



Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the
Netherlands

PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF WOMEN AS POLITICAL LEADERS:

**VIEWS ON WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP AND TEMPORARY
SPECIAL MEASURES IN SOLOMON ISLANDS**

Co-written by:

Camilla Batalibasi, Lucian Bero, Pionie Boso, Anika Kingmele,
Ruth Maetala, Donna Makini and Freda Wickham - WRAM staff,
researchers, current and past Board members; Dr Kerryn Baker
- Research Advisor; Stella Mulder - Research Manager, IWDA;
Genevieve Walker - Program Manager, Solomon Islands, IWDA.

DECEMBER 2019
RESEARCH REPORT

A joint publication between: Women's Rights Action Movement (WRAM)
& International Women's Development Agency (IWDA)



WRAM staff and Board members 2018

Back row L to R: Afu Billy, Freda Wickham, Pionie Boso, Donna Makini, Christina Bakolo, Shirley Timo, Marisa Pepa.

Front row L to R: Merbilly Pitadunga, -, Anika Kingmele.



WRAM staff 2019 from L to R: Camilla Batalibasi, Pionie Boso, Donna Makini and Shirley Timo



Ruth Maetala - Research Coordinator

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There are many people to thank.

The research respondents and participants, thank you for the time you gave to share your personal views on this most vital subject.

The Board of Women's Rights Action Movement and their hands on engagement and commitment to undertake and participate in this research endeavour from the outset. Christina Bakolo, Afu Billy (Co Chair), Anika Kingmele, Deborah Kole, Sonya Mara, Merbilly Pitadunga, Marisa Pepa-Galo (Chair), Sera Sade, Samantha Tuti.

The staff of Women's Rights Action Movement for their passion and determination to see this project through and utilise this research and evidence to inform their programming. Camilla Batalibasi, Pionie Boso, Donna Makini, Shirley Timo.

WRAM's field and desk research team led by the unflappable and deeply skilled, professional and valued researcher and co-writer, Ruth Maetala. Henry Alu, Janny Bentley, Lucian Bero, Alison Naghu, Yvonne Ono, Edward Suinao, Elnata Taisia and Valentine Telena.

WRAM's exceptional research logistics and administration coordinator, Freda Wickham who made everything run smoothly right to the very end.

Research Advisor to WRAM and IWDA, and co-writer of the research, Dr Kerry Baker. Thank you for your valuable guidance, insights, knowledge, expertise and extraordinary generosity of mind and spirit.

The Research Advisory Group and their guidance, Casper Faasala, Josephine Teakeni and Janet Tuhaika.

Research sense making workshop participants for their valuable input into the research findings. National Council of Women, Vois Blong Mere Solomon Islands, Young Women's Christian Association, Young Women's Parliamentary Group and West 'Are 'Are Rokotanikeni Association and Women Deliver.

Research Manager, IWDA - Stella Mulder. Thank you for your extraordinary research, writing, editing and communication skills. Your deep regard for all actors and for the integrity of the research project and process was second to none.

Program Manager Solomon Islands, IWDA - Genevieve Walker. One of the lynchpins to this deeply satisfying learning experience for everyone. Thank you for your unwavering commitment to both the project and to feminist process, your support of WRAM and the women's movement in Solomon Islands.

Advocacy Manager, IWDA - Sharon Smee. Thank you for the hard work and unflinching commitment guiding WRAM in the early days of exploring this research and for your valuable guidance in shaping the research recommendations.

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Acknowledgements | 03 |
| Executive summary | 06 |
| Introduction | 08 |
| Solomon Islands Context | 11 |
| TSM debate on the floor of Parliament in April 2017 | 12 |
| The Campaign for TSM at the Provincial Level | 13 |
| Public Perceptions of Women as Leaders Research Project | 14 |
| Conducting Research as a Feminist Endeavour | 15 |
| Methodology | 17 |
| <u>Table 1: Completed surveys by constituency</u> | 17 |
| <u>Table 2: Survey Respondent Demographics</u> | 18 |
| Limitations | 20 |
| Findings | 21 |
| Section 1: Attitudes towards Women in Politics | 22 |
| Support for Women in Politics | 23 |
| <u>Figure 1: Have you ever voted for a woman candidate?</u> | 23 |
| <u>Table 3: Why should there be more women in politics?</u> | 23 |

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Provincial Differences and Changes Over Time | 25 |
| <u>Figure 2</u> : Do you think it is easier or harder for women to get elected now than it was 10 years ago? | 26 |
| Attributes of a Good Woman Leader | 27 |
| Section 2: Challenges and Barriers for Women in Politics | 28 |
| A Level Playing Field? | 28 |
| <u>Figure 3</u> : Do men and women get the same chances to be elected in national or provincial politics? | 29 |
| <u>Table 4</u> : Do men and women get the same chances to be elected in national or provincial politics? | 29 |
| Perceptions of Women Candidates | 30 |
| <u>Table 5</u> : Do you hold a leadership position in your church or community? | 31 |
| Women Not Supporting Women | 31 |
| Influence of Political Parties | 32 |
| <u>Figure 4</u> : Do you think political parties have any influence on election results? | 33 |
| Culture and Religion | 34 |
| Education | 35 |
| Money Politics | 36 |
| Section 3: Temporary Special Measures | 38 |
| Knowledge of Temporary Special Measures | 38 |
| <u>Table 6</u> : Have you heard of TSM or temporary special measures for women in politics? | 38 |
| Support for Temporary Special Measures | 39 |
| <u>Figure 6</u> : Do you support TSM for women in the provincial assembly? | 39 |
| <u>Figure 7</u> : Do you support TSM for women in the national parliament? | 40 |
| Different Models of Temporary Special Measures | 42 |
| Risks of Introducing Temporary Special Measures | 43 |
| Strategies to Promote Temporary Special Measures | 44 |
| Key Messages from this research | 46 |
| Conclusion | 47 |
| Recommendations | 48 |
| Attitudes towards Women in Politics | 48 |
| Challenges and Barriers for Women in Politics | 48 |
| Temporary Special Measures | 49 |
| Annex: Research Tools and TSM Infographic | 50 |
| References | 55 |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of the *Public Perceptions of Women as Political Leaders* project, led by the Women's Rights Action Movement (WRAM) and supported by International Women's Development Agency (IWDA), was to deepen understanding of (a) public perceptions of the qualities of and qualifications for political leadership and (b) gender norms associated with these perceptions. The intention of the research was to generate findings that would assist advocates for gender equality to support the meaningful participation of women as leaders. WRAM adopted a specific focus on public perceptions of temporary special measures (TSM), to meet the need for more research in this space given the ongoing debate on introducing TSM at the provincial level in Solomon Islands.

Informed by similar research conducted in Fiji, three Public Perceptions research projects were carried out in Cambodia, Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste in 2018-19. The focus of the Solomon Islands research project was to produce a piece of research that both aligned with the aims of the broader multi-country *Public Perceptions of Women as Leaders* project and provided an evidence base for future policy and programming on TSM reform in Solomon Islands.

The study comprised a survey questionnaire administered to 723 women and men in selected constituencies in Western and Malaita provinces and Honiara; 18 focus groups discussions; and 99 key informant interviews.

This research project was the first in-depth study of attitudes around temporary special measures in Solomon Islands. It also sought to test assumptions and beliefs around attitudes towards women in politics, and challenges and opportunities for women's political participation.

Some key findings were:

- There is significant (but not universal) support across the research sites for more women in politics, from both men and women. 88% of survey respondents believed there should be more women in the provincial assembly, and the same proportion of respondents were in support of more women in the national parliament.
- The general support for greater women's representation does not translate into practical support at the polls; only one in five respondents had ever voted for a woman candidate.
- In spite of evidence to the contrary, many respondents thought the political environment was becoming more favourable to women's participation. Overall, people believe that women's participation in politics is improving over time. Three in five survey respondents believed it was easier for women to be elected now than ten years ago.
- "Culture", religious norms, lack of education and the rise of money politics are all persistent barriers to women's participation in politics.
- There were many criteria for a 'good woman leader' and many women would struggle to meet all of them. People have very high expectations of women leaders. Women candidates are also judged more harshly than their men counterparts.
- There is a large information gap on TSM, with very limited awareness throughout the areas in which research was conducted. 76% of survey respondents had heard nothing of TSM prior to the survey. Yet people – once informed about TSM – are generally supportive of its introduction. 92% of survey respondents said they supported TSM in provincial assemblies, and the same proportion of respondents supported TSM in the national parliament.
- Even people who support TSM are wary of associated risks involved with its introduction. These include women representatives not being respected and facing hardship, family discord, women being unprepared for a political career and concern about making short-sighted changes to the political system.

Three key messages from the research are:

- 1. While many Solomon Islanders see politics as a level playing field, it is obvious that many factors are holding women back. While gradual change may help to remove these barriers, in the short-term TSM may be necessary to normalise women's political leadership in Solomon Islands.**
- 2. General knowledge of TSM in Solomon Islands is extremely low. Yet when people are informed about TSM, they are likely to support it.**
- 3. While many people are supportive of TSM in principle, there are many perceived risks in its introduction. Any TSM campaign must engage with these perceived risks.**

This research on perceptions of women as leaders in Solomon Islands offers important contextual background and information on attitudes towards women in politics, on the challenges and barriers women face in the political arena and on perceptions of TSM. It suggests new directions for policy and programming approaches in relation to women's participation in politics.

Women still face multiple and complex barriers that constrain their political participation in Solomon Islands. The research sought to understand the opportunities and challenges for women who wish to enter politics and how an enabling environment for TSM reform can be created or built upon. The research findings suggest there is scope in Solomon Islands for a successful TSM campaign, if it is carefully designed, locally led, and targeted to different audiences.

INTRODUCTION

Women have very low political representation in Solomon Islands at both national and provincial levels. As of November 2019, there were two women members of Parliament out of 50 members (4%); four women out of 172 members of Provincial Assemblies (2.3%); and one woman councillor of 12 people elected to the Honiara City Council (0.08%).¹ Women's voices are therefore largely excluded from political decision-making.

While the under-representation of women in politics is a global issue, Solomon Islands falls significantly below the world average (24%) in terms of women in national politics (IPU 2019).

Of the 52 Commonwealth countries, Solomon Islands ranks 50th in terms of the number of women in politics, with only neighbouring countries Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu ranked lower. Research over the last 10 years has suggested that voters in Solomon Islands overwhelmingly believe that women are capable of political leadership and that the country would benefit from having more women in leadership roles. To date, however, these common views have not translated into higher rates of women being elected, for well-documented reasons (see Baker 2018b; Soaki 2017; Wood 2014).

The purpose of this research project was to deepen understanding of

- a. public perceptions of the qualities of and qualifications for political leadership, and**
- b. gender norms associated with these perceptions.**

The intention of the research was to generate findings that would assist advocates for gender equality to support the meaningful participation of women as leaders.

Local women's rights organisation and joint-publisher of this research Women's Rights Action Movement (WRAM) adopted a specific focus on public perceptions of TSM. TSM are measures to increase the number of women in political positions, usually through instituting reserved seat systems or candidate quotas. This focus was due to the depth of existing research on attitudes towards women

as public leaders carried out in Solomon Islands (see Dicker, Billy & Barclay 2016; McMurray 2012; Roughan & Wini 2015; UNDP 2019), as well as the need for more research into TSM given the ongoing debate on introducing TSM at the provincial level.

Solomon Islands is signatory to a number of human rights conventions and regional commitments to gender advancement and gender equality. One of the significant commitments to advancing the status of women was the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (UN CEDAW) which provides the entry point for advancing women as leaders. Based on this convention and its aligning national policy, the *Gender Equality and Women's Development (GEWD) Policy*, revised and passed by the Solomon Islands Government in 2017, the environment has been prepared to encourage greater participation of women in political leadership.

Women's political participation is very important for any country to fully achieve the global goals of democracy and sustainable development and this has been recognised in target 5.5 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.² Given that women's representation is very low in many countries, TSM have been used as a 'fast-track' measure to improve women's political participation in national parliaments and sub-national political institutions.

While the use of TSM has been proposed in Solomon Islands before, including at the national level by the governing National Coalition for Reform and Advancement in 2010, no measures have been instituted at any political level to date. Recently, there has been momentum building to introduce TSM at the provincial level. As of

¹ One woman appointed councillor of the four appointees also sits on the Honiara City Council.

² See <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg5>.

December 2019, the Western, Central and Malaita provincial government assemblies have endorsed a call to include TSM in a review of the Provincial Government Act.³ WRAM has been a key agent in spearheading this campaign, in close collaboration and consultation with the Women's Development Division (WDD) in the Solomon Islands Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs (MWYCFA).

This report sets out the findings of the research project carried out by WRAM to explore perceptions relating to women's leadership and to TSM in Solomon Islands. The research sought to understand the opportunities and challenges for women who wish to enter politics and how an enabling environment for TSM reform can be created or built upon. The research findings suggest there is scope in Solomon Islands for a successful TSM campaign, if it is carefully designed, locally led, and targeted to different audiences. It also suggests a need for tailored messaging to raise the bar for awareness on the importance of women's active and meaningful political participation, a project that development partners could work on with local women's organisations and non-governmental organisations.

The findings of this research will be of interest to political actors, civil society organisations (CSOs) and development partners working in Solomon Islands. They can inform approaches to increase women's leadership in Solomon Islands, including the existing advocacy and program work being undertaken by WRAM, the National Council of Women and other partners on women's leadership and the introduction of TSM.

THE RESEARCH FINDINGS SUGGEST THERE IS SCOPE IN SOLOMON ISLANDS FOR A SUCCESSFUL TSM CAMPAIGN, IF IT IS CAREFULLY DESIGNED, LOCALLY LED, AND TARGETED TO DIFFERENT AUDIENCES.

³ This represents a commitment from three of nine provincial government assemblies in Solomon Islands with additional provincial government assemblies currently considering this commitment.

SOLOMON ISLANDS CONTEXT

Solomon Islands is a Melanesian archipelago approximately 1,800 kilometres north-east of Australia. A 'protectorate' of both Germany (northern islands) and Great Britain (southern islands) during the colonial period, Solomon Islands remained under British colonial rule until independence in 1978. The colonial presence was accompanied by extensive missionary activity; British colonial administration and Christian values have strongly influenced formal and informal structures for decision making and representation in present day Solomon Islands (see Douglas 2003; Pollard 2006). Cultural norms that emphasise male leadership, as well as patriarchal power structures adopted through colonialism and the introduction of Christianity, have entrenched male dominance in community and political decision-making.

Solomon Islands is made up of nine provinces: Central, Choiseul, Guadalcanal, Isabel, Makira-Ulawa, Malaita, Rennell and Bellona, Temotu and Western. Each province has a provincial government. The capital and major urban centre of Solomon Islands, Honiara, is located on Guadalcanal but is administered separately by Honiara City Council.

