



**NATIONAL  
POLICY ON  
GENDER  
EQUALITY AND  
WOMEN’S  
EMPOWERMENT  
AND ACTION PLAN  
2019 - 2024**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*This Policy has gone through a robust process of peer review and consultation that has further strengthened our commitment to advancing gender equality outcomes and empowering the women of the Cook Islands. We acknowledge the commitment of past gender advocates, champions, and change leaders who have advanced women's rights and gender equality in the Cook Islands. We also recognize the people and organizations who have contributed towards the review and development of this Gender Policy and Action Plan 2019-2023, and who continue to advocate for gender equality and better outcomes for all people living in the Cook Islands. A special acknowledgment to the members and participants of the National Women's Conference 2018, the National Council of Women, for your insights into the lives of women in the Pa Enua (outer islands), and sharing your stories which help shape and give life to the policy.*

*The Ministry of Internal Affairs on behalf of the Cook Islands Government acknowledges the continuous support of the Government of Australia for making this Policy possible.*

*The National Policy on Gender Equality and Women's empowerment (NPGEWE) will henceforth be referred to as the "Gender Policy", or simply as "the Policy" within this document.*

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## List of Acronyms

<b>CIBPWA</b>	Cook Islands Business & Professional Women's Association
<b>BPA</b>	Beijing Platform For Action
<b>BTIB</b>	Business Trade And Investment Board
<b>CCA</b>	Climate Change Adaptation
<b>CEDAW</b>	Convention On The Elimination Of All Forms Of Discrimination Against Women
<b>CIFWA</b>	Cook Islands Family Welfare Association
<b>CINCW</b>	Cook Islands National Council Of Women
<b>CIP</b>	Cook Islands Police
<b>CINYC</b>	Cook Islands National Youth Council
<b>CLO</b>	Crown Law Office
<b>CPPO</b>	Central Policy And Planning Office (Opm)
<b>CRC</b>	Convention On The Rights Of The Child
<b>CRPD</b>	Convention On The Rights Of The Persons With Disability
<b>HOM</b>	Head Of Ministry
<b>MCS</b>	Ministry Of Corrective Services
<b>MFEM</b>	Ministry Of Finance And Economic Management
<b>MINTAF</b>	Ministry Of Internal Affairs
<b>MOA</b>	Ministry Of Agriculture
<b>MOCD</b>	Ministry Of Cultural Development
<b>MOE</b>	Ministry Of Education
<b>MOH</b>	Ministry Of Health
<b>MOJ</b>	Ministry Of Justice
<b>MOP</b>	Ministry Of Police
<b>NCD</b>	Non-Communicable Disease
<b>NCW</b>	National Council Of Women
<b>NES</b>	National Environment Service
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organisations
<b>NPGWE</b>	National Policy On Gender Equality And Women's Empowerment
<b>NSC</b>	National Steering Committee
<b>NSDC</b>	National Sustainable Development Commission
<b>NSDP</b>	National Sustainable Development Plan
<b>NSO</b>	National Statistics Office
<b>NTF</b>	National Task Forces New Zealand
<b>OPM</b>	Office Of The Prime Minister
<b>OPSC</b>	Office Of The Public Service Commissioner
<b>PPA</b>	Pacific Platform For Action
<b>PTI</b>	Punanga Tauturu Inc
<b>RAC</b>	Religious Advisory Council
<b>SPS</b>	Social Policy And Service Division (Mintaff)
<b>STI</b>	Sexually Transmitted Diseases
<b>UNSC</b>	United Nations Security Council
<b>WDO</b>	Women Development Officers
<b>WPD</b>	Work Programme Deliverables



## FOREWORD



### *Kia Orana*

This Policy acknowledges and builds on past achievements and ongoing efforts to achieve gender equality in the Cook Islands. Despite our achievements in advancing the rights of women in health, education and employment, barriers still remain, discrimination persists, new and emerging issues are recognized.

The roles and responsibilities of women at home, and in the workplace have changed, and continues to change for the better. However, gender stereotyping and discrimination practices present unique challenges that continue to limit women and their participation in leadership, governance, social and economic development.

This Government has adopted a gender and development approach that recognizes the importance of considering the relations between women and men in policy and planning processes. Policy and plans should be based on analysis of the different situations and needs of women and men. This Policy aims to progress gender equity and equality between women and men. It also recognizes that in order to redress gender inequalities it is necessary to create the conditions for women's empowerment while women and men work together to address attitudinal and institutional barriers to gender equality.

I believe that this Policy, together with the Strategic Plan of Action, provides a framework to guide the process of developing laws, policies, procedures and practices which will serve to ensure equal rights, opportunities and benefits for women and men in all spheres of Government programs and services as well as in the workplace, in the community and in the family.

I am grateful to the many individuals, Government Ministries, Agencies, Non-government Organisations the communities at large, who have contributed to the development of this National Policy on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. It is with great pleasure, that I present this Policy to all women and men of the Cook Islands, our Sector Stakeholders, Development Partners and Communities.

### *Kia Manuia*

#### **HON. VAINÉ MAC MOKOROA**

MINISTER FOR MINISTRY OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS, COOK ISLANDS  
MARCH 2019

## INTRODUCTION

The Cook Islands Government has a long and proud history of promoting gender equality. The Cook Islands Constitution was adopted in 1964, and guarantees equal rights to all citizens, regardless of sex. On the international stage the Cook Islands became a party to the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1985. In 1995, the Cook Islands developed the first ever National Policy on Women. The goal then was to advance gender equality, enhance women's empowerment in all sectors, and all at all levels of development and decision making. The spirit of the Policy was the protection and advancement of our most vulnerable citizens, women and girls, so that they may fully participate and engage in our national development, and enjoy the highest quality of life.

### **GENDER IN THE COOK ISLANDS**

The subject of gender, and the terms gender inequality/equality, gender mainstreaming, gender analysis, are commonly heard in workshops, trainings, boardrooms, and community meetings, but there is little evidence to suggest these terms are adequately understood, nor the principles appropriately applied. Generations of men and women before today have advocated long and hard for women to be respected, heard, involved, engaged, and accepted in all levels of society, politics, economy, and governance...the evidence below quantifies undeniable progress in some of these areas. And yet "gender" is still largely associated with "women", and a "gender policy" is mistakenly assumed to mean a "women's policy". As a result, these workshops and consultations are, for the most part attended by women, and address issues, challenges, barriers relating primarily to women.

This raises the point that more education and awareness is needed to improve society's understanding of gender, gender equality, and the harmful impact of negative gender stereotypes and gender discrimination. The aim of these strategies is to change the mindsets, beliefs, attitudes, accepted norms and behaviours of both men and women in all sectors, at all levels;

- ~ To understand that gender is more than the biological sex of a person, for example a person that is born 'male' does not necessarily accept the male gender role or male identity.
- ~ To recognize that "gender" refers to the accepted roles of men and women in our society, and the power relations between them e.g. it is acceptable for women to stay home to raise the children, it is acceptable for men to be the primary breadwinner of the family
- ~ To understand and recognize the danger of unequal power relations between men and women, (decision-making authority, control over finances, physical and other forms of violence) and to restructure society and create a balance of shared power from the family unit, to the highest levels of leadership
- ~ To understand and recognize when gender discrimination and negative gender stereotypes exist, and be able to model and advocate for gender equality

With better awareness and understanding of gender, policy makers, implementing agencies, service providers, and citizens can engage in constructive dialogue on gender issues. Stakeholders may then be able to identify, design and develop more relevant, effective, result driven policies and programmes that will ensure we realize our vision, goals, and aspirations in the near future.

## **GENDER POLICY REVIEW REPORT 2018**

A review of the Gender Policy in 2014 and 2018 revealed some progress towards achieving the goals set in 2011, the report also highlights areas of concern, challenges and barriers, and new and emerging issues that have now informed the basis for the priorities outlined in this policy.

### **1. Gender Responsive government programs and policies**

Gender mainstreaming into Government programs, policies, and budget remains a work in progress (Outcome 1), and yet a significant achievement has been made with the passing of the Family Protection and Support Act 2017 which establishes protection measures for women, girls, and children. The CEDAW Law Reform Programme will continue to work on reviewing or developing new legislation e.g. Employment relations act, marriage act, crimes act, that aim to promote gender equality. The Cook Islands has seen some progress in mainstreaming gender perspectives into government policy and planning systems, however more training for government officials is needed. While national coordination mechanisms were established, in practice coordination and communication between stakeholders and implementing agencies were inconsistent. More is needed to establish and strengthen monitoring and evaluation systems, and improve the collection of relevant sex disaggregated data to enable better analysis, and better-informed decision making.

### **2. Equitable participation of women and men in decision-making and governance systems**

More quantifiable progress can be seen in the number of women entering leadership position in politics, local government, and high-level decision-making bodies in government (Outcome 2); with 60% of the public service being made up of women.

Women's representation in politics has increased since 2011, with approximately 17% women parliamentarians, 14% in local governance. In the public service women hold 20% senior management positions in government agencies. The Speaker of Parliament is also a woman, and an active gender advocate in the Cook Islands and the region. Recognizing progress is being made, we still fall short of our national targets of 30% female representation in high level decision-making bodies.

### **3. An enabling environment for the full participation of women in economic development**

Outcome 3 has the least amount of reliable, accurate and accessible information to determine the level of engagement and participation of women in economic development.

In economic development, the labour force participation rate for women has increased to 65% in 2011 (0.65LFP) however evidence suggests gender pay parity has not been achieved, with women earning on average \$13,000 per annum, and men earning \$16,000 per annum. There are several reasons for this disparity besides discrimination; women dominate industries such as nursing and teaching, which tend to pay less than other industries such as engineering, which are dominated by men. There are still gaps in the data which may help shed light on the existing issues and trends, and help measure progress going forward.

### **4. Improved capacity of women to address health issues**

The report found that impressive gains have been made in recent years to improve sexual reproductive health for women, reduce STIs, and reduce teenage pregnancy (Outcome 5). Women's health in general has improved over the years, with the exception of NCD mortality and premature death from NCDs. Research shows that while NCDs both affect men and women (diabetes, heart disease, cancer, etc), the burden or cost of NCDs affect men and women disproportionately, with the burden weighing more on women than men e.g. women are the primary caregivers for the vulnerable (infants, children, elderly, disabled) and will take leave from work, or resign to care for those who fall sick or require full-time care.

