



Students in Papua New Guinea learn about respectful relationships in the Equal Playing Field for Schools program.

## PACIFIC REGION

### PROMOTING AND PROTECTING THE RIGHTS OF GIRLS AND BOYS

#### OUR CHALLENGE

In the Pacific, poverty continues to be a significant problem, with population facing numerous challenges – rising youth unemployment, poor access to water and sanitation, lack of quality education, rising inequality, the effects of climate change and the impact of natural disasters. Health infrastructure and service delivery is constrained, with declining quality most particularly in Papua New Guinea (PNG), where diseases once considered eradicated are re-emerging. Increasing urbanisation is also a challenge across the region.

People in the Pacific are uniquely susceptible to economic shocks and natural disasters, due to small size and geographical spread of Pacific Island nations and vulnerability to natural disasters. According to the World Bank, **eight Pacific countries are among the world's top 20 countries most affected in terms of annual losses from disasters** such as cyclones, earthquakes and tsunami.

Gender inequality is a major concern, posing long-term consequences to social and economic development. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) states that **the Pacific region has some of the poorest development indicators for women and girls**. With entrenched gender inequality and discriminatory sociocultural norms, issues such as gender-based violence against women and girls is widespread.

According to the United Nations, only two Pacific countries achieved all the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and only three achieved at least half, while remaining Pacific countries achieved less than half.

The successor to the MDGs – the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** – has set new global priorities and targets to be reached by 2030, supporting sustainable development and the eradication of poverty in the Pacific. These involve targeting those living in vulnerable situations, increasing access to basic resources and services, including quality health and education and supporting communities affected by conflict and climate-related disasters.

#### OUR RESPONSE

Plan International Australia (PIA) began working in the Pacific in 2012, through a network of partners. Building on this experience, PIA expanded its reach to help more vulnerable children and their families in the region, adding value based on its expertise and strength in programming.

In the 2019 financial year, PIA has committed approximately **AUD \$3.8 million** to deliver programs in the Pacific region, through

direct implementation and through in-country partners, with grant support from the **Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)**.

Disaster preparedness and response is a significant focus of PIA's work in the Pacific. Building on the success of the 4CA program implemented across six Pacific countries (**Fiji, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Tuvalu**) in partnership with The Foundation of the Peoples of the South Pacific International (FSPI), PIA implements the **Pacific Disaster Ready Program** to support disaster risk reduction and disaster preparedness activities through civil society partnerships.

A key focus is ensuring that disaster risk reduction and disaster response mechanisms include vulnerable groups, including young women and men, people with disabilities and other excluded groups.

In **Papua New Guinea**, PIA has been implementing a youth-focused program to address young people's specific vulnerabilities and needs in leadership development, economic security and to build knowledge in and improve access to services in sexual reproductive health. PIA's program is focused in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville, where PIA takes a significant role in building capacity of communities to prepare for disaster, and works closely with the Autonomous Bougainville Government to coordinate disaster risk reduction and disaster response activities.

**Plan International Australia is educating over 5,100 girls and boys to prevent violence against women and girls in PNG**

The **Adolescent Sexual Reproductive and Maternal Health Project** delivers information and services through:

- **Community Awareness:** working with the Bougainville Health Community Program to increase Sexual, Reproductive and Maternal Health (SRMH) knowledge and skills among young men and women in their communities, and to improve health seeking behaviours (demand strengthening).
- **School Education:** working with the Department of Education and schools (secondary and upper primary) to increase confidence in, and awareness of SRMH among young people through a structured curriculum (demand strengthening)
- **Health System Strengthening:** working with the Department of Health and Arawa Health Centre staff to increase the capacity

of health personnel to work with adolescents through training and establishment of an Adolescent Health Clinic that provides education, counselling and referrals, and to strengthen services for STI, HIV management (supply strengthening). There is also support provided for the Koromira Health Centre staff, in STI & HIV management and provision of adolescent friendly health services.

Complementary to this, the Bougainville Youth Empowerment Program aims to enable young women and men in Bougainville to realise their human rights and have the confidence and capacity to be socially, politically, and economically empowered.

One priority of this program is for young women and men to be engaged in decent work across the value chains in the agriculture and livestock sectors.

This project works to make agriculture a viable business opportunity for young people, especially women, who are disproportionately affected by gender and social norms – which often prevent access to agriculture support services and/or credit to consolidate or expand their enterprises, and are limited to production of lower earning crops/products. This project receives funding from Australian aid and the Australian public.

