



## Fiji Country Review

November 2017

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## Acknowledgements

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# Abbreviations

CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DIVA	Diverse Voices and Action for Equality
EVAW	Elimination of Violence Against Women
FWCC	Fiji Women's Crisis Centre
KMS	Knowledge Management System
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MEF	Monitoring and Evaluation Framework
NGO	Non-government organisation
WLDM	Women's Leadership and Decision-Making
WEE	Women's Economic Empowerment

# Executive Summary

## Overview

This report presents the findings and lessons learnt from a review of the Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development (*Pacific Women*) Fiji country plan. *Pacific Women* is a 10 year, \$320 million commitment by the Australian Government to 14 Pacific Island Forum member countries to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women in the region.

*Pacific Women* seeks to contribute to change in the interconnected areas of women's economic empowerment (WEE), women's leadership and decision-making (WLDM), ending violence against women (EVAW) and enhancing agency.

In Fiji, *Pacific Women* will spend approximately \$26 million over ten years on activities that support women's empowerment. After Papua New Guinea, the Fiji program is the second largest *Pacific Women* country program. This review investigates the first phase of the Fiji program (2013–2016), which amounts to an investment of approximately \$4 million. This report includes background on the Fiji program (section 1), details on the review methodology (section 2), detailed findings (sections 3–5) and summative issues and recommendations to consider for phase two of the program (section 6).

## Review approach, focus and methods

The review used a theory-based approach, drawing on both quantitative and qualitative data to inform the analysis. The program theory of change and the key evaluation questions identified in the review Terms of Reference framed the review. The review responded to these questions by focusing in on a set of inquiry areas and using these to uncover evidence of change at the program, partner and beneficiary level.

The review focused on two of the four *Pacific Women* outcome areas: women's economic empowerment (WEE) and women's leadership and decision-making (WLDM), with some inquiry on the support to coalition-building and advocacy groups. Ending violence against women (EVAW) is a well investigated area in Fiji and was not a focus of the review.

Review methods included a desk review of program documentation, partner consultations, beneficiary focus group discussions, stakeholder consultations and a collaborative workshop to validate findings and identify areas for improvement. Evaluation questions and findings have been grouped together on the themes of 'relevance', 'effectiveness' and 'efficiency' and detailed in the main body of the report.

## Summary of key findings

The following key findings are based on available and verified data and pertinence to the next phase of the program:

The most significant findings on **program relevance** are:

- The program's scope and flexibility have made it highly relevant for a range of implementation partners.
- Core funding has enabled partners to address organisational strengthening as well as gaps in program management and service delivery.
- Mechanisms to sustain organisational strengthening and capacity transfer needs further development.
- Partner reach is expanding; however, community-level impacts of this reach are not well documented.



- The program has diversified and expanded DFAT's partnerships with civil society organisations (CSOs) in Fiji.

The evidence presented in this report suggests that there is agreement among all major stakeholders on the relevance of a funding stream to support women's organisations and activities to promote gender equality in Fiji. The broad scope of *Pacific Women* has enabled DFAT to align funding with the needs of existing partners, as well as several smaller CSOs, some of which received DFAT funding for the first time. For DFAT, this first phase has been valuable to trial new types of partnerships and fund new CSOs. This has enhanced the scope of the program and extended its reach and diversity. For partners, the program is appreciated as it has provided core funding and organisational strengthening support, which partners have used to leverage significant gains in advocacy and community-level programming work.

The issue of concern under program relevance is that the perceived relevance of *Pacific Women* in Fiji has not translated into women's organisations expressing ownership of the program. For most implementing partners, it is a 'DFAT program' rather than an initiative supporting Pacific women to increasingly own and direct changes to their lives, as articulated in the overarching *Pacific Women* program design. Moreover, there are gaps and limited evidence of the program's reach to some disadvantaged groups. Sustaining organisational strengthening and capacity building at a partner level is also challenging.

The most significant findings on **program effectiveness** are:

- The program is supporting diverse activities to build the capacity of individual women leaders.
- The program has supported entry-points that are promoting women's participation in decision-making processes at the community level.
- Increased access to information is improving the influence of women at household and community levels.
- Program activities are expanding women's work choices; however, the actual impact on women's income is hard to determine.
- The program has made significant contributions to coalition-building in Fiji, which has flow on effects for addressing other aspects of gender inequality.
- The program has supported advocacy work among faith-based organisations.
- Coalitions and advocacy groups supported by the program are influencing change at multiple levels – locally, nationally and at the Pacific regional level.

The evidence shows that the program is making progress towards three of the five intended WLDM short-term outcomes and three of the five WEE short-term outcomes. Progress in terms of coalition building and support to advocacy groups has also been positive, with partners leveraging significant gains for the women's movement from these activities.

A significant finding on WLDM is that several partners contribute to this outcome area although their primary goal is to contribute to WEE. The limitation so far is that while the program is supporting individual women and building their capacity, there is not enough evidence of funded activities contributing towards women then influencing decision-making processes at the community level.

A strength identified of WEE activities is that partners have adopted varied approaches. The focus is on improving women's access to information so they can better manage their income and assets; and the program is contributing on a small-scale to increased safety and working conditions for women. An area of possible concern is that only one partner can show evidence of increasing women's income. Given program assumptions around the linkages between financial literacy training and increased income, this finding is significant for the next phase of the program.

Finally, the program has been effective in supporting and strengthening coalitions and advocacy groups. Funding for the We Rise Coalition<sup>1</sup> has been beneficial in strengthening the Coalition, as well as extending the reach and inclusiveness of Coalition advocacy activities. There are early indications that this work has flow on effects for addressing gender inequality in areas such as disaster recovery, employment and security.

The most significant findings on **program efficiency** are:

- A mix of informal and formal ways of working across DFAT, the *Pacific Women* Support Unit and partners, has contributed to the program being delivered on time and on budget.
- The program has not adequately supported outcome focused analysis and assumptions around addressing the interconnectedness in women's lives.
- The retrospective development of program management systems (including guidance to partners on reporting) is avoidable, as this has efficiency impacts at a country level.

The evidence shows that the program is operating on time and on budget. The program has invested in highly consultative design process that included an open call for proposals. The program has also built relationships between DFAT staff, the *Pacific Women* Support Unit and partners. Program management and accountability mechanisms are in place and functioning. The challenge for the next phase is to strengthen monitoring, evaluation and learning at several levels. The Fiji Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (MEF) needs to enable DFAT and the *Pacific Women* Support Unit to assess contribution to broader intended outcomes of the program. Lessons learnt on the importance of establishing monitoring, evaluation and reporting systems at the design stage of funded activities are relevant to the newly established Fiji Women's Fund<sup>2</sup>.

### Key issues and recommendations

The investigation and validation of findings during a collaborative workshop attended by DFAT staff, *Pacific Women* Support Unit program staff, civil society representatives and the review team discussed the following key issues and recommendations.

- The program's identity and extent to which ownership – whether at the government, implementing partner or beneficiary level is considered important, varies. While there is appreciation for a funding stream to support women's organisations and activities targeting women, this has not translated into women's organisations (or vulnerable women themselves) expressing ownership of the program.
- Mechanisms to ensure the sustainability of formal and informal partner capacity building inputs (such as addressing sustainability in short-term adviser terms of reference or program design support to smaller CSOs) were not built into the first phase of the program. This is important as partners have found that core funding and capacity building support has contributed to improved service delivery as well as had positive impacts for communities.
- The program has not achieved all its short-term outcomes under WEE and WLDM. For the program to continue to progress towards short-term (and intermediate) outcomes over the next phase, a clear strategy is required to ensure that activities realise economic gains at the individual level, as well as address issues of women's control and use of resources.
- Through coalitions, advocacy groups and funding diverse types of partners, the program has expanded DFAT's reach within the civil society sector and is positively influencing women's empowerment from the community to the national level. However, a clear strategy around the

<sup>1</sup> We Rise is a coalition of four women's rights organisations: Diverse Voices and Action for Equality, FemlinkPACIFIC, Fiji Women's Rights Movement and the International Women's Development Agency, working to increase the participation of women at all levels of decision making.

<sup>2</sup> The Fiji Women's Fund is an activity under the Program that commits \$10.5 million from July 2017- June 2022 to support Fijian women's groups, organisations and networks expand and enhance their work on gender equality and women's empowerment in Fiji.

specific groups of vulnerable women the program needs to reach is needed. There is a notable absence of data on the program's reach to women with disabilities and disabled people's organisations and while partners are expanding their reach through rural networks of women, the community-level impacts of this work are not well documented.

- *Pacific Women* is a complex program and requires sophisticated approaches to identifying pathways to change, assessing contribution, or undertaking a cumulative analysis across a diverse portfolio of projects. The challenge for the next phase is to strengthen monitoring and evaluation in ways that encourage action-learning type of initiatives, shared learning of ideas and collaborative work.

The following are recommendations for the next phase of the program:

1. The recently established Fiji Women's Fund should be used as an opportunity to clarify the Fund's objectives with the program's stakeholders including how it operates across the broader Fiji *Pacific Women* program and the *Pacific Women* Support Unit.
2. Sustainability measures and processes need to be built into the terms of reference of short-term advisers and technical assistance, monitoring, evaluation and learning projects.
3. The activity designs of larger partners need to incorporate and reflect a mix of partner as well as program-level capacity building, monitoring and evaluation priorities and indicators.
4. The Fiji Women's Fund should be explored as a mechanism to build the capacity of smaller partners and promote a community-of-practice that sustains partner capacity building.
5. A review and/or annual reflection of existing WEE activities is required and the next phase of the program should include a portfolio of activities that address the links between WEE and WLDM.
6. The Fiji country plan Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (MEF) should be revised to better reflect realistic pathways to change for WEE and WLDM, including updating short-term and medium-term intended outcomes.
7. The Enhancing Agency outcome for the Fiji country plan MEF should be reviewed based on outcomes of the *Pacific Women* M&E system review workshop held in May 2017 and recommendations from the broader *Pacific Women* Year Three Evaluation.
8. Planned program management and accountability mechanisms (such as the annual reflection process) should be implemented to strengthen coalition-building and advocacy strategies.
9. Program partner MEF development and evaluation-led approaches should continue to be supported with more focus on developing and sharing lessons learnt at a country as well as at the specific outcome level.
10. The review findings (gaps in analysis, lessons learnt, etc.) should be used to develop the agenda for the program's reflection workshop in November 2017.



