ACADEMIC PAPER

THE INFLUENCE OF GENDER ATTITUDES AND NORMS ON VOTER PREFERENCES IN SOLOMON ISLANDS

Commissioned by UN Women Fiji Multi-Country Office
Kiri Dicker, Afu Billy and Alison Barclay, 2016

EUROPEAN UNION

United Nations Peacebuilding
Peacebuilding Fund

UN WOMEN
United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

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Women participating in simulated voting exercise, Kmaga Village, Isabel Province, 2016. UN Women/Kiri Dicker

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ACRONYMS

CDF	Constituent Development Fund
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
EU	European Union
HCC	Honiara City Council
MP	Member of Parliament
MWYCFA	Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs
NCW	National Council of Women
NGE	National General Election
RAMSI	Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands
RCDF	Rural Constituency Development Fund
SIEC	Solomon Islands Electoral Commission
TISI	Transparency International Solomon Islands
TSMs	Temporary Special Measures
UN	United Nations
VACC	Voter Awareness Coordination Committee
VAPs	Voter Awareness Programs
WISDM	Women in Shared Decision Making
YPWG	Young Women's Parliamentary Group

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Despite numerous efforts by government, donors and civil society stakeholders, the 2014 Solomon Islands National General Election saw only one female candidate elected. This made her the third woman MP ever to serve in the history of the Solomon Islands Parliament, where women's representation currently stands at 2%.[1] While the total number of votes for female candidates did increase from 2010 to 2014, their overall share of votes only improved marginally from 4%[2] to 6%.[3] Women have fared marginally better at the provincial level, where there are currently four women serving, however there are no women elected to the Honiara City Council.[4] Not only do women have difficulty getting elected at all levels of parliament in Solomon Islands, but evidence would suggest that female candidates, at least at a national level, are not becoming more competitive over time.[5]

The following report presents the outcomes of a qualitative research study conducted in four provinces, which was commissioned by UN Women to inform and improve programmatic responses to advancing women's political participation in Solomon Islands. Using a creative and participatory methodology, it explores the extent to which gender attitudes and norms influence voter preferences, and how these attitudes and norms interact with other factors, namely the widespread belief that the main role of a MPs is provide materials resources for their constituents.

The findings of this research suggest that while cultural beliefs and restrictive gender attitudes towards women do present a barrier for female candidates, they alone do not sufficiently explain why voters prefer male candidates. Instead, this research finds that voters are willing to vote for female candidates, so long as they meet two basic prerequisites: a deep understanding

A woman casts her vote during the simulated voting exercise, Lau Valley, East Honiara, 2016. UN Women/Kiri Dicker

of community needs, evidenced by a track record of community service; and willingness to 'help', evidenced by providing cash and material resources to individuals and families. It is suggested that while these prerequisites are likely to be apply to both male and female candidates, women face significantly greater barriers in achieving them.

Even if women can meet these prerequisites, it is far from enough to ensure success at the ballot box. In addition to being held to a higher standard than men in terms of their personal behaviour and circumstances (e.g. marital status), female candidates must convince voters that they can actually win an election, and therefore alleviate voter fears that their vote will be 'wasted' on an unsuccessful candidate. In a country where women present a minority of candidates and an even smaller minority of MPs, overcoming the perception that women candidates will be unsuccessful is near impossible. This results in a self-perpetuating 'feedback loop', in which women are unlikely to win an election, because they are unlikely to win. This is further compounded by prevailing gender and cultural norms, in which male elders are responsible for dictating the votes of women and young people in favour of their chosen candidate, who is almost always male.

1 Inter Parliamentary Union Women in National Parliament's Database. http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm

2 Wood (2014). Solomon Islands Election Results, The Centre for Democratic Institutions School of International, Political & Strategic Studies, Australian National University, Canberra.

3 Solomon Star 27th November 2014 & 10th December 2014 issues.

4 There is currently one woman on the Honiara City Council, although the position is appointed, not elected.

5 Wood, T. (2014). 'Why Can't Women Win? Impediments to Female Electoral Success in Solomon Islands', Centre for Democratic Institutions (CDI) Discussion Paper 2014/01. Australian National University: Canberra.

Women participating in simulated voting exercise, Kmaga Village, Isabel Province, 2016. UN Women/Kiri Dicker

While these findings may paint a rather bleak outlook for aspiring female candidates, they do identify a number of opportunities that, if effectively incorporated into advocacy and programs, may assist women to better navigate the current system. These include leveraging the support of grassroots women's organisations and networks to support female candidates, and exploring opportunities to improve female candidates' access to resources. While these efforts may elicit some success, particularly if deployed intensively in constituencies that are at the 'tipping point' of change, it remains unlikely that women will be elected in great numbers in Solomon Islands until there is significant systemic reform, namely to the Rural Constituency Development Fund, which drives a transactional political culture at the detriment of women's political participation.

