



JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

New Pacific Partnership addresses gender equality and violence against women

Monday 26 November 2018 (Pacific region) – In the Pacific region up to two in every three women are impacted by domestic violence and gender-based violence – twice the global average based on national prevalence studies¹.

To respond to this challenging issue - and in a first for the Pacific - the European Union, Australian Government, United Nations and two Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific (CROP) are partnering to coordinate the region's largest single project to date, to comprehensively end violence against women and girls (VAWG) in the Pacific.

Being officially launched today, the Pacific Partnership to End Violence Against Women and Girls (Pacific Partnership) brings together governments, civil society organisations, communities and other partners to promote gender equality, prevent violence against women and girls (VAWG), and increase access to quality response services for survivors. The programme will build on the decades of work led in the region by civil society and governments to address this issue.

The EUR 19.5million programme is funded primarily by the European Union (EUR12.7m) with targeted support from the Australian Government (EUR4.9m) and cost-sharing from UN Women (EUR0.6m). It is being jointly coordinated by the Pacific Community (SPC), the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (Forum Secretariat) and UN Women Fiji Multi-Country Office.

Speaking about the new programme, Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum, Dame Meg Taylor, said: "The Blue Pacific recognizes that our shared oceanic geography, resources, heritage, and cultures, compel us to work together, for the wellbeing of us all. These values of connectedness and partnership equally apply to the issue of eliminating violence against women.

"I have seen how partnerships on ending violence against women have grown and are sustained amongst the smallest, most under-resourced community, women's and faith-based groups - successful change happens in communities where relationships are preserved between husbands and wives, mothers and sons, village elders and women's groups, church leaders and police and politicians and those most at risk groups. We can learn much from the efforts of our people to deal with violence against women."

Head of Cooperation at the EU Delegation for the Pacific, Christoph Wagner, said: "The European Union is strongly committed to gender equality, the empowerment of women and the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls around the world."

"We are proud to be funding this new and important partnership programme in the Pacific, to address the causes of gender inequality and violence against women," said Mr Wagner.

Speaking about the Pacific Partnership, Australia's High Commissioner to Fiji, John Feakes, said Australia was pleased to support the programme given: "Violence against women is a challenge that

Australia shares with the Pacific region and we are pleased to be working together to share promising strategies and solutions.”

“While the Pacific Partnership is a new programme, it builds on decades of work by Pacific Island governments, regional organisations, the women’s movement, civil society and countless individuals across the region – we are proud to stand alongside our Pacific neighbours.”

The Pacific Partnership aims to transform the social norms that allow violence against women and girls to continue; to ensure survivors have access to quality response services; and to support national and regional institutions to meet their commitments to gender equality and the prevention of violence against women and girls.

This includes transforming commonly held attitudes and beliefs in society to ensure people reject violence against women and girls, particularly through key channels of influence in the Pacific such as education, sport and faith.

The programme’s official launch, at the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, corresponds with the start of the annual 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, from 25 November to 10 December, that raises awareness about violence against women and girls being a violation of human rights.

The Pacific Community’s Director General, Dr. Colin Tukuitonga, highlighted the importance of the programme’s education goals, and that it “will make a positive impact on current and future generations of Pacific leaders.”

“Through this programme the Pacific Community will be working closely with our partners to integrate human rights, gender equality and violence-free homes and societies into national school curricula and informal education,” said Dr Tukuitonga.

UN Women Asia and the Pacific Regional Director a.i. Anna Karin Jatfors, said this programme has been developed with the goal to bring all parts of Pacific society together to successfully reduce levels of violence against women and girls across the Pacific, which is twice the global average.

“UN Women will focus on preventing violence against women and girls before it happens through the promotion of gender equitable attitudes and behaviours at the individual and community level, and by engaging key pillars of Pacific society such as faith and sport,” said Ms Jatfors.

“We will also work with partners to ensure that survivors of violence have access to quality response services,” she said.

The five-year programme (2018-2022) targets countries and territories in the Pacific region including, but not limited to, Fiji, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

Central to the programme, is the partners’ recognition of the importance of gender equality for achieving sustainable development, that directly contributes to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) particularly SDG 5 to ‘achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls’, of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The programme directly supports the implementation of the 2012 Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration (PLGED), the Pacific Roadmap for Sustainable Development, and the Pacific Platform for Action on Gender Equality and Women’s Human Rights 2018-2030.

[ENDS]

Resources:

¹ Findings from the Family Health and Safety Studies (FHSS), conducted by UNFPA and the Pacific Community (SPC) across 11 Pacific countries, detailed online: <http://pacific.unfpa.org/en/publications?page=0%2C1>

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BACKGROUND:

The Pacific region has some of the highest rates of violence against women recorded in the world – twice the global average with an estimated two in every three Pacific women impacted by gender-based violence. Along with high rates of violence – a violation of human rights – women and girls in the Pacific region experience constant and continual inequalities including low levels of participation in decision making, limited economic opportunities, restricted access to rights.

The Pacific Partnership to End Violence Against Women and Girls (Pacific Partnership) brings together governments, civil society organisations, communities and other partners to promote gender equality, prevent violence against women and girls (VAWG), and increase access to quality response services for survivors.

To achieve this, the Pacific Partnership aims to transform the social norms that allow violence against women and girls to continue; to ensure survivors have access to quality response services; and to support national and regional institutions to meet their commitments to gender equality and prevention of violence against women and girls. Working through partners, it will promote equal rights and opportunities for all Pacific people, through innovative approaches to education, access to essential services, and policy development.

The EUR 19.5million partnership is funded primarily by the European Union (EUR 12.7m) that supports all three outcome areas of the programme, with the Australian Government providing targeted funding to the second outcome (EUR 6.2m or AUD 7.6m) with cost-sharing from UN Women (EUR 0.6m or USD 0.75m). The programme's three outcome areas are jointly implemented through a partnership between the Pacific Community (SPC) Regional Rights Resource Team (RRRT), Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (Forum Secretariat) and UN Women Fiji Multi-Country Office (MCO).

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The Pacific Partnership recognises the importance of gender equality for achieving sustainable development. It directly contributes to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 5 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to 'achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls'. The programme directly supports the implementation of the 2012 Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration, the Pacific Roadmap for Sustainable Development, and the Pacific Platform for Action on Gender Equality and Women's Human Rights 2018-2030.