The Parliament of Solomon Islands is a unicameral Westminster system. There are 50 seats and members are elected for four-year terms in single-member districts through a first-past-the-post electoral system. There have been eleven general elections since independence, with the most recent taking place in April 2019.

The population of Solomon Islands has grown from approximately 200,000 at independence to around 635,000 people recorded in 2019, with a large proportion of young⁴ people.⁵ Women in Solomon Islands make up almost half of the country's population. The agricultural base of the economy has historically seen export of natural resources including copra, palm oil and timber as an important source of income. In the past 15 years, Solomon Islands has been highly dependent on aid from foreign nations including the largest donor, Australia, as well as New Zealand, the European Union, Taiwan and Japan.

There are significant gender disparities in Solomon Islands. The most recent country gender assessment was completed by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in 2015. This report was coordinated by the Solomon Islands Ministry of Women, Youth, Children

and Family Affairs (MWYCFA) and draws on data from 2009-2013. It outlines important progress towards gender equality in a number of policy areas. Notwithstanding this, the report describes a general environment in Solomon Islands where the experiences of women and girls are strongly differentiated from those of men and boys (ADB 2015). Women are less likely than men to have participated in formal education at all levels. Women are also less likely than men to have paid employment. Work available to women is often highly precarious in nature, for example, subsistence agricultural work. Solomon Islands is ranked in the bottom five countries of The Economist's Women's Economic Opportunity Index, 2012 being the most recent index.⁶ This ranking reflects the minimal legal protection for women in the workplace, limited access to financial and banking services and a business environment that is generally not supportive of women.

The ADB report documents high levels of violence against girls and women. According to the 2009 *Family Health and Safety Study* conducted by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community for the then Ministry of Women, Youth and Children's Affairs, the prevalence of physical and sexual violence against women in Solomon Islands is extremely high. Of women who had ever been in an intimate relationship, 64% reported having experienced physical and/or sexual abuse by an intimate partner (SPC 2009). Generally, levels of intimate partner violence are higher in Honiara than in the provinces.

⁴ Youth in Solomon Islands is defined as young individuals between the age of 15-34 years inclusive. See <http://www.mwycfa.gov.sb/resources-2/strategic-plans-policies/youth-development-empowerment/6-solomon-islands-national-youth-policy-2017-2030/file.html>

⁵ See <https://www.statistics.gov.sb/>

⁶ See https://www.trestlegroupfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/EIU_WEO_2012March62.pdf

Women's representation in national and sub-national politics has historically been low in Solomon Islands. Only four women have been elected to Parliament since independence. Prior to independence, Lilly Ogotina Poznanski from Isabel Province was elected to the Legislative Council in 1965 for one term. The first woman elected to the Solomon Islands Parliament in the post-independence era was Hilda Kari in the seat of North East Guadalcanal. Kari placed second in the 1989 general election but won a by-election later that year. Hilda Kari went on to successfully contest the newly created seat of East Central Guadalcanal in the 1993 and 1997 general elections. She lost the seat in the 2001 general election.

There were no women in parliament between 2001 and 2012, when Vika Lusibaea was elected in a by-election in the North Malaita seat. The seat had been previously held by her husband, Jimmy Lusibaea who was required to vacate the seat due to a court challenge. Vika Lusibaea won almost 50% of the vote in the by-election. In the 2014 general election, Jimmy Lusibaea contested and won the North Malaita seat, while Vika Lusibaea contested in Central Honiara, coming fourth out of 12 candidates.

In the 2014 election, only one woman was successful. Freda Tuki Soriacomua won the seat of Temotu Vatud with just over 25% of the vote, winning 22 more votes than the incumbent MP. Soriacomua was appointed Minister for Rural Development, before moving into the position of Minister of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs after a reshuffle.

In a May 2018 by-election, Lanelle Tanangada was elected in the Gizo/Kolombangara seat as the first ever woman member of parliament for Western province. The seat had been previously held by her husband, Jimson Tanangada who was required to vacate the seat due to a court challenge. For the first time in Solomon Islands parliamentary history, two women served concurrently in parliament. This came to an end in October 2018 when Soriacomua was required to vacate her seat also due to a court challenge. Tanangada replaced her as the Minister of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs.

In the 2019 general election, Soriacomua regained the seat of Temotu Vatud, while Tanangada was re-elected in Gizo/Kolombangara. This was the first general election in which more than one woman candidate had won a seat. Both women members of Parliament were allocated ministerial portfolios: Soriacomua as Minister for Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs and Tanangada as Minister for Police, National Security and Correctional Services.

While the number of successful women candidates in Solomon Islands' political history is low, there have been other competitive women candidates, some of whom have lost by very small margins. The experience of Afu Billy, who lost the seat of East Malaita by two votes in 2001, is a case in point (see Billy 2002). Eleven women have placed second in Solomon Islands elections since independence: Lilly Poznanski in West Isabel in 1984; Hilda Kari in North East Guadalcanal in 1989 and East Central Guadalcanal in 2001; Afu Billy in East Malaita in 2001 and 2006; Sarah Dyer in West Honiara in 2006; Rhoda Sikilabu in Gao/Bugotu in 2010; Julie Gegeu Haro in West Honiara in 2014; Janet Hatimoana in Ngella in 2014; Alice Pollard in West Are' Are in 2014; Cathy Launa Nori in Maringe/Kokota in 2019; Caroline Laore Gorae in Shortlands in 2019; and Choylin Yim Douglas in Ngella in 2019.⁷

In the first nine post-independence general elections, just 72 different women stood compared to 1,696 men (Wood 2014). Analysing the number of women candidates and their outcomes since independence, Wood reports that, statistically speaking, women candidates in Solomon Islands may be becoming less competitive over time. This analysis is supported by others, with Pauline Soaki (2017) suggesting that

"Viewed from a historical perspective, it would seem that women's parliamentary political participation has declined."

In 2008 the Women in Shared Decision-Making (WISDM) coalition, on behalf of women's groups in Solomon Islands, put a submission to the government to argue for TSM for women in national parliament. The government expressed in principle support for special measures and a task force was established to consider options. The National Coalition for Reform and Advancement's 2010 Policy Statement proposed introducing up to 20 reserved seats for women in parliament, but to date no parliamentary reserved seats have been introduced.

Reflections from those involved in the WISDM coalition at the time highlight the damage done to the campaign by the perception that TSM was a 'foreign' idea. It is very important that TSM campaigns are seen to be locally-owned. This is also a common factor in other TSM campaigns in the Pacific region (see Baker 2019). Another lesson learnt was the importance of including some type of election process in TSM proposals - that is to say, creating elected rather than nominated seats for women - so that TSM is not seen as 'free seats' for women.

⁷ See <https://solomonislandselections.files.wordpress.com/2015/01/formatted-2014-results-for-pdf.pdf>

TSM DEBATE ON THE FLOOR OF PARLIAMENT IN APRIL 2017

According to Hansard, the official record of debate in Solomon Islands Parliament, on 4-6 April, 2017 the then Prime Minister, Manasseh Sogavare, introduced the motion for a second White Paper covering three key issues to be discussed and debated on the floor of Parliament to inform the drafting of the new National Parliament Electoral Provisions Bill. These issues were: the alternative election system; the temporary measure for more women to get elected into Parliament; and the anti-defection measure for the purpose of achieving political stability.

Debate on the floor of parliament saw diverse views on women's right to political leadership and the pathway taken to arrive there. Some MPs shared their wish to see more women become leaders and sit in the parliamentary chamber; others shared the view of women's role and responsibilities remaining in the home.

There were some MPs that were not opposed to TSM; however, the majority of MPs that spoke shared their concerns about and arguments against TSM. Subsequently, TSM was removed from potential inclusion in the Bill.

Arguments made against the case for TSM by members of parliament included:

- TSM is a free pass into Parliament.
- Solomon Islands has seen women successfully elected to parliament, women must contest and follow the same process as men.
- Political leadership in Solomon Islands is earned, it is not an entitlement.
- Participation in politics in Solomon Islands is a level playing field for men and women hence, TSM is not needed.
- Women are not discriminated against in Solomon Islands. TSM discriminates against men.

- TSM will unfairly skew the system of proportional representation.
- TSM has the potential to erode the quality and level of honest leadership.
- Concerns and questions surrounding the origins and motivations behind the TSM agenda were also raised by parliamentarians.
- Every time we hear about the arguments as to why women need to be in Parliament...it is really anti-men, treating us the males as corrupt almost to the point where we the males are monsters...
- Let us look at who is trying to push this agenda amongst the women themselves. Is it for national interest or is it for other interests?

The substance of the debate does highlight that TSM is very controversial, particularly at the national level, and there will likely always be opposing viewpoints among political elites and the general public.

THE CAMPAIGN FOR TSM AT THE PROVINCIAL LEVEL

Due to the collective and collaborative efforts of the Women's Development Division (WDD) in the MWYCFA, WRAM and UN Women, a focus on garnering provincial government level support for TSM is underway. This campaign advocates for the inclusion of a TSM clause in the Provincial Government Act (PGA) enabling Provincial Governments to introduce TSM should they wish to.

As of December 2019, at least three provincial government assemblies (Western, Central and Malaita) have signed on to support the introduction of additional seats reserved for women as a temporary special measure. The TSM campaign at the provincial government level continues seeking support from the newly elected provincial government assemblies.

It is important to the success of the campaign for legislative reform that there are a number of provincial governments backing TSM.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO THE SUCCESS OF THE CAMPAIGN FOR LEGISLATIVE REFORM THAT THERE ARE A NUMBER OF PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS BACKING TSM.

PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF WOMEN AS LEADERS RESEARCH PROJECT

Women's Action for Voice and Empowerment (WAVE) is a five-year, five-country women's leadership program established by International Women's Development Agency (IWDA) and funded by the Government of the Netherlands. WAVE brings together and supports individual women, organisations and movements in Asia and the Pacific region to increase the representation of women in diverse leadership positions.

The WAVE program strives for a world where diverse women are equally represented as leaders at all levels of society and are able to use this power to drive systemic change toward gender equality. Through WAVE, IWDA works in partnership with women's organisations in Cambodia, Myanmar, Timor-Leste, Papua New Guinea, Bougainville and Solomon Islands. In Solomon Islands, WRAM is a WAVE partner.

One of the research activities within WAVE is the *Public Perceptions of Women as Leaders* research project. Informed by similar research which took place in Fiji in 2013-14 (Dumarú & Pene 2014), the Public Perceptions project was implemented in Cambodia, Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste in 2018-19.

As previously mentioned, the purpose of this research project was to deepen understanding of (a) public perceptions of the qualities of, and formal and informal qualifications for, leadership, and (b) the gender norms associated with these perceptions. The intention of the research was to generate findings that would assist advocates for gender equality to support the meaningful participation of women as leaders.

The high-level research questions guiding the research across the three countries were:

1. **What public views on the capacity of women to be political leaders are held by people including women and men?⁸**

2. **How have public perceptions of women as leaders been influenced by gender norms?**
3. **How do public perceptions of leadership influence the opportunities and challenges for women who wish to become leaders?**
4. **What public views are there on how to create an enabling environment to support the meaningful participation of women as leaders?**

For the Solomon Islands research, WRAM adopted a specific focus on public perceptions of TSM. This was due to the depth of existing research on attitudes towards women as public leaders carried out in Solomon Islands (see Dicker, Billy & Barclay 2016; McMurray 2012; Roughan & Wini 2015; UNDP 2019), as well as the need for more research into TSM given the ongoing debate on introducing TSM at the provincial level.

At a research design workshop held in Honiara in November 2018, the following country-specific research questions were developed:

1. **How do public perceptions of women in political leadership influence the opportunities and challenges for women?**
2. **Is the political environment in Solomon Islands perceived as a level playing field for women and men?**
3. **What views on temporary special measures (TSM) are held by people, including women and men?**
4. **How do we create or build upon an enabling environment for TSM reform at the provincial and/or national level?**

The focus of this research project was to produce a piece of research that both aligned with the aims of the broader multi-country Public Perceptions of Women as Leaders project and provide an evidence base for future policy and programming on TSM reform in Solomon Islands.

⁸ IWDA refers to designations of women and men acknowledging that these categories are not fixed and recognising diversities in gender identity.

CONDUCTING RESEARCH AS A FEMINIST ENDEAVOUR

The *Public Perceptions of Women as Leaders* research was informed by theoretical and applied understandings of feminist research and the IWDA Feminist Research Framework. The following section discusses the study in relation to the four principles of this framework.⁹ The four principles are:

1. **Our research builds feminist knowledge of women's lives**
2. **We are accountable for how the research is conducted**
3. **We are committed to ethical collaboration**
4. **We conduct applied research that seeks a transformative impact on the causes of gender inequality.**¹⁰

IWDA research builds feminist knowledge of women's lives

This principle relates to generating new understandings in relation to women's experiences, the impact of gender norms and how power is gendered.

This research has allowed the views of specific groups of people in relation to women and leadership to be gathered and documented. These views are not commonly sought, yet they have a real impact on women's political opportunities. The data collected speaks to the influence of patriarchal systems and values on the processes of political leadership. Findings from the research add to existing knowledge about the impact of gender norms and perceptions of women as political leaders in Solomon Islands and more broadly.

Further investigation into the relationship between gender and other factors influencing success in political leadership – family background, wealth,

kinship ties – would be valuable. Greater attention to issues of intersectionality in relation to aspiring women leaders may be a useful avenue for increasing knowledge of women's lives.

IWDA is accountable for how the research is conducted

IWDA's approach to research is informed by principles of best practice developed by the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) and the Research for Development Impact Network.¹¹ These principles set standards for all aspects of the research, including designing research that has integrity, establishing respectful relationships with all people involved and ensuring that the research is beneficial for participants and their communities.¹²

This project required a high level of dialogue between IWDA and WRAM who managed the research in-country. The research team was well versed in the principles of ethical research and their implications for practice and included national researchers with substantial experience in conducting field work with rural communities.

The IWDA Program Manager for Solomon Islands had oversight of the research in collaboration with the research team. Responsibility for project implementation was held by WRAM. This included obtaining local permissions, managing potential risks to participants and staff and managing the dynamics of interview and focus group discussions. The Program Manager worked closely with WRAM's research team to maintain a detailed understanding of all research activity. IWDA's accountability in the *Public Perceptions* research was based on this partner relationship of mutual understanding and trust.

⁹ For further discussion of IWDA's perspective on feminist approaches to research and evaluation see Tracy McDiarmid et al, 'We are women! We are ready! Amplifying women's voices through feminist participatory action research,' 2018, Melbourne, IWDA.

¹⁰ The IWDA Feminist Research Framework is available at <https://iwda.org.au/resource/feminist-research-framework/>.