Until this happens, this research recommends that donors and other stakeholders support continued civil society advocacy for the introduction of Temporary Special Measures in the form of reserved seats of female candidates. While the success of past efforts (led by the multi-stakeholder group WISDM) have been hampered by a lack of political will in an almost entirely male parliament, recent developments, including the introduction of the *Political Parties Integrity Act* (2014), the appointment of the only female MP as the Minister for Women, Children, Youth and Family Affairs and a strong endorsement of Temporary Special Measures (TSM) in the recent concluding observations of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women Committee, mean that the time may be right for Temporary Special Measures to be back on the political agenda.

INTRODUCTION

While research is undoubtedly lacking, it could fairly be argued that more is known about voter perceptions towards female candidates in Solomon Islands than any other Pacific Island country. This is largely attributed to the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) People's Survey, which was conducted annually between 2006 and 2013 (except for 2012), and included a number of questions relating to voter's perceptions of women's leadership ability, beliefs about women's political participation, willingness to vote for a female candidate and even support for reserved seats for women in parliament.[6] In 2014, the Young Women's Parliamentary Group (YWPG) commissioned further quantitative research, focusing specifically on voter perceptions of female candidates, although the sample was much smaller and limited to Honiara.[7] These quantitative studies, particularly the RAMSI People's Survey, have been subject to a limited amount of secondary data analysis, which has been complemented by 1-1 interviews with past female candidates.[8]

The most obvious explanation of female candidates' poor performance in Solomon Islands elections is that in patriarchal cultures that favour male leadership, women are not seen as suitable or capable politicians. As a result, Solomon Islanders possess an inherent preference for male candidates. The evidence to support this assumption, however, is lacking. For example the results of the RAMSI People's Survey have consistently revealed high and increasing support for women's leadership, greater numbers of women in parliament, and special reserved seats for female candidates, among all ages and genders.[9] This was supported by the 2014 Voter Behaviour Study, which was conducted immediately prior to, and directly after, the 2014 National General Election (NGE), which found that 98% of men and women surveyed demonstrated notional support for more women in parliament.[10] These findings suggest that at least in an abstract sense, Solomon Islanders are not necessarily opposed to voting for female candidates.

There is now a large body of sociological evidence that demonstrates that knowledge and attitudes are not necessarily the best predictor of human behaviour.[11] In other words, just because someone believes that women should be in parliament, does not mean that they will vote for a female candidate on election day. This is supported by research in Solomon Islands, which clearly shows that high levels of notional support for women's political participation do not translate into votes for female candidates. For example, in 2009 the RAMSI People's Survey found that despite the fact that 81% of men and 86% of women said they would vote for a 'good' woman candidate[12], not a single woman came close be being elected in the 2010 National General Election the following year. Furthermore, the 2014 Voter Behaviour Study found that despite nearly unanimous notional support for more women in parliament, only 38% of women and 24% of men intended to vote for a female candidate and only 26% of men and 27% of women actually did. This further suggests that most voters make a conscious decision not to support a female candidate well in advance of election day.

Past studies reveal some key factors that may explain why female candidates fail to get elected, even when voters are not ideologically opposed to voting for them. For example, when asked in the 2009 RAMSI People's Survey why women candidates always lost to male candidates, the two most common responses were that it is Solomon Islands custom/culture for men to be leaders (suggested by 45% of men and 33% of women) and that male candidates bribe voters (suggested by 41%

6 Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI) People's Surveys 2006-2013. ANU Enterprise. Canberra, Australia. Available online at: http://www.ramsi.org/media/peoples-survey

7 Roughan, K. & Wini, L. (2015). Report on Voter Behaviour Towards Women Candidates Before and After the 2014 SI National General Election. National Parliament of the Solomon Islands.

8 Wood, T. (2014). Why Can't Women Win? Impediments to Female Electoral Success in Solomon Islands. CDI Discussion Paper 2014/01. Austrsalian National University, Canberra.

9 Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI) People's Surveys 2006-2013. ANU Enterprise. Canberra, Australia. Available online at: http://www.ramsi.org/media/peoples-survey/

10 Roughan, K. & Wini, L. (2015). Report on Voter Behaviour Towards Women Candidates Before and After the 2014 SI National General Election. National Parliament of the Solomon Islands.

11 Hewstone, M., Stroebe, W. Jonas, K. (2015). An Introduction to Social Psychology, 6th edition (pg. 192). Wiley Blackwell.

