were convened and facilitated by interest groups such as women’s groups, youth advocates, disabled persons’ organisations and other collective groups of non-state actors. By analysing the way this process was either inclusive or exclusive of women and women’s concerns, the PIF’s gender policy is scrutinised as a mechanism for gender equality in PIF processes.

The chapter then examines the public submission process by showing how the written submissions reiterated the main concerns raised during the consultations. It shows how submissions from civil society were critical of levels of involvement between civil society and FIC governments and how this might be addressed under the Pacific Plan. In particular, it shows the submissions as critical about the lack of gender inclusion in the first draft of the Pacific Plan and the view that including gender would risk the overall success of the EPGs vision for regional development. Finally, it critiques the final draft of the Pacific Plan, finding that the processes for public submissions and consultations had influenced the final drafting but that the gender mainstreaming approach by the PPTF resulted in gender concerns becoming subsumed into the broader framework of the Pacific Plan rather than being addressed as a critical stand-alone issue.

Gendered Realities: The Emergence of the Pacific Plan Development Process

The Pacific Plan emerged from the 2003 Thirty-Fourth Pacific Islands Forum held in Auckland where the Leaders commissioned a full review of the structure and function of both the PIF and the PIF Secretariat. The Auckland PIF Communique specifically indicated that the process should include an examination of processes for enhancing interactions between the PIF and civil society. The review was then conducted throughout 2004 by an Eminent Persons Group (EPG) consisting of five men selected by the Chair of the PIF in consultation with the Leaders. The review process was a gendered exercise from its inception as there was a failure to include any women on the review committee. The EPG was chaired by Sir Julius Chan of Papua New Guinea, a former Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea between 1980-1982 and 1994-1997. The remainder of the EPG consisted of Mr Bob Cotton, former Australian High Commissioner to New Zealand, Dr Langi Kavaliku, the Pro-Chancellor of the University of the South Pacific and the former Deputy Prime Minister of Tonga, Mr Teburoro Tito, a former Prime Minister of Kiribati and Chair of the PIF and Mr Maiava Iulai Toma, the Samoan Ombudsman. Failure to include any women in the EPG contributed to

513 Ibid.
the marginalisation of women from regional level decision-making processes, which contradicts the PIF’s gender policy.\textsuperscript{516}

When the membership of the EPG was announced, the Director of the PCRC Hilda Lini, publicly criticised its gendered composition. Lini claimed that, when the PIF neglected to appoint any women, it had given an impression that only ‘older men’ were capable of being appointed to such high positions.\textsuperscript{517} She argued that gender equity should be a factor of all local, national, regional and international working committees and, that by appointing a group that was exclusively male, the PIF had effectively failed to recognise women as equal members of the regional community.\textsuperscript{518} This undermines the PIFs strategy of gender mainstreaming and highlights the failure of the strategy at both the conceptual and implementation level as it first demonstrates a lack of political will to address structural inequalities, and second, failure to allocate sufficient resources, in this case by a gender imbalance of human resources within the EPG.\textsuperscript{519} The value of women’s visibility in regional decision-making is more than an issue of gender equity; it also acts as a signifier of women’s rights to equal status. Limiting the perspectives of decision makers to a narrow male-only view not only impacts on who has a voice and who is able to exercise agency, it perpetuates existing stereotypes of women as outsiders in political processes. It also contradicts existing regional and international agreements designed to advance the status of women. One of the fundamental principles of CEDAW and the Pacific Platform for Action requires that women be afforded equal rights with men to representation at high level decision-making.\textsuperscript{520}

A report by the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) in Australia found that no women had ever been appointed to a PIF Eminent Persons Group. WILPF argued that a failure to do significantly reduces the chances of improving women’s status by rendering their concerns invisible.\textsuperscript{521} The exclusion of women from EPGs therefore reinforced stereotypical notions of women as ‘other’, and relegated them to the status of an

\textsuperscript{516} See Chapter One, pp. 9-10.


\textsuperscript{519} See discussion this Chapter, p. 102-105, on the impact of power imbalances in regard to inadequate implementation of gender mainstreaming within organisations. See also, Chapter One discussion on the theoretical ideal of gender mainstreaming as a mechanism for achieving equality, pp. 19-24.


interest group or category for analysis rather than recognising women as equal partners in decision-making processes. At the time of the appointment of the EPG, the PIF had a long standing gender policy which supported the participation of women in political processes. The policy called for the promotion of democratic access to development and mandated the PIF to promote a gender balance of qualified men and women in meetings and programs organised by the Secretariat. It also called for comprehensive gender mainstreaming across all of PIF’s internal processes. Principle Five of the policy, Recognition of the importance of modeling best practices and learning from experience, directed the PIF to apply all aspects of the Gender Policy to all internal operations and work plans. The appointment of an all-male EPG therefore contradicted the PIF’s gender policy.

The secondary support structures for the review process were more empathetic to the gender equality goals of the PIF gender policy. The EPG was supported and guided by advice from a Review Reflection Group consisting of eleven senior bureaucrats and politicians from around the region. New Zealand Prime Minister, Helen Clarke, was the chair of the Review Reflection Group and, of the eleven remaining members, four were women. Emile Duituturaga was the Chief Executive Officer of the Fijian Ministry for Women, Social Welfare and Poverty Alleviation (MWSWPA), Fiame Naomi Mata’afa was Minister for Education in Samoa, Winnie Laban was the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Development Assistance and Trade in New Zealand, and Rae Julian was Executive Director of the New Zealand Council for International Development. Although women were not directly represented on the EPG, the Reflection Group that supported the EPG was well balanced in terms of gender equity.

Further support to the EPG was provided by a cohort of assistants who were appointed by the PIF to work individually with each member of the EPG. The assistants all held high profile positions within the New Zealand bureaucracy. They were the New Zealand High Commissioner to Kiribati John Goodman; Richard Kay and John Mills from the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade; Jeremy Milne from the New Zealand Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet; and Don Stewart from the New Zealand department of Conservation. As with the contrast between the EPG and the Reflection Group, while there were no women appointed to EPG members as assistants, women ironically made up a significant number within another group who supported EPG assistants as administrative officers. The women involved in these positions included Project Director Rene Wilson, Review policy and briefing Officer Jocelyn Woodley, Nicola Ngawati in charge of logistics and policy, Raewyn Watson logistics and budget, and Shirley Munro-

523 Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Gender Policy.
524 Ibid.
527 Ibid. p. 57.
Hughes took care of the EPGs travel programmes. The support staff also included two men, Paul Willis as Project Coordinator and Jonathon Swasse was the writer. The administrative staff cohort was located within the New Zealand Foreign Affairs and Trade Pacific Division.528

The terms of reference for the review stated that the EPG should ‘consult widely’ with the broader Pacific community. The EPG members visited PIF member countries with the support of their assistants to consult with regional Leaders, politicians, public servants, PIF partner organisations, church leaders, civil society groups and other regional and international agency representatives.529 The report of the EPG, *Pacific Cooperation: Views of the Region*, was completed in March 2004 and submitted to the PIF Leaders for consideration in April of the same year. The report advanced four main points of difference to the existing functions and scope of the PIF and Secretariat.

First, it envisioned a Pacific region that behaved as a geo-political community with enhanced regional integration of services and infrastructure. With this in mind, the key recommendation of the EPG’s report was the creation of a Pacific Plan that could promote ‘stronger and deeper’ links between member states through the pooling of resources.530 This idea was advocated both implicitly and explicitly in the report. The implied expectation, articulated through the EPG Vision Statement, was that the Pacific should be a region of peace, harmony, security and economic prosperity.531 The EPG explicitly recommended the adoption of strategies for greater cooperation across specific areas such as transport, information technology, quarantine, customs, security, judicial and public administration, representation at international meetings and processes for meeting international legal demands, and regional law enforcement.532 Fry argues that the EPG concept of a regional community was contained by the need to develop recommendations based on the group’s brief to review the existing structure of the PIF and Secretariat, but conversely it was not closed to the notion that regional order might, in the future, move toward a more formal structure of political union such as a Pacific Union.533 Moving from a state-centric model of resource management to a more regional approach under the framework of the Pacific Plan would provide a foundation for that outcome if it were to be sought in the future.

Second, the report recommended that the position of Secretary-General should become more proactive. Under the EPG’s recommendations the role should be enhanced to enable the Secretary-General to coordinate regional preventative action or responses to crisis. The EPG were ambiguous as to the scope and nature of such actions or responses. Recommendation twelve referred to a mandate for the Secretary-General to consult with the PIF Chair to respond to trans-national and regional security issues by calling special early

528 Ibid.
529 Ibid. p. 59.
530 Ibid. p. 12.
531 Ibid.
532 Ibid. p. 23.
meetings of the Leaders and Foreign Ministers. It stopped short of identifying what type of actions might be envisaged as a result of those meetings, or the extent to which actions might impact on state sovereignty. Empowering the Secretary–General to initiate and coordinate actions to prevent or respond to crisis does imply that some compromise to state sovereignty may be required if regional action was to be agreed to under the framework of a Pacific Plan.  

Third, the EPG forwarded a view that the PIF and Secretariat should become more broadly engaged with civil society. While governance was recognised in the context of being a state responsibility the EPG did not see that approach as holistic enough to enable good governance practices. Basing their recommendations on a balanced approach to managing political and legal aspects of governance with cultural traditions in the region, they advocated for the Forum to markedly increase its engagement with civil society through improved avenues for dialogue at a regional level. In particular the EPG urged that strategies be developed to increase the participation of women in politics, and to convene a civil society forum just prior to the annual Leaders’ meeting, that would report relevant issues of concern to the Leaders via the Secretary General.  

Fourth, the EPG sought to clarify the position of Australia and New Zealand membership of the PIF. In the opening statement to the report, Sir Julius Chan recognised that within the PIF there had been speculations over the legitimacy of the two larger countries membership and role in the organisation. He urged that ‘suspicions and differences’ be put aside by explicitly recognising that all FICs are ‘political partners and are equal members of the Forum’. Criticism had previously been aimed at the tendencies of Australian Prime Minister Howard’s approach to regional relations during the early part of the new millennium. Greg Fry argued that Howard had promoted the notion of a new look PIF that would be led by Australia. Fry claimed that, under Australian management, the PIF would exercise greater powers of intervention than previously witnessed. It would also be endowed with the capacity to impose obligations for FICs to conform to regional agreements in contrast to the non-binding agreements already in existence.

Howard’s hegemonic overtones were viewed as a neo-colonialist approach to regionalism and a backward step in regional development. Gall argues that Australia’s economic dominance in the region was, at times, liable to be perceived as the equivalent of military might under colonialism. Applying three criteria developed by Evans and Newham for identifying colonialism, namely ‘unequal rights, separation and deliberate exploitation’, to an assessment of Australian interventionism in the Pacific from 2000-2004, Gall concludes that Australia had demonstrated a recolonising approach to Pacific

534 Ibid. p. 17.
536 Ibid. p. 4.
538 Gall 2004. Are the Current Australian Policies Towards PNG and the South Pacific a Form of ‘recolonisation’? Canberra, ACT: Centre for Defence and Strategic Studies.
relations. He argues that Australian interventions in Papua New Guinea fit all three criteria and that this reflected both civil society and broader Pacific government perceptions of Australia’s interests in the region. Kelsey reinforces this viewpoint, arguing that the Howard government, influenced by United States’ imperialism, held a strong ‘desire to recolonise’ the region through political, economic and military dominance. She maintains that Australia’s dominant position as an aid provider was a divisive force within the PIF which led to a ‘them and us’ attitude among the Leaders. The divide was intensified by Prime Minister Howard’s refusal to sign the Kyoto Protocol on climate change in spite of the urging of the PIF, and his non-attendance at several Forum leader’s meetings. The statement by Sir Julius Chan at the beginning of the EPG report sought to redress the concerns of both civil society and the PIF Leaders by making the position of the larger countries clear and establishing a premise for equality regardless of economic, political or military strength.

After establishing a premise of equal partnership through Chan’s statement, the report then detailed the scope and content of the prosed Pacific Plan. Four key focus areas, referred to as the pillars of the Pacific Plan, were identified: economic growth; sustainable development; governance; and security. The EPG recommended PIF’s efforts should focus on directing support toward these areas of concern over the following decade. Forum Leaders then met at a specially convened one day retreat in Auckland on April 6 2004 to examine the report. At the conclusion of the retreat, they released the Auckland Declaration endorsing the EPG’s recommendations. The declaration was a public proclamation of regional unity wherein the Leaders agreed to prioritise the four pillars as principle areas of focus for the PIF Secretariat, and as driving influences of the proposed Pacific Plan. The following August at the PIF Annual Leaders meeting, the Terms of Reference were approved for preparation of the first draft. A Pacific Plan Task Force (PPTF) comprised of PIC senior officials and representatives of regional organisations was commissioned to develop the draft under the management and guidance of the PIF Secretary General. A Pacific Plan Core Group (PPCG) was also appointed to act as a consultant body to the PPTF. It was made up of Forum Chair Samoan Prime Minister Hon Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, Papua New Guinea Prime Minister Rt Hon Sir Michael Somare, Small Islands States representative

540 Gall, Are the Current Australian Policies Towards PNG and the South Pacific a Form of ‘recolonisation’?
542 Ibid. p. 12.
President of the Marshall Islands His Excellency Kessai H. Note, and New Zealand Prime Minister Rt Hon Helen Clark. 547

The 2005 Consultation Process

This section critiques the PIF’s process for public consultation on the Pacific Plan. The goal of the PPTF was to develop recommendations for increasing regional cooperation, and to devise strategies for shaping the long term future of regional development. 548 The primary aim was to provide the region with a greater capacity to engage with, and benefit from, globalisation. 549 The task force undertook National consultations with governments and public consultations with civil society representatives throughout the region. Fifty-seven key meetings occurred in which the proposed Pacific Plan framework was presented to stakeholder groups consisting of government and non-government agencies. There were also separate discussions and briefings with government representatives in each FIC. In all, seventeen governments were consulted encompassing the sixteen member countries of the PIF, and Guam which has Forum Observer status. 550 Meetings were held over a timeframe ranging between one and five days. A draft document, dated December 2004 was circulated amongst stakeholders for comment during the meetings. 551 Women’s concerns are shown to have emerged during the process as an add-on feature of the Plan, only materialising after a targeted campaign by Pacific women and regional human rights interest groups highlighted gender gaps in the Plan’s early drafts.

In Fiji, consultations were held over a total of five days between February 10 2005 and September 2 2005. They included a meeting with Fijian Government department CEOs on February 10, a non-state actor briefing on February 17, and two more official Fiji Government consultation days on the 23 February and March 4. The process concluded on September 2 with a Fiji Government Pacific Plan and Trade Agreements workshop. 552 The official report covered only the National Consultation with civil society representatives and it outlined the key areas of discussion, providing a matrix of discussants’ suggested ideas for early, mid-term, and long term goals for the Plan. The goals were based on the working draft that was circulated. The meeting was attended by a large number of people, with civil rights groups represented by organisations, such as the Fiji Disabled Peoples’ Association, the Fiji Human Rights Commission, the Pacific Concerns Resource Centre and Citizens Constitutional Forum. FemLink Pacific was represented by Vanessa Griffen who has a long

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548 Ibid.
549 Personal communication, 20/08/2012. Professor Robertson acted as a Pacific Plan country consultations workshop facilitator.
association as an activist for gender equality in the Pacific. 553 A key criticism participants made of the working draft was that some of the timeframes for implementation were inadequate. All areas identified as mid-term goals for sustainable development were seen as being undervalued by the lengthy implementation timeframes. They recommended these be re-prioritised as early goals to be achieved within the first three years of implementation. Participants also recommended the implementation process begin earlier than indicated in the draft, even if outcomes were not realised in the short term.