# 1 Background

Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development (*Pacific Women*) aims to support women – regardless of their income, location, disability, age, or ethnic group, to participate fully, freely and safely in political, economic and social life. The program was launched in 2012 and is an Australian Government commitment of \$320 million, over 10 years, to the 14 Pacific Island Forum member countries.<sup>3</sup> By June 2016, the program had invested \$86.16 million in supporting gender equality across the region and funded 126 activities.<sup>4</sup>

The program has four intended outcomes:

- Women and women's interests are increasingly and effectively represented and visible through leadership at all levels of decision-making.
- Women have expanded economic opportunities to earn an income and accumulate economic assets.
- Violence against women is reduced and survivors of violence have access to support services and to justice.
- Women in the Pacific have a stronger sense of their own agency, supported by a changing legal and social environment and through increased access to the services they need.

The program is delivered by a number of implementing partners and technical advisers as per agreed activities in country plans, with Support Units in Fiji and Papua New Guinea, providing program management and monitoring and evaluation support. The country plans provide the details on funding commitment and how resourcing decisions are made. Additionally, there is a monitoring and evaluation framework (MEF) and Knowledge Management System (KMS) in place to capture, collate and analyse project data and to promote evidence based policies and programs.

An independent evaluation team recently evaluated the entire *Pacific Women* program<sup>5</sup> and found the program to be responding flexibly to cultural variations across the region and to various levels of engagement by governments. The evaluation report is in draft form at the time of this review.

## 1.1 Fiji Country program

A draft Fiji Country Plan was developed in 2013 based on consultations with Fijian women's civil society organisations (CSOs). In 2015, the Plan was updated to reflect the Government of Fiji and Government of Australia's shared commitment to advancing gender equality following endorsement of the Fiji National Gender Policy in 2014. The Fiji Country Plan includes a Fiji-specific Monitoring and Evaluation Framework<sup>6</sup> (Fiji MEF), which has been developed to track locally relevant responses for change towards the four *Pacific Women* outcome areas mentioned above. The Fiji MEF includes short-term, intermediate and longer-term outcomes, drawn from the theory of change for *Pacific Women* (see Appendix 1 – Fiji program M&E and learning framework; and Appendix 2 – Fiji MEF Evaluation Questions).

In Fiji, *Pacific Women* will spend approximately \$26 million over ten years. The Fiji Country program is the second largest *Pacific Women* country program. From 2013 to 2016, 16 activities were funded across the four *Pacific Women* outcome areas, which, along with M&E, design, administration and program support, amounted to an investment of over four million Australian dollars. These activities

3 Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Palau, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu

4 Department of Foreign and Trade, Program Progress Report – Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development, March – August, 2016

5 ITAD, Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development – Year Three Evaluation Final Report, April 2017 (draft under discussion)

6 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development, May 2016

have been delivered through women's organisations, multilateral, regional and Australian organisations and the Government of Fiji (specifically supporting the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation's Department of Women). The Fiji Country program has also supported research and learning activities during this period.

As summarised below, the largest investment is in the outcome area of enhancing agency<sup>7</sup> with nearly 50 per cent of the total expenditure, followed by 'Ending Violence Against Women' (EVAW) with 25 per cent and 'Women's Economic Empowerment' (WEE) with 16 per cent of total expenditure.

Table 1 Summary of Fiji program by outcome area and activity type, 2013/14- 2015/16

	M&E / Design	Enhancing Agency	Leadership and Decision Making	Economic Empowerment	Ending Violence Against Women	Administration /program Support	Total
Number of projects		5	1	6	4		16
Expenditure	\$4,810	\$2,215,082	\$398,131	\$716,327	\$1,113,850	\$3,688	\$4,451,888

Source: *Pacific Women Year Three Evaluation – Fiji Country Case Study*

The delivery and implementation of the Fiji Country program is the responsibility of the Australian High Commission in Fiji through the Counsellor Development Cooperation for Fiji and Tuvalu and bilateral aid program staff. The regional aid team, also located at the Australian High Commission in Suva, has responsibility for managing the *Pacific Women* regional program, with strategic direction and management by the Director, Pacific Gender Equality and Disability Inclusiveness section, Canberra. Additionally, the *Pacific Women* Support Unit provides some direct support to implementing partners in Fiji.

## 1.2 Policy context

The *Pacific Women* Fiji Country program remains closely aligned with the Government of Fiji's National Gender Policy as well as the priorities of Australia's aid program in Fiji.

The Government of Fiji has a strong commitment to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Fiji is a signatory to several international and regional policies and agreements on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.<sup>8</sup> A National Women's Plan of Action guides the Government's work on gender equality and women's empowerment. Additionally, a National Gender Policy has been in place since 2014.

Empowering women and girls is also a priority for the Australian government. DFAT's performance framework: 'Making Performance Count', identifies this as one of its 10 strategic targets and sets a performance benchmark requiring at least 80 per cent of investments to effectively address gender equality in their implementation. A focus on gender equality is also an essential element of DFAT's Aid Investment Plan for Fiji. The Aid Investment Plan emphasises a twin-track approach for both gender and disability inclusion, which involves ensuring that all programs include these objectives but also support specific initiatives in these areas.

<sup>7</sup> To note – in the Fiji Country Plan this is referred to as 'enabling environment and social action'

<sup>8</sup> For instance the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women; the Pacific Platform for Action for the Advancement of Women and Gender Equality (and subsequent revisions); the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the Jakarta Declaration for the Advancement of Women in Asia and the Pacific; the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; the Millennium Development Goals (and now the Sustainable Development Goals); the Commonwealth Plan for Gender Equality (2005–2015) and the Pacific Plan.

The *Pacific Women* theory of change and Fiji Country program also align with insights from other DFAT commissioned studies and strategic initiatives. For example, the 2014 DFAT commissioned analysis of the civil society sector in Fiji, which recognises the contribution of Fijian women's CSOs. DFAT has existing relationships with many prominent women's CSOs in Fiji<sup>9</sup> and the Fiji Country program has extended and strengthened existing support to the CSO sector. Most recently, DFAT finalised the design for the Fiji Women's Fund<sup>10</sup>, which commits up to \$10.5 million, from July 2017 to June 2022 to support women's groups, organisations and networks in Fiji to enhance their work on gender equality and women's empowerment in Fiji.

### 1.3 Recent developments

This review took place when several strategic activities were underway for the *Pacific Women* program (at a regional and country level). In addition to the completion of the *Pacific Women* Year 3 evaluation and the launch of the Fiji Women's Fund, the lessons and findings from the following processes are relevant to the findings and recommendations in this report.

- **DFAT's Australia–Fiji Civil Society Engagement Strategy (2016/17 – 2018/19):**<sup>11</sup> This Strategy, finalised in 2016, proposes ways in which DFAT will streamline its bilateral aid program and work with CSOs in Fiji. Significantly, the Strategy emphasises that all CSOs implementing DFAT supported activities adopt gender and social inclusion policies. The Strategy also sets the context for review questions investigating the contributions of the Fiji Country program to strengthening women's organisations and the women's movement in Fiji.
- **Mid-term evaluation of Progressing Gender Equality in the Pacific:**<sup>12</sup> In 2016, a mid-term evaluation of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community's Progressing Gender Equality in Pacific Island Countries and Territories project was completed. The insights from this evaluation are useful to contextualise the Fiji Country program's work with the Ministry. This evaluation report contributes to the review questions investigating program alignment at the country (governmental) level.
- **Pacific Women Roadmap:**<sup>13</sup> A Roadmap to guide regional *Pacific Women* investments was developed in the areas of women's leadership and decision-making, women's economic empowerment and ending violence against women. The three synthesis reports produced from the roadmap processes are an invaluable data source on the status, enablers and constraints to programming in each of these areas. Where pertinent to the review findings, relevant sections of the synthesis reports have been cross-referenced in this report.
- **Work on the *Pacific Women* knowledge management system:** The *Pacific Women* Knowledge Management System (KMS) database was established mid-2016. The Support Unit has retrospectively inputted partner activity reporting data and the database is used in regional program progress reporting. The KMS will be an asset to country-level monitoring and evaluation. The review has investigated the extent to which Fiji program stakeholders can use the KMS for accountability or reporting purposes.
- **Cyclone Winston and its impact on partners and their activities:** Finally, Tropical Cyclone Winston, which had devastating effects on parts of Fiji in February 2016, had an impact on program delivery as well. On the one hand, TC Winston led to delays and changes in the scope of activities. On the other hand, the occurrence of a natural disaster of this magnitude has exposed and tested program assumptions around risk and adaptability. Accordingly, the review has made a conscious

9 Examples include: Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, Fiji Women's Rights Movement, FemLINK PACIFIC, Na I Soqosoqo Vakamarama, National Council of Women and Young Women's Christian Association

10 Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade, The Fiji Women's Fund Design (2016–2022) Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development, July 2016

11 <http://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Documents/australia-fiji-civil-society-engagement-strategy.pdf>

12 <https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=http%3A%2F%2Fdfat.gov.au%2Fabout-us%2Fpublications%2FDocuments%2Fprogressing-gender-equality-pacific-project-mid-term-evaluation.docx>

13 <http://pacificwomen.org/key-pacific-women-resources/pacific-women-roadmap/>

effort to capture data on partner responses to the cyclone and the implications of this for funded activities.

## 2 The Review

### 2.1 Purpose and objectives

The purpose of this review is to undertake an independent assessment of the first phase of the Fiji Country Plan (the program). As outlined in the terms of reference for the review (see Appendix 3), the objectives are:

- To establish the extent to which the program is tracking towards the intended outcomes in the Fiji Country Plan
- To establish the extent to which the program is tracking towards the intended short-term outcomes in the Fiji *Pacific Women* Monitoring and Evaluation Framework
- To develop recommendations for program development and improvement

### 2.2 Principles

The review methodology incorporated important guiding principles and approaches from the program MEF:

- Adopting a participatory approach.
- Using local expertise where possible.
- Adopting a principle of ‘do no harm’ to vulnerable people and groups.
- Supporting approaches that identify and share best practices.
- Ensuring evaluation activities are not left to the end of a program but are undertaken throughout the life of the program as ongoing learning and reflection opportunities.