¹¹ See <https://rdinetwork.org.au/effective-ethical-research-evaluation/>.

¹² Principles based on the Government of Australia's National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007).

IWDA is committed to ethical collaboration

IWDA's intention in resourcing the *Public Perceptions* study was to facilitate research aligned with WRAM's priorities. Promoting women's political leadership is a key priority for WRAM and all WAVE partners. IWDA encouraged WRAM to think openly about the focus of the research and how it can best inform WRAM's program planning. With national and provincial elections taking place in Solomon Islands largely inside 2019, findings from this research have immediate application for women's rights organisations in these settings for the next 4-year electoral cycle and beyond.

IWDA had a strong commitment to working collaboratively with partner organisations in the Public Perceptions research. Parameters of time and resources meant that some aspects of the research were influenced by IWDA such as, having a smaller amount of survey respondents. IWDA supported WRAM in developing the overall purpose, high level questions and conceptual framework for the research. The research team took responsibility for developing unique survey and qualitative question sets, choosing a sampling approach, recruiting, training and managing field researchers, seeking local permissions, analysing the data collected and interpreting findings. WRAM ran a workshop as part of the development of the research recommendations, the result of which is found within this detailed research report. IWDA's Program Manager and Research Manager worked closely with the research teams throughout this activity. The research has generated valuable learnings in relation to the possibilities of co-design in future research.

IWDA conducts applied research that seeks a transformative impact on the causes of gender equality

WRAM and IWDA are committed to research as a form of action. The *Public Perceptions* research has generated findings in relation to women and political leadership specific to Solomon Islands but of relevance more broadly. The findings highlight the impact of informal barriers to women's political leadership and the importance of engaging with public concerns about change in relation to political representation. Confirming work by others, the research suggests that achieving gender equality requires explicit engagement with gender norms and discriminatory practices that are embedded in political processes and in everyday life.

WRAM has commenced drawing on the findings from this research in their programming and advocacy work. A 'Research into Action' workshop has been held with stakeholders of the research in each country and this work will continue into the future. WRAM sees this research as an important evidence base for broader transformative work.

A further transformative aspect of this study relates to the professional development opportunities it presented to WRAM and IWDA and the individuals involved. The Public Perceptions project was explicitly intended to provide opportunities for WRAM to gain experience in research design, implementation and analysis. Key project staff have reported significant change in their own skills and the capacity and reputation of the organisation as a result of conducting this research.

METHODOLOGY

The research approach was developed collaboratively in a research design workshop held in November 2018, which itself built on previous discussions between WRAM stakeholders on how the Perceptions research project could best support WRAM’s ongoing work in the women in leadership space. Ethics approval was sought and obtained from the IWDA ethics committee prior to the commencement of the research. The research employed a mixed-methods approach involving both qualitative and quantitative elements. The research methods consisted of three approaches: a survey, in-depth interviews with key informants and focus group discussions.

It was decided at the research design workshop that the research would be carried out in three to four provinces. Ultimately, it was decided that Honiara City, Malaita Province, and Western Province would be the areas of study. These areas were chosen as there had been some debate on TSM in all of them, so it was anticipated that lessons could be drawn for future TSM campaigns in other provinces and potentially at the national level. In Malaita and Western, two constituencies (one urban or peri-urban and one rural) were chosen as target constituencies. The constituencies were selected to represent a range of diverse cultural systems and political economy contexts, different experiences of

women’s political participation and different histories of women’s political leadership at the provincial and national level. These constituencies were Baegu’u/Asifola and Central Kwara’ae in Malaita, and Gizo/Kolombangara and North Vella Lavella in Western. In Honiara, all three constituencies – East Honiara, Central Honiara and West Honiara – were used as target constituencies. Within the seven target constituencies, a total of 29 different sites (villages or communities) were visited between January and March 2019.

Two groups of four researchers (equal numbers of women and men enumerators and qualitative researchers) travelled to Malaita and Western provinces respectively. The two teams then combined to carry out research in the Honiara constituencies. The teams travelled to at least three different research sites within each constituency to ensure a range of views were represented.

Enumerators were tasked to survey at least 200 citizens in each of the three research areas. Survey respondents were Solomon Islanders who were 18 years old or older. Overall, 723 survey responses were gathered from the seven constituencies. The aim was to get roughly equal numbers of women and men respondents overall; ultimately, the total respondent pool was 53.5% women and 46.5% men.

Table 1:
Survey responses

| CONSTITUENCY | WOMEN | MEN | TOTAL |
|----------------------|------------|-----------|------------|
| MALAITA | | | |
| Baegu’u Asifola | 88 | 48 | 136 |
| Central Kwara’ae | 34 | 36 | 70 |
| TOTAL MALAITA | 122 | 84 | 206 |
| HONIARA | | | |
| Central Honiara | 63 | 55 | 118 |
| East Honiara | 51 | 54 | 105 |

| | | | |
|---------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|
| West Honiara | 60 | 58 | 118 |
| TOTAL HONIARA | 174 | 167 | 341 |
| WESTERN | | | |
| Gizo/Kolombangara | 46 | 43 | 89 |
| North Vella Lavella | 45 | 42 | 87 |
| TOTAL WESTERN | 91 | 85 | 176 |
| TOTAL ALL CONSTITUENCIES | 387 | 336 | 723 |

Enumerators also endeavoured to ensure the survey sample reflected as far as practicable the demographics of Solomon Islands and the target constituencies (See Table 2). Excluding demographic questions, survey respondents were asked 17 questions in total. The questions covered the three areas of focus for the research: attitudes towards women in politics; challenges and barriers

for women in politics; and TSM. The research instruments included an infographic about TSM for participants who were not familiar with this concept.

The questions were developed at the research design workshop (see annex for list of questions and infographic).

Table 2:
Survey Respondent Demographics

| Age | 18-30 | 31-54 | 55+ | |
|--------------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | 270 (37.3%) | 302 (41.8%) | 151 (20.9%) | |
| Residence | Rural | Peri-Urban | Urban | |
| | 426 (58.9%) | 176 (24.3%) | 121 (16.7%) | |
| Education Level | No education | Primary | Secondary | Tertiary |
| Central Honiara | 83 (11.5%) | 253 (35%) | 285 (39.4%) | 102 (14.1%) |
| Land Tenure System | Matrilineal | Patrilineal | | |
| | 252 (34.9%) | 471 (65.1%) | | |

Researchers conducted 18 focus groups with community members at different research sites. The focus groups were run by two qualitative researchers, with one acting as facilitator and the other as a scribe. Of the focus group discussions, nine were women only; three were men only; and six were with mixed groups, including focus groups involving people with disability, young people, and community leaders.

The focus group discussions were semi-structured, with researchers having a list of questions based on the three areas of focus for the research but with scope to ask follow-up and group-specific questions as required.

In addition, 99 in-depth interviews were carried out with key informants from the three areas. The interviews mostly took place in Honiara and in the provincial capitals of the selected provinces.

The key informants targeted for this research included: current and former provincial assembly members (two women and two men); representatives from the National Council of Women and the provincial councils of women; representatives from the Mother's Union (Solomon Islands Anglican Church of Melanesia women's organisation); founders and board members of WRAM; senior leaders in the public service; and national members of Parliament. Of the in-depth interviews, 70 were with women and 29 with men. While the sample for in-depth interviews skews towards women, this is in part due to the nature of the research, with more women than men having been involved in TSM debates in Solomon Islands. The in-depth interview respondents reflect a range of perspectives on TSM. These interviews were likewise semi-structured, to ensure consistency in the data while also giving researchers appropriate scope to ask follow-up and individual-specific questions as required.

The survey data was recorded in hard copy. All 723 completed surveys were then entered onto Google forms by data entry assistants. Once the data was entered, the research coordinator exported the data to Excel for a final check. If there were errors in the data entered it was adjusted prior to sharing the completed data for analysis and creation of tables. The in-depth interviews and focus groups were transcribed by the qualitative researchers and the research coordinator.

In March and April 2019, the writing team - Camilla Batalibasi, Lucien Bero, Pionie Boso, Anika Kingmele, Ruth Maetala, Donna Makini and Freda Wickham - worked together to manually analyse the qualitative data, assisted by Dr Kerryn Baker in a series of data analysis workshops. The process the research team came up with for data analysis was named 'Bush NVivo'. This was a collaborative process to make meaning and sense of the raw data collected, ensuring that those most involved in the research led the process.

LIMITATIONS

The timing of the project necessarily meant that the research was being carried out shortly before a national general election (held on 3 April 2019). Election-related tension therefore made gaining the trust of potential research participants difficult in certain contexts. In addition, in some areas conflicts between different communities made carrying out research a challenge. This was mitigated by researchers taking steps to make the nature of the research clear to research participants, to stress they were not campaign workers or supporters of particular candidates, and that participation was completely voluntary.

The researchers noted that the short time frame in which to carry out the research meant that preparation time was limited. This created some logistical difficulties and meant that, in some areas, researchers felt they could have spent more time than was allocated for collecting data. A further challenge to data collection was a cyclone which impacted the time spent in the field and therefore the number of respondents surveyed in this location.

A longer timeframe for the data collection phase, to account for the logistical difficulties in getting from place to place and unanticipated issues like the cyclone, would have been useful. Having said this, the research team conducted more surveys than was originally intended.

Another limitation was the researchers not knowing the local languages of the areas they visited in Malaita and Western province. Many people in remote areas do not speak Solomon Islands Pidjin confidently and this meant their contributions to this research may have been missed as a result. Hiring a field assistant with local language skills could have solved this issue.

The research was limited to three areas – Honiara, Malaita Province and Western Province. Within Malaita and Western, only two target constituencies were visited, meaning we cannot assume the findings from this research are applicable to other constituencies and provinces within Solomon Islands. As much as possible, however, the research team endeavoured to select research sites that reflected the diversity of Solomon Islands and could provide a representative sample for this research.

Actual research sites, of course, needed to be selected against a range of additional criteria, including accessibility, safety and the ability to secure the agreement of communities to participate in the research in the timeframe available.

The explanation of TSM to respondents was conducted by research team members. A tool was used to illustrate the concept of TSM, see Annex TSM Infograph, accompanied by a brief technical outline. TSM is not necessarily a topic that can be explained in a fully value-neutral way. Respondents received info about TSM from research team members who largely support it, nevertheless the researchers were conscious to balance these effects by being as factual as possible.

FINDINGS

This research sought to understand public perceptions of women's leadership and Temporary Special Measures in Solomon Islands. While past research has looked at the issue of women's political under-representation in some detail, this is the first research project to examine in-depth views on temporary special measures.

The findings of this research are divided into three sections:

1. **Attitudes towards women in politics**
2. **Challenges and barriers for women in politics**
3. **Temporary special measures.**

WHILE PAST RESEARCH HAS LOOKED AT THE ISSUE OF WOMEN'S POLITICAL UNDER-REPRESENTATION IN SOME DETAIL, THIS IS THE FIRST RESEARCH PROJECT TO EXAMINE IN-DEPTH VIEWS ON TEMPORARY SPECIAL MEASURES

SECTION 1: ATTITUDES TOWARDS WOMEN IN POLITICS

Summary of findings

- There was significant in principle support amongst participants for more women in political leadership. When asked, "Do you think there should be more women in the provincial assembly?", 88% of people said yes. When asked, "Do you think there should be more women in the national parliament?", 88% also said yes.
- When asked, 'Have you ever voted for a woman candidate?', however, 78% said no.
- The main reasons given for why there should be more women in politics differed between women and men. Women saw women politicians as better able to speak with them and understand their needs. Men saw women politicians as having more integrity and paying more attention to community needs.
- Participants from Honiara tended to believe that the town did worse than other parts of Solomon Islands in terms of women's representation in politics. In interviews, however, women noted that access to information was better in Honiara than elsewhere.
- Participants in Western Province cited the election of a woman member of parliament in 2018 as evidence that their province was doing better than others and was improving over time.
- Participants in Malaita Province suggested they did not think their province was better or worse than others but noted that it was hard for women to get into politics.
- Overall, people believed that women's participation in politics is improving over time, with just under 60% of respondents saying it was easier for a woman to be elected now than ten years ago.
- While many key attributes of good women leaders were noted, the attributes most commonly nominated were being a 'good role model', being 'family-oriented' and having 'Christian values'.

SUPPORT FOR WOMEN IN POLITICS

Survey data showed overwhelming support in the community for increased women’s participation in politics. When asked, ‘Do you think there should be more women in the provincial assembly?’, 88 per cent of those surveyed said yes and only seven per cent said no. The same proportion of respondents were in support of more women in the national parliament. When asked, ‘Have you ever voted for a woman candidate?’, however, almost four out of five respondents (77.6%) said no.

Men, on the other hand, focused more on the impact women might have on politics more generally, in that they would be more reliable as MPs and less corrupt.

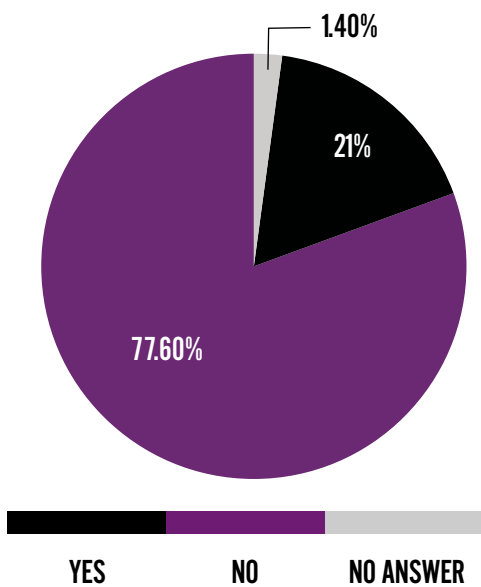
Table 3:

Why should there be more women in politics?

| TOP RESPONSES (WOMEN, FOCUS GROUPS) |
|--|
| Women are approachable |
| Women understand our needs |
| Women are able to assist and fight for us |
| TOP RESPONSES (MEN, FOCUS GROUPS) |
| Women are more reliable than men |
| Women are not corrupt |
| Women care and are concerned about community needs |

Figure 1:

**Have you ever voted for a woman candidate?
N =723**



In focus group discussions, the general consensus was that participants believed there should be more women in politics. The reasons given as to why there should be more women in politics, however, differed between men and women.

Women participants tended to focus on a woman MP’s role as their direct representative, claiming they would be more approachable than men, and could better understand and advocate for women’s issues.

In key informant interviews, women participants all agreed that there should be more women in politics while responses from men were more mixed. For the men participants who did believe there should be more women in politics, one key reason was that women are different from men and so bringing their issues to the table is important. In both focus group discussions and interviews, participants made reference to the importance of achieving gender balance.