Many of the sustainable development goals were related to strengthening mechanisms to ensure the well-being and protection of Pacific people. Gender was a consideration for participants, evident by the inclusion of advancing implementation of CEDAW through the mechanisms of the Pacific Plan. Other goals were also gender-related, although they risked overlooking the specific challenges of gender inequality by not specifically stating that gender be targeted. These included establishing or improving existing data collection for human development indicators, and improving programmes that enhance the status of youth, health and education provision. The report also voiced a desire by participants to improve the processes of regional decision-making by better integration of bottom-up and decision-making processes. This is critical to women when decision-making roles are dominated by male representation as is the case in the Pacific region. Unless policy development is equally inclusive of women’s perspectives from the grassroots and non-government sectors, where women can exercise agency, the marginalisation of women from decision-making is perpetuated. The Fiji participants called for FICs to establish or strengthen government partnerships with the community and private sector at all levels. This would enable women who are empowered in these areas to be actively engaged with policy processes. 554 Participants highlighted the need to implement education programs for civil society in areas relating to governance with a focus on the promotion of ‘community perspectives’ as integral to good governance practice. 555 Doing so requires that gender be incorporated into the planning of educational strategies to ensure women are afforded equal access to the process. In this regard the participants’ critique reflected the initial EPG recommendation that the PIF increase and enhance its relationship with civil society.

The remaining consultations occurred over a shorter time-frame with most being two days in duration. Tuvalu, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, the Cook Islands, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Vanuatu and Tonga all had consultations lasting two days. Australia and Guam were the exceptions with a three day time frame in Australia and one day in Guam. Themes similar to the Fijian consultation emerged throughout the region. In Samoa, the consultations held in Apia attracted approximately sixty people to a preliminary seminar and one day national consultation meeting for civil society, government and business representatives. It is not clear

554 Fiji Department of Foreign Affairs and External Trade 2005. Fiji National Consultations on the Pacific Plan. Southern Cross Hotel, Suva: PIFS.
555 Ibid.
from the reports if a gender balance was promoted or achieved. The issues raised at both were similar in theme to Fiji and concerns about the lack of gender in the Pacific Plan were raised. Non-government organisations, including those representing women, voiced the opinion that they had been undervalued and underrepresented in the initial evolution of the Plan’s drafting. The facilitator of the meeting, Professor Robbie Robertson, reflects that, like other meetings he had attended there was a general consensus that the Pacific Plan draft lacked sufficient gender inclusion. The Samoan meeting proposed that CEDAW be made a ‘foundation principle’ of the Plan and that, rather than adding on women and youth to the existing format, there be an effort made to mainstream them into the process. Robertson notes that, at the civil society workshop, very few participants had any knowledge of the Plan. They had not heard of it prior to the workshop and called for better communication between the PIFS and civil society to ‘spell out’ the content of the Plan. A regional news service was proposed to better engage people with regional issues as way of overcoming this challenge in the future. Participants also endorsed the concept of PIF regional liaison officers to assist local communities to connect with regional institutions.

The Solomon Island’s report on the National Consultations includes feedback from participants on the focus areas of the Pacific Plan. The only reference to gender was under the issue of security where CEDAW was discussed as an example of how the Pacific has so far failed to deliver outcomes under international agreements, such as treaties and conventions. However, participants did urge the PIF to be more inclusive of Pacific Ministerial meetings that did not fall under their umbrella by recognising and endorsing decisions that those Ministers made as regional partners. The Pacific Women Minister’s triennial meetings come under this category and this was acknowledged by participants. The report also revealed a strong feeling among participants that relationships between governments and civil society was paramount to the development and implementation of policies; this is a critically important point for women. Improving access to government through partnerships between government and civil society, provides women with an alternate avenue to voice their concerns when they are not adequately represented within political systems. It increases their opportunities to stimulate change from below by enabling women’s concerns to be included in policy debates.

The Solomon Island’s civil society workshops attracted approximately forty participants. Most were residents of Honiara, the capital of the Solomon Islands and location of the workshops where attendees ranged from students and academics to private and public service employees. Again, it is unclear from the workshop report if there was a gender balance among attendees. Once more, Robertson was a facilitator of the workshops and he observed the tone of the Honiara workshops as markedly different from others in which he

557 Ibid.
558 Ibid.
had been involved in Apia and Suva. His perception was that domestic issues so overwhelmed participants that they were finding it difficult to connect to concepts of regionalism. Participants were concerned more with issues specific to their local environments such as logging, health and managing markets for trade. They were focused on their struggles to meet basic needs in these and other areas and expressed concerns over lack of knowledge and access to information to overcome the challenges they dealt with day to day. One of the major issues that arose was the lack of trust in regional organisations. These were perceived as remote from people’s daily lives for a number of reasons. First, there was a lack of knowledge about them and how they operate, with employees of regional organisations being viewed as élitist. Second, people at the workshops felt that regional organisations failed to communicate with grassroots communities, only connecting with national governments. This was challenging in that they believed governments were ineffective at relaying information to citizens about regional activities.

While participants were sceptical about the value and effectiveness of regional organisations and expressed views that they were ill-informed and disconnected from regional processes, they did make suggestions for improving relationships between regional level organisations and localised communities. These primarily revolved around improving communications between the PIF and local communities. First, like participants of the Apia workshop, they proposed a news service be developed that both informed and educated people on the regional issues. This was viewed as a useful strategy for improving local knowledge and engaging interest in regionalism. Second, they also specifically requested the Pacific Plan be communicated to people in their local language. Unlike their colleagues in Apia, the Solomon Islands cohort preferred this to occur through locally employed liaison officers rather than through a local regional office. While Robertson’s report does not elaborate on the reasoning or discussion that prompted the suggestion, it can be surmised that the lack of trust in national government and perceptions of regional employees as élitist voiced by participants would be a driving factor. There was an overall emphasis on creating avenues for direct negotiation between local communities and regional organisations that was able to bypass national governments. For example, regionally funded projects were seen as problematic when managed through national governments and thus such participants advocated for direct contracts between project managers and funding bodies.

While Robertson’s account of the workshop does not provide a clear picture of whether gender or women’s concerns specifically were part of the discussions that took place, there was inclusion of ‘women’ as a topic that participants felt needed to be addressed as a targeted concern. A proposal was put forward during the workshop that national organisations be formed around single issues such as youth, women, farmers, or business, and that these should not be merged under the umbrella of a national civil society group. National associations could then be structured around regional groupings that had a singular focus.

561 Ibid.
562 Ibid.
563 Ibid.
thereby avoiding the complex issue of competing agendas. In addressing the draft, participants were mostly concerned with a lack of accountability if specific issues were subsumed under broader agendas. This resonates with concerns that gender mainstreaming is prone to failure when women’s issues become invisible within systems that operate under gender insensitive processes. Robertson noted participants also believed the Plan needed to be simplified in order to be understood. It needed to have more emphasis on the importance of inclusive governments as a method of accountability, reiterating the workshop recommendations made in Fiji and Samoa for strengthening civil society partnerships.

Despite the PIF having introduced a gender policy in 1998 that promoted the advancement of women in regional processes, gender was not mainstreamed adequately throughout the development process of the Pacific Plan. The consultation meetings provided extensive input to the PPTF for consideration in the final drafting of the Pacific Plan. A total of eighty three extra regional initiatives were identified. While the National Consultation reports made only minor references to gender, it was the civil society forums that most strongly advocated for increased gender inclusiveness in the Pacific Plan. They highlighted the need for FICs to receive greater assistance in meeting obligations to gender equality under international agreements currently in place under CEDAW. Significantly, provision of specialist support by PIFS to member countries to assist them with implementing CEDAW was seen as necessary for the Plan to properly address women’s needs. Strategies for doing so included regional level assistance to governments to develop and implement gender mainstreaming policies and gender budgets, and increasing resources for national women’s machineries and women’s non-government organisations. Throughout the consultation process, however, the gender mainstreaming approach foreshadowed a process where suggestions and recommendations would be added on to existing frameworks and would become subsumed by broad agendas predetermined by the PPTF, rather than introduced as stand-alone strategies. The marginalisation of gender raised questions about the appropriateness of a PPTF shown earlier to be lacking in gender equality itself, and therefore, lacking a gender balanced perspective when deliberating on consultation recommendations. It also problematises how this gendered make-up of the decision-making committee might serve to influence the outcomes of policy development processes.

The Public Submissions Process: Identifying Gender Gaps in the Draft Pacific Plan

In addition to the regional in-country consultations, the PPTF invited public submissions on the working draft. The total number of submissions received is unknown and many have not been publicly released. The PIF Secretariat initially maintained a website dedicated to the Pacific Plan between 2004 and 2006 with access to some of the submissions. The website had

564 See discussion this Chapter, p. 102-104, on the impact of power imbalances in regard to inadequate implementation of gender mainstreaming within organisations. See also Chapter One discussion on the theoretical ideal of gender mainstreaming as a mechanism for achieving equality, pp. 19-24.
565 Robertson, Capacity Building Report, Honiara : Civil Society Workshops
566 Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Pacific Plan Background Papers: Background Paper Two, Consultation Report, pp. 6-16.
567 Ibid.
been a recommendation of the *Pacific Plan Communication Strategy*, however, funding and resources were problematic and by 2007, the strategy no longer figured in the Pacific Plan updates and the website had been made redundant.\(^{568}\) Much of the material was then removed from public access as the electronic files were not included on a new PIFS website thereafter. A field visit to PIF’s headquarters in Suva in February to March 2009 highlighted the difficulty of accessing information. Multiple attempts over a period of four weeks to gain access to the original documents were unsuccessful. Although the Secretariat did maintain an archival room for Pacific Plan, documentation none of the documents were at the time available for research purposes.\(^{569}\) It must be noted that the PIF’s Gender Officer and head librarian were genuinely interested in assisting with the research project and also made several attempts on my behalf to access the material. The decision to decline access to archived documents was an administrative one. The reasoning behind this was that the documentation had not yet been adequately catalogued. Seven of fifteen submissions that had been listed on the original website were obtainable through other channels. Within these seven submissions there were consistent calls for increased levels of support for civil society. The following is an overview of the submissions:

- The Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) advocated for greater recognition of the role and benefits of civil society. ACFID highlighted the need for financial resources to be made available for regional NGO networking to support civil society as partners in the implementation of the Pacific Plan.\(^{570}\) They also suggested that the draft Plan include enhanced measures for civil accountability of member FICs through adopting criteria for ‘observable community acceptance and support’. They cited the example of past difficulties in the forestry industry when policies have run counter to community views and traditional land tenure issues.\(^{571}\)

- Oxfam New Zealand recommended that the Plan should strengthen the recognition given to civil society as potential partners in implementation. Their submission noted a need to improve the quality of aid to the Pacific in order to ensure donor countries support nationally determined priorities. They suggested that this be supported through increased inclusiveness of civil society in aid processes. They were also critical of the depth of analysis that had been undertaken on issues of poverty reduction, good governance and security, arguing that more analysis should be done to identify root causes of poverty. Oxfam advocated for wide consultations with civil society to unearth the underlying factors of poverty and for the Pacific Plan to be linked more strongly to the MDGs.\(^{572}\)

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\(^{568}\) The website was removed when the PIFS website was updated in early 2007 and from that point forward only minimal key documents have been maintained in a section of the website dedicated to annual reports for the Pacific Plan.

\(^{569}\) Field notes. 24/02/2009; 04/03/2009; 07/03/2009 & 11/03/2009.


\(^{571}\) Ibid.

- Others to raise the issue of civil engagement included the Pacific Youth Summit for MDGs, the Regional Rights Resource Team (RRRT), a Gender Input submission from a collective of Fijian women, and Unifem Australia. The Pacific Youth Summit issued a statement on the Plan calling for increased engagement with community leaders and the establishment of initiatives for youth participation in sustainable development. 573

The statement also had strong references to education and gender as areas in need of improvement. They linked these to the MDGs and advocated for Pacific governments to make stronger linkages between the MDGs and the Plan.

The RRRT submission focused on human rights and the need for civil society to be supported financially as that would result in a cost effective measure to implement programs and projects. RRRT supported the ACFID submission in the area of civil engagement, calling on the PPTF to be more accountable in terms of meeting human rights obligations:

Any Plan for Pacific Islanders must be based on a rights based approach. Shortly explained this must be on the basis of participation, empowerment, non-discrimination, equality and the rule of law (PANEL). The PP appears to cater for some and not all elements of the rights based approach. The rights based approach argues that the pursuit of economic development alone without sufficient safeguards for promoting PANEL will result in uneven economic development and in some cases further marginalisation of the vulnerable, poor and disempowered. 574

The RRRT specifically noted the draft plan had insufficiently addressed issues of gender, human rights and governance. RRRT argued the Plan was based on the premise that increased economic development would result in poverty reduction and that this was a flawed premise with precedents for failure in other countries. They urged the PIF to consider gender, human rights, and governance as interlinked issues that should be integrated into all aspects of the four pillars of the plan.

- Unifem Australia argued that the issue of gender as a cross cutting issue had been neglected in the working draft of the Plan. In a letter to Australian Prime Minister, John Howard, the president of Unifem Australia, Libby Lloyd urged Mr. Howard to exert influence on the development of the Pacific Plan on behalf of regional women. 575 Lloyd asked that Howard ensure it would be modified to reflect a more inclusive approach to women’s perspectives and issues. She argued the working draft failed to include gender

across all aspects of the Plan claiming that, as it stood, the Pacific Plan was silent on the
gendered aspects of each of the Plan’s pillars and that there were also serious shortfalls
in the linkages between the four pillars. Concerned with women’s vulnerability to poor
policy, Lloyd criticised the security and governance pillars as failing to include
adequate reference to human and social elements of development. As a remedy to the
perceived deficiencies, she urged the Prime Minister to promote the need for deeper
consultative processes involving the PPTF, the PIF Gender Advisor, and major
women’s organisations, such as the SPC Women’s Bureau, Unifem and the Fiji
Women’s Rights Movement.

The Fijian Ministry of Women, Social Welfare and Poverty Alleviation (MOWSWPA)
and the Fijian National Council of Women convened a collective women’s consultation
meeting on May 9 2005 which was titled ‘A Gender Focused Pacific Plan’. It was
attended by women from the Fiji government and representatives from, what the
MOWSWPA cover letter on the submission referred to as, ‘a ‘cross-section’ of
women’s interest groups. The meeting participants criticised the working draft for its
lack of gender detail. Outcomes of the consultation were collated by a core working
group and collated into a ‘united submission on behalf of women’s and gender
organisations’. In the submission, participants echoed the concerns of Unifem
Australia. They argued that the draft was a gender insensitive document that failed to
meet the obligations to gender equality that most FICs had undertaken as signatories to
CEDAW. The submission contained detailed comments on the working draft including
twelve specific suggestions for rewording the draft’s implementation strategies to
ensure gender was incorporated comprehensively across all of the four pillars of the
Plan. Significantly, economic growth was seen as an area that was detrimental to
women.