### **5. Elimination of violence against women**

Every person has the right to feel safe and secure, protected from all forms of violence. Domestic violence cases have increased over the years, despite ongoing efforts to raise awareness in the community, and strengthen justice and law enforcement services. The Family Health and Safety Study 2014 provides sufficient evidence and sound recommendations for government to develop more effective programmes and services to support women and men, victims and perpetrators of domestic violence.

More detailed information about the findings, issues, progress, challenges, and recommendations can be found in the NPGWE Assessment Report June 2018 and NPGWE End of Assignment Report April 2017.

## **THE 2019 GENDER PRIORITIES**

The National Policy on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (NPGWE) 2019 is the result of lessons learned, building upon the past achievements, brought about through the passion, determination, and will of past patrons and visionary leaders. The vision, mission and principles are as relevant today as ever before. Consultations with government, NGO's and community leaders from the Pa Enua lent their voice to the Policy, to ensure the priorities, and aspirations of the people are captured within.

This policy is aligned to the National Sustainable Development Plan 2016-2020, reinforcing our commitment under Goal 9 to protect, promote, and advance the rights of all women and girls. The principles and commitments are further reinforced and reflected in multiple sector strategies, Island Plans, Community Sustainable Development Plans, and legislations.

The Policy also recognizes its regional and international commitments and aligns to CEDAW, Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) Convention on the Rights of the Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), the Beijing Platform of Action, the Pacific Platform for Action, the Pacific Plan, Commonwealth Plan of Action, and Global Agenda 2030. Through this policy, the Cook Islands Government along with key partners in Civil Society, reaffirms commitment to provide support and targeted interventions that advance, empower, and protect the rights of all women and girls living in the Cook Islands.

## THE NATIONAL POLICY ON GENDER AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT 2019

This section captures the existing, new, and emerging issues, challenges, and opportunities facing women and girls living in the Cook Islands today. It identifies our commitments to advancing gender equality over the next ten years and groups them into six key priority areas modified slightly from the previous policy;

- **Outcome 1: A Gender Responsive Government**
- **Outcome 2: Gender Equity in Leadership and Governance**
- **Outcome 3: Women engaged in Economic Development**
- **Outcome 4: Healthy Women and Girls**
- **Outcome 5: Eliminating Violence against Women**

Each policy outcome addresses key priorities for gender development in the Cook Islands. The Policy objectives statements are broad, high level and focused on achieving outcomes. The Strategic Actions are also high-level and aim to achieve each objective. The accompanying Gender Action Plan contains a matrix of work programme deliverables and activities, lead and implementing agencies, indicative costings, organized by Outcomes, and Strategic Actions. A separate Monitoring Tool will be maintained by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and will contain information on the key outcome and output indicators which will enable users to track progress against 2011 baseline data.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs will work with government agencies and non-government organizations to ensure work programmes and actions are implemented through their respective Agency Business Plans. This will be the key planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting mechanism to ensure we all work towards these common goals. Success requires the support and attention of all sectors of government and our civil society partners in order to be effectively implemented.

### PURPOSE OF THIS POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to provide a comprehensive framework for accelerating and enhancing gender equality and the wellbeing of women in the Cook Islands. It will inform the development of gender sensitive legislation and government policies. It reflects the priorities and concerns of all women and girls.

This policy recognizes that gender is not just about women. Relationships, and men and women's access to resources, are key elements of gender and development approaches. Consequently, the roles and issues of men and boys are critical in pursuing our national and local development goals from a gender equality perspective.

### OUR VISION

**A society where all women and men are protected, empowered, and actively engaged in national development**

### OUR MISSION

The Cook Islands Government, in partnership with Civil Society and all key stakeholders, are committed to the following mission:

*To establish and strengthen mechanisms that eliminate gender inequalities and empower women of all diversities in all sectors and at all levels*

## OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

### Collaboration

Nothing is achieved in isolation. Strong partnerships and coordination between government, civil society and development partners is needed if we are to achieve the aspirations outlined in this document. This policy recognizes the important role of men and boys in advancing progress in gender equality goals.

### Empowerment

By empowering women, we will help achieve other national goals, and will ensure all citizens benefit from those outcomes. In practice, this also means taking affirmative actions to compensate for existing inequalities that have deprived them of equal opportunities

### Equality

Men and women are equal partners in the development of the Cook Islands and gender equality is the heart of economic and social progress; it requires each partner to have equal conditions for realizing their full potential, to contribute equally to national development, and benefit from those results. This is a key principle that is also enshrined within our Cook Islands Constitution.

### Equity

Through justice and fairness in all decision making, we can improve the quality of life for our most vulnerable. The Policy recognizes the special differences that exist within our community; sex, gender, age, geographic location, socio-economic status, ethnicity, religion, and other factors which can contribute to inequality. We must provide even more support to those with less agency, or without a voice to ensure they too enjoy the highest standard of living

### Harmony

The priorities identified within this policy reflect the aspirations and challenges faced by people living in the Cook Islands. This policy reinforces the values and aspirations as stated in our Kaveinga Nui and the National Sustainable Development Plan 2016 – 2020, and the major sector policies and strategies in the Cook Islands. These principles align with the Christian and cultural values, traditions, and institutions that promote peace, respect, equality, and unconditional love

### Human Rights

The women and men living in the Cook Islands are entitled to live a life of peace, freedom, and dignity. This policy calls for the protection of the human rights of women and girls of all ages, marital status, and sexual orientation, gender identity and expressions.

### Inclusiveness

This policy recognizes the unique challenges and opportunities exist for diverse people of different genders, location, age, physical abilities, and ethnicity, treating each person with fairness and compassion. To ensure there is maximum benefit and value to the beneficiaries of this policy, we must ensure the inclusion of both men and women in the design, development and implementation of government programmes, policies, services and strategies.



## OUTCOME 1: A Gender Responsive Government

### *A gender responsive Government advancing gender equality and human rights*

Gender has been recognized as a cross cutting issue in Government, however Gender perspectives are not yet systematically mainstreamed in all national policies, strategic plans, and programmes. This causes concern considering policy interventions and programmes may have adverse or unintended negative impacts on women and girls, resulting in greater gender inequality.

The gender policy outcome indicators showed large gaps in our knowledge when it comes to measuring results, and assessment the impact of past policy interventions, and programmes delivered. This highlights the need for Government to strengthen the national statistical system, and improve our capacity to effectively monitor programme outputs, indicators, and policy outcomes.

Key legislations may need to be reviewed, revised, developed to ensure equal rights to men and women. Despite slow progress in passing legislations, a significant achievement to date has been the endorsement of the Family Protection and Support Act 2017 which provides clear definitions, procedures, and protection measures for women and girls living in the Cook Islands. The CEDAW Law Reform Programme will continue to review legislation to ensure the gender equality principles and women's human rights are respected.

The Office of the Public Service Commissioner plays a crucial role in strengthening accountability mechanisms and ensuring gender is mainstreamed across the public service. To maintain, or even accelerate progress in achieving all key outcomes, efforts are needed to strengthen the institutional arrangements and accountability mechanisms. This includes working with coordinating and implementing agencies, service providers, agencies responsible for monitoring and statistical systems, human resources, and financing. Without these critical support mechanisms in place, the nation will lose momentum, and fall short of our goals and targets.

### **Policy Objectives**

- ~ **Ensure gender perspectives and gender issues are systematically mainstreamed into all national policies, planning processes, and programmes**
  - *Advocate for greater national commitment towards gender equality goals, and women's empowerment*
  - *Strengthen the national statistical system to enable improved monitoring and measurement of policy outcomes*
  - *Strengthen the institutional arrangements and support services that enable agencies and individuals to coordinate, monitor, and report on gender activities and progress in the Cook Islands*
  - *Promote research into gender development in the Cook Islands*
- ~ **Promote gender equality at all levels, and protect the human rights of all women living in the Cook Islands**

### **Strategic Actions**

- *Review the constitutional and legislative framework to ensure consistency with CEDAW and other relevant conventions*
- *Review the national machinery of government to ensure gender issues are systematically and effectively mainstreamed across all relevant sectors*
- *Ensure Government policy and decision-making processes, planning cycles, and programme development processes are gender responsive*
- *Strengthen the institutional and implementation framework through adequate human and financial resourcing*
- *Ensure accurate data collection and information systems, and improve access and sharing of information between the Law and Order sector agencies (e.g. Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Corrective Services, Cook Islands Police, and other related agencies)*
  - ~ *Strengthen Cook Islands Police Data and Information Management System to ensure accurate, regular, and reliable reporting on domestic violence cases*
  - ~ *Support data and information sharing between Cook Islands Police and Ministry of Health to ensure case records are consistent and reliably reported, secure, and confidential*
  - ~ *Establish mechanisms to generate, store, disseminate gender data, statistics, information and research across all government agencies and NGO's.*
- *Support and strengthen government capacity to produce and analyse relevant sex and age disaggregated data.*
- *Ensure that gender indicators are regularly monitored, analysed, reported, and used for planning and developing effective programmes and services*
- *Strengthen the Cook Islands Human Rights Commission*
- *Strengthen public and community education opportunities to improve gender awareness at all levels*

## OUTCOME 2: Gender Equity in Leadership and Governance

### *A society where women and men actively participate in decision-making and governance*

This policy recognizes the important role of men and boys in advancing the equal and fair treatment of women, and women's empowerment. Gender champions and leaders play a pivotal role in supporting women to pursue leadership roles and key positions in business, politics, and society. This is not just a 'women's policy', rather it asserts that men and women both play an equal role in pursuing better outcomes for all. It therefore prompts us to identify any challenges men and boys may face in relation to the Policy. The Policy can then develop appropriate support measures to address such challenges.

There are more women today in leadership and decision-making position in all sectors, and more young women showing an interest in high level careers in government, politics and business. There are four women in parliament (4/24 or 17% female representation), an increase by 13% since 2011. The Speaker of the House, a proactive advocate and gender champion in the region, is also a female. Men continue to dominate in island governance nationally (80%). Women representation on local governance bodies in the Pa Enua stands at 14%, a 2% increase since 2011. However, we still fall short of the national target of 30% women in Parliament and 30% women in local governance. With greater advocacy, community support, and continuing the funding for the annual women's mock parliament we can sustain progress in this area.