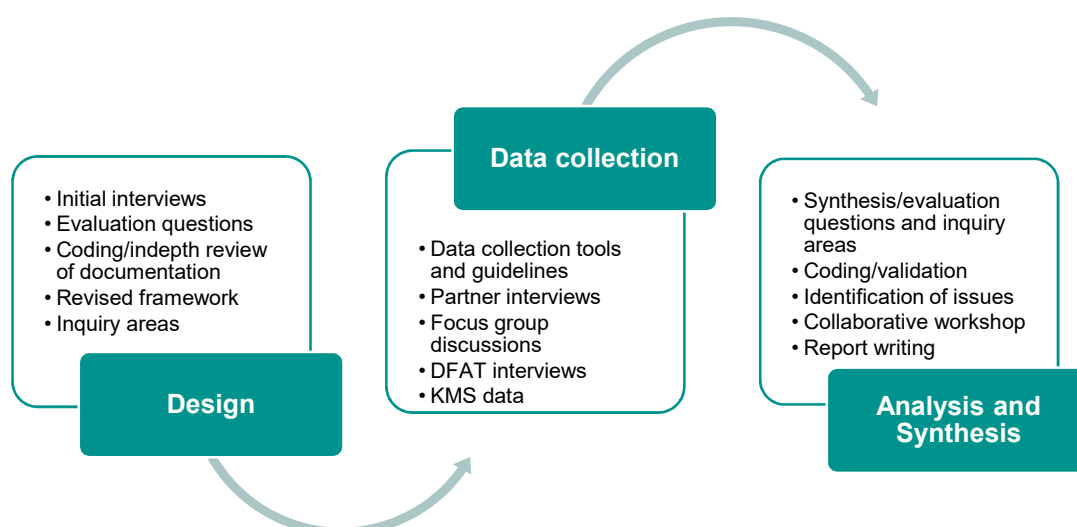
### 2.3 Methodology

The review used a theory-based approach drawing on both quantitative and qualitative data to inform the analysis. The program theory of change and the key evaluation questions framed the theory-based aspect of the review. The review responded to these questions, by focusing on a set of inquiry areas and using these to uncover evidence of change at the program, partner and beneficiary level.

Existing regional and Fiji-specific research and evaluative work informed selection of inquiry areas. These were then refined through inter-related data collection processes at the stakeholder, partner and beneficiary level. The emerging evidence was synthesised against the review framework to identify patterns and lessons. Finally, a collaborative analysis workshop involving the review team and reference group analysed the data to develop recommendations for the next phase of the program.

In this way, as relevant to the Fiji gender equality context, the review has tested out assumptions embedded in the program design as well as provided further analysis or evidence on findings from other research and evaluative processes.

Figure 1 Phases of the Fiji Country Plan Review



## 2.4 Review framework, data collection and analysis

The review framework included a set of evaluation questions, inquiry areas and four main sources of evidence: document analysis, focus group discussions, partner interviews and interviews with other stakeholders (see Appendix 4). The inquiry areas were developed from initial data collection activities and refined through feedback from the review reference group and continued reflection on lessons from other research and evaluative outputs. These evaluation questions and inquiry areas are detailed in relevant sections of the findings in this report.

The following data collection and analysis methods were used in the review:

- Content analysis of key documents:** As noted previously, several strategic *Pacific Women* activities have taken place, which are relevant to the review. Key issues, trends and lessons pertinent to the evaluation questions in these documents were ‘coded’ and used to develop the inquiry areas. Subsequently, this framework was applied to partner activity reports, *Pacific Women* regional reports and other monitoring reports (see Appendix 5 – List of Documents).
- Partner consultations:** A total of eight initial consultations and nine repeat or in-depth consultations were held. The review framework was used to develop interview questions for the in-depth consultations, which were tailored for each partner. The sample included a mix of small and large partners; and those involved in WEE and WLDM. Most interviews were conducted face-face and interview responses were mapped against the evaluation questions and inquiry areas. This data provided examples of progress, challenges and lessons learnt (see Appendix 6 – List of Consultations).
- Beneficiary focus group discussions:** Four beneficiary focus group discussions were held to provide further analysis on findings from other sources. As with the partner consultations, data from the focus group discussions were mapped against the evaluation questions and inquiry areas in the review framework. This data helped to refine the insights provided through the partner consultations and add a beneficiary perspective to some of the review findings.
- Other stakeholder consultations and a collaborative workshop:** Additional consultations were scheduled with the Support Unit and DFAT staff during the review. Prior to report writing, preliminary findings were workshopped with the Support Unit program staff, DFAT staff and the review team. This process helped validate the data as well as synthesise major lessons learnt and areas for program improvement.



## 2.5 Limitations

It is important to note the scope as well as the process limitations of this review.

In terms of scope, the review focused on two of the four *Pacific Women* outcome areas: WEE and WLDM; with some inquiry into support to coalition building and advocacy groups, which forms part of a third outcome area on enhancing agency. This focus was to further develop and test the assumptions underpinning funding and support in these two outcome areas. Ending Violence Against Women was not investigated as it is well researched in Fiji.

There was limited review analysis done on themes such as country (government) ownership of the program, or coherence with other DFAT programs, as these topics are adequately covered in the *Pacific Women* Year Three Evaluation.

In terms of process, the review team identified several limitations below during the data collection process. These limitations, however, do not necessarily dilute the authenticity of the findings.

- Many of the funded activities were in a start-up phase and it was not possible to obtain data and make judgements on contributions of all activities to short and medium-term outcomes.
- Partner data on reach is inadequate – for instance in cases where data is not properly disaggregated.
- The regional KMS database is at a formative stage, so it was not possible assess quantitative data across all outcome areas.
- Partner MEFs are at varying stages of development and not all partners are collecting outcome-focused data or engaging in outcome-focused evaluation and learning activities.
- The timing of the review coincided with a busy period for some implementing partners, which then meant changes to interview schedules and cancellation of one Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and two partner interviews, including with the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation.

Meetings with Ministry staff were held prior to completion of the review and interview data is incorporated in final versions of the review report.

## 3 Findings on program Relevance

### 3.1 Scope of analysis

The review found the program is strongly aligned in policy terms to the Government of Fiji and Government of Australia's gender equality commitments. The country context, which has strengths such as the presence and capacity of established CSOs and women's movement, also fits well with the underlying program theory around supporting Pacific women to increasingly own and direct change.<sup>14</sup> This part of the review, therefore, focused less on proving the relevance of the program and more on investigating if program funding had met the needs of implementing partners and their beneficiaries.

There were three parts to the analysis on program relevance. The first involved investigating partner perspectives on the appropriateness of the program model (R1), which is an important evaluation focus in the Fiji MEF.<sup>15</sup> This part of the analysis also examined partner perspectives on the core funding provided through the program. The second part of the analysis involved investigating the extent of program alignment with the Fiji Government's gender equality priorities (R2), with a specific focus on the technical support provided to the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation. The final part of the analysis focused on the issue of 'reach' and the extent to which the program reflects the needs of

<sup>14</sup> See for example, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Monitoring and Evaluation Framework Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development, December 2015 (p. 7)

<sup>15</sup> See Page 13 Pacific Women Fiji Country Plan MEF

women, particularly those who are disadvantaged and vulnerable (R3). This is an important issue in the *Pacific Women* MEF as well as the Fiji program MEF.<sup>16</sup> The review investigated the ways in which program reach is articulated and the key enablers and constraints in relation to expanding reach.

### Fiji program Review – Relevance Questions

R1: To what extent is the Fiji country plan (2013/14-2015/16) suitable for meeting the needs of implementing partners?

R2: To what extent is the Fiji country plan aligned with the Fiji government's gender equality priorities, namely, the Fiji national gender policy

R3: To what extent is the Fiji country plan suitable for meeting the needs of Fijian women, particularly the most vulnerable?

## 3.2 Findings

### 3.2.1 Extent to which the program is meeting the needs of implementing partners

#### The program's scope and flexibility has contributed to its relevance for a range of implementing partners

The review found there is agreement on the relevance of a funding stream to support women's organisations and activities targeting women in Fiji. When asked the question: 'How do you see the *Pacific Women* program in Fiji contributing to Fijian NGO's goals and activities?', all interview participants answered in the affirmative with examples of how the support has been relevant to their organisations. Notably, a few implementing partners mentioned that the Fiji program has supported activities typically not supported by other donors. In the case of the We Rise Coalition, for instance, program support has enabled the Coalition to adopt and sustain a 'twin-focus' on coalition-building as well as programming. The Coalition established a Memorandum of Understanding to guide coalition partners as well as a range of other decision-making procedures, reporting and evaluation processes. At the same time, individual Coalition members (DIVA, FemLINK Pacific, Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM) and International Women's Development Agency), have engaged in substantial community level, national and regional advocacy work and programming. For the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation, program funding was identified as important by interview respondents. The Ministry's budget is approximately 1% of the Fiji Budget, therefore support through *Pacific Women* has enabled the Ministry to take forward important work to progress the national gender policy and finalise an implementation plan for the policy.

Interviews with Support Unit and DFAT stakeholders suggested that the broad scope of the overall *Pacific Women* design has enabled the Fiji program align funding with partner needs. Several CSOs were consulted during the design of the Fiji country plan in recognition of the important role of CSOs in the delivery of Australia's aid program. Fiji was also one of the only countries where there was a call for proposals and a panel convened to select projects. The scope of the program and initial consultative design process has contributed to its relevance and appropriateness for program stakeholders.

An issue of concern was that women's organisations were not expressing ownership of the program. While DFAT stakeholders emphasise the importance of partner ownership, Fiji partners are more inclined to see *Pacific Women* as a 'DFAT program'. In a few interviews, interviewees needed to consult records to confirm whether activities were funded from *Pacific Women* or other DFAT bilateral programs. Over half the partners interviewed were not aware of the Fiji Country Plan document. Aside from the Ministry, other partners, while aware of its existence, have not referenced the Plan in their proposals or reporting work.

<sup>16</sup> See Page 8 Pacific Women Fiji Country Plan MEF  
Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development

### **Core funding has enabled partners to address organisational strengthening as well as gaps in program management and service delivery**

An additional benefit of the program highlighted in partner activity reporting and interviews has been the support available for extending service delivery, as well as core funding of partners. For instance, the program has provided core funding to Medical Services Pacific to enable them to extend the range of sexual reproductive health services provided to women and girls through its 'One Stop Shop' program. Partner activity reporting indicates that this funding has contributed to improved management oversight and enabled the organisation to function without gaps in services. Other examples include Ra Naari Parishad, a rural-based CSO supporting women's groups in the Rakiraki area with income generation activities, who received core funding to set up an office; and House of Sarah, a faith-based CSO, who received funding for their EAW related activities within the Anglican Church.

There is considerable evidence in the data to suggest that core funding has impacts beyond program management and improved service delivery. For instance, funding provided to Ra Naari Parishad to establish an office had positive outcomes for the community. Previously, the organisation kept its records at different office bearers' homes and meetings were held at the President's house. Now, the women's clubs have a place to convene and sell their wares. The review found the office is developing into a community hub<sup>17</sup> – involving community members well beyond Ra Naari Parishad's own membership. Instead of traveling to Suva, community members can access basic information about government services at the office. Local business owners have also come forward to support the organisation. In the aftermath of Cyclone Winston, the office proved invaluable, providing Ra Naari Parishad the visibility and physical infrastructure to coordinate humanitarian activities. The organisation and its volunteers worked with other NGOs and benefactors to coordinate and distribute emergency supplies, with a focus on assisting women and vulnerable groups.