The MOWSWPA submission stressed that gender discriminatory practices which work
against women’s rights would be reinforced under the economic growth model adopted by
the PPTF. The Plan was viewed as a document that promoted a ‘form of globalisation and
market liberalisation’ that would increase inequalities within, and across, FICs. Failure to
take into consideration unequal work conditions, women’s vulnerability to job losses due to
their ‘over-representation’ in ‘vulnerable industries’, and the social and economic
repercussions for families if regional vocational training schools promoted temporary
migration, were highlighted as examples of the gender gaps in the economic growth
framework. There was also a strong focus on the ratification of CEDAW by FICs, and that
the security pillar needed to be broadened to incorporate human security as a prerequisite for
political security. This challenges that Roberts, Wright and O’Neill argue is the security

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576 UNIFEM Australia, UNIFEM Australia Urges Gender Equality for the Pacific Plan.
Plan from Women’s Groups MOWSWPA; Fiji National Council of Women Fiji, Suva. www.pacificplan.org
(Viewed, 02/03/2007).
579 Ibid.
580 Ibid.
581 Ibid. p. 2.
pillar’s ‘fixation’ on political security in relation to the global war on terror.\textsuperscript{582} Human security encompasses much broader issues of class, gender and social inequalities. It considers issues related to these categories like poverty, disability, age and land, water or food security.\textsuperscript{583} Gender matters in the processes of policy development in all areas, however, it is critical that the masculinised domains of economics and security be targeted for reform. When gender is absent from policy analysis, implementation, monitoring and evaluation then policies will reinforce and replicate the systemic oppression of women. If new policy is grounded within traditionally patriarchal models, the historic location of women as subjugated people cannot change – women’s perspectives cannot be brought to bear on policy decisions and actions when women are absent from decision-making processes.\textsuperscript{584}

\textit{The Final Draft: Gender Inclusion in the Four ‘Pillars’ of the Pacific Plan}

This next section closely scrutinises the way that the PPTF framed the final draft of the Pacific Plan. It considers how the PPTF utilised the information and suggestions generated by the consultative processes that occurred in 2005 in relation to the final wording and inclusions for the four key pillars of economic growth, good governance, sustainable development and security. It questions the way that gender remained marginal in the Pacific Plan framework. Even though concessions to gender inclusion were added in the form of a gender mainstreaming policy approach, the Pacific Plan did not reflect the recommendations for increased gender equality that were put forward during the consultative process.

After considering the critiques presented in the consultation and submission process, the PPTF presented a modified draft to the Leaders for consideration prior to the annual Leaders Forum.\textsuperscript{585} The Leaders later endorsed the draft without alteration.\textsuperscript{586} The final, revised draft was divided into eight sections. Sections one to six introduced the background to the Plan, its strategic objectives, regional priorities, implementation strategies, and processes for monitoring and evaluation. Sections seven and eight provided supporting documentation in the form of the previously noted background papers intended to guide and inform debate. The goal of the Pacific Plan was based on the Leaders’ Vision Statement objective to enhance and stimulate economic growth, sustainable development, good governance and security for Pacific countries through increased regionalism. These four pillars formed the framework for the Pacific Plan.

The four pillars incorporated thirteen specific objectives. The first pillar, \textit{Economic Growth}, was defined as ‘sustainable, pro-poor economic growth’.\textsuperscript{587} This approach to


\textsuperscript{583} Ibid. pp. 971-974.

\textsuperscript{584} See pp. 8-9 for a discussion on the use of the term ‘patriarchy’ in this thesis.


economic growth integrates the environmental and social considerations of developing member countries. Achieving and maintaining macroeconomic stability, improving fiscal management, aiding financial sector restructuring, and developing the institutional and regulatory frameworks for private sector development are target areas to achieve conditions for growth.\textsuperscript{588} However, pro-poor growth modelling is problematic in that it often overlooks factors that affect women such as the economic value of informal unpaid work, or the care of the very young, sick or aged in the community that is most often the domain of women.\textsuperscript{589} Three objectives were identified for economic growth in the Pacific region. These included the need to increase sustainable trade and investment with a focus on integrating services across the region, improving the efficiency and effectiveness of infrastructure development, and increasing private sector engagement with regional development.\textsuperscript{590} During the consultations on the final draft, the Gender Issues Adviser for PIF, Samantha Hung, had argued that the draft had failed to take into account the gendered implications of economic growth and that effective economic growth could not be achieved without the full participation of women. She maintained the potential gendered impacts of globalisation and trade liberalisation had not been adequately considered in the draft.\textsuperscript{591} The economic growth pillar of the final draft did not contain any specific references to gender. Instead it relied on the gender mainstreaming strategy of the PIF to incorporate gender as a cross-cutting issue. As the PIF does not have any legal authority over FICs, this delegates the responsibility for gender in the implementation of programs and actions that fall under the pillar of economic growth to individual governments and agencies. It has no specific guiding framework that will ensure existing gender insensitive or gender discriminatory policy or practices will be reformed.

To contextualise the importance of shifting gender analysis into the immediate priorities of the Pacific Plan’s implementation strategies for economic growth, the notion of poverty alleviation is a useful vehicle. The ultimate goal of economic growth within the Plan had been promoted as improving the income earnings and livelihoods for Pacific people.\textsuperscript{592}


Oxfam argues that the economic growth section was simultaneously the weakest section and potentially the most important, citing poor consultation processes in the development stage as a weakening factor and, as it contained no ‘analytical framework’ on the economic growth it aimed to achieve, or for whom, it was neglecting to consolidate a real purpose in its goals. In considering the impacts of poverty, Chant claims poverty cannot be seen as a gender-blind or neutral concept. She argues it is the subjectivity of poverty together with its dynamic nature that demands a less exclusive approach to analysis. A greater degree of qualitative and participatory methodologies need to incorporated into the mainstream of economic analytical frameworks. Chant draws on Kabeer’s argument relating to the outcomes of failing to include gender as a factor:

Poverty has not always been analysed from a gender perspective. Prior to the feminist contributions to poverty analysis, the poor were either seen as composed entirely of men or else women’s needs and interests were assumed to be identical to, and hence subsumable under, those of male household heads.

These points are highly relevant to the Pacific context where poverty has been a significant and growing problem for many countries because of weak economic performance, population growth, urban drift and increasing inequalities. Although statistical information for the Pacific region is quite limited in terms of gender disparity, the UNDP annual report for 2007/8 reveals women in four different countries, namely the Solomon Islands, Fiji, Samoa, and Tonga, had an estimated earned income of approximately half that of their male counterparts, thus reinforcing the need for an increased focus on gender and the economic sustainability of the region. Elevating gender to a more prominent and visibly accountable position in this section of the Plan would better reflect the mandates of the PIF’s Gender Policy commitments to improving the status of women in the region.

The second pillar, Sustainable Development, identified eight objectives. These were aimed at improving the living conditions of Pacific Islanders by; reducing the numbers of people living in poverty in the region; ‘improved’ natural resource and environmental management, health education and training, and gender equality; enhanced involvement of youth; increased levels of participation and achievement in sports; recognised and protected cultural values, and identities and traditional knowledge. Sustainable development was defined by the PPTF as the integration and mutual reinforcement between the three pillars of development.
economic development, social development, and environment conservation. The requirements essential for sustainable development were identified as active stakeholder participation, poverty eradication, changing unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, and managing and conserving the natural resource base for economic and social development, while maintaining the underlying ecological processes.

In terms of gender specific discourse within the pillar of sustainable development, the final draft of the Plan identified gender equality as goal number eight. Section IV of the Plan identified regional priorities for immediate implementation. However, gender equality was neither noted as a standalone priority, nor visibly integrated into the listed priorities. This failure to specifically identify gender as a priority does not entirely exclude it from the initiatives of the implementation strategies’ framework. Article Eight states that other regional initiatives contributed to improving gender equality. These would be monitored and evaluated for their contribution to progressing goal eight. This forms part of the strategy of gender mainstreaming, however, the subtle marginalisation of responsibility for overseeing outcomes relating to gender equality creates a situation where a number of different agencies would have to take responsibility for developing, implementing, monitoring, and reporting on gendered outcomes. Potentially, these could be tasks delegated to agencies with little or no expertise in gender analysis and monitoring which would, in turn, create challenges unless adequate resources and training were provided. The mainstreaming of gender in this way may well have been a genuine attempt at improving gender outcomes and a sign that mainstreaming has been an accepted strategy for attempting to overcome barriers to women’s participation in development. However, failing to place gender equality as a standalone priority with fully supported infrastructures to oversee and monitor the progress of strategies to create opportunities for advancement of women in the Pacific, risks undervaluing and under-prioritising women’s contributions or concerns. Doing so potentially minimises outcomes for women.

The third pillar, Good Governance, was identified as a prerequisite for sustainable development and economic growth. Examination of the gendered dimensions of this pillar demonstrates how mainstreaming has led to women’s concerns becoming invisible in the public reporting process of the Plan. Good governance was defined by the PPTF as ‘the transparent, accountable and equitable management of all resources’. This section of the Plan called for FICs to improve levels of transparency, accountability, efficiency, and equity in the management and use of resources. The pillar also contained an acknowledgement of the need to develop a strategy to increase opportunities for participatory democracy, a concept that must, by its nature, be inclusive of men and women as participants in the

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598 Ibid.
599 Ibid.
602 Ibid.
democratic process. On average, the Pacific has endured the lowest percentage of women in parliaments globally at only 2.5 per cent. This figure has remained stagnant since 1995 despite the institutionalisation of gender concerns through the establishment of gender desks and gender policies in FICs and the mobilisation of women around the region at conferences, workshops and seminars.

The MOWSWPA recommendations for this pillar include a number of strategies aimed at an attempt to improve these figures. The first calls for drafting ‘Model Gender Equality Legislation’ for the Pacific, followed by support from the PIFS to ensure national adoption of such legislation. The final version did incorporate a milestone under Strategic Objective Twelve that focuses on assisting FICs to draft legislation that would progress obligation to human rights under regional and international agreements. However, it stopped short of including model legislation drafting as an objective of the Plan. CEDAW and the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security were listed as examples of agreements and treaties to be covered by the support mechanisms that could be provided under the umbrella of the Plan. This initiative was marked for immediate implementation with measurable outcomes to be achieved by 2008. Subsequent annual reports revealed that, in 2006 and 2007, progress had been slow in this area although consultations and workshops had taken place to ensure information was being shared and updated at the regional level. For example, the PIF Secretariat had collaborated with Unifem, the PWB and the UNDP Sub-regional centre in 2006 to gather information on progress and or barriers to ratification and implementation of CEDAW in FICs. A meeting held in Nadi in March 2006 concluded that non-CEDAW ratified FICs lacked the political will to institute any significant changes to progressing CEDAW. Furthermore, the women’s machineries of those FICs were found to be under resourced, resulting in a lack of capacity to influence governments toward change. In 2007, the Annual Report made no note of specific progress other than that a further consultation round had commenced between the PIFS and various women’s organisations or agencies in the region.

From 2007 onward, Pacific Plan Annual Reports were published in a new format which does not include the detailed progress charting of the 2006 report. The new format presents an overview of each pillar and recommendations for the following year rather than a detailed account of what had occurred in the previous year or indicators of how each of the strategic objectives was being progressed. Between 2008 and 2011, while there was little mention of ongoing work supporting progress towards achieving higher levels of women in

decision-making across the region, no specific details of particular events, outcomes or progress indicators are provided as evidence of the effectiveness of these efforts. The 2008 and 2009 reports do not provide any reportable outcomes or progress at all across any of the Plan’s implementation review categories.608

In 2010, the Pacific Plan Annual Report noted that two FICs, the Solomon Islands and Kiribati, had taken steps toward addressing issues surrounding gender violence by initiating Family and Health Surveys to identify needs. While the report notes the surveys assisted with developing strategies for strengthening legal frameworks and public advocacy in this area again, no specific outcomes or institutional changes are identified as having occurred as a result.609 The gender input recommendation calling for model legislation is not incorporated into any of the visible aims or strategic objectives, nor is it mentioned as an outcome of any of the implementation actions under the good governance pillar. Mainstreaming gender within the Plan therefore, has the effect of withdrawing opportunities to include evidence of action, progress, monitoring or evaluation from the reporting process. While there may be internal processes that monitor gender outcomes, these have not been visibly apparent in the annual reports and, as such, have been rendered invisible to public scrutiny.

The women’s gender input submission also calls for increased resources and research for capacity building programs that could remove or minimalise barriers to women’s participation in politics. There has been more tangible evidence of this being incorporated into the Pacific Plan implementation strategies than the previous suggestion, although the outcomes for women have been limited. Significant research on the status of women in politics was carried out in 2005-2006 by senior academics Elise Huffer, Jon Fraenkel, Alamanda Roland Lauti and Fakavae Taomia from the University of the South Pacific, Ofa–ki-Levuka Guttenbeil-Lililiki from the Tonga Women’s Action for Change, and Susi Kofe, a former legal rights training adviser with the Tuvalu National Council of Women. Draft findings of the research were tabled at the Pacific Regional Workshop on Advancing Women’s Representation in Parliaments, which was convened in Rarotonga, Cook Islands from 19–21 April 2006 and later published by PIFS in A Woman’s Place is in the House – the House of Parliament.610 The workshop was a joint initiative of PIFS, the SPC, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and Unifem Pacific. It was attended by Ministers, Members of Parliament, and representatives of National Women’s Machineries, regional organisations, donors and academics. The event was a direct outcome of the Pacific Plan initiative 12.5 to increase opportunities for participatory democracy. It aimed to engage women’s ministries at a regional level and encourage FICs to take a more proactive stance on increasing women’s participation in politics. The workshop, convened under the umbrella of the Pacific Plan, offered an opportunity for establishing a unified regional approach and, in

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doing so, paved the way for further programs to educate women in political processes. Recommendations of the workshop included convening sub-regional workshops on special measures and electoral reform. The first of these was held in Port Moresby in September 2008. A second workshop was then held in the Solomon Islands. Both of these provided education and support on development of temporary special measures such as reserved seats for women in parliaments and the use of quota systems. In the Solomon Islands, a national task force was formed, a time-line for action endorsed and participants agreed to work on a strategy to present to parliament for discussion. In 2010, the government passed the Gender Equality and Women’s Development Policy, aimed as a first step in advancing the strategy.  

Similarly in Papua New Guinea a campaign for reserved seats for women was launched by the single female member of the parliament, Dame Carol Kidu. This was a response to both the 2006 sub-regional workshop and a 2007 United Nations Development Program workshop that facilitated a response from the Papua New Guinean Government to endorse four women Members of Parliament by 2008 in order to meet commitments made under the Pacific Plan.  