In all primary and secondary education, girls are performing better than boys. There are also twice as many women pursuing tertiary degrees than men. Research indicates that education level is a strong indicator for women being able to participate in decision-making.

Approximately 60% of public servants are women, however only 7 of the 34 public sector entities are headed by women (6 female Heads of Ministries and 1 CEO), therefore 20% of all high-level decision-making positions in government are held by women. In the private sector 55% of companies have female corporate or general managers. Greater support for the implementation of effective programmes is needed to accelerate progress in politics and island governance as gender inequalities persist.

### Policy Objectives

- *-Support and encourage the full participation of women in politics and decision making in local and central governance*
- *Increase support and resources to recruit, retain and develop women leaders in politics and leadership positions in government*
- *Develop women's capacity to actively engage and contribute to policy and decision making at the local and national level*

### Strategic Actions

- *Support and encourage the participation of women in local communities to leaderships positions; politics*
- *Establish education and awareness programmes to address negative gender stereotypes, and reduce discrimination based on gender, age, disability*
- *Development programmes to promote, support and build the capacity of women in politics*
- *Advocate, support, promote workplace policies and practices that support women in the workplace*
- *Develop programmes that build the capacity and confidence of women to attain high level positions in politics and governance*



## OUTCOME 3: Women's Economic Empowerment

### *An enabling environment for the full participation of women in our economic development*

Cook Island families tend to combine full-time and part-time work (private or public sector) with small business and other agriculture or marine food production activities. More women operate within the informal sector, particularly in the Pa Enua, and by operating small business at the markets. This provides some women with the flexibility and freedom to engage in work that revolves around the immediate needs of the family, while utilizing their traditional skills and knowledge e.g. handicrafts, weaving, tivaevae to generate some income for the family.

The labour force participation rate for women has increased steadily over the years to 65%, however significant barriers to entering the workforce remain. Women tend to do more unpaid work than men; as primary caregivers of children, elderly, and other vulnerable people in the household (and community), they are responsible for 75% of all domestic duties and also expected to give up paid work to fulfil these family responsibilities. This limits women in their pursuit of professional careers, high skilled and high paid jobs, promotions, or entrepreneurship. LFPRs for women are higher on Rarotonga; 70% compared to 49% in the Southern Group, and 60% in the Northern Group, indicating a much higher gender gap exists in the Pa Enua.

Population in the Pa Enua has declined (-10%) between 2011 and 2016, and increased by 2% on Rarotonga. However, the Census indicates an increase in non-Cook Islands residents living on Rarotonga from 9% in 2001 to 16% in 2011. This is the result of an increase in foreign workers (1,538 foreign residents aged 15+, approximately 47% women, in 2011), which present yet another group of vulnerable women without the same access to protection and support during their employment. The Policy recognizes this increasing group of vulnerable women, and aims to explore and strengthen mechanism to protect their human and women's rights.

For women in the Pa Enua, establishing a formal business has been challenging. Efforts by Government and banks to simplify processes, provide information and training in English and Maori have helped improve women's access to finance. SPS is researching ways to increase women's economic empowerment through access to credit and improving women's financial and business literacy.

The Labour and Consumer Services at the Ministry of Internal Affairs has reported issues regarding discrimination practices and human rights violations in the private sector against young women (sexual harassment in the workplace), working mothers (denying maternity leave, firing women that fall pregnant, warning women not to get pregnant), workers in the informal sector, female foreign workers, women with disabilities (discrimination in recruitment of women with disabilities, firing women with a disability).

The statistics support what is already widely known and accepted; that gender inequalities are greater in the Pa Enua where traditional gender roles and gender stereotypes are more ingrained, access to education, health, information, training, finance, and other services are limited, difficult, irregular or more expensive. Improvements in basic infrastructure, more affordable domestic travel, more reliable and affordable internet, may help improve access to other important services and enable women to take advantage of economic and educational opportunities online e.g. e-commerce, online markets, e-learning, internet banking, etc.

### Policy Objectives

- *Promote gender equality in access to productive resources and earnings capacity, and reduce barriers to women in business*
- *Advance gender equality in the workplace*
- *Protect the rights of all workers residing in the Cook Islands*

### Strategic Actions

- *Improve women's access to, and management of, financial resources (savings and credit) by working in partnership with financial institutions*
- *Establish and broaden basic financial literacy and business skills programme in secondary schools, and adult education*
- *Promote policies and practices that reduce and eliminate income disparities between men and women*
- *Establish a National Employment Dispute Resolution Mechanism to address, or investigate employee grievances e.g. leave entitlements, pay disputes*
- *Strengthen collection of sex and age disaggregated national business data and statistics. This will enable more gender responsive monitoring and more informed decision-making about labour and employment policies and economic development.*
- *Establish regulations, policies, and other relevant protection measures that eliminate discrimination in the workplace, and protect the rights of all workers, including Migrant Workers, in the Cook Islands*

<sup>3</sup> Census Report 2011

<sup>4</sup> Economic Activity and Labour Force Analysis, February

<sup>5</sup> Census Data 2016, National Statistics Office, and NSDP Indicator Report Year 1, Office of the Prime Minister

<sup>6</sup> "An enquiry into employees experiences of sexual harassment by customers in the Cook Islands hospitality Industry", Lisa Sadaraka, 2017

## Policy Objectives

- *Support women's economic empowerment and reduce the personal cost to women entering (and remaining in) the workforce*
- *Improve women's access to markets, particularly those living in the Pa Enua*
- *Protect women from all forms of discrimination and harassment in the workplace*

## Strategic Actions

- *Improve access to reproductive health services and family planning, education and communication campaigns on reproductive rights and family planning targeting men and women*
- *Explore and promote options that support women returning to work (e.g. establish public day-care, provide subsidies for child-care services, promoting crèche areas in the workplace)*
- *Review Labour market policies to protect and support all women in the workplace, and promote shared responsibility for childcare;*
  - ~ *Increase maternity leave from 6 to 12 weeks;*
  - ~ *Introduce Parental Leave policy to include support for fathers*
  - ~ *Protect against dismissal during pregnancy or due to childbirth;*
  - ~ *Legislate nursing breaks;*
  - ~ *Explore other mechanisms that support parents in the workplace;*
  - ~ *Explore mechanisms to protect the rights of women foreign workers;*
- *Advocate to strengthen critical infrastructure such as water, energy, transportation, and ICT networks in the Pa Enua*
- *Explore and support opportunities to improve women's access to markets, particularly targeting women in the Pa Enua*
- *Engage and support Gender Champions, leaders, mentors throughout our community to promote the principles of gender equality from grass roots to the national level and advocate for women's rights*
- *Establish awareness campaign targeting employers on the rights and responsibilities of employers, and employees in the workplace*

## OUTCOME 4: Healthy Women and girls

### *A society where all women and girls' rights are respected, and have healthy lifestyles*

The Cook Islands has a good track record for promoting maternal health with nearly all pregnant women receiving antenatal care by skilled professionals. Progress has been made to reduce teenage pregnancy in the last ten years, and reproductive healthcare is readily available. Sexually transmitted diseases are still high, chlamydia being most prevalent especially amongst youth, however cases have fallen from 330 in 2009, to 48 in 2016. There are few, if any, barriers for women to access health care services in the Cook Islands.

Today Non-communicable disease (NCDs) are the main cause of illness and premature death for both women and men, accounting for 75% of all cases in the health system. This figure increases by 2% each year. Approximately 6/10 new cancer patients are women. Many of these patients go to NZ for more long-term treatment and care, placing considerable financial burden on families left behind. Efforts to reduce premature death by NCDs can be found in the NCD Strategy and National Health Strategic Plan 2017, and while health services, education and awareness have increased, it will take time before society as a whole adopts healthy habits and lifestyle changes.

Women have higher life expectancies than men by approximately 8 years. Women are the primary caregivers of the elderly, children, and people with disabilities in the family or village. As more women gain economic independence, find work outside the home, and occupy more high-level positions, research shows that the amount and type of health problems they experience increases. More targeted interventions are needed to improve women and girls' access to relevant, quality, affordable healthcare. More interventions and support are also needed to change attitudes and ensure the burden of caregiving in the home is more equitably shared between men and women.

## Policy Objectives

- *Improve access to health information and quality services targeting women, girls and other vulnerable people on Rarotonga, and in the Pa Enua to reduce premature death from NCDs*
- *Promote women's sexual and reproductive rights*

## Strategic Actions

- *Support health research on NCDs and Mental health exploring issues from a gender perspective*
- *Establish relevant, targeted mental health programmes and services and improve women and girls' access to mental health information and support*

<sup>7</sup> The four main NCD are cardiovascular diseases (inclusive of hypertension, stroke (CVA), heart diseases, heart failure, myocardial infarction, renal impairment and end stage renal failure), diabetes, chronic respiratory diseases (inclusive of asthma, bronchiectasis, emphysema and chronic bronchitis) and cancer. National Health bulletin 2016, Ministry of Health

## Strategic Actions

- *Develop an awareness campaign to promote and support women's sexual and reproductive rights on Rarotonga, and in the Pa Enua*
- *Establish and support targeted education programmes that aim to reduce risky behaviours, and encourage positive, healthy life choices*
- *Establish and improve respite care and services for the elderly, and people with disabilities, and explore new and more gender equitable mechanisms to support care-givers of the sick and infirm*

## OUTCOME 5: Eliminating gender-based violence and violence against women

### *A society where all women and girls are protected from all forms of violence and discrimination*

Violence against women (VAW) is one of the most concerning human rights violations and issues in the world today, and is ingrained in many societies around the world. The 2012 Cook Islands Family Health and Safety study (FHSS) shows a high prevalence of domestic violence on Rarotonga, and in the Pa Enua with one in three women experiencing physical or sexual violence by their partners at some point in their lives. Alcohol is a significant contributing factor to this high statistic. The prevalence of domestic violence is higher against women and girls with disabilities, and women living in the Pa Enua. More research is needed to examine the prevalence of violence against foreign women workers, and transgender people.