12 Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (2009) People's Survey 2009. ANU Enterprise. Canberra, Australia.

of men and 38% of women).[13] This was supported by the 2014 Voter Behaviour Study, which found that the most common reasons why people believed that women did not get elected was vote buying (34%), cultural barriers (32%), and lack of resources (20%).[14] Finally, both the RAMSI People's Survey and the 2014 Voter Behaviour Study point to the fact that a large number of voters, particularly women, experience pressure and/or threats regarding their choice of candidate. In the 2014 Voter Behaviour Study, almost half of all people surveyed said they had experienced pressure or threats to vote for a certain candidate, with the most common source of pressure and/or threats being relatives of the respondent.[15]

In 2014, Terrance Wood, an academic with the Australian National University Centre for Democratic Institutions undertook a comprehensive analysis of data from the RAMSI People's Survey, complemented with qualitative interviews with past female candidates. He concluded that there were three main structural barriers that may prevent female candidates from getting elected in Solomon Islands:

1) Gendered norms that result in female candidates being held to a higher standard than their male counterparts;

2) Lack of access to finances and material resources required to run a successful campaign, which both prevents women from contesting elections and prevents voters from voting for them; and

3) The influence of powerful electoral 'vote brokers' who mobilise sections of the electorate, and whose services are less accessible to women because of patriarchal power networks in society.[16]

Participant gathering during the simulated voting exercise, Lau Valley, East Honiara, 2016. UN Women/Kiri Dicker

These findings are broadly supported by the 2014 Voter Behaviour Study, which concludes that the three greatest impediments to women getting elected are:

1) The expectation of money by voters and women's inability or unwillingness to 'buy' votes;

2) Gendered cultural perspectives on leadership, largely attributed to cultural beliefs; and

3) Male feedback loops, which result in voters choosing male candidates who they perceive as being more likely to win.[17]

This research seeks to revisit these barriers and examine the complex ways that gender attitudes and norms influence voter preferences, including how they interact with other factors such as local and ethnic voting practices. In doing so, it fills a gap in existing research by providing rich, first-hand qualitative data on the factors that influence voters' final decisions at the polling booth.

13 Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (2009) RAMSI People's Survey 2009. ANU Enterprise. Canberra, Australia.

14 Roughan, K. & Wini, L. (2015). Report on Voter Behaviour Towards Women Candidates Before and After the 2014 SI National General Election. National Parliament of the Solomon Islands.

15 Ibid.

16 Wood, T. (2015). Aiding Women Candidates in the Solomon Islands: Suggestions for Development Policy. Asia and the Pacific Policy Studies, vol. 2, no. 3, pp. 531-543. Crawford School of Public Policy at the Australian National University. Canberra.

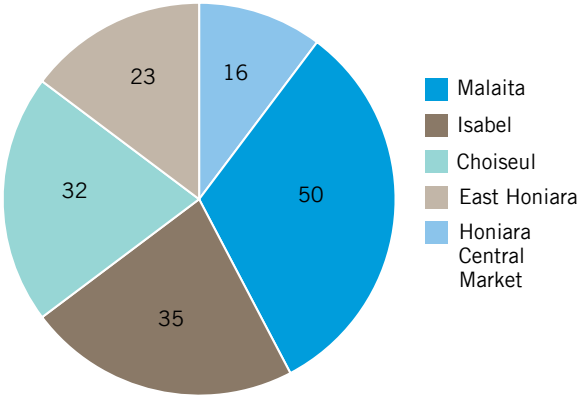
17 Roughan, K. & Wini, L. (2015). Report on Voter Behaviour Towards Women Candidates Before and After the 2014 SI National General Election. National Parliament of the Solomon Islands.

METHODOLOGY

Sampling

The research was conducted in five locations, three in the provinces and two in Honiara.

Figure 1: Breakdown of participants by location



Research sites were selected using a combination of theoretical sampling and convenience sampling. A range of provinces that have demonstrated varying degrees of notional support for women's leadership and political participation were included in the sample. To determine this, we used the results of the 2011 RAMSI People's Survey questions: 'Do women make good leaders?' and 'Should there be more women in Parliament?'[18] According to this data, Choiseul and Malaita ranked lower on notional support for women's leadership and political participation than Isabel and Honiara. We also included a mixture of urban and rural sites in the sample, based on research that indicates urban sites are more gender progressive than rural sites, largely due to the higher levels of educational attainment.[19]

Convenience sampling was used to select the constituency within each province in which to conduct the research. In order to ensure the results were most useful in informing future programming to improve women's political participation, constituencies where a female candidate contested the 2014 National General Election were selected. Actual research sites were selected against a number of other criteria, including ease of access, safety considerations and willingness of the community to participate in the research. A decision was made not to publish the names of villages/settlements where the research was conducted, so as to protect the privacy of participants.