Minister Kidu made several submissions to parliament through the National Executive Council. As a result the Papua New Guinean Cabinet gave its blessings to utilise the National Constitution provisions of Sections 101 and 102 to invite women citizens to submit their Expressions of Interest on 26 October, 2008. Despite a long process of public and parliamentary debate on the issue, the proposal was defeated on March 10 2009 by a vote of 60 to 16, 13 votes short of the number required. In February 2012, another attempt to introduce reserved seats failed when the Equality and Participation Bill received only 58 votes of the 73 required to pass.

The fourth and final pillar of the Plan was security. It was defined by the PPTF as the ‘stable and safe social (or human) and political conditions necessary for, and reflective of, good governance and sustainable development for the achievement of economic growth’ indicating a high level of interdependence between each of the pillars. The security pillar contained only one strategic objective for the first three years and that was to improve political and social conditions for stability and safety. In relation to security, the gender input submission focuses on issues traditionally viewed as women’s concerns such as domestic violence and sexual assault. Within this emphasis was a suggestion that the PIF develop ‘Model Regional Sexual Offences Legislation’ and provide regional support mechanisms that would assist FICs to adopt and implement the legislation. The notion of model legislation

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613 Ibid. p. 9.

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was promoted as a way to ensure that actions to improve gender sensitivity toward sexual offences would be prioritised.

The PIF did develop a model law in 2005. The *Sexual Offences Model Provisions* Bill was established in response to the high incidence of sexual offence in the region. The Bill provides that traditional forms of reconciliation are not to be taken into account by judges in sentencing an offender for a sexual offence. Swamy argues that when customary reconciliation is recognised it gives rise to personal injustice to the victim as it can have the effect of reducing sentences for perpetrators. Customary reconciliation measures can be subjective and, as Swamy points out, in the Pacific there are locations where domestic violence has become normalised as an ‘acceptable aspect’ of marriage or cohabitation, leaving outcomes vulnerable to local interpretations of the seriousness of a crime. A comprehensive report by Christine Forster in 2009 on the status of sexual offence legislation across fifteen Pacific Island countries found that this and other attempts to introduce model legislation in Fiji and the Cook Islands had been unsuccessful. Of the countries surveyed, only two, Papua New Guinea and Kiribati, had introduced legislation that met international standards of best practice but these had not adopted the PIF model. The PIF has persisted in pursuing the endorsement of model legislation of FICs through the establishment of the *Reference Group to Address Sexual and Gender Based Violence (RGASGBV)* in 2010. The role of RGASGBV is to raise awareness of the seriousness of sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) and its impact on the region, and to establish the issue of SGBV on the political agendas of FICs. The group works collaboratively with the SPC and CSOs at the national level to guide the drafting of new legislation. In 2012 the Tongan government began the process for introducing legislation on violence against women for the first time. The RGASGBV collaborated with the Tongan Ministry of Education, Women’s Affairs and Culture to hold consultations with Tongan Members of Parliament to review documentation on violence against women locally and regionally. The new legislation is expected to be passed through parliament before the end of 2012, making Tonga a test case for the effectiveness of the role and function of the RGASGBV in successfully guiding real outcomes for women.

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617 Ibid.
619 Ibid. p. 99.
624 At the time of writing the proposed legislation was still under review.
The security objective contained five initiatives for early implementation. Among those was an increase in training for law enforcement personnel, covering a broad range of areas such as family and domestic violence, gender and sexual violence, human rights and drug control. It did not identify any specific needs for gendered impact assessments or programs in other areas of concern under the security umbrella. The security pillar did address another recommendation the gender input submission had made under the sustainable development pillar by prioritising the harmonisation of approaches in the health sector under the regional Samoa Commitment made by Pacific Health Ministers in March 2005. The commitment aimed to facilitate gender-specific analyses, aid the development of gender-appropriate interventions, as well as improve knowledge bases for HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases. Targeted regional priorities were then documented with projections ‘for immediate implementation’, priorities for ‘agreement in principle’ and those deemed to require further analysis. Each of these is situated within the pillars of the Plan. The final section reveals strategies for implementation, such as the establishment of a Pacific Plan Action Committee (PPAC) to oversee the process by providing support to member countries. It also focuses on the need for support from stakeholders to ensure the Plan’s successful implementation. This was reiterated a number of times by the Secretary General Greg Urwin during 2005. Urwin called on cooperation from national governments and civil society stakeholders for both the consultation process and the implementation of the Pacific Plan, noting that there needed to be a strong political will to translate the Plan into action:

I cannot stress enough that the successful implementation of the Pacific Plan, across all the issues it identifies, will be dependent first on the willingness of our members to translate regional proposals into national action and conversely on the pertinence of what gets decided regionally to national objectives. That connection is very much at the nub of it; if we do not make it our regional priority good intentions will remain just that.

Urwin’s message is reiterated in a report to the PIF by a project group tasked with gauging civil society understanding and awareness of regionalism. The key findings of the report

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627 Urwin, *Closing Address by Mr Greg Urwin, Secretary General, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat at The Pacific Consultation on Addressing Violence Against Children, Tradewinds Convention Centre, Suva 28 September 2005*.

include civil society’s desire to be ‘integrally involved’ in the implementation of the Plan as well as its monitoring and evaluation.629

Conclusion

This chapter has shown how the Pacific Plan grew out of PIF Leaders concerns accumulated over a number years regarding the direction and development of the region. The interconnectedness of these concerns, coupled with the limited capacities of small states to combat them, influenced the PIF to take stock of its own efficiency and capabilities. The Auckland Declaration had paved the way for the EPG review of the PIF and the consequent recommendation by the EPG to initiate the Pacific Plan. This section has shown how the Pacific Plan was a decision that set in motion the foundations for creating a new era for the PIF. The development of a framework for increasing regionalism and improving cooperative State behaviour required a reorganisation of the PIF and the development of a framework for action that involved numerous community partners in the region. The resulting 2005 Pacific Plan was intended as a ten year strategy to achieve deeper and closer ties across the region, which would assist FICs to adapt to, and engage more effectively with, globalisation. To achieve its vision for the Pacific, the EPG emphasised a need for a strong focus on people and a far wider reaching engagement between the PIF and civil society. The subsequent consultation process resulted in government and community consultations being held in each of the PIF member countries. Despite the mandate of the PPTF to ‘consult widely’, there were concerns over the short timeframes allocated for the public consultations, and the potential for the Plan to address concerns of a lack of inclusiveness brought to the EPG’s attention during the consultations.

Pacific women were well placed to advise on the Pacific Plan with a rich history of engagement in advancing not only the status of women, but as demonstrated in Chapter Three, in monitoring, evaluating and advocating on issues related to all areas of the Pacific Plan. Since the early 1970s, Pacific women had been gathering momentum as actors for change at a regional level by discussing, analysing and recommending and taking action on regional issues through various regional workshops and conferences, projects and programs. They were aware of the difficulties of communicating across distance and culture, but through the efforts of individuals, country-based NGO’s and civil society and regional organisations like the PWB, RRRT they secured ongoing, dynamic planning and actions through a series of triennial regional conferences that engaged civil society with governments and bureaucracies. When a collective submission was drafted in Fiji for the consultation process, it uncovered numerous concerns women held about the PPTF’s gender insensitive approach to security, governance, sustainable development and economic growth. These echoed concerns women had already outlined in the Pacific Women’s Platform for Action and its associated recommendations. When Oxfam, ACFID and Unifem made their submissions, they too reiterated the need for a higher degree of prioritisation of gender equality than was evident in the preliminary draft. The final draft did not fully reflect their

629 Ibid. p. 5
recommendations. Gender equality issues did not receive stand-alone, high priority status; rather they were incorporated through gender mainstreaming by integrating gender into the policy broadly and subject to national interpretations. This meant that meeting gender equality objectives was reliant on individual FICs implementing policies to include gender aware strategies. This limited implementation strategy challenges the political will of many small nations to provide expertise or financial support for such programs, thus becoming an ad hoc approach whereby gender mainstreaming as a regional policy cannot guarantee outcomes and may even hinder the advancement of women’s concerns due to a lack of accountability on the part of FICs.

The chapter has shown how regional policy, which incorporates gender mainstreaming, is problematic and can impede gender equality by marginalising women’s concerns. Regionalism in the Pacific is reliant on individual governments to implement policy due to the PIF’s lack of political authority. It is subject to diverse interpretations of policy goals by governments that have historically sustained some of the lowest levels of women’s political representation globally. It is therefore an inherently gendered process grounded in both traditional and imposed models of governance that marginalise women from political processes and decision-making. Gender mainstreaming is only effective when governments are committed to the idea of gender equality, both politically and in practice. Without explicit resourcing through dedicated budgets and expertise, guidelines for inclusion and accountability in implementation gender mainstreaming cannot deliver outcomes that achieve gender equality.

The following chapter now turns the thesis focus to the voices of women. Some were involved in the Pacific Plan development processes while others were located outside of them. It show how women situated at various levels of Pacific society view the Pacific Plan, its development process and the procedures employed by the PIF and domestic governments to communicate and inform them on regional policy development.
CHAPTER FIVE: POST PLAN INTERPRETATIONS - WOMEN’S PERCEPTIONS OF INCLUSIVE PROCESSES

This chapter focuses discussion on women’s reflections of the Pacific Plan development process. It does so by drawing together the contrasting perspectives of women from grassroots communities, civil society and NGOs, and those who are part of an élite group of women who work within government bureaucracies and political systems in the region. It layers these perspectives to create a thick description of regional policy-making processes. In doing so it demonstrates how the problematic nature of top-down approaches negate the efforts of gender policies designed to improve gender equality. First, it briefly explains the fieldwork process. It then brings into focus the EPG’s vision of Pacific regionalism by contextualising the consultation period as one that the EPG intended to be gender inclusive. Building on the previous chapter, it reveals how the EPG linked the inclusion of women in the Pacific Plan development process to a perceived need to honour women’s rights in a region that, in their view, had failed to do so across a number of areas. However the chapter shows how women consulted during fieldwork perceived the process as exclusionary. Their perceptions call into question the success of the strategies the PPTF employed to enable inclusivity within the process. It then shifts focus from the EPG and PIF to the voices of regional women. It highlights how women from diverse settings in the Pacific desire a greater engagement with regionalism. The personal stories of women from grassroots communities illuminate the challenges women face as they engage with political processes and reveal the extent of isolation they experience from regional policy-making processes.

The fieldwork for this thesis project revealed a desire by women across all levels of society to have been more engaged and better informed. In particular, it exposed how grassroots women felt they are significantly marginalised from high end policy dialogue. Even when women engaged with civil society groups, they felt they had remained silenced by political and social barriers to their direct engagement with decision-making processes. They expressed a desire for more direct, easily accessible information from governments. Women I spoke with felt this would assist them to engage more proactively with civil society rather than, for example, relying on community organisations to initiate community debate or discussions. The fieldwork undertaken in Fiji, Tonga and Australia includes semi-structured interviews with representatives of élite women’s groups, or individuals who operate with the élite sphere of influence. These were complimented by structured questionnaires that mapped if, and how, women engaged with the development of the Pacific Plan including the national consultations, civil society forums or meetings and public submissions. The

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630 Thick description refers to the detailed account of field experiences in which the researcher makes explicit the patterns of cultural and social relationships and puts them in context. See Holloway 1997. Basic Concepts for Qualitative Research: Blackwell Science Oxford.

631 See Chapter One p. 13 for an explanation of how the term ‘élite’ is applied in the thesis.
participants included current or former members of government in two of the countries, and equal standing representatives from a third country. Interviews and less formal discussions were held with representatives of civil society and non-government organisation representatives in Fiji, Tonga and Vanuatu, between 2007 and 2009. A total of four small group discussions with grassroots women in Fiji and Tonga were held where the focus was on understanding how women who are located outside formal organisations experience communication from government and regional bodies in relation to policy development. The focus was predominantly on the ways women choose to interact with civil society or NGOs as mediators of government processes. In total, there were eighteen women in the small group discussions. The women lived in a mix of rural and urban locations and had varying degrees of education and employment. I also draw on my own participation in, and subsequent observations of, regional women’s gatherings such as the 10th Triennial Pacific Women’s Conference and the ALP International Asia-Pacific Campaign Training School for Women in Politics, where representation from across the broader Pacific allowed me to observe both informal interactions and formal discussions on regional policy.632

As has been discussed in detail in Chapter Four, when the Pacific Plan was devised, the notion of including consultations with stakeholders during its development was an important factor of the EPG’s vision for the final result. The PPTF Terms of Reference directed them to ‘consult widely’ with a ‘participatory, consultative and broad-based approach’. This was viewed by the EPG as integral to the success of the Pacific Plan in order to instil a sense of national ownership of the Pacific Plan goals.633 Feedback from the national consultations was also viewed by the EPG as pivotal in assisting with policy guidance for development initiatives across regional and national domains. The EPG called for Pacific people to be ‘more closely involved in regional decision-making’ and advocated that it was desirable that new approaches be found that were inclusive of grassroots voices.634 Envisaged as being achievable through increased connections with civil society groups, the review recognised that women, in particular, were not adequately represented within the region at either national or regional levels. The implications of this are evidenced by the various impacts upon women’s human rights. For example, Forum Leaders noted the low levels of women’s literacy and health, high levels of women living in poverty, and high incidence of domestic violence throughout the region. The review urged the PIF to address low levels of women’s participation in decision-making in order to redress these issues by bringing women’s concerns to the fore:

There is a view within the region that Pacific institutions and processes are not as gender sensitive as they should be. Given the changing roles

632 In particular these are drawn for my involvement with the regional 3rd Triennial Pacific Women’s Conference held in Noumea 2007, and from my volunteer work as a consultant to various women’s groups. I was also a workshop facilitator and attendee of the Labor International Asia-Pacific Women in Politics Workshops, Cairns 2008, and a gender consultant to the Tonga Women National Congress inaugural workshops held in Nukualofa in January 2009.
and responsibilities of men and women, and the increasingly recognised role that women play in society, the Forum needs to acknowledge and encourage the participation of women in decision-making at all levels. The challenges facing Pacific Island Leaders are to: increase the current low level of participation by women at all levels in decision-making processes and structures; reduce and eliminate domestic violence; put in place programmes to improve the literacy rate of women; and promote and improve the health of women.\footnote{Hartsock 1998. 'Marxist Feminist Dialectics for the 21st Century', ibid. Vol. 62, Iss. 3. p. 404.}

The Pacific Islands Human Rights Consultation (PIHRC), which took place in 2004, the same year as the PIF Eminent Persons Review, reaffirmed the importance of this call to action by urging the PIF to strengthen its commitment to supporting governments in advancing mechanisms for improved human rights. The PIHRC encouraged Pacific civil society organisations (CSOs) to work towards the promotion of ‘inclusive, barrier-free and rights-based’ societies.\footnote{Grindle 2004. 'Good Enough Governance: Poverty Reduction and Reform in Developing Countries', Governance, Vol. 17, Iss. 4. pp. 525-548.} They recommended Pacific governments completely remove existing discriminatory practices from development processes, and that participatory and accountable methods for development, based on meeting the International Labor Organisation’s human rights standards, be applied. The region has struggled to date with many aspects of good governance and democracy in the post-independence period, including during the current era of Pan-Pacific Regionalism.\footnote{Larmour 1997. 'Corruption and governance in the South Pacific', Pacific Studies, Vol. 20, Iss. 3. pp. 1-17; Larmour 1998. Governance and Reform in the South Pacific. Canberra, A.C.T.: National Centre for Development Studies, Australian National University.; Haley 2008. Strengthening Civil Society to Build Demand for Better Governance in the Pacific: literature review and analysis of good practice and lessons learned: Discussion Paper Series 7. Canberra A.C.T.: State Society and Governance in Melanesia, ANU.; Hegarty and Reagan 2005. “Papua New Guinea: Weak State, Strong Society”. In Effective Development in Papua New Guinea. Special Issue Development Bulletin 67. D. and P. (eds), pp. 110-112.; Reilly, State functioning and state failure in the South Pacific, pp. 479-493.; Saldanha 2004. 'Strategies for Good Governance in the Pacific', Asian-Pacific Economic Literature, Vol. 18, Iss. 2. pp. 30-43.; Reilly, State functioning and state failure in the South Pacific, pp. 479-493.} Discrimination against women remains a serious problem throughout most countries in the Pacific region. Jalal argues this is due to cultural practices or traditions that perpetuate problems of violence and oppression.\footnote{Jalal 2005. The Situation of Human Rights Defenders in the Pacific Islands. Suva: UNDP & Regional Rights Resource Team.} For example, she cites the challenges of Fijian law to overcome the cultural perception of women’s inferior status to sit alongside women’s rights mechanisms such as CEDAW, or the use of traditional courts to exercise jurisdiction over village, family and personal matters which can have a negative impact on women’s human rights.\footnote{Ibid. p. 22, 27.} These types of issues prevent or discourage women from enjoying their full rights as equal citizens and especially from participating in the public sphere. The EPG advocated for higher levels of civil engagement including the specific engagement of women. Thus, the challenge for the PPTF was to employ processes which would not only engage formal structures of civil society but also realise the EPG vision of a
close involvement of the people. This necessarily includes women at the grassroots of FIC societies.