The low number of women in politics in Solomon Islands was noted, with participants saying that having two women in Parliament was not enough to effect real change:

“Now I see that we need more women in parliament ... I am considering national population, there are more women than men. More issues coming up for women. Women can be [a] voice for people in parliament; I think women’s issues can be addressed by women as men don’t address this properly.”

*Woman, key informant interview,
Central Honiara*

“We should have more women in politics- if comparing before and now- we should have more women. Now we see women involved more in modern society. We hold leadership roles in community level and work places. We should be up there.”

*Woman, key informant interview,
East Honiara*

In terms of the ideal number or proportion of women in politics, the most common number given by women and men participants as ‘a good starting number’ was 20%, or ten in the national Parliament of 50 seats.

“I think five to ten would be a good number to start off with.”

*Woman, key informant interview,
Gizo/Kolombangara*

“For the start let’s start with ten, so we can see the performance of women when they are there.”

*Woman, key informant interview,
North Vella Lavella*

“I support the idea of ten seats. When [there is] only one woman, it will be very hard to contribute effectively on any issues of women. So I support if they have ten seats in parliament.”

*Man, key informant interview with former member
of a provincial assembly*

Some women in focus group discussions stated that a ‘good start’ would be 30 per cent of parliamentarians, while others suggested 20 women so that they can participate meaningfully. There was a shared view in focus group discussions that it would be good to (eventually) have 50 per cent women in Parliament so that men and women can work together as a team.

PROVINCIAL DIFFERENCES AND CHANGES OVER TIME

Participants from Honiara tended to believe that the town did worse than other parts of Solomon Islands in terms of women's representation in politics. In interviews, however, women noted that awareness of issues and access to information was better in Honiara than elsewhere. In contrast, interviews and focus group participants in Western province cited the election of Lanelle Tanangada in Gizo/Kolombangara in 2018 as evidence that their province was doing better and improving over time.

In Malaita, participants felt they were not necessarily doing better or worse than other provinces, but that it was hard for women to get into politics. One constituency in Malaita where research took place did have an incumbent woman member of the provincial assembly from that area, which participants noted as a sign that things might be getting better for women participating in politics.

In Western Province, one respondent noted that women might be advantaged because of the matrilineal land tenure systems in place there. While such systems do not necessarily lead to women taking on leadership roles, land ownership does signify society recognising the role of women in public and family life. This was contrasted to Malaita where patriarchal structures dominate and may discourage women from participating in politics. These aspects of customary systems that may advantage or disadvantage women are discussed further below.

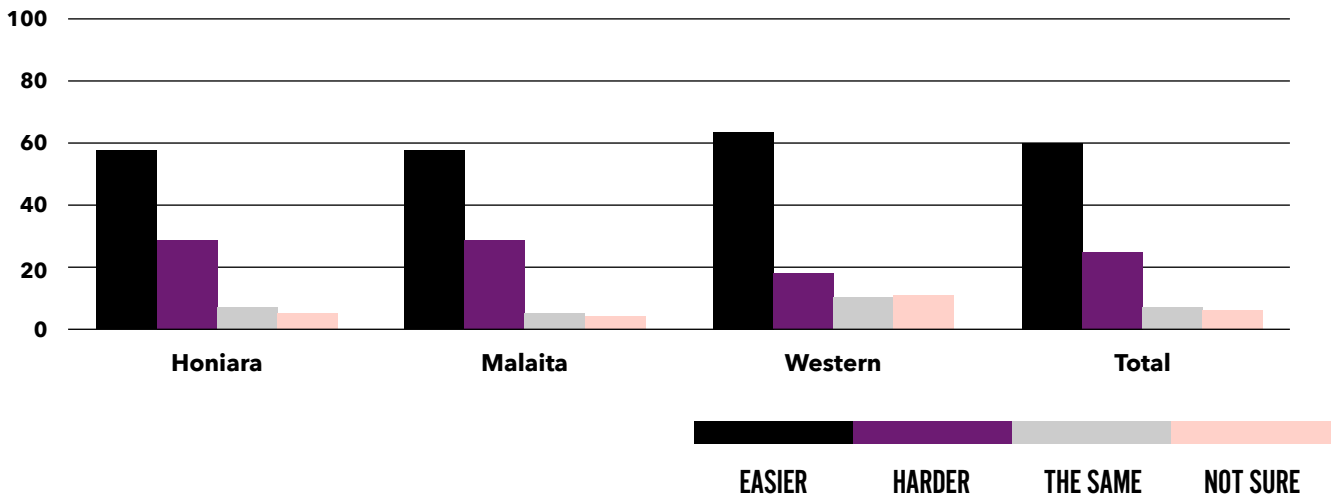
Overall, there was a sense that women's level of participation in politics was improving over time.

In the survey, just under 60 per cent of respondents believed it was easier for women to be elected now than ten years ago, while just over a quarter believed that it was harder. Both men and women perceived that, in general, things are getting better.

There were some interesting provincial differences, however. In Honiara and Malaita, the proportion of people who said it was harder for women to be elected now than ten years ago was much higher, at 28.2% and 31.1% respectively, than in Western where it was only 15.6%. At the time the survey was carried out, Western Province had one incumbent woman MP while Honiara and Malaita had none, which could potentially explain the difference.

People interviewed felt that things have improved over time for women in politics. Evidence of the political environment becoming easier for women that was cited in focus groups and interviews included the election to the national Parliament of Freda Tuki Soriamcomua in 2014 and Tanangada in 2018, as well as recent successes by women at the provincial level in Western and Malaita. The increased number of women contesting the National General Elections was also highlighted. Men felt that in the past men leaders did not perform, hence when women performed outstandingly in the delivery of services and support to the constituency, women set a high standard of leadership. This was seen as an opportunity for more women to stand.

Figure 2:
Do you think it is easier or harder for women to get elected now than it was 10 years ago?
 (Response measurement in %)



In focus group discussions and key informant interviews, some argued that women’s access to politics was improving, but at a very slow rate:

“Now we have a lot of women’s groups that advocate for women; put a lot of women in parliament. It has improved from before. Before to now, it’s 40 years. Maybe we need another 40 years.”

The presence of women in parliament was seen as a positive step that could increase women’s representation in the future:

“There is a better chance for women now than in the past. Because with the little time our woman MP is up there she makes a difference in her constituency, so people will now realise that yes, women have potential to be leaders and make a difference.”

Men believed that it is easier because of the influence of education and awareness. One man from Malaita said:

“Currently I think women have high chances to get into parliament, because they have more trainings, workshops.”

However, men respondents acknowledged that it is still hard for women. Many participants argued that the environment had not become easier for women:

“Even if men have this [bad] character they still go in. Women not, they have to be perfect before they go in.”

Further, women think that dominance by men is still persistent in some ways. Some women voted for men because they thought that men dominate leadership areas and women are incapable of performing in those areas. One woman respondent said,

“I am from Aoke/Langalanga. Any woman standing there will not win because those areas are man dominated. I think a woman’s time (to lead) is far away...”

Attributes of a Good Woman Leader

“Women make good leaders. Despite the challenges, I believe I have a vision for my ward and country.”

*Woman former candidate,
key informant interview*

When asked about the qualities of a ‘good woman leader’, the common responses shared by both women and men participants were that women must be good role models, be family-oriented, and have Christian values. Other key attributes were that they must be trustworthy and honest, have a ‘good character’ and a ‘clean’ background, and hold their reputation in high regard. Education was seen as an important factor too, as being a member of parliament involves making laws. A good woman leader must also be connected with culture, be knowledgeable about it and be able to balance it with their formal education.

Both women and men confirmed that another important quality of a ‘good woman leader’ is to be humble, ‘simple’ and present in the community. They shared a common view that a good leader understands their role as a member of Parliament, so that they can articulate the national interest and be a voice for their constituents in the national policy-making sphere. Yet they also believed a good woman leader is someone who considers the needs of the community and the grassroots and is able to work and connect at their level.

Another key theme was that a good woman leader is not ‘selfish’. For example, she does not accept bribes and goes into Parliament to make positive changes and contribute to national development. Many participants noted the importance of a good attitude and being strong, brave and outspoken. In in-depth interviews, women participants added that a good woman leader must have leadership experience in order to perform well, and should also have a vision and a goal.

Men key informants shared that a good woman leader must have community connections and knowledge to be able to represent their communities, and understand and identify their needs. Additionally, they stated that a good woman leader thinks creatively and has innovative ideas that are relevant for their community to help in their development.

There were a lot of apparent contradictions in answers to this question, even by the same respondents. A good woman leader is outspoken and has leadership experience, but is humble and does not put herself above her community; she is simple but educated; she makes national policy but is accessible to everyone. It is clear that the expectations for women leaders are very high, and probably higher than the expectations for men leaders.

SECTION 2: CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS FOR WOMEN IN POLITICS

Summary of findings

- In spite of evidence to the contrary, many respondents thought the political environment in Solomon Islands is becoming more favourable to women's participation, with 64% of survey respondents agreeing that women and men "get the same chances" in terms of being elected in provincial and national elections.
- Focus group and interview participants suggested that women candidates are judged more harshly than men and can be judged on their husband's reputation as well as their own.
- 'Culture' was commonly nominated as a reason why women do not choose to enter politics, conceptualised as 'men's space'.
- Perceived barriers included women being "unwilling to put themselves forward" for leadership roles and not being well prepared.
- Interview and focus group participants (women and men) raised concerns about women voters not supporting women candidates and suggested that this affects electoral success.
- Attitudes towards women in leadership were seen to be influenced by the practices of the dominant churches.
- Women who have completed higher levels of formal education were perceived to be more likely to be elected.
- 'Money politics', a range of practices whereby candidates give or promise material resources to voters at election time, were seen as a barrier for women aspiring to political leadership roles.
- Whilst 60% of survey respondents believed political parties have significant influence on election outcomes, most focus group and interview participants suggested that the proliferation of parties and the common practice of vote-buying limited the influence of party policies on elections.

A Level Playing Field?

The survey data suggests that two thirds of people believe that women and men have the same opportunities to participate in political leadership. Sixty-four percent of respondents agreed that men and women get the same chances to be elected in national or provincial politics, and 32 per cent disagreed. There were no significant differences between the responses of men and women to this question. There were some differences between constituencies, with Baegu/Asifola reporting the highest proportion of positive responses (79%), and Gizo/Kolombangara the lowest (53%).

In focus group discussions and in-depth interviews, women were more likely to say

that in general men have more chances than women. Men, on the other hand, perceived the playing field as more equal. This conceptualisation is interesting as it does not line up with the historic rates of women's representation in politics in Solomon Islands.

Past research, as well as the recorded experiences of women former candidates and representatives collected for this research, highlights that there are gendered barriers in Solomon Islands politics which hinder women's electoral chances (see Baker 2018b; Billy 2002; Dicker, Billy & Barclay 2016; Soaki 2017; Wood 2014; UNDP 2019). Yet the survey results suggest that these barriers are either not recognised by the majority of respondents or are not considered significant.

Figure 3:

Do men and women get the same chances to be elected in national or provincial politics (by province)?

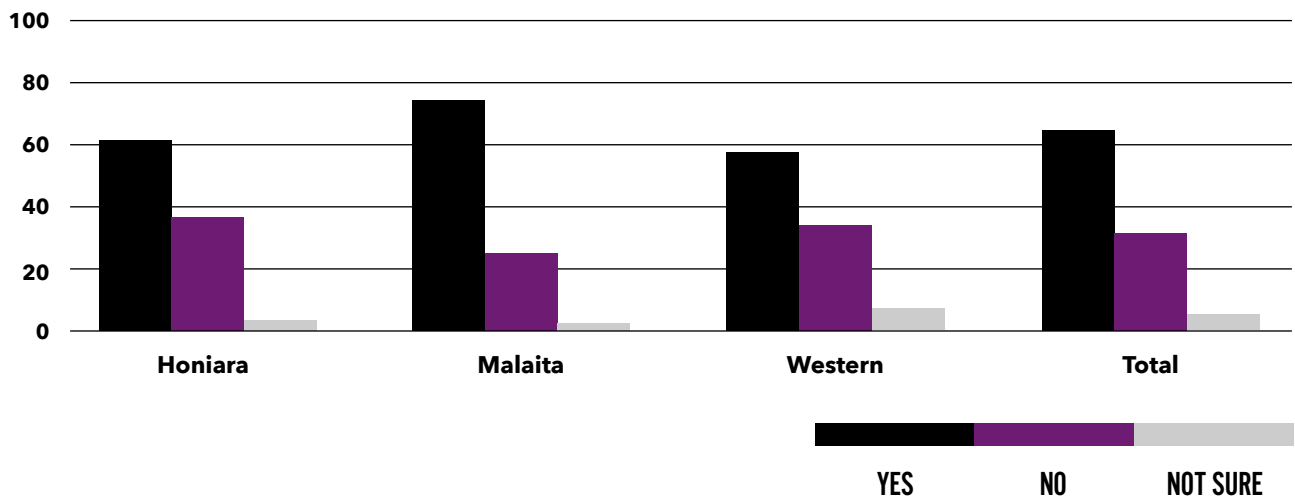


Table 4:

Do men and women get the same chances to be elected in national or provincial politics (by constituency)?

| CONSTITUENCIES | YES | NO | NOT SURE |
|---------------------|------------|------------|-----------|
| Baegu'u Asifola | 79% | 21% | 0% |
| Central Kwara'ae | 67% | 27% | 6% |
| North Vella Lavella | 63% | 30% | 7% |
| Central Honiara | 67% | 31% | 3% |
| West Honiara | 57% | 38% | 5% |
| East Honiara | 60% | 39% | 1% |
| Gizo/Kolombangara | 53% | 39% | 8% |
| Total | 64% | 32% | 4% |

Perceptions of Women Candidates

Research findings demonstrate that women entering politics in Solomon Islands are judged more harshly than men. This can be further complicated by family reputation, whereby a woman may be judged through the reputation of her husband. A woman interviewed in Honiara said that:

“Voters look at the background of the family.”

For women candidates especially, there is a common perception that a candidate’s husband will have influence if she is elected. The research found that people perceived husbands as inspiring their wives to go into politics; therefore, when women campaign, voters see their husbands at the back and judge their moral character along with that of the woman candidate. Interviews with both men and women suggested that many voters see women standing as initiated by her husband and his family members. Hence, the woman is judged by her family background rather than her potential or ability to lead.

One woman in White River noted during a focus group discussion:

“Some of the people say, husband blo woman nogud. Taim woman win, husband garem power [the woman’s husband is not a good man. When a woman wins, her husband gets power] ... people will find fault and reasons to judge the person’s partner.”

Indeed, the extent of a husband’s influence over a woman’s political actions was a topic that came up frequently in the research. Women candidates were sometimes seen as proxies for their husbands; during a focus group discussion for men in Honiara, it was argued that:

“People will see women standing as [their] husband’s idea.”