Participants at each site were selected using a combination of purposeful and convenience sampling. Local 'brokers', including chiefs, pastors and community leaders were used to recruit research participants, which in some cases resulted in bias (see limitations section). The research team specifically requested that men and women of all ages were included in the research sample.

Participants

A total of 172 men and women of voting age participated in the research. At the conclusion of data collection, a decision was made to exclude people from the sample who didn't cast a vote in the 2014 National General Election (N=16), which left a total sample size of 156.

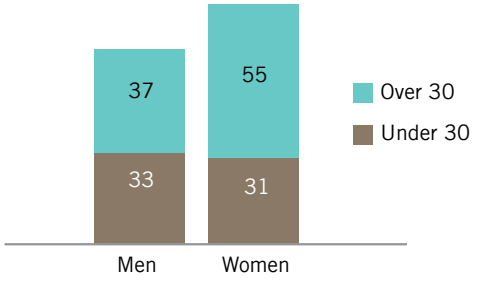
The sample comprised of 45% men (N=70) and 55% women (N=86). Of the male participants, 47% were young men under the age of 30 (N=33). Of the female participants, 36% were young women under the age of 30 (N=31). In total, 41% of participants were young people under the age of 30 (N=64). There was a reasonably equal distribution of the sex and age of participants in all locations except for East Honiara, where no adult men were included in the sample (see Limitations).

Participants at each site were selected using a combination of purposeful and convenience sampling. Local 'brokers', including chiefs, pastors and community leaders were used to recruit research participants, which in some cases resulted in bias (see limitations section). At the recommendation of key informants, participants took part in the research in same-sex groups: women on the first day, followed by the men.

18 Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (2011) RAMSI People's Survey 2011. ANU Enterprise. Canberra, Australia.

19 Asian Development Bank, 2015, Solomon Islands Gender Country Assessment.

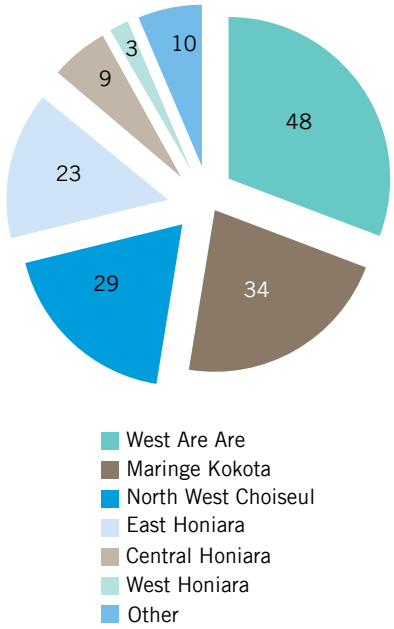
Figure 2: Breakdown of participants by age and gender



Locations

The majority of participants who voted in the 2014 National General Election voted in the same constituency where the research was conducted. The responses of participants who voted in a different constituency were retained in the sample, however it is worth noting that these represented only a small number of respondents (N=10) and no female candidates contested the election in any of these constituencies.

Figure 3: Where participants voted in the 2014 NGE



Design

This research used a participatory qualitative research methodology, consisting of three key data points:

Mock Election

This research used a participatory 'mock' election to collect data on voter preferences and rationale in a fictional scenario. In creating this method, the research team took inspiration from the field of human-centered design, which uses prototyping to test the way users interact with possible future (or in this case, past) scenarios.[20] The method was created specifically for this project and the research team are not aware of it being used elsewhere. In the mock election, participants were asked to vote for one of four fictional candidates based on information provided to them. In additional to being a creative way to engage participants in discussion about the factors that influence voter preferences, this method was selected because it allowed external factors to be somewhat controlled. In other words, it was assumed that the results of a mock election would provide a more realistic representation of gender attitudes towards candidates, as external factors (including coercion, local and ethnic voting) were not at play. Based on this assumption, researchers have drawn a number of conclusions by comparing the results and decision-making processes used by voters in the mock election, with the 2014 National General Election.

Candidate profiles were deliberately created to resemble 'likely' candidates in a real Solomon Islands National General Election, based on profiles of past candidates.[21] They were also constructed to test two specific variables that past research has shown to be influential in voter preferences; the candidate's sex (and associated gender attitudes and norms); and the candidate's access to financial resources and willingness to 'help' individuals and families in the community. Although there were no doubt other variables that affect voter decision-making (including candidate qualifications and family relationships), it was decided that testing additional variables was beyond the scope of this research.