During the period of the consultations, the average time the PPTF spent in each of the FICs varied between one and three days, with some consultations also including public forums that were arranged by the host countries or civil society groups. National consultations were criticised for being conducted as information-giving sessions rather than as consultative information-gathering sessions. Individual women and civil society organisations interviewed for the thesis were concerned that the draft Pacific Plan was so advanced that the consultations occurred after the major decisions surrounding its content had already been decided. Although there was a degree of understanding that a preliminary plan would be presented for comment, women interviewed were disappointed that this was the case. They felt regional women had been mostly excluded from in-country discussions held prior to the consultations in preparation for the formal consultations.

For the most part, the consultations were directed toward élite levels of participation consisting of representatives from CROP agencies, PIF development partners, intergovernmental organisations and non-state actors, as outlined in the PPTF-TOR. The inclusion of non-state actors such as the University of the South Pacific, UNIFEM Pacific, World YWCA, the Citizens Constitutional Forum, the World Council of Churches and the Pacific Islands News Association was a move by the PPTF to bring broader community representation to the conversations than had previously been the norm in the PIF. However, there remained a sense of distance between those who work for, or represent, organised community service groups, churches or other non-state actors and the grassroots citizens. For example, grassroots women’s frustrations centred on a general lack of knowledge about the country consultations. This was a result of two factors. First, there was a failure on the part of the PPTF to effectively implement the PIF’s gender policy and ensure that grassroots women were equally catered for in the way the consultations were conducted. Second, was the difficulty of mediating between the types of communications used within the NGO and CSO sectors and those communication channels that village and rural women rely upon for information. This is highlighted later in this chapter through the stories of grassroots women and the small group discussions that took place during fieldwork visits.

While the PPTF was the overseeing body for in-country consultation processes, it was the responsibility of individual FICs to decide who and how representatives from their

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642 Fieldwork interviews: December 5 2007, Vanuatu; March 11 & 13 2009, Fiji.
645 Fieldwork small group discussions outcomes: Fiji, Tonga, and Vanuatu: Personal field notes.
country would be involved in the process. 646 This resulted in a decidedly ‘ad hoc’ approach to the involvement, or otherwise, of women’s ministries or other women’s national machineries from each location. For instance, at the official national consultation for Fiji, the Fijian Ministry of Women, Social Welfare and Poverty Alleviation (MOWSWPA) was not invited. 647 However, there was representation from numerous other Ministries. 648 Women’s perspectives were represented by the non-government presence of FemLink, a Pacific based women’s advocacy organisation. 649 The Fiji Ministry of Women, in partnership with the National Council of Women and with assistance from Unifem Pacific instead initiated a public women’s consultation prior to the PPTF’s national consultation. This meeting’s outcome was a submission that was issue-oriented and that recorded women’s personal stories as means of including women’s voices in the consultation process. The main focus was on the ratification of CEDAW and increasing the direct involvement of the National Women’s Machinery in that process. The women’s submission was critical of the top-down approach taken by the PPTF as one that further isolated women from the policy development process. Women claimed that the consultation process was restrictive and that it would lead to an inability for the Plan to accommodate the range of concerns that gender equality and women’s empowerment ‘demand from a systematic and institutional viewpoint’. 650 During the workshop discussions, there was also emphasis placed on the priorities of the existing Fiji National Plan for Women such as reforms to legal protection of women and improving women’s rights under judicial systems. 651

Another example of the failure of the PPTF to engage with the PIF Gender Policy was in Tonga. The Tonga Ministry of Women’s Affairs (MWA) was neither made aware of the consultations being held, or the timing of them. It is not unusual for decision makers within the government hierarchy to deem such information unnecessary to women’s ministries as the information is not specific to women or women-centred programs. 652 This non-consultative decision process denied the MWA an opportunity to represent the interests of women in the national consultation process. It also resulted in the MWA not presenting a written submission as they were not made aware of the public submissions process. This was viewed

646 Interview and Questionnaire responses: Participant 3, Suva, March 4 2009.
647 Interview and Questionnaire responses: Participant 1, March 11 2009.
648 These included the Prime Minister’s Office, Ministry of Foreign Affairs & External Trade, Ministry of Education, Bureau of Statistics, ministry of Home affairs, Department of Environment, Department of Agriculture and Quarantine, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Commerce, Business Development & Investments, Attorney General’s Chambers, Department of Immigration, The Fiji Reserve Bank, the National Planning Office and the Ministry of Youth.
651 Fieldwork interview: Participant 1, March 11 2009. The Plan of Action is in two (2) volumes. The first volume contains directions for action required to achieve the broad Strategic Objectives of women and gender concerns/issues such as mainstreaming gender across national policies and achieving gender equality by improving laws and lawmaking processes. The second volume contains the broad text outlines: Ministry for Women and Culture 1998. The Women’s Plan of Action 1999-2008 Volumes 1 & 2. Suva, Fiji Fiji Ministry for Women and Culture.
652 Interview and questionnaire responses: Participant 5, March 3 2009.
as particularly concerning by the MWA as the entire process then failed to take into account the perspectives of the MWA and the relevant knowledge that they could provide.653 This example resonates with evidence globally where women’s ministries or female elected members of parliaments have struggled to be taken seriously by their counterparts, for instance, where women experience a loss in leadership opportunity despite gaining formal positions in governments.654 The failure to include women results in system problems of marginalisation and hidden or obscure barriers to participation that women, who are located in ministries that are traditionally viewed as being specific to women’s concerns become isolated from broader agendas. The stories and perspectives of women are therefore critical to understanding the extent and impact of this type of marginalisation in order to counter women’s underrepresentation.

Concern was also raised in the consultation and submission process, discussed in Chapter Four, that consultations were conducted as a kind of ‘fait accompli’. The presenters told participants what the new Pacific Plan would be and how it would be achieved, and that the short timeframe for preparing for the consultation and the brevity of the consultation itself afforded little chance for constructive critique.655 Therefore a public perception arose that the draft plan would proceed without any major changes in spite of the consultations; consultations occurred only after the Pacific Plan draft had been already significantly shaped by outside interests, and therefore consultations were for the purpose of being seen to allow comments in order to satisfy due process.656 There was an indication by women’s ministries in three countries, Papua New Guinea, Fiji and Tonga that at FICs national government level, women who operated beyond portfolios that dealt specifically with issues of foreign affairs or the economy were not made aware of how they might contribute to the consultations, and were not encouraged to do so either at the government or nongovernment levels.657 In Fiji, the women’s ministry, MWSWPA, did manage to make significant contributions to the consultations through the convening of a one day workshop ‘A Gender Focussed Pacific Plan’ on May 9 2005; however, this was after what a participant recalled to be a great deal of ‘robust discussion’ with other senior government officials.658 The process in Fiji then did not allow time for the women’s ministry to hold direct precursory consultations with women’s civil society groups to survey how they might wish to be included. These examples show that the timeframe for the Pacific Plan consultation process had been too brief which limited the opportunities for civil society to engage with it. The lack of opportunities led to a feeling that civil society had been undervalued as a resource in the process. When participants believe their input would be of little value to the process there may be a risk of governments

653 Ibid.
655 Interview and questionnaire responses: Participant 3, February 25, 2009; Participant 1 March 11, 2009; Participant 1, March 11 2009.
656 Interview and questionnaire responses: Participant 1, March 11, 2009.
657 Interview and questionnaire responses: Participants 1, March 11, 2009; Participant 5, February 20, 2009.
658 Ibid.
marginalising those participants and subsequently missing out on valuable feedback. This is an undemocratic outcome and particularly concerning from a feminist perspective as women’s voices and participation in political processes begin from an already marginalised position.

Non-government organisations that I spoke to during field visits to Fiji, Tonga and Vanuatu indicated they were either not informed of the consultations, or that they were disappointed with how the PPTF had communicated with community organisations. For example, one prominent women’s organisation in Vanuatu explained that, while they work closely with the Vanuatu government’s women’s ministry and they had been sent a copy of the final Pacific Plan after its endorsement, they were not invited to the national consultations. The representative did not recall being advised of the consultations or that they could make written submissions on the draft. She was disappointed with the format of the final document, explaining that it seems to have little relevance to their day to day work as it was viewed as being unnecessarily complex and technocratic. She explained that this was an unsatisfactory outcome as most local organisations did not have the necessary resources to allocate staff extra time on top of their regular commitments to deconstruct such complex documentation in order to make it a more accessible resource. It was clear from our discussion that if the organisation had been invited to the consultations, or been able to access a more concise version of the document, they would have been very interested in providing feedback to the PPTF.

Another example emerged in 2009 in Fiji. A representative of a prominent women’s support organisation recalled the organisation had been aware there were to be country consultations in Fiji and that one of their representatives had attended various meetings during that period. However, at the time, those events were not specifically identified as being part of the Pacific Plan development process. She recalled the organisation was aware that some public forums and meetings they had sent representatives to during the consultation period did discuss the Pacific Plan but so far as they were concerned the meetings were part of their usual engagement with the broader Fijian community. An understanding regarding the relationship between the events and the Pacific Plan country consultations came to light after the meetings had taken place. She felt that if there had been more information on how the outcomes of these events were to be presented to the consultations, their organisation would have been able to provide the PPTF with more targeted insight on women’s issues.

Another organisation which had been a strong women’s rights advocate but not exclusively a women’s organisation, did contribute to the consultations by providing a written submission to the PPTF. However, they also expressed great concern over the lack of resources provided to ensure women’s contributions to the process. Their representative

660 Civil Society Field-visit 1: November 13, 2007, Port Vila.
661 Civil Society Field-visit 2: March 13, 2009 Suva.
662 Civil Society Field-visit 2: March 13, 2009 Suva.
663 Civil Society Field-visit 3: February 25, 2009 Suva.

pointed out there had been a concerted effort on the part of some women’s rights advocates and activists to increase Pacific women’s input into the draft and the consultation process. The geographical isolation of some countries and the limited resources for connecting and consulting between women’s organisations meant the short timeframe created a barrier to full and meaningful participation of women at a broad level. Furthermore, she indicated there was confusion amongst NGOs over who could be involved and the end result was a submission on behalf of Pacific women that was somewhat rushed, and compiled without opportunity for significant regional collaboration. This was viewed, not as a flaw in the way women themselves networked and collaborated but, as a result of the process itself.664

A troubling aspect of the role of élite women in the consultation process was that women who would have wished to be a part of the dialogue struggled to have their say, or were so disconnected from the process that the notion of the Pacific Plan had been an unknown entity for them that reproduced existing perceptions of marginalisation rather than one that advocated improved equality. Of the representatives involved in fieldwork discussions, none were satisfied that the process had been any more inclusive of women than previous processes undertaken by either State or regional bodies. The élite nature of the meetings, and a perceived lack of in-country preparation, served to marginalise the input of women from the process. This was therefore in direct opposition to the EPG’s urging in the PIF review that the region needed to ‘reach out to women’ and ‘address the low participation of women in all levels of decision-making processes and structure’ which, by their own admission, includes the PIF.665

Thus, although the PIF does appear to have desired to bring about enhanced measures of inclusiveness, its own strategies and processes acted to prevent that from being the case with the most significant decision-making process they had undertaken in a number of decades.666 Instead, the process replicated the élite nature of decision-making in the region and its brevity ensured that grassroots communities would not be able to contribute in any direct meaningful capacity. While this appears to be a matter of failing to follow through on the aims of the PIF gender policy to improve gender equality, the issue is much more complex. The Pacific has many challenges in terms of improving democratic processes at both state and regional level and one which should not be underestimated is communication. Problems associated with communication were a major issue articulated at all levels of the community during my fieldwork, as becomes evident later in this chapter when the responses to a series of questions on how people receive and respond to information are revealed, and what grassroots people might see as preferential modes of communication between governments and their communities. To consider the engagement of grassroots or élite women in decision-making without considering how and why women receive information is to overlook the fundamental challenges women have in the Pacific. Women operate mostly

664 Ibid.
666 This was the first full review of the PIF and as such the first comprehensive review of regionalism within PIF member states. Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Thirty-Fourth Pacific Islands Forum Communiqué, p. 19.
outside the public sphere and, where they are in positions of élite privilege, they are often not included in high level dialogue.

**Engaging Women in the Dialogue**

Feminist literature has long argued that effective gender inclusive practices in policy development is contingent on increased numbers of women who engage with political processes. However, the mere increased presence of women in political office does not necessarily result in effecting positive change, an argument Hassim refers to as the ‘thinnest definition’ of participation. It is the increase in women’s voices within political processes that can most effectively influence policy outcomes. Policies ultimately will deliver the best outcomes when they incorporate ways of improving the capacity of people who are impacted by them through redistributive and capacity-building measures. They then become a part of a cooperative process of voluntary and mutually beneficial association which is sustainable in the long term, thus building a community’s own capacity to contribute to national and regional development.

During the latter part of the last century the language and discourse of gender equality and inclusivity became a regular feature of most international and regional political institutions and their respective policies. There was a heightened awareness of the need for gender sensitive programs following the Beijing FWC, and subsequent agreements and conventions adopted by the UN became more gender inclusive in their language. Mechanisms such as gender mainstreaming, gender analysis and gender sensitive planning, provided a starting point for action to overcome gender inequality. Despite these mechanisms becoming procedural norms for many institutions, globally the status of women’s representation in formal politics has remained relatively stagnant with only nominal gains in the majority of countries over the past four decades. With this gap in political representation comes a flow on effect of underrepresentation in policy-making structures and processes.

