

## **Solomon Islands Minister Of Women Highlights Progress On Gender Policy**

By Lesley Sanga

HONIARA, Solomon Islands (Solomon Star, June 7, 2017) – The revised Gender Equality and Women’s Development (GEWD) policy will continue to guide government to improve on the areas that have been lagging.

That was according to the Minister for Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and family affairs Freda Tuki.

“The promise of strengthening the institutions and systems, and allocate resources for implementation through the whole of government approach,” Minister Tuki said.

She said that the GEWD policy outcome has increased to 7 highlighting the priorities of all that were consulted, which are;

Gender responsive government programs and services;  
Improved economic status of women;  
Equal participation of women and men at all levels of decision-making, governance and leadership services;  
Preventing and responding to violence against women and girls;  
Increased awareness and acknowledgement of the role of women in peace and security;  
Increased access to education and providing a supportive school environment, and;  
Improved access for women’s right to sexual and reproductive health.  
She added that the outcomes four and five are also why the country is launching the Women, Peace and Security National Action Plan.

“No doubt that I am very pleased that the revise Eliminating Violence against Women and Girls Policy is a continuing promise and commitment by our government to eliminate violence against women and girls and advance gender equality in our country.”

She added that the enforcement of the Family Protection Act, and the Children and Family Welfare Act are the testament to the government’s commitment.

The Eliminating Violence Against Women and Girls policy contains five priority outcomes and they area;

Violence against women and girls is reduced as a result of holistic prevention strategies;  
Legal frameworks, law enforcement and the justice system are strengthened;  
Victims and survivors have better access to medical, legal and protective services;  
Perpetrators are held accountable and rehabilitated, and;  
National commitments are developed and coordination is improved  
This policy is aligned to the new Women, Peace, and Security National Action Plan, which complements and reinforces their outcome areas but takes a women-centred focus to the national peace framework and policy.

The national action plan (NAP) is the first of its kind for Solomon Islands and the Pacific region.

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She said that the NAP will also help with the advancement of the Truth and Reconciliation report recommendations specific for women and girls. Which includes other government services in protection, prevention and rehabilitation such as the Ministry of Policy, National Security and Correctional Services.

Minister Tuki said that Solomon Islands Women Peace Security NAP is also a direct response to our commitment to the United Nations Security Council Resolution 13/25 on Women peace and Security.

The UNSCR 13/25 and therefore the NAP, is firmly grounded in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) of which Solomon Islands is a States Party to CEDAW forms the cornerstone of the agenda and the legal framework for women's rights in conflict, post-conflict and peacebuilding contexts.

The WPS NAP in line with the UNSCR 1325 calls for the reinforcement of the following themes known as the four pillars;

Participation: to ensures women's equal participation and influence with men, and promotion of gender equality in peace and security decision-making processes at national, local and international levels.

Protection: to ensure full implementation of all laws that protect the rights of women and girls, during and after conflicts including putting in place special measures.

Prevention: focuses on improving strategies for preventing conflict and all forms of violence against women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations including fighting impunity and increasing prosecutions for perpetrators of conflict-related sexual violence.

AND Recovery and Reconciliation: to ensure measures to address women and girls different experiences of conflict, and to respond to women and girls' particular needs when rebuilding and healing after conflict. It also promotes strengthening women's capacities and agency in post-conflict recovery processes

"I would like to emphasise that this national action plan is not simply a document that was developed by my ministry, but a document that have been thoroughly consulted and researched and ensured that current policies and plans of partners and stakeholders were incorporated," she said.

It is hoped that these set of agreed priorities and blueprints for the government and civil society, to improve their capacity to address gender issues and enhance the wellbeing of the families, by integrating a gender perspective in the process of developing laws, policies, and programmes which will serve to ensure equal rights, opportunities and benefits for women and men.

"I will conclude by hoping, that the global and regional commitments of our leaders, and the Solomon Islands government's commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment, with this launching of the:

the new Women, Peace and Security National Action Plan  
the revised Gender Equality and Women's Development, and

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the revised Eliminating Violence Against Women and Girls

“Will be a tool to close the gaps of gender inequality and enhance the relationship between Government, the Private Sector, CSOs and NGOs, the Community and Development Partners in a coordinated, consultative and harmonised way.”