Domestic violence reporting has increased steadily over the years from 123 cases in 2011, to 218 cases in 2016, although this could be the result of effective advocacy and awareness campaigns, and an increase in public confidence in the justice system, rather than an actual increase in domestic violence incidents. Needless to say, this domestic violence is still a big problem in our community. Establishing reliable, regular reporting on domestic violence statistics can help policy and decision makers determine the efficacy of ongoing efforts to reduce domestic and other forms of gender-based violence in the Cook Islands.

Access to justice, specifically legal services, police enforcement and support, on Rarotonga has improved since the establishment of the Domestic Violence Unit (DVU) at the Cook Islands Police, instituting the “No Drop” policy, and the provision of free counselling and legal aid to women and victims of domestic violence. Access is more difficult still for women living in the Pa Enua, and again more so for women with disabilities, women with no or little formal education, and women without employment or income. With all this progress however, we still fall short of reaching our target of reducing, and ideally eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls. The Family Protection and Support Act 2017 will require increased resourcing to ensure effective enforcement and implementation of relevant programmes and services targeting victims and perpetrators of gender-based violence.

## Policy Objectives

- *Promote gender equality, women's human rights, and reinforce commitment to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women*
- *Promote awareness about, and sensitivity to, domestic violence among researchers, policy makers, law enforcement officers, and health care providers*

<sup>8</sup> Te Ata o te Ngakau – Shadows of the Heart; The Cook Islands Family Health and Safety Study (FHSS) 2012  
<sup>9</sup> FHSS 2012, pg. 13

<sup>10</sup> Source: Cook Islands Police Service, February 2016



## Strategic Actions

- *Work to change women's and men's attitudes, perceptions, beliefs, and behaviours regarding gender-based violence, violence against women, and domestic violence through education and research*
- *Ensure that women play a key role in decision-making and efforts related to addressing violence against women*
- *Strengthen legal frameworks, law enforcement services, and justice systems*

### Part A) Prevention Strategic Actions

- *Develop, implement, and evaluate targeted education programmes and awareness campaigns to improve understanding of healthy relationships, and reduce negative gender stereotypes targeting youth, families, and other relevant groups*
  - *Strengthen and support early childhood development education programmes that promote better understanding of healthy relationships*
  - *Support Positive Parenting Toolbox community programmes on all islands*
  - *Strengthen and support Healthy Relationships and Gender programme into school curriculum and train teachers to deliver it effectively*
  - *Establish targeted community education programmes to develop knowledge, understanding, and skills to build healthy relationships*
- *Establish and strengthen national commitment and advocacy programmes targeting decision-makers, including parliamentarians, high level government officials, media, religious and community leaders as gender champions and leaders of change*

### Part B) Strengthening Support Services

*Community and civil society organizations play a crucial role to supporting families and individuals who are experiencing gender-based violence, discrimination, and domestic violence. Training, education, awareness, and advocacy can be extended to church leaders, village clubs (e.g. rugby, netball, soccer), village leaders, community role models.*

- *Encourage and support civil society organizations, and individuals, to become gender champions within their own communities, clubs, organizations*
- *Support and strengthen family and partner counselling services on Rarotonga, and in the Pa Enua*
- *Establish and strengthen rehabilitation programmes targeting perpetrators of domestic violence, and offer support to change violent behaviours*
- *Strengthen enforcement measures to ensure perpetrators receive appropriate treatment and support*

## INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

The implementation of the National Policy on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, and the achievement of these six key outcomes requires the contribution of all levels of Government and Civil Society.

The Cook Islands Government Agency Business Planning, Performance and Budget process remains a key component in the implementation, monitoring, and reporting on key work programme deliverables. Budget allocations are captured in the Agency Business Plans, whether they be agency appropriations or development partner funding. Government Agencies submit reports every six months to the Office of the Public Service Commissioner (OPSC), who submits a consolidated report to Parliament on an annual basis. NGO's are also encouraged to incorporate these strategies and actions into their respective business plans.

A Steering Committee will be established, consisting of a few key stakeholder representatives that will drive the Policy and action plan forward, and ensure progress towards key outcomes are accelerated, if not maintained. Members of this committee will consist of high-level gender advocates and champions, gender and policy advisors, relevant government and CSO representatives whose focus will remain on developing and promoting effective programmes and services that align to the Policy objectives, mainstreaming gender equity and social inclusion across the public and private sectors, and advocating for gender quality and women's empowerment.

*The following section describes the role of different agencies in the implementation, coordination, monitoring, and reporting of the NPGWE.*

### The Social Policy and Services Division, Ministry of Internal Affairs

The Social Policy and Service Division at the Ministry of Internal Affairs was established early in 2018, encompassing Gender, Youth, Disability, and Sports into a single cohesive body responsible for coordinating programmes and services across the Cook Islands. The Gender Advisor situated within this office will be responsible for coordinating all efforts relating to the Gender Policy and Action Plan over the next five years, and will therefore be working closely with all implementing agencies to ensure gender programmes are implemented successfully, adequately monitored, and regularly reported on. They will also be responsible for reviewing the Policy again after five years, to ensure programmes and services are relevant, and aligned to the Policy objectives. Ongoing responsibilities will involve coordinating gender training, awareness raising, communications, coordinating gender research, advocating for more comprehensive and inclusive gender programmes, working with government agencies to collect and analyse data on gender indicators, collaborating with various stakeholders on gender initiatives, and other gender responsibilities.

**The Island Secretary’s and Women Development Officer’s**

Women of the outer islands experience greater gender inequalities than women in Rarotonga. Women Development Officers, under the authority of their respective Island Secretary, can play an important role in promoting the implementation of the Policy through the islands development plans. They can help agencies coordinate interventions that address gender inequality issues and women’s needs, and support women’s empowerment processes. They will liaise with the Gender and Development Division of the Ministry of Internal Affairs for coordination purposes but also to monitor and relay information about the progress and gaps in implementing the Policy and addressing outer islands women’s needs and gender inequalities.

**The Cook Islands National Council of Women**

The role of the Cook Islands National Council of Women (CINCW) is to serve as a focal point for the civil society organizations, and to facilitate information sharing and collaboration between Government, communities, NGO’s and development partners. The CINCW will act as a key channel for information – between the civil society organizations and the Social Policy and Services Division and will support consultation processes on the Policy and implementation of the strategic action plan. As a member of the Steering Committee and the task forces, it will provide feedback about the implementation of the Policy and gender related concerns expressed by civil society and Cook Islands women. It will play a key role in disseminating information to the Cook Islands population about the Policy and women’s human’s rights. It will contribute to monitoring and reporting on the progress and the remaining gaps for achieving gender equality and protecting women’s human rights.

**The Office of the Public Service Commissioner**

Mainstreaming requires the commitment of central agencies, especially the agency responsible for the administration of the public service, and pivotal in strengthening accountability mechanism in Government. The Public Service Commissioner’s authority extends to the 14 heads of public service departments, and their employees, who are all governed under the Public Service Act (amended in 2016). The co-operation of the Public Service Commissioner is integral to the effective mainstreaming of gender, as the Commissioner has the legislative mandate to review the Machinery of Government, and enforce accountability and responsibility across government to progressing gender equality in the Cook Islands. Strengthening partnerships and co-operation between central agencies and the commitment of the Public Service Commissioner to incorporate gender mainstreaming in the public service is necessary as a first step to advancing gender equality and women’s empowerment.

***The National Statistics Office (NSO) and the National Statistical System (NSS)***

Significant improvements have been made to ensure sex and disaggregated data are being collected and reported on, however significant gaps in reporting remain. This policy emphasises the need to strengthen the monitoring and evaluation framework, thereby enabling policy and decision makers to track our progress towards gender equality goals and outcomes, and make better informed decisions that result in the implementation of better gender programmes, services, and policies. The NSO’s role is to produce relevant statistics that inform national development, and coordinate efforts to strengthen the National Statistical System as a whole. The Social Policy and Service Division must work in collaboration with the NSO to ensure the appropriate data is collected and analysed for timely gender reporting, and to support continuous improvements to gender data and information systems.

**Monitoring and reporting framework**

The Ministry of Internal Affairs Social Policy and Service Office will be responsible for establishing and maintaining an appropriate monitoring system to keep track of all relevant data, indicators, and activities carried out during the next five years.

	AGENCY	REPORT	REPORTING TO	TIMING
MONITORING DURING THE IMPLEMENT-ACTION PHASE	Social Policy and Ser- vices Division (SPS)	Divisional Progress Report	Head of Ministry (HOM), PSC	Monthly, 6-monthly, annually
	Ministry of Internal Affairs	Agency Business Plan (WPDs, KPIs)	PSC and Cabinet	Annual
	SPS	Progress Report on NPGWE actions and indicators	INTAFF HOM	6 months, annual
	Women’s Development Officers	Annual Business Plans	Island Administration	Monthly, 6 monthly, and annually
MIDTERM REVIEW	SPS	Review of NPGWE	All stakeholders	Midyear progress update 2020
EVALUATION	SPS	Evaluation Report	All stakeholders	End of policy term 2022

## GENDER ACTION PLAN 2019

### OUTCOME 1. A Gender Responsive Government

*Desired outcome: A gender responsive Government advancing gender equality and human rights*

#### Policy Objectives

1. Ensure gender perspectives and gender issues are systematically mainstreamed into all national policies, planning processes, and programmes
2. Strengthen the national statistical system to enable improved monitoring and measurement of policy outcomes
3. Strengthen the institutional arrangements and support services that enable agencies and individuals to coordinate, monitor, and report on gender activities and progress in the Cook Islands
4. Promote research into gender development in the Cook Islands
5. Promote gender equality at all levels, and protect the human rights of all women living in the Cook Islands