Another example of the benefits and relevance of core funding is the support given to the Women in Fisheries Network. Through the grant, key organisational systems are now in place. In just one year of operation, the Network has a Strategic Plan, human resource and finance manuals and guidelines, a website and an Annual General Meeting process. As noted by one member, 'The support has made a huge difference to the Network and enabled us to take a quantum leap forward and engage with communities. It has brought a whole new level of professionalism to the Network'.<sup>18</sup>

### **Mechanisms to sustain organisational strengthening and capacity transfer within partners need further development**

The review investigation into program relevance for partners showed that there are gaps and challenges in terms of sustaining the work of organisational strengthening. Interviews with smaller partners such as House of Sarah suggest that while funding boosted human resources, the capacity development needs outweigh resources available through the program. Staff commented on the challenges involved in building capacity and reporting on intermediate and longer-term outcomes within a shorter timeframe. For instance, funding enabled one staff member to gain knowledge and information on monitoring and evaluation but internal resource constraints did not allow for skills transfer within the organisation. Funding uncertainty following the completion of activities, also affects the continuation of organisational strengthening work. Uncertainty around funding and the continuation of a gender adviser (currently supported through the program), was also commented on by the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation staff.

With the larger partners, aligning internal strategy and systems to DFAT accountability and reporting requirements is challenging. The We Rise Coalition, for instance, has made considerable progress in the development and implementation of a monitoring, evaluation and learning framework<sup>19</sup> shared by all four Coalition members. One Coalition member, the International Women's Development Agency, takes responsibility for ongoing reporting and synthesis of lessons learnt. One of the challenges the Coalition faces is trying to align the categorisation used in the *Pacific Women* KMS database to the

<sup>17</sup> Source: Ra Naari Parishad partner interview

<sup>18</sup> Source: Interview with Women in Fisheries Network member

<sup>19</sup> We Rise Coalition, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework, August 2015

scope and nature of We Rise programming. Partner reporting and feedback suggests that the KMS categories are more oriented to service-delivery programs, which is challenging for the Coalition who are focused on voice, agency and policy reform. Thus, while the program has had an impact on strengthening partner organisations and improving management oversight of activities, considerations of alignment and sustainability need to be addressed.

### 3.2.2 Extent to which the program is aligned with the Fiji Government's gender equality priorities

#### The program is contributing to implementation of the Fiji Government's gender policy

Evidence of the program's contribution to the Fiji's Government's implementation of its gender policy is based on interviews with DFAT, the Support Unit and Ministry staff; as well as reports from a short-term adviser placed with the Ministry. These sources suggest that the placement of a Gender Adviser<sup>20</sup> in the Ministry has been successful to align DFAT's bilateral aid program to policy developments at the national level and enable the program to contribute to the Government's work of mainstreaming gender – particularly in the EAW area.

The Gender Adviser was based with the Ministry's Department of Women on a full-time basis from July 2015 – July 2016; and since then has worked on a short-term model comprised of in-country visits and remote support. During the first phase, major activities included support to the Ministry and other stakeholders to develop an implementation plan for the 2014 National Gender Policy; support to increase the effectiveness of programs including research and reporting capabilities in the Ministry; and capacity development of the Ministry through training and mentoring of key staff. During the second phase, in addition to the continuation of training and mentoring activities, support is being consolidated through a network of gender focal points established across Government. At present, gender focal points have been established in 22 ministries and staff in the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation noted that this has improved the speed of communication on gender-related matters. Additionally, the Adviser has supported relationship-building between the Ministry and other stakeholders including in the civil society sector. A performance appraisal conducted on the Adviser following completion of the first phase of the assignment suggested that this support had led to 'an increase in capacity for the Ministry to drive forward the National Gender Policy, increased profile of the Ministry within Government and increased visibility and gender inclusive communication because of the Adviser's support'.<sup>21</sup>

There are three factors that have contributed to the impact of this work and serve as valuable lessons in the context of program alignment. The first factor is that the DFAT Post in Fiji responded appropriately to opportunities for collaboration with the Government of Fiji, which emerged with the finalisation of the National Gender Policy. The National Gender Policy was finalised after the Country Plan was drafted. However, the Post was quick to engage with the Government, incorporate activities to support the Ministry and the program was endorsed at the Ministerial level.

The second contributing factor was that the Adviser's expertise in EAW was closely aligned to Government's priorities at the time. This meant that the Adviser could use opportunities to integrate gender into existing EAW mainstreaming processes and gain the respect of staff within the Ministry. For instance, the Adviser played a lead role in organising the first policy dialogue on violence against women for Fiji Parliamentarians. The Adviser also initiated monthly gender sensitisation training with Ministry of Women staff. Other Ministries have begun to ask for support from the Ministry, which demonstrates the rising profile of gender issues in other departments.

A final contributing factor was that through this support, the Ministry could demonstrate stronger relationships, including with key CSOs in Fiji. The Adviser played a key role in supporting the Ministry to establish Gender Focal Points across Government agencies and provided training on roles and

20 During the first phase of the Fiji Country Plan, the Program also funded a short-term M&E advisor in the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation

21 Cardno Performance Appraisal for Long Term Advisers

responsibilities in relation to the Gender Policy. Additionally, the Adviser helped revitalise the Ministry's multi-agency taskforce on EVAW, which has also helped to enhance relationships with key women's CSOs. Reporting by short-term advisers to the Ministry and interviews with DFAT staff suggest that a key challenge going forward is the extent to which adequate capacity has been built within the Ministry to sustain this work.

### 3.2.3 Extent to which program is relevant and meeting the needs of beneficiaries

#### Partner reach is expanding; however, community-level impacts of this are not well documented

The review investigation into program reach looked initially at the data on project beneficiaries in the KMS database. At a glance, KMS data and the Support Unit's retrospective synthesis of partner reach data shows some positive trends in terms of numbers of project participants or beneficiaries of implementing partners that have benefitted from the Fiji program year on year. For instance, in the most recent update of the KMS database, reported numbers of beneficiaries (both men and women) participating in the Fiji Country program across the WEE and WDLM outcome areas total 43,808. A total of 33,075 beneficiaries have been disaggregated by gender – including 26,738 women and 6,337 men. Reporting in the enhancing agency outcome area is less clear, as several activities do not have progress reports. The total number of reported beneficiaries participating in enhancing agency-related activities is 4,542 including 4,249 women and 293 men. At present, not all partners are disaggregating beneficiary data by geography or other vulnerabilities such as disability.

Discussions with the Support Unit do suggest that the task of synthesising partner reach data is not an easy one. Conceptually, there are clear impacts of the program on vulnerable women at the individual level, but it is harder to determine flow on impacts at a household or community level. It is also hard to separate the contribution of activities funded by the program from the contribution of other activities of partner CSOs. Additionally, not all partner's data on reach or beneficiary numbers are disaggregated nor can they be validated. Systems and definitions to disaggregate data by gender, rural/urban, local/national and disability are still under development.

Among the larger partners, there are several instances of the program expanding outreach. For instance, in the case of the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre (FWCC), the program supports the provision of counselling, advocacy and support for survivors of violence, including increasing their access to justice and the provision of refuge services to prevent and respond to violence against women. Activity reporting suggests that the program has also contributed to the extension of FWCC's community education and mobilisation in rural and remote areas.

Activity reports from the We Rise Coalition also demonstrate program reach to remote and rural areas. DIVA's social organising and movement building work and research, including FemLINKPacific's community consultations, has extended the Coalitions' reach in rural areas. DIVA's work around building 'community hubs' resulted in 23 community networks involved in the completion of a survey. This process also involved training researchers in rural and remote locations and trialling audio interviews or 'audio booths', for anonymous interviews of Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Transgender (LGBT) people. This work has enabled diverse women in rural areas, who are often isolated from information, to have a safe space for discussions about discrimination and related issues persisting in their communities.

#### The program has diversified and expanded DFAT's partnerships with CSOs in Fiji

A finding on the theme of program reach is the extent to which program funding and support has enabled DFAT to diversify and expand its partnerships with CSOs in Fiji. The review found substantial qualitative evidence (from partner reports) of the program growing and strengthening diverse relationships, which have positive implications for DFAT's partnerships with CSOs, as well as the reach and coverage of partner activities at a community level.

FemLINK PACIFIC's Women's Weather Watch is an excellent example of the ways in which Fiji partners are using innovative strategies to expand outreach and build new relationships. In this activity, FemLINK PACIFIC used its community radio network to disseminate information and early warning messages to



150 rural women leaders and to collect and document women's experiences post-disaster. As a follow-up to the community-level work, FemLINKPacific facilitated three national consultations on Women, Peace and Security in Humanitarian Crises. The outreach included diverse groups, including women from LGBT communities and young women's organisations. Additionally, new relationships are being built – for instance, between FemLINKPacific and the Australian Defence Force to enhance participation of women in disasters and at the national level through engagement with the Fiji National Disaster Management Office.

Another example of expanding reach and coverage is the work of an emerging faith-based network the program supports, including the House of Sarah, South Pacific Association of Theological Schools and Pacific Conference of Churches. Partner interviews suggested that program resourcing has facilitated a strong movement to amplify discussions on gender equality in the Anglican Church. Additional House of Sarah staff resourced by the program, enabled the coordination of a monthly informal meeting (Christian Churches *Talanoa* Network) where representatives from nine member churches would meet monthly to discuss strategies to integrate gender within the churches. This progressed to a joint '16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence' campaign where pastors were supported with interactive bible stories and drama resources. Additionally, and for the first time, House of Sarah could visit rural communities in Savusavu, Nabua and Dreketi.

### **Intangible as well as the tangible benefits from funded activities have contributed to program relevance for beneficiaries**

Focus group discussions were held with beneficiaries of House of Sarah, Fiji Muslim Women's League, Ra Naari Parishad and Spa Academy. All participants engaged in discussions on how the funded activities had contributed to their lives and well-being. One notable trend, across the FGD data, is that several women talked about the limited opportunities for women in their communities to access information or training, suggesting that *Pacific Women* funded activities were a value-add and making a difference to their lives by increasing their opportunities to information and training.

Additionally, and particularly in the context of the work of Spa Academy, several beneficiaries discussed intangible benefits and a sense of 'self-worth' they had gained through participation in Spa Academy's Graduate program. For instance, one FDG participant commented: 'I can do something better on my own rather than looking down on myself. I feel different.' Another spoke of the sense of achievement gained from getting through the difficult coursework: 'This gives me a sense of purpose. It is very challenging.' An important aspect of the program is that graduates have guaranteed employment upon completion. This allows trainees to make plans and aspire: 'I want to be a successful woman.'