On the other hand, men also think that they do not want their wives to stand in politics because their wives are their prized possession and not something for the public to attack with disrespect. Men felt that wives are to be honoured and respected and hence they should remain in private. Another man said:

“Men do not want their wife to be there and have bad talks about her,”

Meaning they would not want other men to disparage her publicly.

The research also found that women are seen as reticent to put themselves forward to take on leadership roles, let alone stand for provincial and general elections. It was clear from the research that many women think women do not have the confidence to win an election. A woman interviewee in Western province observed:

“Women look down on themselves and think they are not capable to be a leader.”

When asked what the key barriers were for women who want to get into politics, a woman participant in a focus group said:

“Maybe they are not confident even though they have qualities. They doubt about themselves.”

Men also expressed the same sentiment during interviews and focus group discussions. One man in Honiara noted:

“They are not brave.” Another argued:

“Women don’t see themselves as leaders but constrain themselves to home and family, they don’t come out and demonstrate their capabilities.”

This is interesting when compared to the survey results, which show that a higher proportion of women (39%) compared to men (35%) said they held leadership roles in the community, including church leadership. This suggests that many women see themselves as leaders within their local networks. The definition of ‘leadership position’, however, is vague, and not all leadership positions are respected equally. Neither do they necessarily provide equal access to power and influence. Past research shows that where women exercise leadership in the church and community, it is often seen as an extension of domestic duties and not considered a qualifying factor for political leadership (UNDP 2019).

Table 5:

Do you hold a leadership position in your church or community?

| RESPONSE | MEN | WOMEN | TOTAL |
|-----------|------|-------|-------|
| Yes | 38% | 39% | 37% |
| No | 65% | 60% | 62% |
| Not sure | 0.3% | 0.5% | 0.4% |
| No answer | 0.6% | 0.3% | 0.4% |

Women’s perceived lack of preparation for political candidacy was seen as a barrier to women’s increased participation in politics.

For example, a man respondent from West Honiara warned:

“Don’t sleep in bed and wake up one morning and say I will run.”

Men perceived women’s preparation as underdeveloped:

“Preparation for women is very weak that is why a lot of women do not win the election.”

Women are seen to be unprepared in terms of policies and manifestos and because they are less likely to have associations with political parties. Some men also felt strongly that women should use men in their campaigning. As stated by one respondent in Malaita:

“Women need to prepare their platform. They need to strengthen their networks with men. Using women to campaign is not enough. Women must learn to work with key influencers.”

In this view, women’s perceived lack of preparation becomes a barrier to winning an election. Conversely, men’s dominance in networking and their ability to translate traditional and community relationships into political influence create a platform for winning.

This shows that women candidates are disadvantaged by their perceived lack of ‘groundwork’ and preparation. This highlights a gendered double standard, however, as men

are not necessarily doing more preparation than women for campaigns. From past research and the interviews conducted for this research with politicians and former candidates, it is not clear that there is a significant preparation gap between men and women candidates. The perceived ‘groundwork’ of men, instead, is often a by-product of the way men are more likely to be viewed as leaders by the community, and the way their networks are seen as politically salient in a way that women’s networks are not (see also UNDP 2019).

Men respondents suggested that current leaders have a role in creating, or at least in not actively challenging, barriers for women’s participation. Gender norms remain strong and continue to restrict women’s access to politics. Additionally, there is a call for a change of mindset and attitudes towards women running for office. Views of respondents reflect the need for more education and awareness on the value of gender balance in leadership positions.

Women Not Supporting Women

The notion of women not supporting other women is a commonly cited barrier to increased women’s representation in politics in Solomon Islands.

According to our national statistics, women make up around half the population of Solomon Islands, which raises a question about more women voting for women candidates. In this research, this was a common theme brought up in interviews and focus group discussions.

Our research found that both men and women perceived women as not supporting other women:

“My experience, I would say that even women do not support each other.”

*Woman, key informant interviewee,
Malaita*

“Women should take the blame because they don’t team up.”

*Man participant, Honiara focus
group discussion*

This was often attributed to jealousy:

“Women themselves are jealous and have negative comments or thinking about other women.”

*Woman, key informant interviewee,
Central Honiara*

“Jealousy is also one barrier, women are jealous of other women.”

*Man participant, Malaita focus
group discussion*

The idea of ‘women not supporting women’ is commonly considered in academic research, as well as in political debate in the Pacific and in candidate accounts of campaigning (see Baker 2018a). This creates a gendered double standard, however, whereby women are expected to prioritise gender over other identities – be they ethnic, religious, community, political ideology, or other – while men are not. Elise Huffer (2006) asks:

“Why is solidarity expected of other women when it is not expected of men with respect to other men?”

Others have argued that women candidates, as well as men candidates, do not actively solicit women’s votes. Women voters are therefore undervalued by candidates, as one participant from West Honiara explained:

“Women are here at the markets, but no one is interested in their votes.”

This suggests that it is not only women candidates but also women voters who are undervalued in the Solomon Islands political arena. If only men are seen as genuine political actors – both as voters and candidates – then this has an impact on women’s participation in politics across the board.

Influence of Political Parties

The Political Party Integrity Bill 2014 states that:

“A political party shall reserve for women, at least 10 percent of the total number of candidates it selects and endorses to contest and election.”

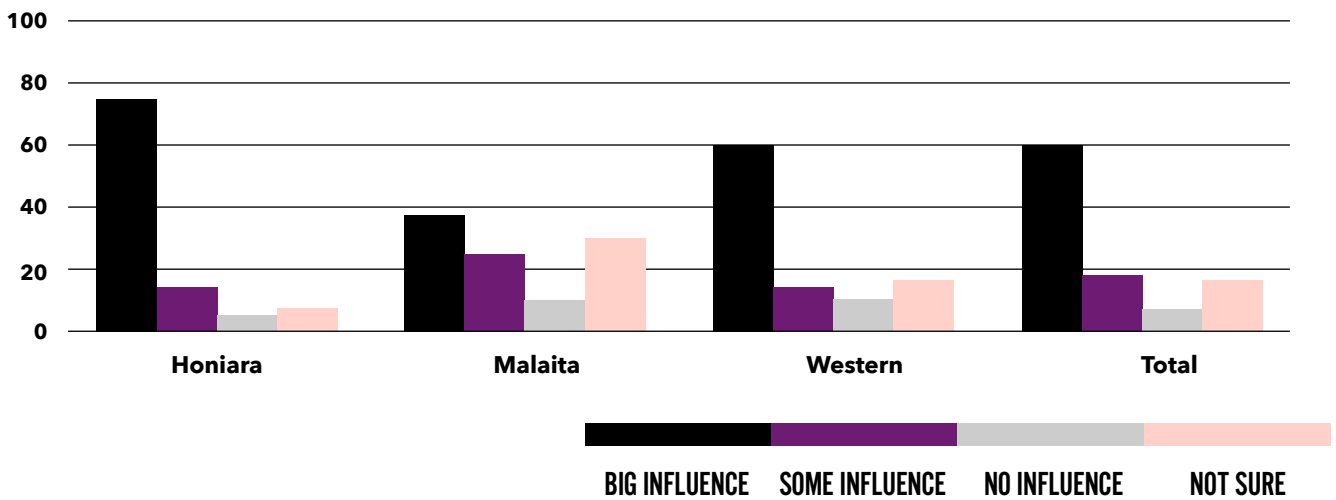
Yet a loophole in the legislation has meant that many parties are free to simply ignore this quota requirement. As a result, any potential advantage for women candidates has been negated.

Furthermore, most political parties where they do endorse women tend to take in women who have the potential to win, rather than take risks on those who may not be seen at the beginning to have a good chance. Voters also tend to look at individual candidates rather than political party platforms, meaning that even if women are affiliated with a party, it is of limited electoral value.

In the survey, 60% of respondents said political parties had a big influence on election results, while 17% said they had some influence; 16% were unsure; and 7% said they had no influence.

There were significant regional differences, however, as figure 4 below shows, which suggest parties are more influential in Honiara and far less influential in Malaita. In Honiara, 74% of respondents said that political parties had a big influence on election results, compared to 60% in Western and just 37% in Malaita.

Figure 4:
Do you think political parties have any influence on election results?



In focus group discussions and interviews, both men and women respondents generally agreed that political parties had very limited influence over elections even in Honiara.

Political party structures are weak and mostly people see party politics as an issue for members of Parliament but not necessarily voters. Some participants argued that political parties had influence over elections and women’s representation, but that such influence was limited and that most voters chose based on individual candidates rather than parties. Where parties could have an influence was through financing, as one man from Central Honiara noted:

“[There are] so many parties so they can influence with money.”

Most participants, however, said that parties had no influence, and that even where floats¹³ are full of young people and it looks like parties are popular, they do not impact on the vote. Even amongst their own members, political parties cannot necessarily rely on votes. One man in West Honiara said:

“People even join political parties, [but] they will vote for who they want, not the party.”

The common practice of vote-buying, and the influence of the Rural Constituency Development Fund (RCDF)¹⁴ were seen as having eroded the potential influence political parties could have:

“[The] parties formed are good. But now people go for what they see and what they feel. Their focus is on material things.”

Man participant, Central Honiara focus group discussion

“We neglect the manifestos of the parties coming around to campaign ... we neglect what is good policy.”

Man participant, West Honiara focus group discussion

The proliferation of political parties was noted as a negative that had decreased their potential influence:

“There are too many parties.”

Woman, Central Honiara, key informant interview

¹³ Floats – decorated cars, buses, trucks, and sometimes boats filled with supporters – are commonly used in campaigns in Honiara and some other parts of Solomon Islands, both for nomination rallies and in displays of support on the final day of campaigning.

¹⁴ The RCDF is a type of constituency development funding, money given to politicians for discretionary use in their constituencies. The size of RCDF in Solomon Islands has increased significantly in recent years.

“I think in Solomon Islands we have so many parties unlike other countries [that] do not have too many parties for election.”

*Woman key informant interviewee,
West Honiara*

Men participants in focus groups and interviews felt that the attitude of leaders in the political parties are not enabling of equality:

“Attitude blo leaders lo inside political parties. Women approach party but oketa no taken women in lo party ya. [It is the attitude of the leaders inside political parties. Women approach parties but they all do not take women.] Political parties don’t prepare to take women into political parties. So today it is harder for women than before.”

Culture and Religion

Like all nations, there is a strong cultural base to the political environment in Solomon Islands. ‘Culture’ can be said to include attitudes, customary beliefs, material traits, religious and social groupings, ethnic backgrounds, social norms and behaviours, and can be the source of contention and gender inequality. ‘Culture’ is one of the barriers identified by both men and women as one main reason for women not getting into politics. One woman from Central Honiara said of Solomon Islands culture in an interview:

“Women don’t come up. Perceptions of society, how we [are] brought up [to] look down on women.”

Yet another said:

“Culture influences the politics of this country and chances of women.”

‘Culture’ has a huge impact on how men and women perceive women, and women’s role in political leadership. This is partly due to the customary land tenure system which can be either matrilineal or patrilineal in Solomon Islands. The research confirmed the findings from past research (Maetala 2008) that although in matrilineal societies women were said to have resource ownership rights, this does not necessarily translate into leadership at the community or political level. This is also true for how women’s roles are perceived at different levels of society including family, community and church. For example, men and women in Honiara felt that ‘culture’ causes male dominance in the political leadership space.

One of the areas which might merit further in-depth study is use of the concept of *kastom* to reiterate women’s traditional leadership roles and gender stereotypes. *Kastom* is a term that can refer to shared traditions, but also to contemporary ideas and institutions perceived to be grounded in indigenous concepts and principles. In context, *kastom* is not synonymous with the Western ‘custom’ or ‘culture’ as the term is used in English, but is typically conceived as Melanesian ways from pre-contact period.

These ways inform attitudes and perceptions of what women can and cannot do in public. Yet *kastom* is a fluid concept that is used selectively and creatively and is for many Solomon Islanders a key mechanism for adapting to and channelling modernization and change. In this way, it is an opportunity as well as a potential barrier for women’s leadership. An example of this can be found in the neighbouring Autonomous Region of Bougainville, where women’s groups successfully advocated for the inclusion of reserved seats for women in the House of Representatives by drawing on customary traditions of matriliney and women’s contributions to community decision-making (Baker 2019).

The research found that men living in Honiara perceive Malaita as the most *kastom* conscious province. Hence, it was seen as the most hostile province for women’s political participation. Malaita is depicted as a province with heavily entrenched patriarchal norms on leadership. According to Maetala (2008), in Malaita men are the custodians of land. They are the heads of tribes and dictate the way society is organised. Leadership is passed down from fathers to sons or nephews. While this study did not go in depth to understand the underlying relations, Maetala argues that patrilineal land tenure systems are a barrier to women’s role in public life decision making.

Malaitan men who participated in this research agreed that ‘culture’ is a barrier to a certain degree, but they argue that this is changing and is becoming a less important consideration. For instance, at the time the research was carried out, the constituency of Baegu/Asifola had a woman member of the Provincial Assembly (MPA) from that area, Hon. Rose Liata. One respondent from the province said:

“In Malaita, we base so much on culture but these days culture is not so strong now.”

Yet while its influence may be waning, culture is still seen as a contributing factor to politics not being an equal level playing field for women and men.

For example, one woman participant argued that:

“Women are not allowed to stand ... how society looks at women, man becomes the boss of everything.”

Cultural practices for men and women differ in each province that the research covered. For example, for Gizo/Kolombangara and North Vella Lavella, land tenure is matrilineal. Land tenure in Solomon Islands is customary and hence its practices will influence how land decisions or management are carried out. Attitudes in these provinces towards women’s participation in leadership differ based on land tenure customs and practices. Fieldwork covered matrilineal societies in North Vella Lavella and Gizo/Kolombangara, where a woman MP was elected in a 2018 by-election and again in the 2019 general election.

The research also found that church influence in different communities has an impact on perceptions of women’s leadership. The research found that the Seventh Day Adventist Church is an influencer in Western Province and the Anglican Church is an influencer in Malaita, followed by South Seas Evangelical Church. In practice, this means that women’s leadership roles and attitudes to women in leadership are also affected by the practices of the dominant church in the area of study. Church values, principles and practices often guide and prescribe how much women are able to engage in politics at all levels as leaders.

Furthermore, the *wantok* system (relational ties) is strong in Solomon Islands and this system influences voting practices. For instance, one focus group participant in Western province noted the dominance in elections of the:

“Wantok system, so they just vote for their own people.”

People commonly vote for candidates because they are related through blood ties, marriage, land ties and/or through membership of clans and tribes. This kind of allegiance is difficult to change overnight. This is due to Solomon Islands’ strong social networks through extended family and language, with loyalty to a relation usually transcending any political party or manifesto. Relationship ties affect incumbent performance of both men and women; one woman respondent argued that:

“Former MPs’ actions and attitude [do not benefit the community], only their family benefit, so people do not want to vote them back in.”