STRATEGIC ACTIONS	WORK PROGRAMME DELIVERABLES	LEAD AGENCY	BUDGET
Review the constitutional and legislative framework to ensure consistency with CEDAW and other relevant conventions	Law Reform Programme to embed CEDAW articles into the relevant legislative and statutory reforms across Government	CROWN LAW OFFICE (CLO)	
Review the national machinery of government to ensure gender issues are systematically and effectively mainstreamed across all relevant sectors	Establish a <b>multi-agency cross sector platform/mechanism</b> to communicate, collaborate, and drive gender issues across all sectors, at all levels of government and civil society e.g. Gender and Social Progress Forum held every quarter	SOCIAL POLICY AND SERVICES DIVISION (SPS) AND OPSC	
Ensure gender is mainstreamed in Government policy and decision-making processes, planning cycles, and programme development (Institutionalising Gender)	Gender considerations are integrated into the <b>Policy and Planning Development Process</b> ; e.g. Policy Toolkit, Cabinet Manual, Parliamentarians Handbook, Business Planning Guidelines and Training Workshops  <b>Review Government Business Plans</b> to ensure work programmes are integrated and adequately resourced  Develop <b>Training Programme</b> targeting government officials; policy advisors, senior level management, heads of agencies on gender issues/considerations, etc.	Central Policy and Planning office and OPSC	

Strengthen the institutional and implementation framework through adequate human and financial resourcing	Establish Gender as a priority development goal within the government medium-term budget framework, Budget Policy Statement	MFEM, OPM, OPSC	
Ensure accurate data collection and information systems, and improve access and sharing of gender statistics, research and information between government and NGO's	Coordinate with Pacific Women to develop gender database, e-library, gender research portal, and other relevant information resources  Strengthen government information systems to ensure relevant quality data is sex-disaggregated, and gender indicators are monitored and reported	Social Policy Division and National Statistics Office	
Support and strengthen government capacity to produce relevant sex disaggregated data	Strengthen National Statistics System to develop, and analyse Social and Gender Data by establishing a Social and Gender Statistician, and providing adequate resourcing	Social Policy Division and National Statistics Office	
Ensure that gender indicators are regularly monitored and reported on annually	Establish Government Gender database to monitor and track gender indicators	Social Policy Division and NSO	
Strengthen the Human Rights Commission	Increase resourcing and support to the Human Rights Commission Office	SPS and Ombudsman	
Strengthen public and community education programmes to improve gender awareness at all levels	Develop a <b>Gender Equality &amp; Social Inclusion Training and Mentoring Programme</b> , and Identify a Focal point in each Ministry to enrol into the Programme. (See Pacific Women for development funding support)	SPS	
Explore new opportunities to mainstream gender across government, and reduce gender inequality, and monitor progress	Establish a Gender mainstreaming and Gender Equality Initiative (taskforce) to examine mechanism that may reduce gender inequality in the workplace	OPSC and MINTAFF	



## GENDER ACTION PLAN 2019

### OUTCOME 2. Gender Equity in Leadership and Governance

*Desired outcome: A society where women and men actively participate in decision-making and governance*

#### Policy Objectives

1. Support and encourage the full participation of women in politics and decision making in local and central governance
2. Increase support and resources to recruit, retain and develop women leaders in politics and leadership positions in government

STRATEGIC ACTIONS	WORK PROGRAMME DELIVERABLES	LEAD AGENCY	BUDGET
Support and encourage the participation of women in local communities to leaderships positions; politics	Establish TSM Advocacy and Technical Advisory group to explore ways to increase the number for women in politics and local governance positions, support and develop these women	Parliament	
Establish education and awareness programmes to address negative gender stereotypes, and reduce discrimination based on gender, age, disability	<b>Gender Equality &amp; Social Inclusion Training and Mentoring Programme (GE&amp;SITMP)</b> Develop a <b>Gender Communication Strategy</b> , and resource plan	SPS to support coordination between all stakeholders	
Development programmes to promote, support and build the capacity of women in politics	Implement Women's Annual Mock Parliament and Workshop targeting; Young women/ Youth, Women Leaders, Women in the Pa Enua	SPS, NCW and Parliament Services	
Advocate, support, promote workplace policies and practices that support women in the workplace	<b>Conduct Research</b> ; Undertake study in the CI on gender inequality policies and practices in the workplace (private and public sector) with recommendations for targeted interventions Promote participation for <b>Women's network</b> for Business and Professional Women; mentoring, support, training, champions	Chamber of Commerce, BPWN	
Develop programmes that build the capacity and confidence of women to attain high level positions in politics and governance	Develop <b>Training and Mentoring Programmes</b> for women leaders and future parliamentarians; Establish Celebrating Women Leaders in the Cook Islands (International Women's Day) Promotional Campaign	Parliament Services	

## OUTCOME 3. Women's Economic Empowerment

*Desired outcome: An enabling environment for the full participation of women in economic development*

#### Policy Objectives

1. Promote gender equality in access to productive resources and earnings capacity, and reduce barriers to women in business
2. Advance gender equality in the workplace
3. Protect the rights of all workers residing in the Cook Islands

STRATEGIC ACTIONS	WORK PROGRAMME DELIVERABLES	LEAD AGENCY	BUDGET
Improve women's access to financial resources (savings and credit) by working in partnership with financial institutions	Develop <b>Financial Services and Packages</b> that increase women's access to finance e.g. micro-loans, business start-up loans, etc.	SPS with Private Sector	
Establish basic financial literacy and business skills programme in secondary schools, and adult education	Incorporate financial literacy programmes in formal school curriculum Develop <b>community education programme</b> ; financial literacy, business management, and other relevant skills and deliver training (print and online) to the Pa Enua	MOE BTIB SPS	
Promote policies and practices that reduce and eliminate income disparities between men and women	Develop TOR to <b>conduct research</b> into pay parity, with recommendations and interventions to address pay disparity		
Establish a National Employment Dispute Resolution Mechanism to address, or investigate employee grievances e.g. leave entitlements, pay disputes	Establish a <b>National Employment Dispute Resolution Mechanism</b>	SPS	
Strengthen sex and age disaggregated national business data and statistics collection to enable better monitoring and informed decision-making on labour and employment policies and economic development from a gender perspective	Establish Gender and Social Statistician with NSO to produce gender analysis Support to implement the Labour Force survey in the CI	SPS and NSO	

Establish regulations, policies, and other relevant protection measures that eliminate discrimination in the workplace, and protect the rights of all workers in the Cook Islands	Review Employment Relations Act, and Public Service Act, and other relevant legislations and regulations to eliminate gender discrimination, promote equal opportunity, equality of treatment, and protect the rights of ALL women in the Cook Islands	CLO	
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### OUTCOME 3. Women's Economic Empowerment

*Desired outcome: An enabling environment for the full participation of women in economic development*

#### Policy Objectives

1. Support women's economic empowerment and reduce the personal cost to women entering (and remaining in) the workforce
2. Improve women's access to markets, particularly those living in the Pa Enua
3. Protect women from all forms of discrimination and harassment in the workplace

STRATEGIC ACTIONS	WORK PROGRAMME DELIVERABLES	LEAD AGENCY	BUDGET
Explore and promote options that support women returning to work (e.g. establish public day-care, provide subsidies for child-care services, promoting crèche areas in the workplace)	Review existing support services/ mechanisms and produce recommendations on targeted interventions to be developed e.g. Maternity Leave, child care policies, etc for the public and private sector	OPSC, Labour Office, SPS, Chamber of Commerce	
Review Labour market policies to protect and support all women in the workplace;	Report on recommended changes to policies and regulations	Labour and Consumer Division	
Ensure Gender considerations are made when planning critical infrastructure projects such as water, energy, transportation, and ICT networks in the Pa Enua	Establish Gender criteria in all relevant government project, programme, policy and budget proposals, concept notes, design documents	MFEM, OPM and OPSC	

Explore and support opportunities to improve women's access to markets, particularly targeting women in the Pa Enua	Develop TOR to explore online business opportunities, and develop a <b>e-Market strategy</b> for women in the Pa Enua  Advocate for reliable, affordable domestic transport services to the Pa Enua, and explore other opportunities to improve <b>women's access to markets</b>  <b>Undertake feasibility study</b> on product amalgamation and quality control models that have successfully supported women producers in remote areas in other Pacific Countries. For example, Rise Beyond the Reef model.	BTIB, CI Tourism, NCW, MINTAF	
Engage and support Gender Champions, leaders, mentors in all communities to promote the principles of gender equality from grass roots to the national level and advocate for women's rights	<b>Gender Champion Initiative</b>	MINTAFF	
Raise awareness targeting employers on the Rights and Responsibilities of employers, and employees in the workplace	Initiate a Public Awareness Campaign targeting businesses in the Private Sector, and all employees; Ref: <b>Gender Communication Strategy</b>	MINTAFF	

OUTCOME 4. Healthy Women and Girls

Desired outcome: A society where all women and girls' rights are respected, and have healthy lifestyles

Refer also to the Cook Islands National Health Strategy 2018, Rauti Para Policy (Senior citizens), Disabilities Policy, and other relevant Social and Health Policies and Strategies for more details.

Policy Objectives

- 1. Improve access to health information and quality services targeting women, girls and other vulnerable people on Rarotonga, and in the Pa Enua to reduce premature death from NCDs
- 2. Promote women's sexual and reproductive health rights

STRATEGIC ACTIONS	WORK PROGRAMME DELIVERABLES	LEAD AGENCY	BUDGET
Support health research on NCDs and Mental health exploring issues from a gender perspective	Develop TORs for Research on gender and health, focusing on NCDS and Mental Health, and other relevant health issues	MOH	
Establish relevant, targeted mental health programmes and services and improve women and girls' access to mental health information and support	Establish and strengthen counselling support services Establish and strengthen professional counselling and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy services	MOH and PTI	
Develop an awareness campaign to promote and support women's sexual and reproductive health rights on Rarotonga, and in the Pa Enua	Sexual and Reproductive Health Education Programme delivered in Schools and Community Education Centre (face-to-face and online) Develop appropriate educational materials in English and Maori on women's sexual and reproductive rights (print and online)	MOE, SPS, and MOH and CIFWA	
Establish and support targeted education programmes that aim to reduce risky behaviours, and encourage positive, healthy life choices targeting youth	Implement the <b>Youth Mentoring Programme</b>  Develop and promote <b>Trade Programmes</b> that develop healthy habits, skills, behaviours e.g. healthy cooking classes  Work with CI Sports associations and community groups to encourage you people to participate in sports and recreational activities  Promote Family and Communal Gardens programme  Promote Community Parenting Toolbox Workshops	MOE, CITTI, SPS, and MOH and CIFWA          MOA	

Establish and improve respite care and services for the elderly, and people with disabilities, and explore new mechanisms to support care-givers of the sick and infirm	Review, support <b>respite care services</b> and develop targeted interventions to support respite care workers  Explore new opportunities to provide improved respite care for the aging population in the Cook Islands	CIFWA and MOH	
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OUTCOME 5. Eliminating Gender based violence and Violence against Women

Desired outcome: A society where all women and girls are protected from all forms of violence and discrimination

Refer also to the Cook Islands National Health Strategy 2018, Rauti Para Policy (Senior citizens), Disabilities Policy, and other relevant Social and Health Policies and Strategies for more details.