At the *Pacific Women* program design stage as well as through the Roadmap process, the values and attitudes of men and women were identified as significant barriers to women's empowerment. Moreover, women's lack of agency, or a belief in their own self-worth and ability, limits both what they choose to do and what they expect of others.<sup>22</sup> In this context, the funded activities have clearly been beneficial in terms of enabling women to explore new opportunities and develop a positive sense of self-worth.

## **4 Findings on program Effectiveness**

### **4.1 Scope and focus of the analysis**

The effectiveness of the program has been examined in the context of program achievements, enablers and constraints in the two outcome areas of WEE and WLDM. Additionally, data collected on the program's support to coalitions and advocacy groups informs understanding on achievements in a third outcome area – enhancing agency.

The review questions are drawn from the regional *Pacific Women* MEF, Fiji Country Plan and Fiji MEF. The first question looks broadly at progress in relation to the outcome areas (E1). The review focused

<sup>22</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development design document (Pg. 4)  
Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development

on women's influence at a community level; the capacity of women leaders; women's capacity to access economic opportunities; and changes in women's income. E1 findings are contextualised using a similar methodology to the *Pacific Women* regional reporting<sup>23</sup> to provide a cumulative analysis of progress for the short-term outcomes listed in the program MEF.

The second question (E2) investigates the program's contribution to coalition building and advocacy. The review investigated the extent to which the program has expanded the influence of coalitions and advocacy groups; the extent to which these groups are driving and initiating change; and the extent to which the program has contributed to building locally relevant understanding and solutions.

The final question addresses barrier and challenges in these areas (E3) – discussions on barriers and challenges are incorporated in the other findings.

### Fiji program Review – Effectiveness Questions

E1: To what extent has the Fiji country plan (2013-2017) contributed to transformative change in the *Pacific Women* outcome areas: women's economic empowerment and women's leadership and decision-making?

E2: To what extent did coalitions and advocacy groups in Fiji build a locally relevant understanding of and solutions to gender equality?

E3: What were effective strategies that the Fiji country plan used to overcome barriers and challenges to progress in women's economic empowerment and women's leadership?

## 4.2 Data sources and limitations

Data related to effectiveness is mainly qualitative from documentation such as partner activity reports, as well as from partner consultations and focus group discussions with women participating in program funded activities. An additional part of the inquiry into program effectiveness has been establishing the links and building on the lessons learnt from parallel *Pacific Women* regional and evaluative processes.<sup>24</sup>

Overall, there is more qualitative data in partner reports on WEE than on WLDM, which is reflective of the scope of funding and the difficulties involved in measuring change such as capacity building and women's empowerment in shorter implementation periods.

## 4.3 Findings

### 4.3.1 Extent to which program has contributed to women's leadership and decision-making

**There is strong evidence that funded activities are contributing towards three of the five intended women's leadership and decision-making short term-outcomes**

The program has five intended outcomes on WLDM as indicated below. Appendix 6 provides a summary of the activities that have contributed to these short-term outcomes.<sup>25</sup> This includes the work of House of Sarah, FemLINK Pacific, Fiji Muslim Women's League, Markets for Change, Spa Academy, Ra Naari Parishad, Women in Fisheries Network and the We Rise Coalition. Short-term outcome (c) 'support for the inclusion of women's views' has the maximum activity with seven partners providing examples of change in this area. This is followed by short-term outcome (b), the 'capacity building of women

<sup>23</sup> See for example: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Program Progress Report – Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development, March – August 2016

<sup>24</sup> For example, the Feasibility Study on Women's Economic Empowerment in Fiji, Roadmap Synthesis Report on Women's Economic Empowerment, Roadmap Synthesis Report on Women in Leadership and Office of Development Effectiveness' Women's Leadership: evidence review

<sup>25</sup> To note: the scope of the analysis is not limited to the partner / activity primary outcome areas as designated in the *Pacific Women* KMS database. Instead the analysis covers all examples of contribution or impact and relates these to the *Pacific Women* outcome framework. In this way, the potential impacts of progress in one outcome area, on another, can be tracked

interested in leadership and decision-making roles in Fiji society', with six partners contributing to this short-term outcome.

The following discusses progress made to date:

- **Increased interest of women in participating in leadership and decision-making roles:** There is strong evidence of progress in all four activities (We Rise Coalition, Markets for Change, FemLINK PACIFIC and House of Sarah) contributing to this outcome. Further support is needed to enable organisations to collect information on women's interest in participating in leadership development activities. Currently, most of the data provided by partners relates to the number of women moving into leadership roles.
- **Increased capacity building of women interested in leadership and decision-making roles in Fiji society:** There is good evidence of progress from three activities (We Rise Coalition, Markets for Change and FemLINK PACIFIC) working towards this short-term outcome. One partner (House of Sarah) has shown moderate progress. Another partner is working informally with rural networks to increase women's capacity and interest to take on leadership on a small scale (FemLINK PACIFIC).
- **Increased support for the inclusion of women's views:** Five of the seven partners working towards this outcome show strong evidence of progress in including women's views in new areas such as disaster risk reduction (e.g. Cyclone Winston response supported activities). Another two partners have shown strong progress of inclusion of women's views in market governance structures (Markets for Change and national democratic processes (We Rise Coalition)). There is a gap in relation to the inclusion of views of women living with a disability across the activities.
- **More women are visible and influencing decision-making:** Three of the four activities working towards this outcome are showing good evidence of progress (We Rise Coalition, FemLINK PACIFIC and Markets for Change). House of Sarah's work shows potential for progress in this area.
- **Advocacy for policy change and legal reform for women's equality and empowerment is underway:** The activities of the We Rise Coalition show the strongest evidence of progress as the Coalition is working at multiple levels (national, regional and international) for policy reform. These activities also show good inclusion and reach working with LGBT women and rural women. Activities by the House of Sarah and Markets for Change show moderate progress in this area.

The following findings detail the progress made, constraints and enablers.

### **Informal and formal processes drive women's interest (or lack thereof) to participate in leadership development activities**

An important assumption in the Fiji MEF is that women *want* to undertake leadership roles.<sup>26</sup> Additionally, at the activity design stage, several implementing partners indicated that this assumption fits with their activity design and at least four partners have reported an increased interest among women participating in leadership activities. Because of its relevance to program theory, the review sought to unpack the factors that were driving women's interest through the focus group discussions, partner interviews and the Support Unit's comparisons across country programs. The finding is that a mix of formal, partner-driven processes and informal, word-of-mouth type of processes have strengthened women's participation in project-funded activities. For instance, Spa Academy has invested in processes to ensure the Academy is advertising in all geographic areas of Fiji using divisional offices and Provincial councils to distribute forms and to receive applications. Trainee selection is undertaken at the community level in each division and the Academy sends representatives that are familiar with the socio-cultural context in each area. In addition, some of Spa's Academy's trainees have come from word-of-mouth channels. One encouraging story was from a graduate of the Academy who used her savings to fund a family member's training at the Academy. Several graduates who attended the FGD mentioned that they had promoted the Scholarship program in their communities.

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<sup>26</sup> Fiji MEF p. 6

Activity reporting by FemLINK Pacific also includes examples of processes that have strengthened women's participation. For instance, a series of visits to rural centres by the organisation was instrumental in encouraging women's clubs in some communities to work together. The subsequent appointment of rural convenors and networks has been beneficial in spreading information on development priorities and for women in rural areas to work together to access resources.

### **The program is supporting diverse activities to build the capacity of women leaders**

The review data suggests that the approaches used by implementing partners have contributed to significant gains in building the capacity of individual women. Furthermore, a distinctive feature of the Fiji program is that a diverse range of approaches and activities has been funded in this area of building individual-level capacity. The House of Sarah, for example, trains 'Sarah carers' to spread EVAW messages in faith-based communities. FemLINK Pacific is promoting women's political leadership through a participatory learning exchange and the use of multimedia approaches. The Women in Fisheries Network is seeking to build a network of women leaders and link them to existing structures at the district and regional level. This diversity provides opportunities to test out program assumptions around pathways, constraints and enablers for women leaders.

The FGDs conducted provided an opportunity to investigate these approaches and activities further from the perspective of women themselves. The discussion covered the information and support they had received from implementing partners and the challenges they faced in their roles as community leaders.

One positive finding was that the program has created opportunities to expand women's choices, albeit on a small scale. A few FGD participants mentioned that the opportunities for women in their communities to gain new skills or explore other self-development opportunities were scarce. The work of the Spa Academy is a good example of this. Through the program, Spa Academy has provided 61 scholarships for women, specifically targeting women from a low socio-economic background and from rural and remote areas where access to employment is low, to complete a Certificate level III in Beauty and Spa Therapy. The review team met with graduates as well as trainees undergoing the course. They found that opportunities are quite limited for women and saw the training as a pathway to a 'real job' where they can 'earn enough money to take care of our family and to make it out of here.' Previously, the women were restricted to working in their own homes or in low paid jobs. Many of the respondents reported transformations in their sense of self-worth and confidence.

The limitations of the data (and possibly the scope and time frames of funded activities) is that it does not enable an assessment of the flow on benefits of strengthening leadership at the individual level and, at present, is not well documented. The House of Sarah plans to undertake follow-up focus group discussions with community members to assess the role and impact of Sarah carers. Likewise, FemLINK PACIFIC will address the increased influence that women leaders have on their household or community decision-making process.

### **The program has supported entry-points to address women's participation in decision-making processes at the community level**

A final, significant finding that emerged from the review towards achieving short-term outcomes in WLDM involves the level of change the program is supporting.

The broad *Pacific Women* theory of change is premised on a recognition of the interconnectedness between individual, family and community change.<sup>27</sup> The program theory emphasises that strategies are needed across these different levels to effect change. The Fiji program also includes a mix of desired changes at an individual-level, as well as changes at the community level. For example, one of the short-term intended outcomes of the program is for women to have influenced decision-making processes (at community and local levels).<sup>28</sup> Aside from the Markets for Change program, which focuses on building the capacity of both local government and women market vendors, most of the funded activities with

<sup>27</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development, Design Document, April 2014, p. 12

<sup>28</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development, Fiji Country Plan 2013/14-2016/17, May 2016, p.12

potential impacts on WLDM are affecting change at the level of individual women. There is not enough evidence of program activities contributing towards women influencing decision-making process at the community level or the program working alongside duty-bearers and governance structures.

Partner activity reporting, partner interviews and validation with other literature suggest that enabling women to influence community-level decision-making processes requires long term investment and complex development pathways. House of Sarah's activities to raise awareness of gender equality among the leadership of the Anglican Church in Fiji is a good illustration of these complexities. House of Sarah has been working towards gender equality in the Anglican Church since 2013. This required working at the level of Synod, which is the governing body of the Church and working in partnership with other ecumenical groups. Through these activities, the House of Sarah contributed to a significant legislation change ensuring that the two representatives elected to the Synod (from parishes) included one male and one female. The inclusion of women at the Synod decision-making level then created further opportunities for sensitisation of male pastors and support for community-level activism. For the faith-based partners; therefore, the success of projects is closely linked to progress at these different levels. This example also illustrates that it is hard to separate the contribution of activities funded by the program from the contribution of other activities by partner CSOs, making tracking and measuring progress of community-level change challenging.