Furthermore, ‘traditional’ leadership plays a distinct role in influencing votes. One woman from Western province argued:

“If we are from the same tribe, the chief will make an order for everyone to vote for someone. If not, family and relatives’ conflict will arise. It happens here all the time.”

This shows the impact of the tradition of male leadership:

“When we speak about leadership, we speak about men. So, already men dominate and there is a dominant language inside the community and hence in the society. Solomon’s Pidgin language covers men[’s] leadership and excludes women as leaders all the time.”

Therefore, leadership is perceived as men’s space. In this context, women are not seen as fit to take on leadership and public roles.

Education

The survey found that the majority of respondents completed at least primary education, with only 11% of respondents not completing primary schooling. Respondents believed that education – or rather, the lack of it – is a major barrier to women’s political leadership. One interviewee in Central Honiara suggested: “Literacy is a barrier to women. Solomon Islands has a high illiteracy rate for women, so it is a real barrier.” According to UNESCO, Solomon Islands has an adult literacy rate of 76.6%. According to the same report, the literacy rate for men is 83.7% and for women 69%, showing a significant gap.

The study found a prevalent idea that better educated women would have a greater chance of attaining political leadership positions. One respondent from Malaita said:

“With women, if education is poor, in the rural areas we have fewer women with knowledge or a good educational background. If we have enough educated women, we would give the chance for them to lead.”

People think that a ‘good education’ is a prerequisite for women to be political leaders. However, the case of former MP Hilda Kari shows us that women need more than formal education to win a campaign. In her three terms as an MP, Hilda Kari won her campaigns and maintained her position for two main reasons: first, she was one of the educated women from Guadalcanal province and, second, she effectively established a network of voters.

Education, therefore, can have an equalizing effect. A man respondent from Western province said:

“I think there’s [the] same chances, because many women nowadays are well educated compared to the past. So, I think there’s [the] same chances.”

Money Politics

Another key barrier is related to what is known in Solomon Islands as ‘money politics’. Both men and women agree that the giving of money and gifts by candidates to voters before elections is a common practice, as noted in past research and described as ‘vote buying.’ Yet people perceived this practice as supporting their livelihoods and building relationships rather than ‘vote buying’. Interviews in both rural and urban constituencies found that people want money to help with their livelihoods and it is seen by one woman as

“The main thing people use to make people vote.”

Participants highlighted changing attitudes towards money and the use of it, as alluded to by a man respondent:

“More and more people want material things.”

This is by no means a universal driving factor for voting decisions, but the research showed that many voters perceived elections as an opportunity to increase their personal and material circumstances.

Findings support the argument, made by various scholars, that the economics of elections disadvantage women (see Baker 2018b; Soaki

2017; Wood 2014). Women often lack the money to campaign. One respondent from Central Honiara suggested:

“Women cannot overcome situations like men because they do not have money.”

Interviews conducted across all the research sites found that money plays an important role in the outcome of elections.

Access to money can also increase political influence at election time. A comparison of the survey results showed that a high percentage of people think that women leaders, chiefs, youth leaders, community leaders and church leaders have some influence on voting practices. Respondents were more likely to see businessmen as influential than these community leaders.

As Soaki (2017) suggests, people in the rural areas are distanced from the economic ecosystem of the country. Hence, immediate needs such as school fees and building hardware are often addressed through distribution of Rural Constituency Development Fund (RCDF). This gives power to the incumbent member of Parliament because they control the dispersal of RCDF. Access to RCDF – or the lack of it – can determine whether women or men are winning candidates or not. Soaki argues that many voters conceptualise the allocations of funds as:

“Personal favours by the elected member rather than duties inherent to the office”,

a sentiment reflected in this research. Participants saw the dispersal of RCDF by MPs as a tool for relationship building, rather than a simple duty of an MP. A man respondent from Malaita said:

“Politics in the rural areas is not about policies and laws but it is about the mark that a leader leaves on the people. For example, you make the road, it eases the women’s loads. This is what establishes the MP’s relation with the people.”

From the survey it is clear that women felt that there is no law that stops women getting into politics, but an absence of legal barriers does not necessarily mean there is an equal playing field:

“There’s no law that says only men or only women to go into politics.”

*Women key informant interviewees,
Western Province*

“Laws allow anyone to stand, but at the end of the day men get the seats, it’s people’s choice.”

Woman, East Honiara, key informant interview

Men perceived that one of the major barriers to women’s increased participation in politics is the fact that money politics matters to voting citizens:

“Money seems to be a determining factor which men in most cases use to win.”

Man participant, West Honiara, focus group discussion

“Men stop women getting in because of money.”

Man participant, Malaita, focus group discussion

Although politics is seen as a level playing field, the barriers to women’s participation in political leadership, including money politics, outweigh equality in practice at all levels of the political system and process.

Both men and women saw money politics as getting worse. Women felt that due to incumbent politicians’ access to money including RCDF, women cannot win elections if contesting against an incumbent MP.

SECTION 3: TEMPORARY SPECIAL MEASURES

Summary of findings

- There was very low awareness of TSM throughout the areas in which research was conducted, with 76% of respondents saying they had not heard of TSM prior to the survey.
- Once informed about TSM, 92% of respondents said they supported the introduction of special measures in their provincial assembly and in national parliament (also 92%).
- Participants were open to a range of different TSM models including the 'safety net' model, reserved seats and candidate quotas.¹⁵
- People who support TSM in principle may nevertheless be concerned about risks associated with its introduction. Concerns included women candidates not being respected, women being unprepared for a political career, the possibility of family discord and making changes to the political system.
- The research suggests that engaging grassroots networks within different social groups would be crucial to a successful TSM campaign.

Knowledge of Temporary Special Measures

Findings from the research show that there is very limited awareness of TSM throughout the areas in which research was conducted.

Of all survey respondents, 76 per cent had heard nothing of TSM prior to the survey, 15 per cent had heard a little and 9 per cent had heard a lot. Overall, awareness was higher than average in Honiara and lower than average in Western Province, as shown below.

Table 6:

Have you heard of TSM or temporary special measures for women in politics?

| PROVINCE/AREA | HEARD NOTHING | HEARD A LITTLE | HEARD A LOT |
|---------------|---------------|----------------|-------------|
| Honiara | 74% | 14% | 11% |
| Malaita | 76% | 16% | 9% |
| Western | 82% | 15% | 3% |
| Total | 76% | 15% | 9% |

¹⁵ The 'safety net' model, adopted by the Government of Samoa, establishes a minimum number of seats for women in parliament. If this level of representation is not met through the general election, the highest-polling unsuccessful women candidates in the election are given additional seats to meet the threshold.

The majority of participants in focus groups discussions throughout the country had heard nothing about TSM. Some had heard a little about it, but few could explain TSM in any detail:

“I only heard about reserved seats - that we should give women ten seats reserved for women. I heard this from the radio, newspaper, Facebook.”

Woman participant, Central Honiara, focus group discussion

“I heard a little bit about it. Reserved seats but due to criticism they say women are better off in the normal competition, I worked with government and I heard that.”

Woman participant, West Honiara, focus group discussion

“Heard a little bit about. To have a woman that represents us in decision-making in the provincial assembly. We heard it when there was a meeting at Gizo with the council of women. They said that we are going to have 3 regions and we will choose a woman from our region to represent us in the provincial assembly to be our voice.”

Woman participant, Western Province, focus group discussion

The level of awareness from participants in key informant interviews was higher, as would be expected given the targeted nature of interviews, but broader knowledge of TSM was still relatively low. Some participants from Malaita and Western Province had attended TSM workshops. Others had heard about TSM at women’s meetings when guest speakers were present to speak on the topic. Still more had heard about TSM from informal discussions with other women:

“There has been a meeting on TSM last year in Gizo. I was not able to attend it but I just heard it from the saving club women representatives in our community.”

Woman, Gizo/Kolombangara, key informant interview

“I heard from a few women who speak about it at church.”

Woman, East Honiara, key informant interview

In many of the in-depth interviews, however, participants knew little or nothing about TSM. This was true of over half of the men interviewed for this project. This suggests that overall the level of knowledge on TSM in Solomon Islands is extremely low.

Support for Temporary Special Measures

The research suggests significant support for TSM in the community. The survey included a brief explanation of TSM for those respondents who had not heard of it or did not think they fully understood it.

When asked after this explanation, 92 per cent of respondents said they supported TSM in the provincial assemblies, and the same proportion said they supported TSM in the national Parliament.

The support levels were relatively consistent between men and women and geographically.

Figure 6:
Do you support TSM for women in the provincial assembly?

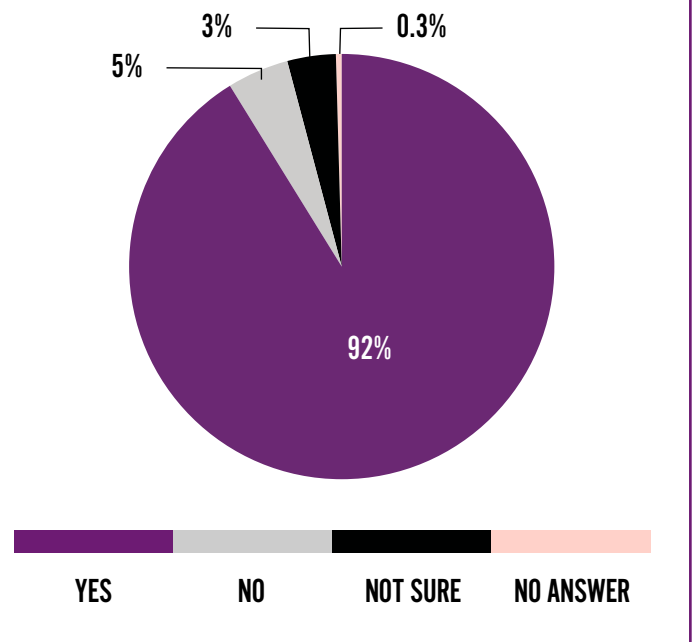
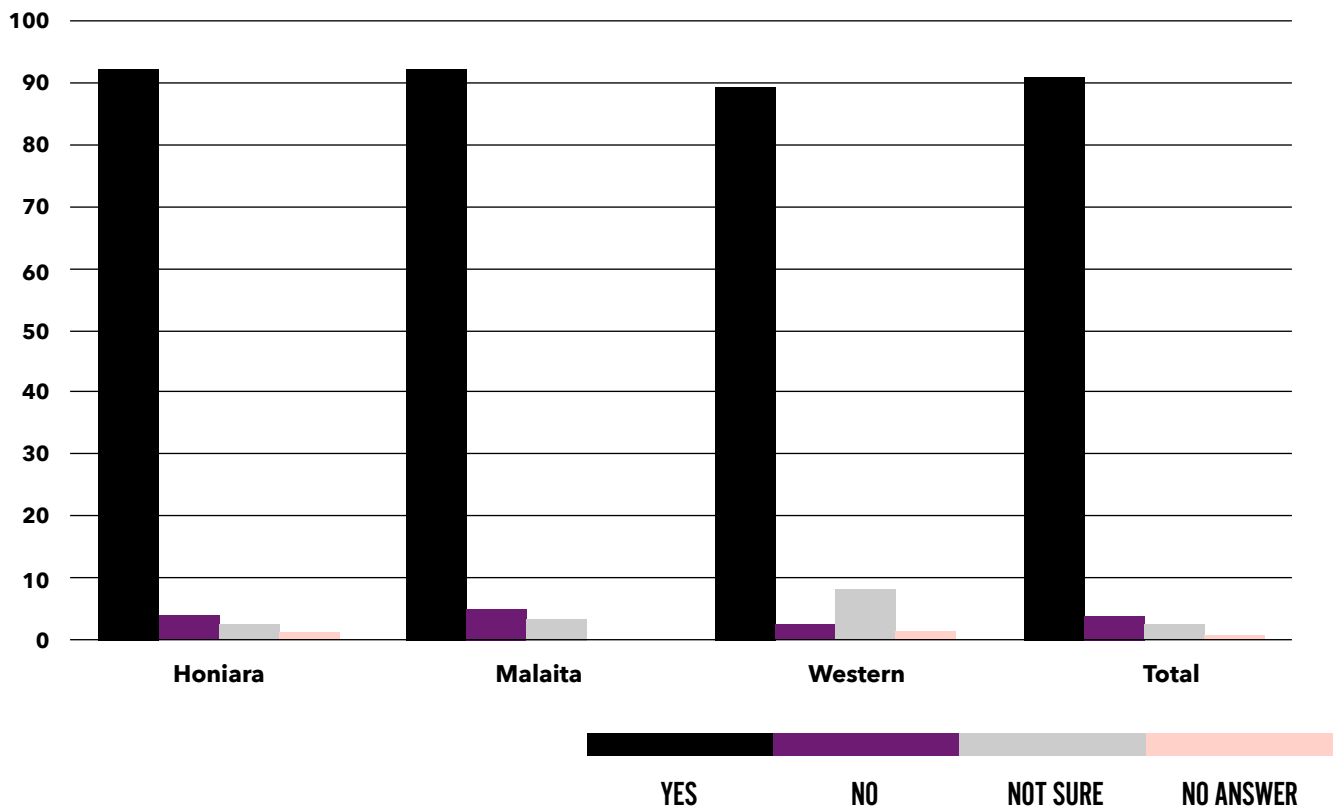


Figure 7:
Do you support TSM for women in the national parliament?



In focus group discussions and interviews, most participants supported the idea of TSM at both provincial and national levels. They saw TSM as a measure that would create space for women to go into politics since the normal electoral environment is difficult for women. Also, those that are supportive believe that women are an agent of change and think that TSM can be a platform for them to perform their leadership capabilities. Support was especially high in the focus groups for women participants in Western Province, but present in all focus groups:

“For me lo tingting blo me, hem good idea ya [In my opinion, this is a good idea].”

Woman participant, Gizo/Kolombangara, focus group discussion

“Yes, good idea and we support it time [for] women [to] go inside [Parliament].”

Woman participant, North Vella Lavella, focus group discussion

“It’s a good idea because it’s good to see the capability and the potential of women in the provincial and national level. There will be chances for woman because of TSM and we can see the changes they will make.”

Man participant, Central Honiara, focus group discussion

“Yes it is a good idea ... I think this is a chance to let women showcase their leadership capabilities.”

Woman, Western Province, key informant interview

“Yes, the normal electoral process is still unfavourable for women, so it would be a good idea to create space for them.”

Man, Central Honiara, key informant interview

"I think at least we try, it's worth trying out new things."

Woman, Central Honiara, key informant interview

"Yes, it's a good idea. Women can become leader in the government. If TSM is not put in then women don't have the chance to be a leader at the provincial or national parliament."