PIA is also establishing partnerships to establish a Male Advocates Program, through which to engage men and boys to challenge negative gender stereotypes, reduce gender-based violence and to advocate for women's rights.

In the **Solomon Islands**, in partnership with local organisation Live and Learn, PIA implements the **New Times, New Targets Program**, funded through DFAT's **Water for Women Fund**. With a funding commitment for a five-year period (until 2022 financial year), PIA and partners will deliver substantial improvements in access to improved sanitation and hygiene for women, men, girls and boys in disadvantaged and remote communities in the Western Guadalcanal region.

Strong gender and social inclusion elements and application of the Gender Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Monitoring Tool will enable lasting WASH improvements in households, schools and communities.

In this year, PIA will also be completing a WASH Project in Isabel province, consolidating increased access to sanitation and hygiene behaviour in homes and schools, establishing increased cooperation regarding WASH decision-making, both within communities and between communities and government service providers. PIA will also be expanding the WASH program in the Solomon Islands to deliver improved sanitation facilities and hygiene behaviour within schools.

Through a partnership with the Solomon Islands Development Trust (SIDT), the PIA Pacific Disaster Ready program is building the capacity of local communities to plan for and respond to disasters. PIA is also undertaking complementary initiatives, including research on gender and climate change within the Pacific, and the development of new guidance tools for designing and implementing interventions to better support women, girls and people of diverse sexual and gender identities to ensure their equal participation.

These approaches can be applied in the **Community Adaptation Pathways in the Solomon Islands** project which will work with communities in the isolated area of Ontong Java in collaboration with community representatives in Honiara.

## OUR KEY PARTNERS

PIA's primary local partners are civil society and government at all levels. These local partnerships are critical to sustainability and seek ongoing commitment and action by civil society and government to improve the quality of life of children, their families and communities.

An integral part of the PIA Pacific program involves working closely with communities to build resilience, with a strong emphasis on actively involving young people and vulnerable groups in planning and programming implementation, where possible and appropriate.

Key Pacific NGO partners include: Partners in Community Development Fiji (PCDF), the Tonga Community Development Trust (TCDF), the Foundation for the Peoples of the South Pacific Kiribati (FSPK), Solomon Islands Development Trust (SIDT), Live and Learn Solomon Islands, Young Women's Christian Association of Solomon Islands and the Honiara City Council.

PIA also works with Australian NGO partners, notably: Australian Volunteers International (AVI), CBM, ActionAid, ChildFund and Live and Learn Australia, to expand our reach and influence quality programing in the Pacific region.

These collaborations bring skills to the implementation of programs and build foundations to sustain and replicate the improvements achieved through PIA's work regionally.

## OUR HIGHLIGHTS

Here are some examples of key outcomes from the programs:

- In PNG, established the Bougainville Youth Initiative, helping to facilitating access to decent work for young people and provide leadership training for young women, benefiting 990 young women and men.
- Together with Equal Playing Field, educated 5,110 girls and boys to prevent violence against boys and girls through the promotion of gender equality and respect in PNG schools.
- In the Solomon Islands, providing access for youth with disabilities to internships in the formal sector, as well as personal and professional development training, to build their confidence and capacity to access decent work.
- Deliver Water for Women Fund projects in Indonesia and the Solomon Islands, reaching over 450,000 people and over 40 schools with improved WASH services and collaborate with academic institutes on research exploring gender, climate change and approaches to community management in these projects.

## OUR IMPACT

In addition to achieving specific program objects and outcomes, there have been broader impacts of PIA's Pacific programs.

The various climate change programs are ensuring the meaningful participation of children, who have been involved in documenting and monitoring community activity through video documentaries, working together with adults in the implementation of small grants projects and in climate change adaptation advocacy at national and regional levels.

Education materials developed as part of the program are being adopted and taken up by other organisations, government agencies and countries, multiplying the reach and impact of the program.

## OUR FUTURE PRIORITIES

Over the coming year, PIA will look for opportunities to consolidate and expand initiatives that:

- Build the capacity of young Pacific Islanders to actively engage with decision making processes in communities, civil society and government;
- Acknowledge and expand Pacific Islanders resilience and capabilities to prepare for and respond to disaster;
- Support Pacific Islanders to challenge harmful gender norms and practices;
- Build young Pacific Islanders capacity to access decent work and incomes;
- Strengthen the capacity of Pacific Islander civil society and government partners to fulfil their roles and responsibilities.