Earlier chapters have identified how women in the Pacific are substantially behind their male counterparts in terms of political representation and within decision-making roles.

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671 Inter-Parliamentary Union, *Women in Politics 1945-2005*.
Approaches, such as reserved seats or quotas that aim to reform existing political structures, have proven difficult to implement. Women have struggled to gain the support needed to pass them through parliaments, as in the case of Papua New Guinea.\textsuperscript{672} Similarly, top-down approaches to policy development have also resulted in the notable exclusion of women from political decision-making and thus, the predominance of male perspectives being applied to policy-making processes. Consequently, policy development processes with gender inclusive strategies are critical to ensuring gender equality is achieved. In international and regional contexts, similar to the approaches aimed at increasing numbers of women in politics, there has been a top-down focus on including gender in policy dialogue and policy content through gender mainstreaming of ‘women’s issues’.\textsuperscript{673} There has been far less focus on taking advantage of women’s intimate knowledge of the cultural and traditional variables that impact on women. This would enable a bottom-up approach by bringing women’s firsthand experience into the initial development of policy.

Where grassroots women have been included, it is often through élite channels where civil society groups operating in urban areas come into contact with political process. This is a useful and necessary vehicle for women’s voices, however, it too limits itself to women who have access to the urban areas and is increasingly tied to access to modern technologies. For Pacific women, locating and engaging with local level women’s networks in rural areas has been a critical factor in the lives of women. Traditionally, this has been through access to women’s organisations such as church groups and community groups where their collective action assists in articulating their concerns and work toward creating a balance of power.\textsuperscript{674} They also provide women with opportunities for attaining leadership and management skills and for developing networks. This has the effect of increasing levels of confidence to contribute to local and national dialogues as Himmelstrand argues, through ‘solving problems, gaining experience, and working together, women... become aware of their own subordinate position in society and more capable of changing it’.\textsuperscript{675} This approach does not guarantee access to élite networks though, and women without regular access to technology often feel left behind at the national or regional level.\textsuperscript{676} As demonstrated in the previous section, relying on access through élite channels can also be a flawed solution if the channels themselves become marginalised.

\textsuperscript{672} See Chapter Four pp. 144-145.
\textsuperscript{674} Scheyvens, Church Women’s Groups and the Empowerment of Women in Solomon Islands, pp. 27-28.
\textsuperscript{676} This became apparent within responses to small group discussions with rural village women in Tonga and Fiji who felt that information was too often restricted by the lack of technology available to them.
The field research for this thesis shows how women are able to involve themselves in policy development dialogue at a number of levels. Small group discussions with grassroots women in Tonga and Fiji, elaborated on in the next section, focus on women’s interactions with policy development by placing an emphasis on women’s opinions of how they would like this process to engage them. This in turn identifies gaps between current practice and citizen wishes. Kabeer stresses that choice is a fundamental component of empowerment and that power is relative to one’s ability to make choices. She contends that when choice is not an available option to citizens they become disempowered and this is inextricably linked to how the ability to make choices is acquired.677 For example, the resources women identified during the discussions as necessary for them to make choices about how they engage with political processes were found to be vastly different to the resources provided in the case of the Pacific Plan development process. The latter relied heavily on access to technology with most information directed at the public being accessed through a dedicated website. Grassroots women claim they were disadvantaged from the outset in terms of being able to exercise their agency due to limited access to this technology.678 Individuals were often limited in their access to the internet, and when they did have access it was often an unreliable connection service so they were not likely to use it for long enough to read the large volumes of information provided. Rural women relied more heavily on interpersonal communications through local organisations such as women’s groups, church groups and local NGOs. While this example provides a snapshot of women’s viewpoints from across the region, it is precisely this snapshot that is missing from policy development practice currently and thus it does point to a gap in the process undertaken by the PPTF.

The following section works to provide such a snapshot by giving voice to the stories of women in grassroots communities by retelling the personal experiences they shared with me during my visits. It uncovers the personal challenges that women face in participating in development projects.

Voices from the Local: Grassroots Women and Political Participation

A demonstrated concern for cultural and social sensitivity on my part was required by some participants (particularly where social bonds were not as strong as for others) before they would consent to being part of the group discussions, in particular and to this end, I spent time volunteering my services for women’s groups while in country and by ‘living in’ with local women. This allowed participants to observe me and to evaluate and make a decision about gifting their trust and knowledge to the research project. This was a valuable experience for me as I was immersed in the day-to-day local community life, giving me a deeper appreciation for the various challenges that individuals encounter when engaging with political processes.

In Fiji, I lived with a family connected to a former colleague of mine from Suva. The senior female member of the household was a senior member of a local NGO. Being

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associated with a local woman who was part of the Fijian NGO network was an important connection in terms of establishing credibility. It enabled access to women in the community who might otherwise be reluctant to participate in research being undertaken by someone viewed as an outsider. This was critical during my fieldwork as Fiji was, at the time, under military rule and women from some NGOs had been targeted with violent or humiliating punishment for speaking out against the regime, leaving many women hesitant to be seen as speaking publicly even though the topic was not domestic politics or its status.679 One contact I made through the live-in experience, whom I refer to as ‘Josie’, had extensive contacts at the grassroots level.680 Josie offered to act as a facilitator for me to speak with women from the village she lived in. This was a significant offer; culture and social boundaries demand that outsiders are first introduced through a member of the village if they wish to interact with residents, and this is particularly so for researchers.681 In this case, the women chose to participate in the research by answering questionnaires and communicating their points of view using Josie as a mediator, in part due to language barriers but also due to their fear of intimidation by other members of the community. Josie explained that women in this village were encouraged to keep their political views out of the public domain, although she stressed they were quite often very outspoken in what they viewed as the ‘private’ settings of home and women’s meetings. Women were reluctant to be seen to speak out with an outsider such as myself in what they considered a public manner that contradicted village level gender politics:

We can’t see you at home in our village – only can we meet in the market when we come to sell [our produce]. But we women understand that we need more to say about this. We want to talk about what might happen here. We need to know more. But right now are being quiet and we don’t want to make problems for our women. This is better to talk very quietly. Talking with [Josie] is best for us and we can say more this way.682

Fijian culture locates women as ‘gatekeepers of tradition’ and this sometimes inhibits the likelihood of women acting in a way that would challenge the status quo.683 The use of a mediator such as Josie, who was from the local village but who simultaneously worked and lived in an urban environment, was essential to their participation. It provided a bridge across the divide between me as an outsider and the cultural and traditional norms that could potentially silence and marginalise the women’s voices. This is not to say that all non-Fijian

679 Fiji has been under the rule of Commodore Voreqe Bainimarama following a military coup in 2006. See Lal 2009. “This process of political readjustment: The aftermath of the 2006 Fiji Coup”. In The 2006 Military Takeover in Fiji: The Coup to end all Coups? Fraenkel, Firth and Lal. (eds). Canberra, Australia: ANU ePress. p. 67. I also draw on many of my fieldwork interviews with various NGOs and individuals, February 26-March 19, 2009.

680 Josie is not the woman’s real name. Her identity has been protected at her request.


682 Fieldwork notes: Fijian participant, March 9 2009

researchers are denied access. This had been an unexpected offer that required a quick response and there had not been sufficient opportunity to establish myself over time as a trusted person in that community. Josie’s endorsement was therefore crucial to gaining access. By offering women with assurances as to my character and place within Pacific women’s networks, she provided a proxy for them to bestow trust. This provided, in turn, a channel of access to local stories and women’s perspectives that moved the research beyond the limitations of academic empiricism by including the often hidden perspectives of women who have limited or no public means of inclusion in academic or political debate. For many of the women, the idea of being included in policy development was a radical departure from their lived reality. For those women in rural and village settings with no direct contact with political processes, the notion of being ‘included’ in policy planning was outside their expectations, however, they expressed a strong desire to see changes in how they were kept informed and the type of input that could be sought from them.684

Two stories in particular, where I have protected the identity of the storyteller, provide an insight into the barriers women face when they decide to engage with political processes. In the first, I was told how women elected to parliament had been at risk of domestic violence or social isolation within their communities. This occurred if they did not comply with directives from senior men in their electorate regarding how to cast their votes in parliament. Women elected to parliament were expected to ‘sit quietly’ and not behave proactively in the parliament. Women believed that female representatives had been promoted as electoral candidates instead of men to create a public perception of gender equality. The implication was that these women were fast tracked to represent their constituency, not because they were seen as effective leaders but, because there was a push by village elders to have women seen to be in the parliament. The perception was that they would attend parliament but once back in the villages they represented they had no power to make decisions or contribute to them – this remained the domain of men. By electing female government representatives, the men felt that they may have a higher chance of attracting donor funding for development. This experience of women’s representation was thought to be contributing to the reluctance of other women from the local area to seek election despite many women being trained and prepared for political roles.

The second story shared with me was about a woman who was a victim of domestic violence due to her role as a political activist. The woman had been an outspoken advocate for increasing the numbers of women in parliament and for reforming legislation to better protect women from violence. She had become involved in political campaigning and intended to run as a candidate in a future election. She explained there was an understanding in her country that it was a ‘right’ of men to beat their wife if she acted against his wishes but that she was prepared to endure this to attempt to be elected. She expected that her husband’s family, including his mother, would be supportive of him and would not assist her or protect her from this violence. The woman had attended a training program for prospective

684 Fieldwork notes: February/March 2009.
female political candidates and, as a result, was subject to violence when her husband found out about her involvement.

An example of how important it is for alternate voices to be included is evident in a story that embodies rural women’s attitudes towards speaking out. It demonstrates the challenges that emerge when women are excluded from policy-making processes and relates to an example where a collective of village women had tried for many years to have a community hall built. They had been fundraising but had difficulty raising enough money to begin the project. The women wanted the hall because they believed that in other locations where there were better community facilities, women had been able to create more opportunities for themselves and organise collectively to create significant change in their communities. The women eventually decided to apply for a grant from a religious organisation to build the hall and they were successful in this step. It was to be a two stage project where they had to account for stage one funds before stage two funds would be released to complete the final stage of building. As the women were not part of an NGO or a formal women’s group, as was required to apply for the grant, they had approached the local pastor to allow them to do so using the local church’s identity as the applicant in the first instance and naming the women as the facilitators of the project. This proposal was accepted as all of the women were active members of the church. When the funds were approved they were released to the local church authority, the pastor, who took control of the funds. The building began shortly after; however, it faltered midway through the first stage. The women claim they were told by the pastor that the funding had all been used. There was not going to be enough funds to complete the building because the materials were more expensive than had been initially anticipated. When the funding body completed an audit they decided against releasing the second stage funds on the grounds that the women did not appear to have responsibly administered the project and a lot of money remained unaccounted for. The women’s explanation for this is that the local pastor had taken sole control over the distribution of the money and they had not questioned his competency as he was a respected member of the village community. They claim most of the funds had been used to obtain a new vehicle for the pastor rather than to pay contractors to complete stage one of the building process. No women were prepared to speak out publicly about this as they felt the pastor was too powerful in the community and there would be repercussions for anyone who questioned his credibility. Intellectually, the women knew that what had occurred was an injustice to them and that the situation could have been avoided if some of the women had been included in the process of administrating the funds. However, they felt that social and cultural constraints prevented them from lodging formal complaints or making public accusations. The women have since reverted to using their own private initiative to try to raise the remaining funds for their hall. They hold market stalls and sell arts and crafts and surplus produce. At the time of writing, they had gathered a small percentage of the funds needed to complete the project and were expecting the fundraising to take at least one to two years.

The critical point of this story is not whether the women’s allegations are completely accurate as they were retold to me; rather it is that the women believed they had no control over their choices. They felt that a lack of understanding about due process had disadvantaged them from the beginning. Without the information or expertise required to form their own NGO or formal collective they could not apply for the funding in their own right. This meant the women were not able to assert their own sense of agency and they were dependent therefore on a third party, leaving them open to exploitation. This experience was the motivation for them to participate in the research project. They were aware that if they had been more engaged with government procedures regarding how to form their own NGO or civil society group then they may have acted differently. The women expressed a high level of interest in increasing their understanding of how policy is created and how different policies can impact on them at a local level.

In Fiji the majority of women at village level who participated in the research project were unaware of the existence of the Pacific Plan. Questions One and Two on the Small Group Questionnaire asked participants if they knew about the Pacific Islands Forum and if they had ever heard of the Pacific Plan. Three quarters of the women who participated in Fiji had never heard of the Pacific Plan. Of the others, only those who had resided in an urban area were able to identify with it. Their knowledge was limited to having heard it mentioned in local media, such as news reports on radio. This was echoed in similar fieldwork from Tonga, although it was unclear if women had heard of it prior to speaking to me in a workshop setting. Although this is not surprising given that the Pacific Plan is a highly technical regional policy, the national country consultation process, if it had followed the EPG’s recommendations, was one that had the potential to reach further into grassroots communities than previous regional policy-making processes. There were apparent failures of communication in promoting the consultation process and inviting public participation. This can be seen in the women’s responses, where very few had any knowledge of the consultations, the Pacific Plan or the public submission opportunity to contribute. It is reinforced by civil society groups who also felt they were not properly informed. For grassroots women, communication operates mostly at a local level on information giving and receiving. Across research fieldwork locales, the most common and important aspect in considering communication, as a factor in if or how women were aware of or engaged with consultations, was how the information on consultations filtered down to those local levels.

There was a strong belief that current communication channels used by governments and the PIF, such as websites were not always accessible to rural women. While urban areas had access to internet sources and were able to monitor government news, rural women relied much more heavily on other local sources for their information. The questionnaire asked women to indicate the usual way they were receiving government information, and if they had found out about the Pacific Plan through the PIF’s dedicated website. Less than one quarter of participants had even heard of the Pacific Plan and of those who had, none had done so using internet or direct government sources. One quarter of those who had heard of the Plan used radio as a means of news information and the rest had access to television, although those participants regularly had access to urban living conditions. Two thirds did not
know how to access information on government policy but all participants indicated they would find this information useful if they could access it. Of these, most thought they would use the information for their personal knowledge or to keep family and friends informed, and over half indicated it would be useful for their church or community groups as well. While television was the most popular form of information gathering, not all participants had easy access to it. For many rural women it was accessed when they visited urban centres, although this varied considerably depending on location. Information gained through newspapers or newsletters, community or church groups, friends and family members and at community meetings far outweighed more advanced technologies such as internet or mobile phones. However, when questioned on what would be their preferred method of obtaining information, television and radio were the most popular choices. Information gained through community groups, meetings and through friends and family failed to rate at all. The unstructured discussions with the women indicated they wanted to be better informed than they were currently and they overwhelmingly believed there was a need for them to be informed in ways that were not biased or influenced by local politics. This is the reason that they believed television and radio news programs were the most appropriate. Of those who did not have access regularly to television, radio was seen to be a practical and easily accessible option. This suggests that the use of internet technology by the PPTF was not an effective way to reach women in grassroots communities at the time.