Woman, East Honiara, key informant interviewee

On the other hand, some participants were unsure whether to support the idea of TSM or not and others, including women, were opposed to the idea:

"It needs to be justified why providing such a measure is beneficial for the country. What would be the economic impact? What would they do different compared to the current status? Will it improve the quality of life?"

Man, East Honiara, key informant interview

"No, let the women go through elections ... I know a little bit of reserved seats, but I don't really support it."

Woman, West Honiara, key informant interviewee

"I will not support it. And I think it's not a good idea. Because me no likem oketa woman inside lo politics. Me tingim oketa man nomoa fitim role ya [I do not like women in politics. I think only men fit that role]."

Woman, North Vella Lavella, key informant interview

Participants suggested that there were other ways to increase women's representation without introducing TSM. One such proposal was changing the electoral system from first-past-the-post to preferential voting. Another was establishing a women-only political party.

Other participants, especially women interviewees, were unconvinced of the viability of TSM in Solomon Islands, given that national leaders seemed unwilling to support it:

"Yes, I think it's a good idea, but then our national leaders do not accept it as yet."

Some support was dependent on the type of TSM being proposed. In general, there was a lot more support for models in which women representatives were elected and less support for those in which they were appointed:

"TSM must have to put an emphasis on that these women have to be voted in, they must be elected by the people and voted by the people. ... Not political appointees. We've gone past that time. We must show that we're not beggars. We women must show that we are capable of playing on that field with the men."

Woman, Western Province, key informant interview

Many participants, including this man in Malaita were also confused about what TSM might look like in reality:

"Is it temporary, how can we differentiate their power in parliament, it is temporary or permanent power? I'm still confused."

The research uncovered serious information gaps that will need to be filled by awareness programs at the grassroots level:

"Yes it's good but we need good awareness before we understand this idea."

Man participant, Malaita, focus group discussion

"It's a good idea to take up, with wider awareness on it throughout the country. We need people to really understand it rather than calling it a free hand out."

Woman, Honiara, key informant interviewee

From the research, we can see that people, once informed about TSM by our researchers, were generally supportive of its introduction. This is related to the large majority of people who want to see more women participating in the political arena. However, we can still see that there is still a large information gap in relation to TSM.

These results suggest that when the information gap around TSM is remedied, people are likely to support the introduction of TSM.

Different Models of Temporary Special Measures

From the research, there are a number of preferred TSM models and suggestions mentioned by the participants to improve the participation of women in the political arena. It is important to note that while some key informants had knowledge of different TSM models already, others were hearing about different models for the first time from the qualitative researchers. The models discussed were the 'safety net' model, reserved seats and party candidate quotas.

One popular model, especially amongst the women focus group participants, was the 'safety net system' adopted by the Government of Samoa. This model establishes a minimum number of seats for women; if this level of representation is not met at a general election, additional women – the highest-polling unsuccessful candidates in the election – are given seats to meet the threshold:

“Women come second lo votes na for tekem seats osem” - [“Women who come second highest in votes are the ones who take the (reserved) seats.”]

Woman participant, Gizo/Kolombangara, focus group discussion

“Normal election noma and woman second highest votes na ba tekem oketa reserved seats ya. Because if umi women appointim oketa women for go inside and not voted in, ba hem no fair. So everyone na vote but hem come second ya” - [“Normal elections the woman with the second highest votes takes the reserved seat. It would not be fair if women were appointed and not voted in.”]

Woman participant, Gizo/Kolombangara, focus group discussion

This model was seen as popular because it requires all candidates to go through the same electoral process, with the TSM system acting as a safety net only if a minimum threshold is not met. This point of difference could counter the 'free seats' criticism levelled at the TSM proposal at the national level. This model also addresses any legal issues relating to creating a separate constituency for reserved seats since, under this model, voters are not required to cast an extra vote.

Another model favoured by participants was reserved seats. This system sets aside a specific number of seats for women. There are a number of ways as to how these reserved seats can be filled, including election and appointment and it depends

on the decision of the government of the day. However, the adoption of this TSM model does not prevent women from competing for the open seats. Views on this approach by supporters highlighted the substantive impact women coming into politics through a reserved seat system could have:

“With reserved seats, women will know that no matter what, they will have a representative inside the house to be their voice because the seats are reserved only for women.”

Woman participant, Western Province, focus group discussion

“Reserved seats to give more space for women to really make an impact.”

Man participant, West Honiara, focus group discussion

A third model viewed favourably by participants was candidate quotas for parties. This model mandates parties to select a certain proportion of women as candidates. As mentioned above, this type of quota is in fact already in place in Solomon Islands, but a lack of political will and a lack of enforcement have meant the relevant legislation has not been effective.

This model was seen by some participants as especially favourable as it does not result in additional seats and therefore additional cost for taxpayers. It could also support the perception that there is a level playing field for all candidates, as both men and women compete for the same seats. Yet past experience in Solomon Islands has shown that without strong enforcement mechanisms, such a quota is in practice ineffective.

Regardless of the model of TSM introduced, many participants agreed that it should be trialled at the provincial level before it is introduced at the national level:

“Provincial government, it should start there and come up.”

Woman participant, Central Honiara, focus group discussion

“It is good that we start in the provincial level so that they can see that it works in this level before it can be worked in the national level.”

Woman, Malaita, key informant interview

The importance of different groups of women being represented was also highlighted, in that it would not be just elite women who would gain political entry through TSM. It was also suggested that there be provisions for women with disability to be represented in any TSM system.

Risks of Introducing Temporary Special Measures

Even when participants supported TSM, many were wary of the associated or perceived risks involved with its introduction. These included the risk of women who entered politics through TSM not being respected:

“Men will think, how come women sit there because they didn’t get elected? Women have to run with men.”

Man participant, West Honiara, focus group discussion

“People don’t put her there. They didn’t put in that woman by their voice or vote. There is a saying ‘your vote your voice.’ My community didn’t put in the woman. So, there will be criticism that we didn’t put that woman there.”

Woman participant, West Honiara, focus group discussion

“Men will look down on the women who enter under ... TSM.”

Woman participant, Western Province, focus group discussion

Participants were concerned that women might face extra hardship because they did not enter politics the same way that men did. One man in Malaita raised the possibility that men politicians might not want to work with women:

“Sometimes men will not want to hear women’s views so it will be a challenge.”

In focus group discussions and interviews with women participants, there was also concern that introducing TSM might cause disharmony in families and would result in marriage break-ups if women entered politics against the wishes of their husbands. It was also suggested that the TSM conversation might cause disharmony amongst women’s groups if they did not have a united agenda on TSM.

Women entering politics unprepared as a result of the introduction of TSM was a potential issue

flagged by participants. As a result, it was perceived that they might not perform well in parliament, creating a poor image for not only themselves but for women who wished to follow them into politics. It was suggested that they might also be led into corrupt practises by incumbent politicians (given women politicians can also be corrupt). Support programs for first-time women politicians could be a mitigating factor for this particular risk.

Men respondents in particular were concerned about the effect TSM might have on the political system. Both men and women discussed the need to change laws to enable TSM, to clarify the roles of women who entered politics through TSM and to clarify their voting rights. One man from West Honiara stressed that any measures should be temporary:

“It needs to be tried but if it affects the principle of democracy, it needs to be reconsidered.”

There were a lot of questions from men on the practicalities of TSM should it be introduced. Concerns were also raised about women representing only women’s interests rather than the national interest. Men expressed concern that when women win seats they will be representing women’s interests rather than the interests of the wider populace.

Whatever form of awareness on TSM is designed and implemented will need to consider addressing this perception. Yet, as highlighted in the answers to the question ‘why should there be more women in politics?’, women do not feel adequately represented by their predominantly male representatives. There is a gap in the substantive representation of women in Solomon Islands that necessitates measures such as TSM.

Acknowledging the concerns that participants in the research raised about TSM will be important in any future TSM campaign. It should be noted, however, that many of these perceived risks rest on assumptions and biases about women as leaders. For instance, these findings indicate that women who get in through any TSM system are already seen as less capable than men by both voters and fellow politicians. In this case, regional experience will be helpful; studies in the French Pacific territories, for example, have found that women who entered politics because of the ‘parity law’ are on average more highly-educated than their man counterparts (Bargel, Guyon & Rettig 2010).

Strategies to Promote Temporary Special Measures

More awareness in relation to TSM was the primary suggestion for improving women's representation from participants in the research. A majority of respondents believed that a wide-reaching awareness campaign would go a long way in promoting TSM. In focus group discussions with women, there was a belief that people would support TSM if they had enough information about it. Men also raised the need for more awareness:

"We need more awareness of this idea to come first because we really do not know what this is. It is good for us to understand this idea before you people can come."

*Man participant, Malaita,
focus group discussion*

"People need to understand TSM so there is a need to [provide] awareness. Conflict happens because of lack of understanding. Community level needs to be educated about TSM."

*Man participant, Malaita,
focus group discussion*

Participants also identified the need for tailored campaigns to different communities and education levels to promote TSM. Adjusting campaign techniques to suit different groups of people was seen as very important:

"If they can come on community level and talk with people and ensure they really understand. The women not in school don't really know [about it] - there needs to be an awareness that will educate people about TSM so that they support the idea."

*Woman participant, West Honiara,
focus group discussion*

"I think it needs to be explained well to the people in the community to understand it. Personally myself I really have to listen hard and try to understand and I didn't quite have it right. So if someone like me cannot understand right how much more for others in the community."

*Woman, Malaita,
key informant interview*

Participants suggested using different methods to reach different groups, such as social media for young people. One suggestion from Malaita was that face-to-face awareness should be led by people

from within each province and not from outside. This was seen as important in getting people on board with the idea of TSM:

"The wider consultation of the TSM needs big work and it must go down to 33 wards within Malaita ... in Malaita it is better for a woman in Malaita to go and not a woman from west so that you can sit down with them."

*Woman, Malaita,
key informant interview*

This could also mitigate the potential risk identified in previous attempts of a TSM campaign being seen as led by development partners. Creating a campaign to promote TSM that is grassroots – and, equally importantly, that is seen by people as grassroots – was seen as important. Involving different people – young and old, men and women – in TSM programming and the wider conversation around TSM was also recommended.

Participants encouraged women's groups to collaborate on TSM awareness. There was a concern that divisions within the women's movement could be exploited to discredit the TSM movement. Further, different women's groups have different networks throughout the country, meaning working together on a campaign would be far more effective than working separately:

"They need to work together to make the awareness especially to rural areas and others areas as schools, church and communities."

*Woman participant,
focus group discussion*

"Women themselves must work together with one mind and good heart to support each other with the idea of TSM."

*Woman, Western Province,
key informant interview*

Utilising existing networks – such as social groups, church groups, and savings clubs – was identified as an important potential strategy to help promote TSM. Word of mouth was seen as particularly effective in spreading ideas. Furthermore, institutions, especially churches, are well-respected and their support can be influential within communities:

“We Melanesians we pass on messages through conversation. Umi no wriem [we do not write it down]. It’s word of mouth. So groups can help.”

*Woman, Western Province,
key informant interview*

“Even though we have the national council of women, our strength is still back in the churches in the communities. Churches are influential. Work in line with the churches.”

Woman, key informant interview

Participants also recognised the importance of learning from regional and global TSM experiences. Drawing on lessons from other countries that have introduced TSM – including Pacific neighbours such as Samoa, Vanuatu and the Autonomous Region of Bougainville – could be valuable for Solomon Islands.

KEY MESSAGES FROM THIS RESEARCH

The Perceptions of Women as Leaders in Solomon Islands research project produced wide-ranging findings. While some confirm the findings of other studies on women's political participation in Solomon Islands, this was the first large-scale research project to focus on perceptions of TSM in Solomon Islands. Here are three key messages from the research.

- 1. While many Solomon Islanders see politics as a level playing field, it is obvious that many factors are holding women back. While gradual change may help to remove these barriers, in the short-term TSM may be necessary to normalise women's political leadership in Solomon Islands.**

The research found that Solomon Islanders are generally supportive of having more women in politics. At the same time, many people also believe women currently have equal chances to men in terms of participating in politics. Factors highlighted in the research, including educational disparities, resource imbalances and masculinised ideas of political leadership show that the playing field is far from level. While recent gains, including the election of two women as parliamentarians, are to be celebrated, the pace of change is slow. TSM might be necessary as a short-term measure to increase women's representation in politics and to normalise the presence of women in political decision-making.

- 2. General knowledge of TSM in Solomon Islands is extremely low. Yet when people are informed about TSM, they are likely to support it.**

The research found that the vast majority of people in Solomon Islands know nothing or very little about TSM. This highlights the critical need for awareness on TSM. When educated about TSM, however, an overwhelming number of respondents supported its use to increase the number of women in politics. The people of Solomon Islands are open to the idea of TSM, but the messaging is important. In the research, participants were learning about TSM from TSM advocates. If TSM is presented for the first time in a negative light, people may not be so inclined to support it. This means that TSM advocates must ensure they lead awareness around TSM and counter negative messaging.

- 3. While many people are supportive of TSM in principle, there are many perceived risks in its introduction. Any TSM campaign must engage with these perceived risks.**

These perceived risks include women who enter politics through TSM being seen as less capable, not being supported to do their jobs well and having unclear roles in politics. Changes to the electoral system were also viewed with concern, even if participants were supportive of the end goal. It is important that any future TSM campaign acknowledge the concerns about TSM and work to counter them.

CONCLUSION

This research on perceptions of women as leaders in Solomon Islands offers important contextual background and information on attitudes towards women in politics, the challenges and barriers women face in the political arena and perceptions of TSM. It suggests new directions for policy and programming approaches in relation to women's participation in politics. These new directions are covered in the recommendations.

There are many encouraging findings in this research. In line with other studies, the research found widespread support for increasing the number of women in politics. The research also found that an overwhelming number of respondents, once educated about TSM for women in politics, support its introduction.

While there are no legal barriers to women's full participation in politics as voters, candidates and elected officials, the Solomon Islands context remains difficult. Barriers are complex and evolving, with newer issues such as money politics arising even as older issues, such as customary ideas of leadership, appear to be somewhat diminishing. These barriers are also not clear to some people, with many believing that politics is an equal playing field, despite the enduring absence of women.

In this political environment, TSM could be an appropriate measure to increase women's representation in the short-term and normalise women's political leadership in the long-term. This research has raised some important points on how an effective TSM campaign might be carried out in Solomon Islands. The research suggests that, while not without risks, there is an appetite for TSM reform.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research findings, 15 recommendations have been developed across the three research thematic areas. The research team encourages the Government, women's groups, donors and other stakeholders and partners working in this space in Solomon Islands to consider these recommendations and how they might align with short-, medium- and long-term work on women's leadership, including programming, policy development and legislative reform.