Policy Objectives

- 1. Promote gender equality, women's human rights, and reinforce commitment to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women
- 2. Promote awareness about, and sensitivity to, domestic violence among researchers, policy makers, law enforcement officers, and health care providers
- 3. Work to change women's and men's attitudes, perceptions, beliefs, and behaviours regarding gender-based violence, violence against women, and domestic violence through education and research, to prevent and reduce violence in the community
- 4. Ensure that women play a key role in decision-making and efforts related to addressing violence against women
- 5. Strengthen Legal Frameworks, law enforcement services, and justice systems and other national mechanisms to reduce domestic and all forms of violence against women and girls



STRATEGIC ACTIONS	WORK PROGRAMME DELIVERABLES	LEAD AGENCY	BUDGET
Develop, implement, and evaluate targeted education programmes and awareness campaigns to improve understanding of healthy relationships, and reduce negative gender stereotypes targeting youth, families, and other relevant groups	<p>Establish gender and healthy relationships as part of the school curriculum at all levels (ECE, Primary, Secondary), addressing negative gender stereotypes</p> <p><b>Parenting Toolbox Community Education Programme</b></p> <p>Develop <b>Education and Awareness Campaign on Domestic and Gender Based Violence</b>, targeting general public; develop educational material (print and online)</p> <p>Develop <b>Training Programme</b> (Workshop) targeting first responders e.g. police officers, health workers, lawyers, etc. for relevant issues e.g. gender sensitivity, responding to domestic violence cases, working with women and children, counselling basics, etc.</p> <p>Conduct a <b>Training Needs Analysis</b> to identify skill gaps amongst service providers; Health, Police, Legal services, Counsellors, etc.</p>	<p>MOE</p> <p>CIP/DVU, CIFWA, NCW</p> <p>PTI, CIFWA, NCW and SPS</p>	
	<p>Establish a <b>Youth Leadership Programme</b> to develop youth Gender Champions</p> <p>Work with Religious Advisory Council to identify <b>Gender Champions and Community Leaders</b> advocating for gender equality and addressing negative gender stereotypes</p> <p>Establish <b>Parliamentarian Gender education and Induction programme</b>, and incorporate Gender considerations in the Parliamentarian Handbook; CEDAW, Family Protection Act, etc.</p> <p><b>Gender Champion Initiative</b>; establish high level and high-profile gender champions (male and female) and focal points in each agency, Island Council, and community groups and encourage participation in the <b>GE&amp;SITMP</b></p>	CIYC, RAC, SPS	

Strengthen Legal Frameworks, law enforcement services, and justice systems	<p>Advocate for an increase in public funding for Law enforcement and Justice systems to develop and maintain programmes and services identified in this policy; e.g. Strengthen the Domestic Violence Unit</p> <p>Strengthen government administrative data and information systems (e.g. databases) to enable reliable, accurate reporting on domestic violence and other relevant statistics, particularly Police, MCS and MOJ</p> <p>Ensure ongoing free legal support available to vulnerable groups</p>	<p>CLO, Police, MOJ, MCS</p> <p>CIP and NSO</p> <p>PTI</p>	
Develop and support capacity building that target law enforcement to reduce negative gender stereotypes, gender discrimination, domestic and gender-based violence	<b>Training and Development Programme and Training Needs analysis</b> (above)	Police, MOJ, PTI	
Develop and support capacity building of medical personnel, counsellors, and other service providers working directly with victims and perpetrators in the area of domestic violence, and gender-based violence	<b>Training and Development Programme and Training Needs analysis</b> (above)	Police, MOJ, PTI	
Develop and strengthen counselling support services targeting both victims and perpetrators of domestic violence on Rarotonga and in the Pa Enua	<p><b>Review existing mental health services</b>; e.g. psychological and counselling support services, policies and procedures, identifying gaps and opportunities for development</p> <p>Develop and strengthen <b>Rehabilitation Programme</b> for perpetrators of Domestic violence; e.g. anger management, alcohol abuse</p> <p>Establish a <b>Peer and mentor support Programme</b> for men in partnership with local communities, the Church, and NGOs</p>	MOH and Ministry of Justice, MCS	

Support the role of the Church to provide family and partner counselling, particularly in the Pa Enua			
Encourage and support civil society organizations, and individuals, to become gender champions within their own communities, clubs, organizations	<b>Gender Champion Initiative</b>	MINTAFF	
Support and strengthen family and partner counselling services on Rarotonga, and in the Pa Enua	Support training opportunities and professional development for Cook Islanders in mental health, counselling, therapy etc. to increase the number of health professionals in country Ensure adequate resourcing is available for family, partner, and other forms of counselling services on Rarotonga Increase the number of professional mental health workers	MOE	
Establish and strengthen rehabilitation programmes targeting perpetrators of domestic violence, and offer support to change violent behaviours	Refer to <b>Rehabilitation Programme</b>  Establish, and strengthen <b>rehabilitation services</b> and other support services available to men e.g. Rotaiana, and ensure services are fit for purpose and adequately resourced	MOJ, MCS	
Strengthen rehabilitation measures to ensure perpetrators receive appropriate medical, emotional, etc. treatment and support		MOH and MOJ	

## Cook Islands Gender Indicators

### *How will we measure progress?*

The gender indicators listed here have been adopted from the 2011 gender policy and implementation plan. A midterm review was conducted in 2014, and again in 2017, the results of which can be found in the NPGEWE Progress Report - Outcomes, Indicators and Actions - March 2018. These indicators are a work-in-progress, reflecting continuous improvements to the National Statistical System and the Gender Monitoring and Evaluation system.

### OUTCOME 1:

#### Gender-Responsive Government's Programs and Policies

- A mechanism in place for reviewing and provide advice on every bill and policy proposed to the parliament to ensure its compliance to CEDAW
- Accountability to achieve targets in term of gender equity and equality in relation to the sector is embedded in public service staff TORs – at all levels and it part of performance appraisal
- Annual report on the progresses made for achieving the Policy outcomes
- Availability of sex disaggregated data set in each sector
- CEDAW report is presented to CEDAW committee every 4 years
- Existence of a national mechanism responsible to monitor progresses – steering committee and task forces
- Gender e-library
- Increased budget for addressing gender issues at the national and local level and in the sectors
- Increased human and financial resources of GADD
- Increased information in overall gender equality situation and improved capacity to monitor the progresses
- Increased number of collaborations between GADD and central and sectoral ministries
- Information on key indicators of gender equality is produced and regularly updated
- Number of Cook Islands laws and policies reflect CEDAW's commitments
- Number of existing laws and policies inducing direct or indirect discrimination against women reviewed and amended
- Number of gender responsive policies and programs
- Number of high and mid-level managers have been trained on the production and use of sex disaggregated data
- Number of meetings at high level decision making where the GEWE policy is mentioned and/or discussed

- Number of national policies, strategies and programs include sex disaggregated data and gender analysis
- Number of policies, strategies and programmes within which gender perspective is mainstreamed
- Number of provisions and resources allocated to address priorities and needs of both women and men by government programs in every sector
- Number of recommendations made by the CEDAW committee implemented in a timely manner
- Number of reports with references to the GEWE policy
- Number of sectors where women and men have the same opportunity to benefit from government services and programs, especially in the Pa Enua
- Number of senior and mid-level managers who have built their capacity to identify gender issues in their sector and develop initiatives to address those issues
- Number of senior and mid-level managers who participated in gender mainstreaming training

## OUTCOME 2:

### Equitable Participation of Women and Men in Decision-Making and Governance Systems

- Increased number of votes for women's candidates
- Increased number of women as candidates for elections
- Increased number of women elected
- Increased number of women in decision making positions in all sectors (politic, economic, social, cultural, religious)
- Increased number of women in each political party
- Increased number of women in senior management positions in the private sector
- Increased number of women in senior management positions in the public sector
- Increased number of women participating in political decision making (in parliament and in the local governance bodies)
- Increased to at least 30% the representation of women in decision making positions in all sectors (politic, economic, social, cultural, religious)
- Increased to at least 30% the representation of women in high-level decision-making bodies
- Increased to at least 30% the representation of women in local governance bodies (Pa Enua)
- Increased to at least 30% the representation of women in the parliament and in the government (central and Pa Enua)
- Number of articles and programs where women's human rights and gender issues are mentioned or discussed
- Number of fair coverage of women's candidates to election and women in decision making positions
- Number of measures promoted by political parties' programmes for addressing gender issues
- Number of measures to support women candidate at elections
- Reduction of stereotypes circulated through the medias

<sup>11</sup> All reports can be requested from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Social Policy and Service Division



### OUTCOME 3:

#### An Enabling Environment for the Full Participation of Women in Economic Development

- All working parents (mothers and fathers, primary caregivers) are entitled to paternity leave
- Elimination of all discriminatory practices that contribute to deprive women to access and control productive assets
- Employment relations bill enacted, and resourced
- Enforcement of legislation on pay equity
- Equal Employment Opportunity policy in place
- Identification of the causes of pay disparity
- Improved women's role/ knowledge and skills in agriculture and fisheries and traditional livelihood
- Increased access to market for enterprises led by women from Pa Enea
- Increased capacity/skill in business management
- Increased employment rate of women
- Increased financial security of household, especially in the Pa Enea
- Increased number of enterprises created and managed by women
- Increased number of women accessing bank loans
- Increased number of women involved in the creation and management of enterprises
- Increased number of women participating in business management training
- Number of initiatives aiming to inform women and men about labour's rights
- Pay equity between women and men in all sectors
- Percentage of women participating in training programs for up-scaling their knowledge and skills
- Sexual harassment policies in the workplace developed and enforced in all places of work
- Working conditions and social security benefits established for workers in lowest paying sectors including contract workers and migrant workers