On a positive note, the program has contributed to effective entry points for broadening women's participation in decision-making processes at the community and national levels. Through events organised by the We Rise Coalition members, women have engaged with duty bearers and formal governance structures in communities, districts, nationally and regionally. For example, the inaugural Pacific Feminist Forum brought together 130 diverse women from across 13 Pacific countries with four participants identifying as having a disability and 12 girls from the Fiji Women's Rights Movement's Grow, Inspire, Relate, Lead and Succeed (GIRLS) program. The Forum resulted in the development of a Pacific Feminist Charter for Change. This Charter sets in place a framework for feminist organising, movements and policy advocacy on gender equality in the Pacific.

The Women in Fisheries Network is another example of an entry point for broadening the participation of women fishers in community and district-level governance and support structures. The Network is cognisant of challenges and increased risks such as impacts of natural disasters; hence, securing partnerships with key stakeholders at all levels is vital to delivery of its activities.

#### 4.3.2 Extent to which program has contributed to intended outcomes in women's economic empowerment (E1b)

**There is moderate to strong evidence that funded activities are contributing towards three of the five intended women's economic empowerment outcomes**

The program has five intended outcomes on WEE<sup>29</sup> as indicated below. This includes the work of Fiji Muslim Women's League, Markets for Change program, Spa Academy, Ra Naari Parishad, Women in Fisheries Network and the We Rise Coalition. Activities have concentrated on 'women have greater access to information as to how to manage their income and assets' with five partners contributing to this short-term outcome. One limitation of partner activity reporting on this outcome is that activity reports do not detail the extent of impact of project activities or challenges faced and lessons learnt.

In terms of progress made:

- **Increased capacity of women to access income generating business and employment opportunity:** Of the four activities contributing to this short-term outcome (including activities of Fiji Muslim Women's League, Markets for Change, Spa Academy and Ra Naari Parishad) the strongest

<sup>29</sup> To note: the scope of the analysis is not limited to the partner / activity primary outcome areas as designated in the *Pacific Women KMS* database. Instead the analysis covers all examples of contribution or impact and relates these to the *Pacific Women* outcome framework. In this way, the potential impacts of progress in one outcome area on another can be tracked.



evidence exists for Spa Academy, which can demonstrate tangible increase in women's employment opportunities and income.

- **Public and private sector promote gender equality through policies and practice:** There is limited activity and progress towards this outcome in the program.
- **Increased safety and working conditions for women:** The Markets for Change program has strong evidence of change towards this short-term outcome. Activities by Spa Academy and through the We Rise Coalition show potential to improve safety and working conditions for women.
- **Increasing numbers of women employed and generating income:** The two projects that are contributing to this outcome (SPA Academy and Fiji Muslim Women's League) are showing good progress.
- **Women have greater access to information as to how to manage their income:** The partners/projects contributing to this short-term outcome include Spa Academy, Fiji Women's Muslim League, Markets for Change, Ra Naari Parishad and, potentially, the Women in Fisheries Network.

The following findings detail the progress made, constraints and enablers.

### **Increased access to information is improving the influence of women at a household and community level**

As the program has funded several activities linked to increasing women's access to information on managing their income and assets, the review investigated the extent of impact of these activities and the factors contributing to or deterring impact.

The data suggests that implementing partners in Fiji have adopted a variety of approaches to improving women's access to information in the context of economic empowerment activities. The Markets for Change program, for example, supported elections in five market vendor associations in Lautoka, Nadi, Namaka, Rakiraki and Suva. Pre-election consultations in these markets provided a platform for women vendors to access useful information to advance their participation in the elections. The associations also function as a mechanism for women vendors to raise their issues and concerns, for example, around infrastructure, access to information, safety and security. Markets for Change also provide financial literacy training to market vendors through a pro bono agreement with Westpac. Over 500 market vendors, most of whom are women, have participated in these training sessions.

The training provided by smaller partners, Fiji Muslim Women's League, Spa Academy, Ra Naari Parishad and the Women in Fisheries Network, is more targeted and skills-based. Partner interviews and FGDs conducted, suggest that the training by Spa Academy as part of the Scholarship program is comprehensive; in addition, students learn savings strategies and subjects such as Maths and Biology. The training offered by the Fiji Muslim Women's League is also skills-based. The program funded the outfit of the League's kitchen for culinary programs at its Women's Vocational training centre to equip women with catering skills and income generation opportunities. However, the relevance and impact of this training in the broader context of women's economic empowerment needs further evaluation. Women in Fisheries Network have provided training on sustainable management of assets, such as through crab fishing.

One limitation of this data is that the KMS database and partner monitoring, at present, does not capture the appropriateness and quality of information disseminated in the context of WEE training activities. Except for the Markets for Change program, which has sophisticated systems for monitoring, evaluation, reporting, other partners providing women with access to information on managing their income and assets do not report on much more than training participant numbers. Notably, three of these partners have expressed an interest in developing monitoring and reporting frameworks and templates to record training impact. The Women in Fisheries Network is currently developing its MEF. Fiji Muslim Women's League and Spa Academy have discussed the possibility of follow up visits to trainees to assess the impact of training six months after course completion. The Fiji program would benefit from an added

focus on monitoring the quality and appropriateness of information disseminated as well as after action reflection on training impact.

**The program is contributing on a small-scale to increased safety and working conditions for women; some activities have the potential for further impact in the medium to longer-term**

The Markets for Change program is the main activity reporting on increasing safe working conditions for women. Assessments on safety and discrimination have taken place in two markets and assessments will continue in 2017 in the remaining markets. These assessments were undertaken due to findings from a Suva-based consultation that women markets vendors who sleep at market accommodation centres do not feel safe. The Markets for Change program developed a series of assessment tools designed to encourage women market vendors and key market management, security and infrastructure staff to discuss their experiences of 'being safe' or 'feeling unsafe' at their respective markets. Through these assessments, women vendors have requested information and training as well as improved physical infrastructure.

Three additional activities have the potential for addressing women's safety and working conditions beyond the community level: i. the work with potential employers of Graduates by partner Spa Academy; ii. the We Rise partner, Fiji Women's Rights Movement's Sexual Harassment Incident Study in Fiji; and iii. training by FWCC with private sector bodies. FWCC also conducts gender, violence against women and human rights training with private sector bodies in two hotels to increase female employees' access to services and sensitise management on sexual harassment at the workplace. The continuation and strengthening of research and learning activities that link important assumptions in the Fiji MEF on income, security and agency will be important.

**Program activities are expanding women's work choices; however, the actual impact on women's income is hard to determine**

The review data suggests that while program activities are expanding women's work choices, (for example, through Fiji Muslim Women's League, Spa Academy, Ra Naari Parishad and Women in Fisheries Network activities) the actual impact on women's income is hard to determine.

The impact of WEE activities on women's income is an important short-term outcome in the Fiji MEF (as well as the regional *Pacific Women* MEF). However, evidence of this in partner activity reporting, as well as in the interview and FGDs, is unclear. Even in the larger projects, baselines are limited and it is difficult to ascertain whether WEE activities contribute to increased income. Moreover, the control and use of women's income, which is a key issue in the *Pacific Women* Roadmap and other literature, is not adequately documented.

The most tangible evidence of the program supporting an increase in women's income is in the case of Spa Academy. To date, the program has supported 61 graduates in total. Of these, 12 are still undergoing training and 49 have graduated and are now employed. Only one woman was unable to complete the course. Program funding covers costs for certificate level study over eight months and the recipients are encouraged to save for the diploma level qualification (an additional three months and approximately an additional FJD3,500), which is considered to give them a better footing for employment opportunities.

The Spa Academy offers part-time work and loan schemes to help students cover their living costs during the additional Diploma study. The Support Unit Communications Officer has collected stories from women who have completed this certificate program and DFAT maintains regular communication with the Academy to monitor progress including conducting on site monitoring visits. Two graduates interviewed reported new employment opportunities because of the project. The first graduate has taken on the role as Spa Manager at a private club. The second graduate is a beauty therapist in Apia, Samoa. DFAT monitoring visits with other graduates note that women not only earn an income but also report a sense of empowerment and increased status in their community and family. While these stories are impressive, further tracking of the other scholarship awardees is needed.

There is moderate evidence to suggest that the Fiji Muslim Women's League has supported women to start new businesses, although more follow up with training program participants is required. Further data and tracking is also required to determine the income generating impact of Ra Naari Parishad and the Markets for Change program.

This area of program contribution to increasing women's income has proved to be challenging from a monitoring and evaluation perspective. Due to confidentiality issues, it is often difficult to ask women directly about changes in their income. Finally, even in cases where women have reported an increase in income, investigation into the control and use of this income is required. However, at this stage, there is limited reporting on these issues.

#### 4.3.3 Extent to which program has contributed to coalitions and advocacy groups in Fiji (E2)

##### **The program has made significant contributions to coalition-building in Fiji, which has a flow on effect for addressing other aspects of gender inequality**

The importance of the coalition building and support to Pacific women's advocacy groups is emphasised in the *Pacific Women* design<sup>30</sup> and in other important studies and evaluative work in the Pacific. The Office of Development Effectiveness' 2014 report on women's leadership,<sup>31</sup> for instance, found that a critical element in facilitating women's leadership is providing support for coalition building and networking.

The review data suggests that the Fiji program is a major source of learning in this area. Funding for the We Rise Coalition has been beneficial in strengthening the Coalition, as well as extending the reach and inclusiveness of Coalition advocacy activities. Additionally, there are early indications that this coalition-building work has flow on effects in terms of supporting women's organisations as they take on advocacy and policy influencing work in areas such as disaster recovery, employment and security, which are highly relevant to the women's empowerment agenda.

Program funding for partnership and organisational strengthening activities has strengthened the four Coalition members. The review found that collaboration around program planning, monitoring and evaluation has freed up Coalition program resources for advocacy and campaign work. For instance, partner reporting indicates that the workloads of DIVA's Coordinator and Political Adviser has reduced over time with other Coalition members taking on roles and responsibilities as CSO representatives in intergovernmental negotiations.

Additionally, the involvement of DIVA in the Coalition has meant that the Coalition's reach to rural areas has strengthened. FemLINK PACIFIC, through links with DIVA and disabled peoples' organisations, has also diversified its membership. Since program commencement, 11 young women from LGBT and disability networks received training to produce programs and volunteer as on-air broadcasters. Coalition members' involvement with young women through the Fiji Young Women's Forum<sup>32</sup> is also contributing to extend the reach and inclusiveness of the Coalition's advocacy work.