Attitudes towards Women in Politics

1. Government, donor and development partners work in collaboration with women's rights organisations and civil society organisations (CSOs) to ensure gender awareness programs – both specific to women's leadership and more broadly – are locally owned, developed and informed; are linked to local ideas and policies; incorporate the history of patriarchy and how it informs the bedrock of cultural and gender based norms; and recognise cultural diversity across Solomon Islands and the need to tailor messaging to different contexts.
2. Women's Rights Action Movement (WRAM) and the National Women's Forum Convenors (National Council of Women, Voice Blong Mere Solomon Islands, West 'Are 'Are Rokotanikeni Association, Young Women's Christian Association and Young Women's Parliamentary Group) work closely with CSOs, the Government and key stakeholders to create targeted and tailored training of various individuals and groups to recognise and counter the high expectations of women leaders, including: women leaders at the national and community level; men advocates for gender equality; church leaders; community leaders; and MPs, MPAs (MP – Member for Parliament and MPA – Member for Provincial Assembly) and candidates for political office. Furthermore, these organisations should examine entry points for school curriculum messaging to normalise women's leadership.
3. Government, donor and development partners work with and appropriately resource key women's rights organisations and CSOs, including the National Council of Women, to support aspiring women candidates to have access to skills development throughout the electoral cycle.
4. Women's rights organisations and CSOs, including the National Women's Forum, create a campaign to raise the profile of women in leadership in order to educate the public on women's leadership and to provide a counter-narrative to shift mindsets, highlighting examples of role models and using positive messaging.

Challenges and Barriers for Women in Politics

1. Women's rights organisations and CSOs, including the National Council of Women, as well as development partners work to engage men and men advocates for gender equality at the local, provincial and national levels more fully in awareness, trainings and strategies to increase women's political participation.
2. Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs (MWYCFA), women's rights organisations and CSOs, including National Council of Women and WRAM, and development actors work with the Political Parties Commission to advocate for parties complying with the 10 per cent women candidates' provision, including encouraging better enforcement of the law and assisting in linking parties with aspiring woman candidates through the dissemination of manifestos.
3. Women's rights organisations ensure the goals of the National Women's Forum, in terms of TSM and women's political participation more broadly, are promoted. This includes connecting strategically with Government agencies and gender focal points.

-
4. Women's rights organisations and development partners, with support from Government and donor partners, invest in intending women candidates to develop tailored, realistic and locally-informed campaign strategies well in advance of elections; review and revise existing candidate training curriculums to be better informed by evidence and local experience; and include social media campaigning advice for women candidates.
 5. Women's rights organisations, CSOs and development partners engage with churches to influence positive change in terms of women in politics.
 6. Women's rights organisations, CSOs and development partners create targeted voter education programs for women voters on voter rights.
4. Government and donor agencies support and resource the work of women's rights organisations, CSOs, and the National Women's Forum in advocating TSM while ensuring that initiatives are locally led.
 5. Explore options for legislative change to enable TSM at all levels of politics, including further research into the types of TSM that are most suitable for the Solomon Islands legislative and political context.

Temporary Special Measures

1. Women's rights organisations create a large-scale awareness program on TSM with target-specific messaging, including discussion on how to mitigate the risks identified in this research. Utilise social media, especially Facebook, to educate young people on TSM.
2. Learn from TSM experiences in the Pacific including inviting representatives to share their experiences to inform the proposed legislative approach to TSM in Solomon Islands.
3. Ensure a collective and inclusive commitment from women's rights organisations, CSOs, the National Women's Forum and the national women's machinery more broadly in support of TSM.

ANNEX: RESEARCH TOOLS AND TSM INFOGRAPHIC

Infographic

EQUALITY VERSUS EQUITY



In the first image, it is assumed that everyone will benefit from the same supports. They are being treated equally.



In the second image, individuals are given different supports to make it possible for them to have equal access to the game. They are being treated equitably.



In the third image, all three can see the game without any supports or accommodations because the cause of the inequity was addressed. The systemic barrier has been removed.

Focus groups: Proposed lines of inquiry

Should there be more women in politics in Solomon Islands? Why/why not?

Should there be more women in politics in this province? Why/why not?

Does this province do better or worse than most other provinces in Solomon Islands for women's participation in politics? Why?

Does this constituency do better or worse than other constituencies for women's participation in politics? Why?

What do you think influences people's votes in this constituency?

Do political parties have a big influence on politics in this constituency?

What are the key barriers for women who want to go into politics? What might make it easier for these women?

What makes a good woman leader in the community/in provincial politics/in national politics?

What is the ideal number/proportion of women in politics?

Does politics give the same chances to men and women? Yes/No. Why?

Do men and women get the same chances to get elected in national or provincial politics? Why/why not?

Do women have a better chance to be elected now than in the past?

What do you know about TSM, or temporary special measures for women in politics?

[Present visual tool & explanation here]

Do you think TSM for women in the provincial assembly is a good idea? Why/why not?

Do you think TSM for women in the national parliament is a good idea? Why/why not?

[Infographic here]

- Example a - women are appointed to seats, not elected. These seats are added on to existing seats.
- Example b - there are reserved seats for women that only women can contest, but everyone can vote. These seats are added on to existing seats.
- Example c - there is a safety net measure where the highest polling women candidates are given additional seats in parliament if not enough women are elected outright.

Are there better or worse TSM models?

What do you think might be the risks of TSM?

Key informant interviews: Proposed prompts

Should there be more women in politics in Solomon Islands? Why/why not?

Should there be more women in politics in this province? Why/why not?

Does this province do better or worse than most other provinces in Solomon Islands for women's participation in politics? Why?

What makes a good woman leader in the community/in provincial politics/in national politics?

What is the ideal number/proportion of women in politics?

Does politics give the same chances to men and women? Yes/No. Why? Do men and women get the same chances to get elected in national or provincial politics? Why/why not?

What are the key barriers for women who want to go into politics?

Do women have a better chance to be elected now than in the past?

What do you know about TSM, or temporary special measures for women in politics?

How did the TSM conversation start in your community/constituency?

What has been your role in the TSM debate in this province?

Have political parties had a role in the TSM debate? Could they have a role in the future?

Do you think TSM for women in the provincial assembly is a good idea? Why/why not?

Do you think TSM for women in the national parliament is a good idea? Why/why not?

Has your opinion on TSM changed over time? If so what changed your opinion?

Are you aware of different models of TSM? [If no, inform of different models].

What is your preferred model of TSM? Why?

Do you see any risks to introducing TSM?

Do you think the women who would enter politics because of TSM would face any challenges?

How do you think groups could work better together to promote TSM?

Survey

| | | | | |
|--|-----------------|----------------|----------------|----------|
| ENUMERATOR: | | | | |
| VILLAGE: | | | | |
| PROVINCE: | | | | |
| SEX: | Male | | Female | |
| AGE: | 18-30 | 31-54 | 55+ | |
| WHERE DO YOU LIVE? | Urban | Peri-Urban | Rural | |
| WHERE WERE YOU BORN? | Urban | Peri-Urban | Rural | |
| HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION | None | Primary | Secondary | Tertiary |
| DO YOU COME FROM A MATRILINEAL OR PATRILINEAL SOCIETY? | Matrilineal | | Patrilineal | |
| DO YOU HOLD A LEADERSHIP POSITION IN YOUR CHURCH OR COMMUNITY? | Yes | No | No Answer | |
| WHICH RELIGIOUS DENOMINATION DO YOU BELONG TO? | Anglican | Catholic | SSEC | |
| | SDA | United | CFC | |
| | Other Christian | Other religion | No religion | |
| HAVE YOU EVER VOTED FOR A WOMAN IN A NATIONAL OR PROVINCIAL ELECTION? | Yes | No | Not sure | |
| DO YOU THINK THERE SHOULD BE MORE WOMEN IN THE PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY? | Yes | No | Not sure | |
| DO YOU THINK THERE SHOULD BE MORE WOMEN IN THE NATIONAL PARLIAMENT? | Yes | No | Not sure | |
| DOES POLITICS GIVE THE SAME CHANCES TO MEN AND WOMEN? | Yes | No | Not sure | |
| DO MEN AND WOMEN GET THE SAME CHANCES TO GET ELECTED IN NATIONAL OR PROVINCIAL POLITICS? | Yes | No | Not sure | |
| DO YOU THINK IT IS EASIER OR HARDER FOR WOMEN TO GET ELECTED NOW THAN IT WAS 10 YEARS AGO? | Easier | Harder | Hasn't changed | Not sure |
| DO YOU THINK IT IS EASIER OR HARDER FOR WOMEN TO GET ELECTED HERE THAN IN OTHER PARTS OF SOLOMON ISLANDS? | Easier | Harder | Hasn't changed | Not sure |

| | | | | |
|--|-----------------|----------------|---------------|----------|
| DO YOU THINK COMMUNITY LEADERS (I.E. CHIEFS, ELDERS) HAVE ANY INFLUENCE ON ELECTION RESULTS? | A big influence | Some influence | No influence | Not sure |
| DO YOU THINK RELIGIOUS LEADERS HAVE ANY INFLUENCE ON ELECTION RESULTS? | A big influence | Some influence | No influence | Not sure |
| DO YOU THINK BUSINESS PEOPLE HAVE ANY INFLUENCE ON ELECTION RESULTS? | A big influence | Some influence | No influence | Not sure |
| DO YOU THINK WOMEN'S GROUP LEADERS HAVE ANY INFLUENCE ON ELECTION RESULTS? | A big influence | Some influence | No influence | Not sure |
| DO YOU THINK YOUTH GROUP LEADERS HAVE ANY INFLUENCE ON ELECTION RESULTS? | A big influence | Some influence | No influence | Not sure |
| DO YOU THINK POLITICAL PARTIES HAVE ANY INFLUENCE ON ELECTION RESULTS? | A big influence | Some influence | No influence | Not sure |
| HAVE YOU EVER HEARD OF TSM OR TEMPORARY SPECIAL MEASURES FOR WOMEN IN POLITICS? | Heard a lot | Heard a little | Heard nothing | |
| IF 'HEARD NOTHING', DO QUICK EXPLANATION: TEMPORARY SPECIAL MEASURES ARE AFFIRMATIVE ACTION POLICIES TO SUPPORT WOMEN TO ENTER POLITICS, SUCH AS THE ADOPTION OF RESERVED SEATS OR A CANDIDATE QUOTA FOR WOMEN. | | | | |
| IF 'HEARD NOTHING': DO YOU THINK YOU NOW UNDERSTAND WHAT TSM IS? | Yes | No | Not sure | |
| DO YOU SUPPORT TSM FOR WOMEN IN THE PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY? | Yes | No | Not sure | |
| DO YOU SUPPORT TSM FOR WOMEN IN THE NATIONAL PARLIAMENT? | Yes | No | Not sure | |
| IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WOULD LIKE TO SAY IN RELATION TO WOMEN AND POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IN SOLOMON ISLANDS? | | | | |

REFERENCES

- Asian Development Bank [ADB]. 2015. *Solomon Islands: Country Gender Assessment*. Manila: ADB.
- Baker, Kerryn. 2018a. Great expectations: Gender and political representation in the Pacific Islands. *Government and Opposition* 53 (3): 542-568.
- Baker, Kerryn. 2018b. 'What did the winning candidate have that I don't have?' Gender, Politics and Elections in Solomon Islands. *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* 56 (4): 427-445.
- Baker, Kerryn. 2019. *Pacific Women in Politics: Gender Quota Campaigns in the Pacific Islands*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Bargel, Lucie, Stéphanie Guyon and Isabelle S. Rettig. 2010. *Assessment of the Application of the 'Parity Law' in New Caledonia, French Polynesia and Wallis and Futuna*. Nouméa: Secretariat of the Pacific Community.
- Billy, Afu. 2002. Fighting for a Fair Deal in National Politics. *Development Bulletin* 59: 58-61.
- Dicker, Kiri, Afu Billy and Alison Barclay. 2016. *The Influence of Gender Attitudes and Norms on Voter Preferences in Solomon Islands*. Suva: UN Women.
- Douglas, Bronwen. 2003. Christianity, Tradition, and Everyday Modernity: Towards an Anatomy of Women's Groupings in Melanesia. *Oceania* 74 (1-2): 6-23.
- Dumaru, Patrina and Sarah Pene. 2014. *Public Perceptions of Women in Leadership*. Melbourne: Fiji Women's Forum and International Women's Development Agency.
- Huffer, Elise. 2006. Desk Review of the Factors Which Enable and Constrain the Advancement of Women's Political Representation in Forum Island Countries. In *A Women's Place is in the House - the House of Parliament: Research to Advance Women's Political Representation in Forum Island Countries*. Suva: Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, pp. 1-56.
- Inter-Parliamentary Union [IPU]. 2019. Women in national parliaments, situation as at 1st February 2019. Accessed 23 June 2019 at <http://ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm>.
- Maetala, Ruth. 2008. 'Matrilineal Land Tenure Systems in Solomon Islands: the case of Guadalcanal, Makira and Isabel Provinces' in Huffer, E. *Land and Women: The Matrilineal Factor*. Suva: The Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat.
- McMurray, Christine. 2012. National Elections and Women Candidates in Solomon Islands: Results from the People's Survey. *CDI Policy Paper 2012/01*. Canberra: Centre for Democratic Institutions.
- Pollard, Alice. 2006. *Painaha: Gender and Leadership in 'Are 'Are Society, the South Sea Evangelical Church and Parliamentary Leadership - Solomon Islands*. PhD Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington.
- Roughan, Karlyn and Lysa Wini. 2015. *Report on Voter Behaviour towards Women Candidates Before and After the 2014 Solomon Islands National General Election*. Honiara: National Parliament of Solomon Islands.
- Secretariat of the Pacific Community [SPC]. 2009. *Family Health and Safety Study*.
- Soaki, Pauline. 2017. Casting Her Vote: Women's Political Participation in Solomon Islands. In *Transformations of Gender in Melanesia*, eds. Martha Macintyre and Ceridwen Spark (Canberra: ANU Press), pp. 95-109.
- United National Development Programme [UNDP]. 2019. *Research on Women's Leadership and Political Participation in Selected Constituencies of Solomon Islands: Synthesis Report*. Honiara: United Nations Development Programme.
- Wood, Terence. 2014. Why Can't Women Win? Impediments to Female Electoral Success in Solomon Islands. *CDI Discussion Paper 2014/01*. Canberra: Centre for Democratic Institutions.

**International Women's
Development Agency (IWDA)**

Level 1, 250 Queen Street
Melbourne VIC 3000
1300 661 812
iwda@iwda.org.au
www.iwda.org.au

**Women's Rights Action
Movement (WRAM)**

Room 8, Stephen & Sons
Building, Chinatown, Honiara,
Solomon Islands
Ph. (677) 29272



Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the
Netherlands