By employing the Pacific Plan as a case in point for regional policy development, it is then possible to see how women might or might not have actively engaged with a specific policy development process through either the in-country consultations or the public submission option offered by the PPTF. Speaking with women across the Pacific, and in some cases simply by attempting to speak with them, made it possible to piece together an understanding of how women in different roles view their own understanding of inclusivity – what it is, and how it can be effected by improved communication between government, civil society and grassroots citizens. It also allowed for observations to be made on the different ways that women exercise individual and collective agency in a political sense. In doing so, gaps between women’s perceptions of how policy should or could be developed and actual policy planning realities could be identified. The fieldwork served to highlight how women in the Pacific are subject to the same challenges as their sisters around the globe; many women’s voices are either not heard, or are subdued by the gendered nature of political processes, and at times by social and cultural constraints. Others are left out of the information loop because of inadequacies in communication. Referring back to my introductory remarks for the chapter - it is the employment of a choice to engage, or more often the absence of choice - that shapes women’s perceptions of agency. This sense of agency was also apparent in other contexts.

686 Fieldwork notes. Small group discussions and Questionnaire Two results: Tonga February 2009; March 2009, Fiji.
Tongan Women’s Agency: Kautaha Fakafonua ma’a e Kakai Fefine Tonga

At the same time as my fieldwork relating to the Pacific Plan was being conducted there was a historically ground breaking women’s gathering in Nukualofa, Tonga. The Tonga National Women Congress (TWNC), under the leadership of founders Mele Amanaki and Betty Blake, convened a four day series of workshops on constitutional reform and gender equality. Women from rural communities who had never been afforded a chance to exercise their agency found themselves speaking in a public space with the media and government officials listening intently. I was a workshop presenter and consultant to the TWNC at the workshops and witnessed how women enthusiastically took up the opportunity to speak publicly:

I want to say thank you to the organisers of this workshop for listening to me and letting us speak up today. I have never spoken up before and this is very difficult for some of us from the villages. I have never been able to tell anyone what my life is and what we need to make things easier to take care of our children. You have given us a place to speak and that is a very good thing.

Political agency is broadly understood as being correlated with the ability to create change, and human agency as ‘a conscious capacity to choose and act at a personal and political level’. Within feminist scholarship, agency is evident by both women’s collective ability to influence formal political process, and through individual or independent organising for political means. For feminists, however, analysis of agency also navigates beyond an ability to engage with and create change; agency embraces the history and position of those who exercise it as integral to the process. Siim argues that agency involves a ‘’generative’ concept of power as enabling’ which is in opposition to the formal hierarchical political structures it seeks to engage and influence. The young woman quoted above was attending a workshop where women were being asked to consider and debate the role of Tongan women in relation to a proposed new constitution. They were rallied together on approximately six weeks’ notice. With the support of Unifem Pacific the TWNC was able to give financial assistance to scores of women who lived in outer island villages so they could travel to the workshop and have their concerns aired. Time was set aside so that women who had no previous experience of addressing the public could tell of their personal circumstances and put forward the issues that were most relevant to them so they could form a part of the tapestry of information the

687 Morriss, *Tonga Women National Congress: Agents for Change in a Transitional Era? Unpublished paper presented to the Australian Women’s and Gender Studies Association Conference Emerging Spaces: New Possibilities in Critical Times, 30 June - 2 July 2010, University of South Australia, Adelaide*. The author was a seminar presenter during the women’s workshops, and consultant to the TNWC organising committee.
688 Authors’ workshop diary notes day four: Participant 1, 2009 Tonga National Women Congress, Queen Salote Hall Nuku’alofa, Tonga 19/02/2009.
691 Authors’ workshop diary notes day two: 2009 Tonga National Women Congress (TWNC), Queen Salote Hall Nuku’alofa. Tonga. 17/02/2009.
collective would use to decide on a final submission to the Constitutional and Electoral Commission. 692

For many Tongan women this was the first time they had engaged with a political process in such a direct way. They were assertive and forthcoming in voicing a range of feelings on the various topics covered during the four days. Some were angry that in usual processes they are not invited to speak, or not supported in such a way that makes it possible. Others, such as the woman quoted above, spoke of a sense of relief that their voices were being recognised and that they could contribute to the submission in a way that was meaningful to them and useful to the collective. 693 Repeatedly the inadequacies of the political system to accommodate grassroots women in political decision-making came to light. In this particular gathering, the process was not made possible through institutional channels of government or bureaucracy but through the work of informed political activists from the urban elite who recognised the opportunity to bring to the constitutional process a united women’s voice that was representative of a broad cross-section of female citizens. Clearly evident during the week of the workshops was the determination of organisers Mele Amanaki and Betty Blake. The women were determined to make a submission that reflected the often invisible or hidden concerns of women that exist in the margins of oppression, and to urge the constitutional drafting committee to give women more rights and protections at the constitutional level. 694

When hierarchical barriers were removed and all participants were invited to contribute to the dialogue in whatever way they felt comfortable, women overwhelmingly at times expressed a great desire to engage, and for the most part did so with empathy for differing views. What sets this apart from usual processes for engagement is the lack of formality that was employed during the course of the workshops, which meant women were comfortable and not overwhelmed by alien procedures. Some traditional norms were adhered to in regards to maintaining a prearranged agenda and timetable, although these were highly flexible. Time was left open for informal and, at times, impromptu speaking from the floor and on occasion women came forward to invoke the beauty of their culture through dance as a way to acknowledge the significance of the event. Each woman was shown respect and given the time needed to articulate her point of view in a way she was familiar with, at times in both Tongan and English languages. Where language was a challenge for some participants due to the fact there were some non-Tongan speaking workshop presenters, interpreters worked to translate as much content as was possible. This created a real sense of agency for women who had previously felt themselves disempowered, and connected women from all levels of society in a practical sense of belonging to each other.

693 Author’s workshop notes TWNC conference, 17-20 February 2009.
694 Ibid.
Conclusion

Reasoned or rational choice from which women’s agency occurs is shaped fundamentally by women’s oppression. Agency is therefore influenced by the politics of location. Even where women can and do assert agency, as with the élites who organised the Tongan women’s constitutional reform workshops, it is often from a gendered position of subordination, and women are operating within the constraints of inequality. Educational sessions on the topic of affirmative action, for example, were held at the workshop. Affirmative action for women in politics is the adoption of special conditions that allow women to make political gains under the protection of special measures that guarantee women representation. Such measures might include reserved seats in parliament, such as in Bougainville where three seats are reserved for women only. Alternately, it may involve legislating for equal representation as candidates in the democratic voting process, such as in New Caledonia where every second name on a ballot must be a woman. These measures ensure that women are able to scale cultural or social barriers to exercise their citizenship in the democratic process. Agency is linked to citizenship. While notions of citizenship are conferred through legal rights and practice, it is individual participation in the political process - the acting out of individual agency - that defines and realises citizenship. Where citizenship is impacted by unequal participation or representation, then agency too becomes limited. Citizens’ capacity for agency is fundamental to notions of sustainable development. Understanding the role of citizens as agents for change, both at the individual and collective level is as critical to sustainability as is that of understanding economic data and human development factors that are measurable, such as infant mortality rates or literacy. But it is only when individual reasoned agency, free from restraint, works in synergy with those other factors that political policies can meet the goal of making citizens’ lives better.

Women’s agency depends therefore on the capacity to engage with policy in such a way that the proposed policy is understood and more importantly, that the implications of the policy are clearly outlined for women for their consideration. Communicating with women in ways they can easily access is critical to ensuring women can choose to participate. Women


699 Sen, Development as Freedom, pp. 3-4.
can then apply their understandings of new or potential policies to their circumstances, both as individuals and as a collective body representing a particular sector of civil society. Only when that understanding is present is it possible for women to critically assess and cast judgment over the policy, and in turn propose any changes that may enhance or alter it. It is then critical that women are represented at all decision-making levels to advocate for the position of grassroots agents to avoid and overcome the phenomena of invisibility.

For women who operate as part of the public sphere, a certain level of agency pre-exists due to their location in public spaces. For women in non-government or civil society organisations, there is access to knowledge and opportunity to link to networks of expertise that can potentially assist organisations to engage with political processes. In the Pacific region, women’s networks are vast and there are multiple avenues for engagement. However the effectiveness of this public sphere agency rests with the political will of policy developers to draw upon the sector’s expertise and knowledge and to fully integrate NGO and civil society advocates and activists into consultation processes. For women at the coalface of decision-making, those in the bureaucracy or elected members of parliament, the same can be said. For grassroots women the connections to policy are less clear, communication issues can muddy the waters and in the words of one woman from a remote area of the Pacific, ‘the hope is that for our daughters it will be different’.  

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FINAL REMARKS: THOUGHTS AND REFLECTIONS ON WOMEN, GENDER AND POLICY-MAKING

What are Pacific women’s experiences of inclusion or exclusion in policy-making processes? This central question has driven the theoretical analysis of approaches to policy-making in the Pacific Islands region throughout the thesis. In early chapters, it has facilitated an understanding of the way that women were involved in shaping the emerging geopolitical region of the South Pacific. This thesis has taken a feminist standpoint approach that has incorporated knowledge and analysis borrowed from anthropology, political science, history, gender and women’s studies, and development studies. It has shown how regional policy-making processes are not merely pragmatic processes that should be undertaken by élites in remote locations, but that they are dynamic processes that affect the well-being of human society. Policies are, due to the very need for their existence, intrinsically linked to the lives of individual people.

Policy, and therefore policy-making processes, impact on people. As such, to make policy that is germane to those whose lives are affected by it requires a contextual framework that is inclusive rather than exclusive. It must be founded upon, and relevant to, the lived experiences of those impacted by its outcomes. It is a relational process; at the same time both a big picture undertaking and a personal encounter. Policy eventuates in change to people’s living standards and opportunities. Whether policy impacts directly or indirectly on people, it does not exist in isolation from people. Developing policy that fully and fairly accommodates the perspectives of all sectors of a society, or a region as in the case of the PIF, is both challenging and confronting. When one sector of society is underrepresented in critical decision-making roles, such as is the situation for women in politics, the challenge becomes amplified. This thesis has shown how it is imperative to understand the background to such exclusion in order to rise above past injustices.

Insights, such as those provide by Margaret Jolly’s work in feminist anthropology, for example, challenge the way we need to think about women’s roles in regionalism. Women, she showed, were active participants in the colonial era rather than merely victims of westernisation. They were more than passive observers in the labour trade, both supporting and participating in the colonial power’s blackbirding schemes and taking up the challenge of sustaining communities and life at home when male community members were forced or chose to leave for long periods of time. It has been critical to the thesis to draw out this alternate history; to locate women as participants in regional processes and in building a sense of regionalism. Doing so presents challenges to conventional methodologies; it necessitates a blurring of the academic and creative boundaries to reach the voices of those

who are excluded through the limitations of a single disciplinary approach. The historical
discussion of the emergence of a Pan-Pacific Regionalism also reveals the structural
inequalities that were inherent in colonialism. It importantly demonstrates how those
inequalities were not exclusive to the experiences of women but that Pacific Island men were
also marginalised by colonial politics. However, highlighting women’s voice, through the
introduction of Pacific women’s poetry and stories of the lived experiences of the impacts of
policies, has been critical to the aim of the research. While some traditional academic
approaches to understanding policy-making rely on ‘firm data’, they are also, by design,
exclusive methods with a limited scope. In the Pacific, as in many other parts of the globe
much of the knowledge about how social political and cultural systems work, and why, is
held not in written histories, statistical data or measurable outcome but lies deep within the
stories, lived experiences and sometimes silent or silenced expectations of the people. The
inclusion of evidence like stories, personal reflections and poems has revealed the
perspectives of women located both inside and outside political structures and systems. This
has intensified the richness of academic work by adding to its depth the personal accounts,
opinions and reflections which might otherwise go unrecorded in academic literature. It
allows those who are often unnoticed as knowledge-makers in academic terms to become
pivotal to the analysis. This has been an important step in bringing to light new ways of
thinking about policy-making processes.

The historical foundation of Pacific women’s regionalism was shown in Chapter
Three to be linked to a broader global awareness of gender inequality. Gender equality in this
thesis is therefore fundamentally linked to notions of inequality, in particular to the right of
women to take an equal place at the decision-making table with their male counterparts. The
thesis concerns itself with the impact of a resulting subjugation of women which occurs when
that right is not freely available. The chapter shows how Pacific women pursued issues of
core to them at an international level. In spite of the vast geographical distances and
cultural differences from their sisters in Europe, Africa, the Americas and Asia, they created
opportunities for international attention to be drawn to internationally relevant issues, such as
the tragic impacts of nuclear testing, the degradation of community and environment brought
about by poorly managed mining projects, and the challenges of food and economic security
for women in developing nations. The chapter shows how the absence of women in politics
was, on one hand, a poor reflection on the systems that worked to create barriers for women’s
participation but, on the other, hand how women overcame this and placed themselves in the
political system as mediators from the outside.

However, the effort to improve women’s participation in decision-making has not
resulted in women’s inclusion. Rather, it has led to a continuing tussle to uncover a way to
respect and honor the ‘outside’ work of women as political actors while also opening up the
often closed doors of political representation. Women have not been equally drawn into the
inner circles of traditionally male domains of public politics, as Chapter Three demonstrates.
The policies and processes formulated to facilitate gender equality, such as gender specific
policies and gender mainstreaming strategies, have so far not overcome social, cultural and
political barriers to women’s full participation in policy-making and political representation
more generally. For the Pacific context, gender mainstreaming is an ideal that has proven difficult to realise. Pan-Pacific regionalism has brought many benefits to islanders such as interconnecting aspects of development that small island states find difficult – trade negotiations and a political voice in a globalised world are enhanced, for example, by the power of collectivity. For the pursuit of gender equality under the umbrella of such mechanisms as CEDAW, BPA, PPA and the MDGs the diversity of cultures, social organisation, and traditional ways, together with the political independence of individual states can be a challenge. While there is no way of enforcing ‘political will’, it is this one factor that has the power to bring about real reform.

In Chapter One the question of State accountability was raised. I turn to the stories of those women who are far removed from the echelons of power, such as the women who are trying to build a community centre to advance women’s standing in their village, to consider how States policies impact on Pacific women in their daily lives. Their position was to remain silent and to attempt to overcome the situation through their own personal determination. Interplays of power and the systemic politics of inequality they function within, continue to place them in a position where they feel restricted in the ways they can resolve problems that they encounter with authority. How can regional policy assist them? I argue that by modeling practices and process that achieve gender equality in real terms, the PIF can demonstrate a way forward for member States and set a precedent for regional standards that would ensure women’s empowerment.

Similarly, this applies to the examples of those women I interviewed who were located within PIF member state bureaucracies. These women felt they are still struggling to be included in mainstream political dialogues despite their presence in political processes. The dismissal of women’s concerns in the constitution building process in Tonga provides yet another ‘storying’ of women’s marginalisation, and of how, when women are not equally represented, their concerns are apt to be ignored. They tend to become issues that are seen as either ‘irrelevant’ or that can be addressed ‘later’ when moments of crisis, or indeed of opportunity, have passed. Were the PIF to overcome the gendered aspects of its leadership that privilege current male dominated governments as being exclusively representative of regional leadership, it could then set a standard of inclusivity that could be inspirational rather than reinforcing and replicating existing barriers to women’s inclusion.