A final aspect to the program's contributions to coalition-building in Fiji are the early indications that this work is supporting partners as they advocate and influence policy in areas such as disaster recovery, employment and security as previously noted with FWRM and femLINK PACIFIC. DIVA has been asked to undertake training on gender identity and LGBT rights by the Department of Corrections and the Fiji Police Academy.

30 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development design document April 2014 (p. 27)

31 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Women's Leadership: Evidence Review, Office of Development Effectiveness, March, 2014

32 The Fiji Young Women's Forum was formed in 2014 to promote young women's political participation at the local and national levels. Co-convenors of the Forum include: Diverse Voices and Action for Equality, Young Women Christian Association, Emerging Leaders Forum Alumni and the Young Women Producers and Broadcasters of FemLINK Pacific.

The overall learning from this first phase of the Fiji program is that coalition-building and support to advocacy groups has the potential to strengthen DFAT's engagement in a range of issues relevant to advancing women's empowerment in Fiji.

### **The program has supported advocacy work among faith-based organisations**

Through the program, DFAT has also increased its collaboration with faith-based advocacy groups. As noted previously, work among the House of Sarah, South Pacific Association of Theological Schools and Pacific Conference of Churches show that focusing on transformation of typically conservative faith based structures is having some encouraging results, particularly in the EAW area. Moreover, program funding has strengthened the organisational capacity of the partner CSOs to involve Church leaders, potentially improving the impact of community-level activities.

In the case of TC Winston, the Archbishop of the Fiji based Anglican diocese included the House of Sarah in a recovery group enabling it to promote the inclusion of a gender perspective in recovery efforts. In the partner interviews, House of Sarah representatives noted, 'we brought in the gender perspective and that meant there was a real gender focus.'

Interviews with other stakeholders and regional program reporting suggest that this investment is significant as faith-based organisations and churches have, in some cases, previously blocked work on gender equality. The program is enabling DFAT to engage in an ongoing dialogue and relationship building with faith based organisations in Fiji.

#### **4.3.4 Extent to which coalitions advocacy groups are building a locally relevant understanding of and solutions to gender equality (E2)**

##### **Coalitions and advocacy groups supported by the program are influencing change at multiple levels**

For this outcome area, the review initially looked at the data on 'enhancing agency' in the KMS database. This data, extracted from partner activity reporting on the number and scale of activities, is synthesised and analysed by the Support Unit. Currently, program activities listed in the KMS database are found to be 'highly effective', with a small number, including the work within the Ministry, not yet adequately reported on or measured.

All partners interviewed were questioned further on the effectiveness of their advocacy work and the factors, which contributed to or constrained change. Most partners discussed the importance of having adequate resourcing to build momentum for and sustain advocacy work. The lack of home-grown Fiji-specific research and the need for women's organisations to highlight the needs of specific groups of vulnerable women, particularly those living outside of Suva, were also identified as works-in-progress.

One positive trend that was common across the activities and of relevance to the program is that advocacy efforts have gathered momentum by operating at several different levels – from local, community-based advocacy initiatives to national and regional events. The We Rise Coalition is the best example of a coalition that operates at multiple levels. At the national level, the Coalition has supported the Fiji Women's Forum and engaged with the Fiji NGO Coalition on Human Rights, which are key national level forums for engagement with duty bearers. Events such as the Feminist Skill Sharing workshop organised by DIVA has also created opportunities for new relationships with duty bearers in national and inter-governmental governance structures.

This multi-level approach, as opposed to a project-by-project approach, is emphasised in the draft *Pacific Women Roadmap*<sup>33</sup>, the *Pacific Women Synthesis report on Women's Leadership*.<sup>34</sup> The We Rise Coalition and emergent Women in Fisheries Network are examples of coalitions structured to operate at several levels. Other advocacy work (for example the Talanoa network of faith-based partners) started with a local, community focus and then developed into a multi-site approach with

33 Draft *Pacific Women Roadmap*, May 2017

34 *Pacific Women Synthesis Report: Women's Leadership*, May 2017

national sharing of lessons and joint programming. For example, the resources developed by the Talanoa network in Fiji have been used by Anglican churches in New Zealand. Stakeholders find this multi-level approach adds to the visibility of advocacy groups and the momentum of campaigns. This is a valuable lesson for the first phase of the Fiji program.

This finding around the importance of multi-level programming also offers lessons for the future design of the 'enhancing agency' outcome area in Fiji. As the Coalition is contributing to other outcome areas such as WDML, a reorientation of the outcome area as a cross cutting issue, as suggested in *Pacific Women* regional reporting, would be relevant to the Fiji Country program context. This would enable improved programming, monitoring, evaluation and reporting against multiple outcomes.

### **The program is supporting relevant research and learning events and process**

The final inquiry area around strengthening coalition and groups relate to research and learning activities funded through the program and the extent to which these were advancing local solutions to gender equality. Since commencement, the program has supported varied research and learning activities linked to program implementation. This includes supporting, for example, the Individual Deprivation Measure study in Fiji, which involved trialling a new multidimensional gender sensitive poverty measurement tool. The program commissioned a WEE feasibility study and feasibility study on establishing a Fiji Women's Fund. The program has also supported partner research and learning interests, for example, femLINK PACIFIC's report on Women's Human Security following engagement in disaster response activities; a monitoring, evaluation and learning framework for the We Rise Coalition; and DIVA's community-based research on LGBT issues.

The scope of this review did not extend to evaluating these varied activities as that would involve consulting with end-users and research participants as well. However, based on interviews with partners and other stakeholders, there are some tentative conclusions on the relevance of this work in the broader context of building locally relevant understanding of, and solutions to, gender equality.

## **5 Findings on program Efficiency**

### **5.1 Scope and focus of the analysis**

The review questions on efficiency draw directly from the regional *Pacific Women* MEF, Fiji Country Plan and Fiji MEF. Both questions are quite broad and due to time and resource constraints, the review has only addressed some aspects of these. For the first question (T1), the investigation focused on the extent to which the program has been delivered on time and on budget and the factors which have contributed to or hindered this. The impact of Cyclone Winston emerged as an additional inquiry area once the review commenced. For the second question (T2), the focus was on the appropriateness of program accountability and learning mechanisms; DFAT and partner feedback on the Fiji country plan design process; and DFAT and partner feedback on the Fiji MEF.

#### **Fiji program Review – Efficiency Questions**

T1: To what extent has the Fiji Country program been delivered on time and on budget?

T2: To what extent was the Fiji Country Plan considered well-governed, managed and accountable?

### **5.2 Data sources and limitations**

The efficiency of the program was examined through discussions with DFAT and Support Unit staff and to a lesser extent through partner activity reporting and partner feedback on the program design and delivery mechanisms.

Owing to the scope of the review, the inquiry focus was more on the mechanisms for program delivery, accountability and learning rather than on program value for money or expenditure analysis. The latter



are important indicators of efficiency but more appropriate to an in-depth evaluative exercise or at the regional program level.

## 5.3 Findings

### 5.3.1 Extent to which the Fiji Country program been delivered on time and on budget (T1)

#### **Changes to timelines and budget have not impeded progress towards short-term outcomes**

As previously noted, in Fiji, there is good political will for gender equality and a number of established women's civil society organisations in Fiji. DFAT had existing partnerships with Fijian CSOs, many of which had established programs, particularly in the EAW area. To that extent, once activity proposals were accepted, there were no significant delays in activity implementation. Partners have reported on changes to budget or timelines. However, these changes have not impeded progress towards the short-term outcomes. There are two main factors that have contributed to budget and timeline changes: the complex nature of the work and external factors such as Cyclone Winston.

Cyclone Winston did cause delays to activity implementation. However, partners that were affected managed these delays efficiently with minimal impact to the work. In fact, the occurrence of the Cyclone exposed and tested programming assumptions around women's experiences of community-level responses and the role of CSOs in mainstreaming gender in areas such as disaster response. Core funding to Ra Naari Parishad for the setup of its office enabled this CSO to participate in the disaster response in the Rakiraki area. FemLINK Pacific's work with establishing the Women's Weather Watch project in the aftermath of the Cyclone is another example of program adaptability and an appropriate CSO response during disaster.

A final observation on the issues of timelines was feedback received that a few partners have experienced delays in receiving DFAT feedback on reports and monitoring and evaluation documentation. As noted in the *Pacific Women Year Three* evaluation (under draft), in Fiji, country program activities often overlap with regionally funded activities or are jointly funded for a range of mutually reinforcing programming reasons. The Fiji bilateral Gender Focal Point works closely with regional DFAT gender program staff to manage and monitor these activities. These complexities add to delivery and communication challenges and, going forward, need to be managed, as appropriate, by all relevant stakeholders.

#### **A mix of informal and formal ways of working across DFAT, Support Unit and partners has contributed to program delivery on time and budget**

A positive finding and feedback received from partners in the context of program efficiency was around the support received from the DFAT Fiji bilateral gender focal point and from the *Pacific Women* Support Unit based in Suva. Several partners, when questioned on the factors that have contributed to or hindered activity delivery and implementation, mentioned that it was useful to discuss program plans with DFAT and the Support Unit and that DFAT's understanding of programming contexts made the communication and delivery process more efficient.

The data also suggests that partners appreciate the mix of formal and informal capacity building and other support received from DFAT and the Support Unit. Formal strategies include, for example, the technical support provided to enable partners like We Rise and FWCC to develop their monitoring and evaluation frameworks; and the delivery of an M&E workshop for implementing partners. These activities, as well as other informal mentoring and capacity building inputs, have contributed to enhancing the relevance of the program for partners and enabling them to work through delivery challenges. For instance, participant feedback on M&E training was very positive with some partners highlighting that it was the first time they understood what was involved in monitoring and evaluating development programs.

Discussions with DFAT and the Support Unit validate this finding around the usefulness of formal as well as informal strategies to strengthen program delivery and implementation. In the initial stages of the Fiji program, ongoing discussion and mentoring of partners was useful for DFAT to implement due diligence procedures and minimise any potential risks from funding smaller, newer organisations. The major consideration for DFAT and the Support Unit is around using the Fiji Women's Fund to build efficiencies into working with a range of DFAT partners, including small and larger agencies.