### OUTCOME 4:

#### Improved Capacity of Women to Address Health Issues

- Improved access to healthy food
- Improved sexual reproductive health of young women and adolescent
- Increased access to condoms for teenagers
- Increased access to contraceptive to teenagers
- Increased number of women and men performing physical activities on a regular basis
- Legislations and policies in relation to women's sexual and reproductive rights comply with CEDAW commitments
- Number of boys and girls participating in awareness raising initiatives
- Number of initiatives organized to inform and raise awareness about sexual and reproductive rights
- Number of women and participating in awareness raising initiatives and accessing information
- Number of women asserting their right; using contraceptive
- Reduce by 30 % of teenage pregnancy (goal of the National Sustainable Development Plan)
- Reduced by 30% of incidence rate of NCD
- Reduced drudgery of women (who are taking care of family members with NCD)
- Reduced number of cases of STI among teenagers (30% overall population)
- Reproductive rights of women are respected – including women with disability
- Significant reduction of NCD in the overall population
- Significant reduction of pregnancy cases among adolescents
- Significant reduction of STI cases number among young women and adolescent

**OUTCOME 5:**  
**Elimination of Gender based violence and Violence against Women (VAW)**

- Adoption of legislation and establishment of measures against gender-based violence
- Availability of data on crime and violence collected and analysed from a gender perspective on a regular basis
- Availability of data on injuries caused by gender-based violence compiles by hospital and clinics
- Decreased in the rate of domestic violence
- Establishment of effective mechanisms and facilities for dealing with all forms of gender-based violence and abuse
- Improved judiciary services
- Increased number of official complaints administrated by court
- Information on incidence and causes of gender-based violence
- Number of awareness raising initiatives targeting the media and the large public on the links between gender stereotypes and discriminations and violence against women
- Number of local initiatives set for intervening in case of domestic violence and supporting victims
- Number of medical and police staff trained – including in the Pa Enuu
- Number of members of the judiciary, law enforcement, prosecutors and medical and media personnel, traditional chiefs and church leaders trained in understandings the dynamics of all forms of gender-based violence and obligations under relevant international conventions
- Number of men active in initiatives for combating gender-based violence
- Number of perpetrators of violence against women who took part to anger management and conflict resolution sessions
- Number of services available for protecting and supporting victims and their children
- Reduction of incidence of domestic violence
- Reduction of incidence of VAW



**Figure 1** Gender Policy and Planning Framework, and alignment to National Development Priorities

Annex 2 Gender Policy and the National Sustainable Development Plan 2016-2020

The Cook Islands National Sustainable Development, Te Kaveinga Nui, was developed in 2007 and is the 15-year visionary framework for the social, environmental, and economic development. Our National Vision is for all people living in the Cook Islands to enjoy the highest quality of life consistent with the aspirations of our people, and in harmony with our culture and environment.

The achievement of each development goal cannot be fully realized without the full involvement and engagement of women. The National Sustainable Development Plan 2016 – 2020 reaffirms our commitment to achieving Gender Equality as a priority in **Goal 9 Accelerate gender equality, empower all girls, and advance the rights of youth, the elderly and people with disabilities.** This goal is consistent with the Global Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goal 5 Achieve Gender Equality and empower all women and girls.

Gender is recognized as a key cross cutting issue, and has been supported in various other national policies and sector plans such as the National Children’s Policy 2017, Cook Islands Tourism Policy 2016, National Health Strategy 2017-2021, Education Master Plan 2008-2023, and the Climate Change Policy, to name only a few.

“

**National Development Goal 9:  
Accelerate gender equality, empower  
all women and girls, and advance the  
rights of youth, the elderly and  
disabled**

”

THE COOK ISLANDS  
NATIONAL SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2016 - 2020

The NPGewe and Action Plan will incorporate the NSDP Goals and indicators within a newly developed Results Management Framework that will allow Government to monitor and track progress against Gender goals at the National Level.

Each government agency and organization will implement the Policy through their Annual Business Plans. Monitoring and reporting of the Policy will be tied into existing government reporting process to reduce reporting duplication and burden on smaller agencies. The national sector policies and strategies are equally important in reinforcing actions that engage, promote and support women in each area of our social, environmental and economic development, and are all positive steps towards gender mainstreaming.

NPGewe	SUPPORTING CI POLICY, STRATEGY, LEGISLATION
OUTCOME 1: Gender Responsive Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>CI Strategy for the Development of Statistics 2015-2025</li><li>CI Public Sector Strategy 2015-2025</li><li>Government Training and Development Policy 2016</li><li>CI Policy Development Guidelines 2016</li></ul>
OUTCOME 2: Gender Equity in Leadership and Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Public Service Act 2009, amended 2017</li><li>Public Service Management and Employment Policy 2014</li><li>CI National Youth Policy 2017</li><li>CI Education policies and Master Plan</li></ul>
OUTCOME 3: Women’s Economic Empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>National Culture Policy 2017-2030</li><li>Employment Relations Act</li><li>CI Sustainable Tourism Development Policy Framework 2016</li></ul>
OUTCOME 4: Healthy Women and Girls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>CI National Health Strategic Plan 2017</li><li>Education Act 2012 &amp; Education Master Plan</li><li>Reproductive Health Policy</li><li>Mental Health Policy</li><li>NCD Action Plan</li><li>Sexual and Reproductive health Strategic Plan</li><li>National Disability Policy</li><li>CI Children’s Policy 2018</li></ul>
OUTCOME 5: Violence against women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Cook Islands Family Protection Act 2017</li><li>Domestic Violence Referral Mechanism Policy</li></ul>

Gender and Island Government; Business and Strategic Plans

The Island Governments are each responsible for developing their own respective Business Plans, and medium-long term Community Sustainable Development Plans (CSDPs) which articulate their respective development priorities, including gender and social development. Most Island plans reinforce the commitment to gender quality and women’s empowerment, however strategies, programmes and services delivered will differ depending on the needs of each island community. Gender mainstreaming across all sector and island plans will require the sustained, and ongoing support of all if we hope to maintain progress in achieving these gender and development outcomes for the benefit of all.



Annex 3 National Gender Policy Results Management Framework;

The National Gender Policy closely aligns to several NSDP goals and indicators. The annual NSDP Indicator Report will provide one source of monitoring for key outcome areas identified below;

GENDER POLICY OUTCOMES	OBJECTIVE	NSDP INDICATOR	TARGET
1. A Gender Responsive Government advancing gender equality and human rights	Improve the distribution of wealth	1.2 Gini Coefficient	Reduction
2. A society where Women and Men actively participate in decision making and Governance systems	Increase the representation of women in politics	9.1 Increase percentage of women political representatives	>30%
3. An enabling environment for the full participation of women in our economic development	Advance gender equality in the workplace	9.3 Reduce Income disparity between men and women	1:1 pay parity
	Promote fair employment	2.5 Employee wellbeing Index	Improvement
	Improve broadband connectivity	5.1 Broadband connectivity Index	Improved speed, reliability especially in the Pa Enua
	Promote regular and reliable transport	6.4 Transport connectivity Index	
	Inclusive, equitable and quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities	8.4 Develop a skilled workforce	% of population with vocational and tertiary qualifications
4. A society where All Women and Girls rights are respected, and can live healthier lifestyles	Reduce NCDs	7.1 Rate of premature deaths from NCDs	Reduction
	Promote Sexual Health	7.3 Prevalence of STIs reduced	Reduction
	Achieve healthier and longer lives	7.5 Average life expectancy	Improved
	Improve mental health care	7.6 Active treatment of mental health cases	#cases supported
	Improve care of the inform, elderly and disabled	9.4 Fit for purpose facilities and services for the infirm, elderly, and persons with disabilities on	>90%
5. A society where All Women and Girls are protected from all forms of discrimination and violence	Improve access to justice	16.1 Justice Accessibility Index	Increase
	Support effective corrective Services	16.4 Reduce reoffending rates	Reduction

Annex 4 National, Regional and International Commitments to Gender Equality

Cook Islands Constitution

The Cook Islands’ Constitution came into force 1964. In Section 64, it guarantees to all citizens equal rights without regard to sex.

Cook Islands Government National Policy on Women 1995 The development of the first National Policy on Women (1995) was driven by the CINCW and was an important piece of work that drove Government’s work over the years on improving the status of our women.

The implementation of the National Women’s Policy has been an uphill battle for women in the Cook Islands. The major obstacles encountered were the financial and capacity constraints of implementing bodies, which were the SPS12 Unit and the CINCW.

Seven specific objectives were set out in the National Policy on Women, as follows: • Ensure women participate equally in decision making at all levels • Foster closer working relations between government, non-government organizations and the private sector • Enhance women’s roles by improving health and environment • Bring women’s issues into mainstream development process • Make women equal partners as contributors and beneficiaries of development within the family, community, and the nation. • Maintain and preserve those cultural values/traditions that promote the status of women. • Uphold the Human Rights of women by improving their social, economic, political and cultural status in line with UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) by providing opportunities and support system for women’s multiple roles in society.

The objectives reflected in the 1995 National Policy on Women are still relevant today and there have been incremental gains over the last 10 years. For example, the current draft National Sustainable Development Plan (2) expects to systematically mainstreamed gender issues into all the sectoral plans. The next step is to ensure that these provisions are maintained in the plan and the relevant budgetary allocations are provided by our government to ensure implementation of plans.

The National Policy on Women has recently been reviewed and the exercise brings to the fore the emerging issues that will be included in this National Policy on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment.

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

CEDAW is the short name given to the Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The Convention is commonly regarded as the international bill of rights for women. CEDAW was adopted in 1979 by members of the United Nations following decades of national, regional and international efforts to promote and protect the rights of the world’s women.

The Cook Islands became a party to CEDAW in 1985, when New Zealand ratified the Convention. On the 11th of August 2006, the country acceded to CEDAW in its own right and on the 3rd of August 2007 at the 808th meeting of the Committee overseeing the implementation of CEDAW at the United Nations, Government presented its initial report. Ratification and accession commit the Cook Islands Government to reviewing a host of domestic legislation in accordance with the articles adopted under CEDAW.

