

Pacific male advocates working with women's crisis centres to end violence against women

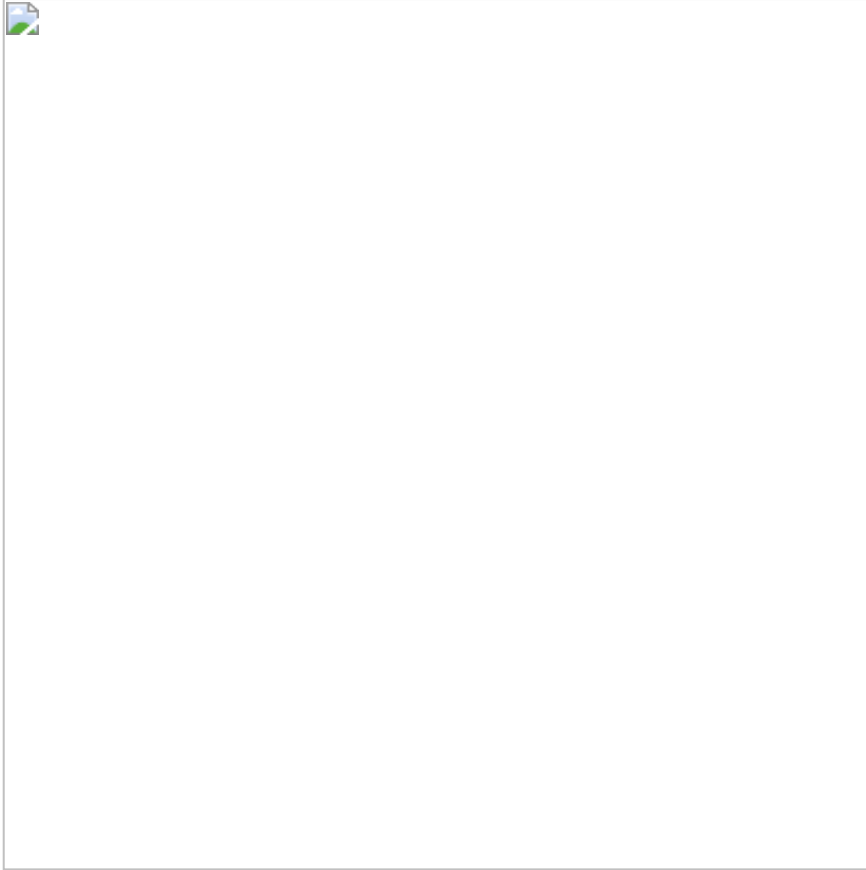


Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development (*Pacific Women*) supports a range of programs that enable male advocates to be agents of change to end violence against women in communities across Pacific Island countries.

The Male Advocacy Program, developed by the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre (FWCC) over 15 years ago, includes four stages of training for male advocates, starting with sessions by women's rights activists and ending with sessions led by a masculinities expert.

Coordinator of the FWCC, Shamima Ali, described the male advocacy training as promoting introspection and thinking around women, equality and the human rights of women in every sphere of the man's life including the home, community, traditional setting and workplace.

'For us, it's about the male advocate,' Ms Ali said. 'He is someone who has been trained by Pacific women's groups [and works towards] influencing change in other people and other men.'



Caption: Male advocates that completed the Women and Children Crisis Centre (WCCC) Tonga's Male Advocacy Program during the 16 Days of Activism 2017. From left to right; Melkie Anton (trainer), Vilai 'Ilolahia Jr, Sione 'Aukafolau, Tapinga Lavemaau, Rev. Tevita 'Eukaliti, Beau Tauheluhelu, Taniela Paea, 'Anitelu Toe'api, Rev. Mavae Fonokalafi, 'Apolosi Fangalua and Tito Kivalu. Front; His Excellency Andrew Ford and Hon. Poasi Tei the Guest of Honor. Credit: WCCC

FWCC is partnering with the Vanuatu Women's Centre and WCCC in Tonga to roll out this Pacific-led methodology. Three male advocacy trainers are now regularly training men in Pacific Island countries.

Ofa-ki-Levuka Guttenbeil Likiliki, Director of the Women & Children Crisis Centre Tonga, said it is important to harness the power of men in positions of authority to promote gender equality:

'In Tonga, men hold that kind of power within the community and a majority of leaders within the society are men,' she said. 'Using the traditional systems in Tonga, WCCC believes that they can train these leaders to be advocates on gender equality within the community.'

Merilyn Tahī, Coordinator of the Vanuatu Women's Centre, said a key factor to success is the ongoing support that the women's groups provide to the male advocates after they have completed their training:

'If they have any problems, they can talk to us. Because they will have problems,' she said. 'Suddenly, [they] are changing [their] behaviour, so [they may need] to process that by talking to us. It's something they feel comfortable with talking to us about.'

The Men's Hub, operated by the Nazareth Centre for Rehabilitation in Bougainville in Papua New Guinea, is another model of male advocacy. With *Pacific Women* support, the Nazareth Centre worked with the International Women's Development Agency to develop a toolkit that equips male advocates and women's human rights defenders to facilitate learning initiatives based on gender equality and human rights at the community level.

At the Nazareth Centre's Male Advocates Forum in December 2017, 111 men shared stories of personal change as they learned about human rights, gender equality and gender-based violence.

'Male advocacy is important because we men are the main contributors to all these types of violence that occur within the community,' said male advocate Dominic Komaru. 'Before we saw these issues of violence as [just] a family matter. After the awareness we've been doing in the community, people understand.'

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