These stories challenge academic debate. They urge both scholars and those in the international community to listen closely to the lived experiences of women. They must consider the impact of policy that continues to undervalue a culture of women’s organising that has shaped, and at times, led regional development. Examining the shortfalls of the Pacific Plan development process has illuminated how the PIF has, despite what I contend is good intent on the part of individual actors within the organisation, replicated and reinforced the low levels of political will of its member States. The PIF is in a position to lead. It can, as the preeminent regional body, develop and initiate new ways of ensuring gender equality is paramount within its own structures and processes. As a regional body that mentors, guides and advises member States on a vast range of issues and practical development actions, and
as a body that has endorsed all the major international gender equality conventions and agreements, I argue it does have an obligation to be more democratic than the Pacific Plan process demonstrated. To do so, it must begin by honoring the knowledge of grassroots women and women at all levels of society. But it must go further and include their knowledge in the decision-making processes. This can only occur when their perspectives are represented. Thus, the present model of representation needs to be accepted as being exclusive in its current form and changed to communicate with, and meet the needs of women who sit outside formal political systems and structures.

Policy-making in regional development has come a long way since the initial years of the South Pacific Forum. The independence of most Pacific states has resulted in a new era of self-determination where improved human rights and human security are increasingly viewed as integral to the development of sound policy. Women’s inclusion is critical to the successful realisation of such outcomes. However, as this thesis has demonstrated, there is much more that needs to be done before gender equality is embedded within the political systems and practices of Pacific regionalism. It is my hope that this thesis has been a small step in the process of illuminating the voices of women that are vital to moving beyond the paradigm of oppressive subjugation.
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## Appendix

### Appendix 1 - Political Status of Regional States

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>PIF Membership</th>
<th>Political Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Independent (Federation 1901)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cook Islands</td>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Independent self-governing in association with New Zealand 1965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federated States of Micronesia</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>Independent Compact of Free Association 1986 (U.S.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiribati</td>
<td>1977 (as Gilbert Islands)</td>
<td>Independent 1979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nauru</td>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Independent 1968</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Independent 1907</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niue</td>
<td></td>
<td>Independent self-governing in association with New Zealand 1974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palau</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Independent Compact of Free Association (U.S.) 1994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papua New Guinea</td>
<td></td>
<td>Independent 1975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samoa</td>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Independent 1962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solomon Islands</td>
<td>1978</td>
<td>Independent 1978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tonga</td>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Independent 1970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuvalu</td>
<td>1978</td>
<td>Independent 1978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanuatu</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Independent 1980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Associate Membership</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Caledonia</td>
<td>Associate Member (2006)</td>
<td>Self-governing Territory – France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French Polynesia</td>
<td>Associate Member (2006)</td>
<td>Overseas Lands [limited autonomy] France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Forum Observer Status</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World Bank</td>
<td>Forum Observer (2010)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Samoa</td>
<td>Forum Observer (2011)</td>
<td>Unincorporated and unorganised territory of the US.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Mariana Islands</td>
<td>Forum Observer (2011)</td>
<td>Commonwealth in political union with the US</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guam</td>
<td>Forum Observer (2011)</td>
<td>Organised, unincorporated territory of the US</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Special Observer Status</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Post Forum Dialogue Partners

Canada, People's Republic of China, European Union, France, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, United Kingdom and the United States.

## Appendix 2 - The South Pacific Forum Chronology 1971-2004

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>The South Pacific Forum established</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>The South Pacific Bureau for Economic Co-operation (SPEC) – now The South Pacific Forum Secretariat - established</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Signing of the LOME Convention covering regional EC aid projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>Fellowship Scheme established</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>Pacific Forum Line (PFL) formed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) formed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>Agreement to form the Association of South Pacific Airlines (ASPA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>South Pacific Trade Commission established in Sydney, Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>South Pacific Regional Trade and Economic Co-operation Agreement (SPARTECA) came into force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) established</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>South Pacific Regional Telecommunications Development Programme commenced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone established under “The Treaty of Rarotonga”. It entered into force in 1986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>South Pacific Maritime Development Programme commenced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>The United States ratified the Multilateral Fisheries Treaty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Decision to change the name South Pacific Bureau for Economic Cooperation (SPEC) to South Pacific Forum Secretariat was taken. Forum Governments ratified the name change agreement in 1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>The South Pacific Organisations Coordinating Committee (SPOCC) met for the first time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>South Pacific Trade Office established in Auckland New Zealand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>The Forum adopted the &quot;Tarawa Declaration&quot; on Driftnet Fishing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Post-Forum Dialogue instituted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Honiara Declaration on Regional Law Enforcement Cooperation adopted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Declaration on Development of Natural Resources:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Waigani Convention to ban the importation into Forum Island Countries of hazardous and radioactive wastes and to control the transboundary movement and management of hazardous wastes within the South Pacific Region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>The Aitutaki Declaration: guiding principles governing regional security cooperation in the region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>The Biketawa Declaration: outlines guiding principles for good governance and courses of action for a regional response to crises in the region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Agreement Establishing The Pacific Islands Forum: The constitutive treaty for the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Waigani Convention came into force October 21.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Pacific Agreement On Closer Economic Relations (Pacer) And Pacific Island Countries Trade Agreement (Picta) : PACER is a regional economic cooperation between all Forum members, including Australia and New Zealand and entered into force on 3 October 2002 after seven members ratified the agreement. The PICTA is a free trade agreement, initially applying to the 14 Forum Island Countries, and entered into force on 13 April 2003 after six members ratified it. Eventual trade integration was on the inaugural 1971 Forum agenda.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Pacific Oceans Policy: aims to ensure the future sustainable use of the Pacific Ocean and its resources by Pacific Islands communities and external partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>The Nasonini Declaration on Regional Security: highlights the region’s concerns over and response to transnational crime and terrorism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Forum leaders endorsed a Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI) in accordance with the guidelines of the Biketawa Declarations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>The PICTA entered into force on 13 April 2003 after six members ratified it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Pacific Islands Air Services Agreement: Leaders endorsed the Pacific Islands Air Services Agreement for signature. The PIASA enters into force after six members have ratified it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Constitutive Agreement be reviewed to reflect the new purposes and functions of the Forum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>New Constitutive Agreement opened for signature on 27 October 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Pacific Plan For Strengthening Cooperation and Integration: Leaders adopted the Pacific Plan, to strengthen regional cooperation and integration in areas where the region could gain the most through sharing resources of governance, alignment of policies and delivery of practical benefits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>New Forum Agreement: Leaders adopted a new Forum Agreement establishing the Forum as an inter-governmental organisation at international law. The Agreement enters into force when it is signed and ratified by all 16 member states.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Vava’u Declaration On Pacific Fisheries: Leaders adopted the Vava’u Declaration on Pacific Fisheries to reaffirm the importance of regional fisheries resources as a key driver for sustainable economic growth in the region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Niue Declaration On Climate Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>The Cairns Compact on Strengthening Development Coordination in the Pacific: seeks more effective coordination of available development resources from Forum Island Countries and all development partners, focused on achieving real progress against the MDGs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ref: CIA World Factbook: http://www2.hawaii.edu/~ogden/piir/pacific/spf-info.html; 
PIF communiqués: http://www.forumsec.org/pages.cfm/documents/forum-communique
Appendix 3 - PIF Gender Policy

GENDER POLICY

PACIFIC ISLAND FORUM SECRETARIAT

December 1998 (Revised May 2003)

Introduction

1. Achieving gender-balanced participation in development is essential not only for promoting social justice, but it is also a matter of good economics and sound sectoral management. Worldwide experience clearly shows that supporting more equal participation by women contributes to the economic growth of their communities and improves the welfare of their families. Investing in gender equality is central to sustainable development and management of regional resources. A gender approach takes into account the different knowledge, roles and responsibilities of women and men and recognises that, to effect long-term positive change in the conditions of communities and nations, actions and attitudes about men’s and women’s roles and rights in society must change. Thus gender is a critical and crosscutting consideration in development planning. The failure to strive for gender equality in all social and economic activities creates an opportunity cost ill afforded by Forum Island Countries, as sustainable economic growth is reliant on maximising the potential of all its human resources, regardless of gender, age, ethnicity or class.

2. The Pacific Platform for Action (PPA) - for the Advancement of Women, adopted in 1994 by all Forum members as part of the Noumea Declaration, formally recognises the importance of women’s participation in national and regional development activities. It identifies the critical areas of concern affecting the full and equal participation of women in the region including all aspects of economics and politics. The PPA was the Pacific contribution to the Global Platform for Action which was endorsed in Beijing in 1995. Additionally, many Forum members are using the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) as a guide for promotion of gender equity.

Policy Vision

3. This gender policy seeks to contribute to optimum political leadership through the Forum by promoting comprehensive social and gender analysis of, and fully informed decision-making on, issues concerning the Forum and the mandate of the Secretariat.

4. As well, the policy seeks to create a framework that will assist the Secretariat to provide service to member governments in harmony with their individual sovereign status, with respect for the rights, cultures and traditions of all citizens, and in line with existing and outstanding commitments to gender equity.

5. The policy seeks to reflect the commitment of Forum members, and hence the Secretariat, to values of inclusiveness, equity, respect and a sharing of responsibility for sustainable and equitable development in the region.
Policy Principles, Goals and Strategies

6. Principle One: Recognition of the weight and importance of national and international commitments to gender equity made by Forum Island Countries

• Policy Goals: To provide support to members as they work to fulfil gender equity commitments made at national and international levels;

• Strategies:

i) Ensure that Secretariat staff are aware of member countries’ commitments in the area of gender equity and how these are relevant to divisional work; and

ii) Ensure through professional development and training that all Secretariat staff can respond with effective and appropriate analytical and technical skills to assist countries to meet their commitments to gender equity.

Indicators:

i) level of knowledge of staff (female/male) of gender equality commitments of member countries and their relevance, through opinion surveys;

ii) percentage of staff (female/male) receiving training which included information on member country gender equity commitments and their relevance.

iii) percentage of staff (female/male) who have received professional development and training to ensure relevant analytical and technical skills;

iv) level of satisfaction of receivers of services from Secretariat staff, through evaluation forms and requests for feedback.

7. Principle Two: Recognition of the varied and valuable roles played by men and women, and other social groupings, in sustaining traditional and contemporary culture and in contributing to the ongoing positive development of their countries.

• Policy Goal: To analyze and document how men’s and women’s gender differentiated roles are relevant to, or may be impacted by, the mandate of the Forum and the work of the Secretariat.

• Strategies:

i) In all studies and programs, staff will be encouraged to integrate an analysis of the value that the contributions of different groups can make to policy, as well as the differential impacts that policies may have on the practical needs and strategic interests of different social groups inter alia: men and women, people of different ages, ethnic origin, religion;

ii) Sex disaggregated data will be produced available in all Secretariat publications which provide statistical information about people and their activities in the region

iii) Based on the two previous strategies, the Secretariat Executive and staff will aim to include social and gender analysis statements in reports to the FEMM, FOC and Forum Meetings.
• **Indicators**

i) Percentage of studies and programs that adequately integrate analysis of the roles played by men and women and other social groupings in the positive development of their countries;

ii) Percentage of Secretariat publications on Pacific Islands people and their activities which provide adequate sex-disaggregated data;

iii) Percentage of reports to FEMM, FOC and Forum Meetings which include adequate social and gender analysis.

8. **Principle Three: Promotion of democratic access to development initiatives**

• **Policy Goal:** To promote equitable participation of women and men in all programs stemming from Forum initiatives and the divisional work programme of the Secretariat.

• **Strategy:** The Secretariat will encourage members to achieve a balance of qualified men and women to participate in meetings and programs organised by the Secretariat.

• **Indicators**

i) Percentage of men and women participating in meetings and programs organised by the Secretariat, disaggregated by level of seniority.

9. **Principle Four: Promotion of open communication to ensure that balanced information is collected from all components of society and integrated into comprehensive analyses of issues relevant to the region.**

• **Policy Goal:** To provide assistance and advice to governments to ensure balanced communication with all sectors of their societies

• **Strategy:** Work with members to develop acceptable procedures to facilitate effective interaction with the private sector, communities and non-government organisations where these groups represent specific viewpoints relevant to achieving the annual workplan objectives of the Secretariat.

• **Indicators:**

i) Numbers of consultations with different sectors; feedback from those consulted (through user surveys).

ii) In line with Standard Contract - number of studies with sex disaggregated data and gender analysis

iii) Number and percentage of members who have developed acceptable procedures which facilitate effective interaction with relevant private sector, community and NGO groups.

10. **Principle Five: Recognition of the importance of modeling best practices and learning from experience**

• **Policy Goal:** Forum Secretariat will apply the principles of this policy to the organisation itself as well as to its mandated workplan.
• **Strategies:**

i) Review of corporate and human resources policies of the Secretariat to ensure that they do not discriminate against anyone on the basis of sex and that they encourage equitable opportunity in hiring;

ii) Establishment of a monitoring and review process for the gender policy and procedures to ensure effectiveness of the policy and achievement of goals;

iii) documentation of best practices for gender analysis and production of training materials on gender and policy analysis.

• **Indicators:**

i) **number of hiring cases which follow equitable practices;**

ii) **timely and effective follow-up to recommendations from monitoring and review processes related to the gender equality policy;**

iii) **numbers of copies of good practice material requested; user comment on good practice material (through user surveys). de adequate sex-disaggregated data;**

iv) **Number of policies reviewed; b. number of changes to policies that did not meet requirements of the strategy;**

iv) **adequate monitoring and review process for gender policy and procedures in place, including agreed indicators of achievement**

v) **Number of cases of good practice documented**

vi) **Number of training materials on gender and policy analysis produced.**

**Guidelines for Implementation**

An ongoing sub-committee of staff representing each division and including both men and women to be charged with:

• Interpreting the policy in light of each divisions responsibilities and commitments as defined by annual workplans and the corporate mandate of the Secretariat;

• Developing indicators of success to measure progress in achieving policy goals;

• Monitoring the policy and bringing significant results or findings to the attention of the executive.
### Appendix 4 - PIF and International agreements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME OF TREATY</th>
<th>Year of Adoption</th>
<th>Year of Entry into Force</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty, done at Raratonga, 1985</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>11th December 1986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convention for the Protection of the Natural Resources and Environment of the South Pacific Region, done at Noumea 1986 (Noumea Convention)</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>22nd August 1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convention to Ban the Importation into Forum Island Countries of Hazardous and Radioactive Wastes and to Control the Transboundary Movement and Management of Hazardous Wastes within the South Pacific Region, done at Waigani, 1995 (Waigani Convention)</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>21st October 2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations, done at Nauru, 2001 (PACER)</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>3rd October 2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Island Countries Trade Agreement, done at Nauru, 2001 (PICTA)</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>13th April 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Islands Air Services Agreement, done at Auckland, 2003 (PIASA)</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>13th October 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Pacific Islands Civil Aviation Safety and Security Treaty, done at Apia, 2004 (PICASST)</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>11th June 2005</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: [www.forumsec.org](http://www.forumsec.org)