### 5.3.2 Extent to which the Fiji Country Plan is considered well-governed, well managed and accountable (T2)

#### Planned management and accountability mechanisms are in place and functioning

There is strong evidence that the program has achieved five out of the seven 'outputs' of relevance to program management and accountability:

- **The development, endorsement, resourcing and implementation of the Fiji Country Plan:** As noted in section 1, the initial development took place over 2013 with a high level of CSO consultation. The actual Plan took a while to be finalised, during which time (2014) the Government of Fiji launched its National Gender Policy. The Plan was then updated to reflect support to the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation and the program was endorsed at the Ministerial level.
- **Identification of activities and results areas:** This was implemented in a consultative manner. A call for proposals was made and a panel (comprising DFAT, independent, external representatives from UN Women and civil society) was constituted to select projects. While some partners had existing funding through the regional program or other bilateral funding streams, a number of CSOs, which DFAT had not previously funded, were identified through this process.
- **The development and implementation of a Country program MEF:** This was developed with support from the *Pacific Women* Support Unit's M&E Specialist and Senior Program Manager. The Fiji MEF was initially developed during a workshop attended by Fiji implementing partners and DFAT. The Fiji MEF aligns with the regional *Pacific Women* MEF but includes Fiji-specific evaluation questions and monitoring focus areas specific to the activities funded through the program.
- **Implementing partners developing and implementing M&E plans:** The FWCC, along with partner crises centres across the region, worked with the Support Unit in developing their monitoring and evaluation framework. The Markets for Change program, as part of a regional UN Women initiative, had an existing M&E framework, which was subsequently adapted to align with the *Pacific Women* program MEF. Additionally, the Fiji MEF has informed the monitoring and evaluation frameworks of the We Rise Coalition and FemLINK Pacific. Both the Coalition and FemLINK have completed frameworks in place, which they are implementing. Two additional partners, Women in Fisheries Network and House of Sarah, are looking to develop their monitoring and evaluation processes/frameworks over 2017. Most recently, the Support Unit M&E Manager facilitated a MEF workshop with the Women in Fisheries Network staff and Executive Board.
- **Technical assistance, training and other support provided to implementing partners:** Training and support has been provided to partners through technical assistance, mentoring and informal guidance and training workshops such as the Fiji MEF workshop. The program is also using the services of technical assistance via the Support Unit such as engagement of a short-term M&E adviser from the *Pacific Women* M&E panel to support implementation of the program MEF.

The outputs that need to be progressed include:

- **Reporting and dissemination of reports on progress:** There are several activity reports received from partners. Some larger partners have submitted up to three activity reports. Most of the smaller partners have also reported on their work. However, many of these reports are activity implementation reports and do not discuss lessons, challenges, etc. At present, there has been limited attention to using reports for learning and advocacy purposes.

- **The commencement of annual reflection workshops:** Plans are underway for the program's annual reflection workshop in November 2017.

### **Program management and accountability processes have not adequately supported outcome-focused analysis and assumptions around addressing the interconnectedness in women's lives**

One challenge noted by program implementers and partners is that current reporting mechanisms do not support outcome-focused analysis. The review found that there are practical as well as methodological reasons for this. A lack of capacity or M&E knowledge can limit partners' ability to measure complex change processes such as women's empowerment. Methodologically, assessing contribution to outcomes also requires understanding and investigation at the policy and national level, which is often beyond the scope of smaller partners or targeted, small-scale project interventions.

Several stakeholders have also indicated that monitoring, evaluation and reporting processes do not encourage investigation or learning around the interconnectedness between outcome areas (for example, We Rise Coalition experience using the KMS database).

The Support Unit, in the context of regional progress reporting, found that partner reports generally focus on program implementation with limited reflective content on early outcomes and barriers to progress. This makes it harder to identify outcomes, challenges encountered and lessons learnt across the whole program.

This finding supports the *Pacific Women* Year Three Evaluation, which suggests that the uniqueness of the *Pacific Women* program lies in its 'joined-up' character and this requires programming (and monitoring and evaluation work) beyond individual activities. A review of the regional *Pacific Women* MEF, as well as the planned annual program reflection workshop in November 2017, may address these issues at a country (Fiji) level.

### **The development of program management systems after program implementation has commenced is avoidable as this has potential efficiency impacts at a country level**

Finally, on the theme of 'efficiency', interviews with DFAT and other stakeholders highlighted challenges as a result of having several program management and accountability mechanisms implemented *after* projects had commenced. This has had impacts on program efficiency at a DFAT level as well as at partner level. At a partner level, smaller partners have suggested that they would have benefitted from more guidance on monitoring, evaluation and reporting at the design stage of initiatives. Among the larger partners, there is some concern that the accountability reporting requirements do not align with partner systems and data collection processes. Essentially, a more strategic approach to systems development and alignment is required at the start of the next phase. The lessons learnt around the importance of establishing relevant monitoring, evaluation and reporting systems at the design stage of funded activities is relevant to the Fiji Women's Fund.

## **6 Issues, Ways Forward and Recommendations**

Building on the findings and lessons learnt, the review team in collaboration with other stakeholders identified the following key issues for the program.

### **6.1 Program identity and ownership**

The evidence collected through the review suggests there are different interpretations of the program's identity across government, implementing partner and beneficiary level. The extent to which this is important also varies across the levels. The review found that there is appreciation for a funding stream to support women's organisations and activities targeting women. Additionally, the broad remit of the program has enabled DFAT, as well as implementing partners, to align and direct funding to diverse contexts and needs. However, this broad remit has not translated into women's organisations (or

vulnerable women themselves) expressing ownership of the program (e.g. driving a design or implementation process) to address *Pacific Women* outcomes. For most implementing partners, it is a 'DFAT program' that funds aspects of their work rather than an opportunity to bring about change in women's empowerment and gender inequality. This is a significant finding, as the program theory of change emphasises the need for both regional and country activities to support Pacific women to increasingly own and direct change.

Within a relatively enabling policy environment and expanding civil society sector, it will be important to clarify and resolve these issues of program identity and ownership. Funding decisions for the next phase need to be closely aligned with the achievement of short-term and medium-term objectives in the program. The newly established Fiji Women's Fund also provides an opportunity to address issues of ownership at the partner level.

**Recommendation 1:** The recently established Fiji Women's Fund should be used as an opportunity to clarify the Fund's objectives with the program's stakeholders including how it operates across the broader Fiji *Pacific Women* program and the *Pacific Women* Support Unit.

## 6.2 Sustaining partner capacity building

Major benefits of the program to Fijian partners have included core funding, as well as receiving formal and informal capacity building. Formal capacity building includes technical assistance provided through advisers; and informal inputs include the mentoring and advisory support to partners from the DFAT Fiji bilateral Gender Focal point and the Fiji Support Unit. The experience shows that this core funding and capacity building support, in addition to being appreciated, has also contributed to improved service delivery and had positive developmental impacts for communities and women's empowerment. Several smaller partners were equipped with physical infrastructure and knowledge resources to engage with cyclone Winston recovery efforts. Larger partners have begun to grow their advocacy work addressing gender inequality in areas such as disaster recovery, employment and security, which are highly relevant to the women's' empowerment agenda in Fiji.

The challenge, however, is to ensure sustainability of capacity building provided to partners. As sustainability approaches were not built into the program from the outset, partners are left vulnerable when there are staffing changes or other constraints that impede progress. The diverse range of partners the program works with also has implications for the *Pacific Women* Support Unit and DFAT to manage workload and capacity building efforts.

**Recommendation 2:** Sustainability measures and processes need to be built into the terms of reference of short-term advisers and technical assistance, monitoring, evaluation and learning projects over the next phase of the program.

**Recommendation 3:** The activity designs of larger partners need to incorporate and reflect a mix of partner as well as DFAT/*Pacific Women* capacity building, monitoring and evaluation priorities and indicators.

**Recommendation 4:** The Fiji Women's Fund should be explored as a potential mechanism to build the capacity of smaller partners and promote a community-of-practice that sustains partner capacity building.

## 6.3 Refocusing WEE initiatives and strengthening WEE – WLDM linkages

The review shows that while implementing partners in Fiji have adopted varied approaches to WEE and WLDM, not all short-term outcomes have been achieved. The program needs to further explore the impacts of other leadership development activities and for the program to leverage off other DFAT and development partner initiatives to gain momentum and cover a larger cross-section of the population.

Additionally, many WEE activities have focused on improving women's access to information. The program is contributing, on a small-scale, to increased safe working conditions for women and only one partner can show evidence of tangibly affecting women's income. For the program to continue to

progress towards short (and intermediate) outcomes over the next phase, more planning is required to ensure that funded activities realise economic gains at the individual level, as well as addressing issues around women's control and use of resources.

**Recommendation 5:** A review and/or annual reflection of existing WEE activities is required and the next phase of the program should include a portfolio of activities that address the links between WEE and WDML. The review and/or annual reflection might consider coherence and linkages with other DFAT funded WEE activities as well.

**Recommendation 6:** The Fiji MEF should be revised to better reflect realistic change pathways for WEE and WLDM, including updating short-term and medium-term intended outcomes in these outcome areas.

## 6.4 Strengthening multi-level programming and tracking program reach

The changes sought through the *Pacific Women* program cut across individual, family, community and national levels. To achieve its goal, the program needs to work in ways that connect activities at different levels, or, in ways that support the work of partners that operate at multiple levels.

The review shows that support to coalitions and advocacy groups in Fiji, has positive impacts in terms of multi-level programming. Through coalitions, advocacy groups and funding different types of partners, the program has expanded DFAT's reach within the civil society sector and is influencing women's empowerment from the community to national level. This is a valuable lesson for the first phase of the Fiji Country program. This finding around the importance of multi-level programming also offers lessons for the future design of the 'enhancing agency' outcome area in Fiji.

Lessons from the first phase of the program highlight the need for more planning around the specific groups of vulnerable women the program needs to reach. For example, there is a notable absence of data on the program's reach to disabled women and disabled people's organisations; and while partners are expanding their reach through rural networks of women, the community-level impacts of this work are not well documented.

**Recommendation 7:** The Enhancing Agency outcome for the Fiji country plan MEF should be revised based on outcomes of the *Pacific Women* M&E system review workshop held in May 2017 and recommendations from the broader *Pacific Women* Year Three Evaluation.

**Recommendation 8:** Planned program management and accountability mechanisms (such as the annual reflection process) should be implemented to strengthen coalition building and advocacy strategies.

## 6.5 Implementing improved reporting and learning mechanisms for Phase 2

The *Pacific Women* program is a complex program and requires sophisticated approaches for measuring change across a diverse portfolio of projects. As suggested in the review findings, there is good progress in terms of the setting up and the functioning of program management and accountability mechanisms. The challenge for the next phase of the program is to strengthen M&E in ways that encourage action-learning type of initiatives, cross-fertilisation of ideas and collaborative work.

**Recommendation 9:** Partner MEF development and evaluation-led approaches should continue to be supported with more focus on developing and sharing lessons learnt at the country and outcome level.

**Recommendation 10:** The review findings (gap analysis, lessons learnt, etc.) should be utilised to develop the agenda and focus for the program's reflection workshop in November 2017.