A shadow country report prepared by Cook Islands non-government organizations preceded the presentation of the initial report to the UN in January 2007. This report supplements the Government report by highlighting NGO perspectives on the nature of the Government’s commitments to implement the Convention through legislation, policies and resource allocation.

### **Beijing Platform for Action (BPA)**

Pacific Islands member states, including the Cook Islands Government, participating at the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in September 1995, approved the Beijing Platform for Action (BPA) aimed at establishing priority actions at the threshold of the new millennium. Of the 12 critical areas of concern in the BPA, one of which is Women in Power and Decision Making, governments agreed to take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making setting specific targets and implementing measures to substantially increase the number of women with a view to achieving equal representation of women and men, if necessary, through positive action. This can be viewed at the UN Website, Division of the Advancement of Women, Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

### **Pacific Platform for Action (PPA)**

The 22 Pacific Island governments and territories, including the Cook Islands Government, through the Sixth regional Conference of Pacific Women and the Ministerial Conference on Women and Sustainable Development, both held in Noumea in May 1994, which unanimously approved the

Pacific Platform for Action (PPA) and agreed that women's development should become a top priority for all Pacific Island governments and administrations. The PPA identified 13 critical areas of concern, one of which was Shared Decision Making, where governments agreed to take action to promote women in elected political offices and appointed decision-making positions, attaining the 30% target set by the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

Pacific Platform for Action, Rethinking Sustainable Development for Pacific Women towards the Year 2000, produced by the Pacific Women's Resource Bureau, South Pacific Commission [renamed Secretariat of the Pacific Community].

### **Pacific Plan (PP)**

In 2004, Pacific Leaders, through the Auckland Declaration, noted that the serious challenges facing the countries of the Pacific called for the development of a 'Pacific Plan' to strengthen regional cooperation and integration as the main instrument for realizing their Pacific Vision. The Pacific Plan established four priority goals: economic growth, sustainable development, good governance and security. Improved gender equality is a cross-cutting strategic objective in the Pacific Plan. **The Commonwealth Plan of Action**

The Commonwealth Plan of Action 2005-2015 was agreed to at the 7th Commonwealth Ministers Responsible for Women's/Gender Affairs Meeting (7WAMM) held in Fiji in May 2004. The Plan established a target of at least 30% of women in decision-making in the political, public and private sectors.

### **UN SC R1325 on Women, Peace and Security Adopted by the UN Security Council at its 4213th meeting, on 31 October 2000**

The resolution calls for increase in the number of women at decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions involved in preventing, managing, and resolving conflicts, increased participation of women at decision-making levels in conflict resolution and peace processes, ensure that a gender component is included in field peacekeeping operations, provide training guidelines and materials on (1) the protection, rights, and needs of women, the importance of involving women in peacekeeping and peace-building measures, adopt a gender perspective when negotiating & implementing peace agreements in areas like:

- Special needs of women and girls during repatriation and resettlement and for rehabilitation, reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction.
- Support local women's peace initiatives and indigenous processes for conflict resolution and involve women in all of the peace agreement implementation mechanisms.
- Ensure the protection of and respect for human rights of women and girls, particularly relating to the constitution, electoral system, the police and judiciary.

### **Convention on the Rights of the Child. (CRC)**

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is the first legally binding international instrument to incorporate the full range of human rights—civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights. In 1989, world leaders decided that children needed a special convention just for them because people under 18 years old often need special care and protection that adults do not. The leaders also wanted to make sure that the world recognized that children have human rights too.

The Convention sets out these rights in 54 articles and two Optional Protocols. It spells out the basic human rights that children everywhere have: the right to survival; to develop to the fullest; to protection from harmful influences, abuse and exploitation; and to participate fully in family, cultural and social life. The four core principles of the Convention are non-discrimination; devotion to the best interests of the child; the right to life, survival and development; and respect for the views of the child. Every right spelled out in the Convention is inherent to the human dignity and harmonious development of every child. The Convention protects children's rights by setting standards in health care; education; and legal, civil and social services.

Role of women: Women in their various roles play a critical part in the well-being of children. The enhancement of the status of women and their equal access to education, training, credit and other extension services constitute a valuable contribution to a nation's social and economic development. Efforts for the enhancement of women's status and their role in development must begin with the girl child. Equal opportunity should be provided for the girl child to benefit from the health, nutrition, education and other basic services to enable her to grow to her full potential.

### **Convention on the Rights of the Persons with Disability. (CRPD)**

The Convention on the Rights of the Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol was adopted on 13 December 2006 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, and was opened for signature on 30 March 2007. There were 82 signatories to the Convention, 44 signatories to the Optional Protocol, and 1 ratification of the Convention. This is the highest number of signatories in history to a UN Convention on its opening day. It is the first comprehensive human rights treaty of the 21st century and is the first human rights convention to be open for signature by regional integration organizations. The Convention entered into force on 3 May 2008.

On the 8th of May 2009, The Cook Islands ratified the Convention and also the Protocol. The country initial report is due in 2011.

### **Women and girls with disabilities**

The Convention on the Rights of the Persons with Disabilities recognizes that women and girls with disabilities are often at greater risk, both within and outside the home, of violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation. To address this concern, the Convention on the Rights of the Persons with Disabilities has also taken a two-track approach to promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women with disabilities. It has as one of its principle's equality between men and women, (Article 3 (g)) and it devotes an article to women with disabilities (see Article 6).

## GLOSSARY

*It is important for the reader to become familiar with the terms identified in this policy by referring first to the glossary below.*

**EMPOWERMENT:** Refers to the process of “conscientisation” which builds critical analytical skills for an individual to gain self-confidence in order to take control of her or his life. Empowerment of women is an essential process in the transformation of gender relations because it addresses the structural and underlying causes of subordination and discrimination.

**EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY:** Refers to a fundamental human right embedded in the Constitution of the Cook Islands. This Gender Policy Framework aims towards the achievement of equality of opportunity, in access to and share of employment opportunities, services and resources as well as in equality of treatment by employers and service providers.

**EQUALITY OF TREATMENT:** Refers to meeting the specific and distinct needs of different social categories of women and men. This can often involve special programmes and the commitment of additional resources, for example in the case of women and men with disabilities. Equality of treatment does not mean treating all men and all women in exactly the same way (i.e. in a gender-blind fashion) as this would only serve to perpetuate existing disparities.

**GENDER:** In this policy framework document, refers to the social roles allocated respectively to women and to men in particular societies and at particular times. Such roles, and the differences between them, are conditioned by a variety of political, economic, ideological and cultural factors and are characterised in most societies by unequal power relations. Gender is distinguished from sex which is biologically determined.

**GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT (GAD):** Refers to a planning process which is based on an analysis of the different situations and needs of women and men. It aims at creating gender equity and equality between women and men. A gender and development perspective recognise the importance of the relations between women and men.

**GENDER ANALYSIS:** refers to gender analysis as the study of socially determined inequalities within women and men. Gender analysis entails studying “gender biases” which perpetuate gender inequalities in all sectors of society.

**GENDER AWARENESS:** Refers to a state of knowledge of the differences in roles and relations of women and men and how this results in differences in power relations, status, privileges and needs.

**GENDER DEVELOPMENT INDEX (GDI):** Refers to an index which uses some of the same variables as the HDI (see below), viz life expectancy, educational attainment and real GDP, but which goes further to take into account inequality in achievement between women and men.

**GENDER EMPOWERMENT MEASURE (GEM):** Refers to a measure which examines whether women and men are able to actively participate in economic and political life and to take part in decision-making. The GEM focuses on the respective capabilities of women and men to take advantage of the opportunities of life.

**GENDER EQUALITY:** Refers to a situation where women and men have equal conditions for realizing their full human rights and potential; are able to contribute equally to national political, economic, social and cultural development; and benefit equally from the results. Gender Equality entails that the underlying causes of discrimination are systematically identified and removed in order to give women and men equal opportunities. The concept of Gender Equality, as used in this policy framework, takes into account women’s existing subordinate positions within social relations and aims at the restructuring of society so as to eradicate male domination. Therefore, equality is understood to include both formal equality and substantive equality; not merely simple equality to men.

**GENDER EQUITY:** Refers to the fair and just distribution of all means of opportunities and resources between women and men.

**GENDER ISSUES:** Arise when the relationships between women and men, their roles, privileges, status and positions are identified and analysed. Gender issues arise where inequalities and inequities are shown to exist between people purely on the basis of their being female or male. The fact that gender and gender differences are socially constructed is itself a primary issue to deal with.

**GENDER MAINSTREAMING:** Refers to a process that is goal oriented. It recognises that most institutions consciously and unconsciously serve the interests of men and encourages institutions to adopt a gender perspective in transforming themselves. It promotes the full participation of women in decision-making so that women’s needs move from the margins to the centre of development planning and resource allocation.

**GENDER MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (GMS)** Refers to a holistic and system-wide approach to gender mainstreaming developed by the Commonwealth for the use of governments in partnership with other stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector. In this policy framework, it refers to a comprehensive network of structures, mechanisms and processes to enable government and other organisations to contribute to gender equality.

**GENDER PERSPECTIVE:** Refers to an approach in which the ultimate goal is to create equity and equality between women and men. Such an approach has a set of tools for and guidelines on how to identify the impact on development of the relations and roles of women and men.

**GENDER RESPONSIVE:** Refers to a planning process in which programmes and policy actions are developed to deal with and counteract problems which arise out of socially constructed differences between women and men.

**GENDER SENSITIVE:** Refers to the state of knowledge of the socially constructed differences between women and men, including differences in their needs, as well as to the use of such knowledge to identify and understand the problems arising from such differences and to act purposefully to address them.

**PRACTICAL GENDER NEEDS:** Refers to the needs identified to help women cope better in their existing subordinate positions. Practical needs are related largely to issues of welfare and do not challenge the existing gender division of labour or to women’s subordinate positions in society.

**STRATEGIC GENDER NEEDS:** Refers to needs which are identified as necessary to transform the existing unequal relations between women and men. Addressing women’s strategic gender needs expedites women’s empowerment and facilitates the fundamental social transformation necessary for establishment of gender equality.

**SUBSTANTIVE EQUALITY:** Refers to a stage of real equality underpinned by equality of opportunity, access and treatment between women and men.

**WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT:** Refers to a planning process in which the importance of women’s needs in development is the major focus.



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