20 More information about human centered design methods can be found at http://www.designkit.org/human-centered-design

21 See Wood, T (2013). Of But Apart. Profiling Politicians in the Solomon Islands. State, Australian Journal of Political Science (2013) 48:3, 320-334.

Of the four fictional candidates, two were male and two were female. Included in the profiles of one male and one female (Hudson and Audrey) were statements suggesting that the candidates possess personal wealth and had a track record of providing for the community. The remaining candidates (Joseph and Suzie) were described as actively involved in their communities, however specific references to personal wealth and resource distribution were omitted. Attempts were made to 'control' other information in the candidate profiles (which was required to build a realistic scenario) by making all candidates equal in other aspects (such as church attendance, marital status, family size, qualifications etc.). Despite this, it was found that some of these factors did influence voter decision-making to some extent (see limitations section).

Participants were provided with candidate profiles, consisting of short statements written in Solomons Pigjin (See Annex A: Candidate Voting Materials). Participants were also given a verbal description of the candidates, to cater for lower levels of literacy. Participants were given as long as they needed to vote for their candidate, and were specifically instructed not to discuss their choice with anyone else in the room. Once participants cast their vote on the ballot paper provided (using a real voting box provided by the Solomon Islands Electoral Commission), they proceeded to a 1-1 interview and questionnaire.

Interview and Questionnaire

A questionnaire was developed to gather more detailed information on how and why each participant they made their decision about who to vote for, both in the mock and in the 2014 National General Election. Additional quantitative questions were included in order to collect data to inform a subsequent evaluation of UN Women's Strongim Mere programme. Final questions were validated by a group of stakeholders at the beginning of the research, however resource constraints meant that the questions could not be pre-tested with individuals. As a result the questions evolved throughout the data collection phase (see Annex B: Questionnaire V1 and Annex C: Questionnaire V2). Questions and responses were translated from English to Solomons Pidjin in real time by the researchers. While both researchers were fluent Pidjin speakers, one was a foreigner, which may have contributed to a small amount of bias in the information gathered (see limitations section).

Focus Group Discussions

Once each participant completed the 1-1 questionnaire and interview, the group re-gathered and the results of the election were revealed. Following this, participants took part in a focus group discussion, where the mock election results were discussed, including how they compared to the results of 2014 National General Election. All of the focus groups were same-sex, and where possible, were further broken down according to the participant's age (over 30 or under 30). There was some atrophy in participant numbers throughout the day, so while all of the participants who cast a vote in the mock election attended a 1-1 interview, not all participants who attended a 1-1 interview participated in the focus group. Additionally, participants in the Honiara Central Market data collection did not participate in a focus group, as it was not practical to do so. A list of focus group discussion questions is included at Annex D: Focus Group Discussion Questions.

Ethical Considerations

A consent procedure, suitable for low literacy contexts, which was in keeping with UN Women standards and expectations for ethical research, was used (see Annex E: Consent Script and Form). Completed consent forms were stored in a sealed envelope and delivered to UN Women at the conclusion of the research. Aside from the consent forms, participant names were not used on any other research materials. Upon registering for the research, participants were given a number (in chronological order) written on a coloured 'sticky dot', which indicated their age and gender.

Limitations

The use of convenience sampling, both in the selection of research sites and the use of local brokers to select participants, is likely to have resulted some bias in the data. For example, in Solomon Islands elections, candidates generally poll better in their own ward or village. The research team did not consider this, consequently some of the research sites were in the same ward as the female candidate, while others were not. Furthermore, unbeknownst to the research team, in one of the participants who assisted to recruit research participants in East Honiara was married to one of the

Poroporo village, Choiseul Province, 2016. UN Women/Kiri Dicker

male candidates in the 2014 National General Election. Similarly, in Malaita, a significant number of the research participants were members of the Rokotaekeni Women's Association, therefore the results showed significant support for the Association's founder, who was a candidate in the 2014 National General Election. This bias is to be expected in the Solomon Islands context, where communities generally comprise of people related to each other by clan group and people vote in family groups. It is difficult to determine the extent to which this bias may have affected the results of the mock election, however the fact that the results of the mock election were largely consistent across all research sites, suggests that bias was minimal. Having said this, the results of each research site should not be seen as representative of the province as a whole.

When creating the profiles of fictional candidates in the mock election, attempts were made to control all other variables except for the two variables being tested (candidate sex and access to resources). During the questionnaire it was found that despite these efforts, some of these other factors did influence voter decision-making to a degree. Specifically, participants often mentioned Suzie's youthfulness (as the only candidate under 50) and Joseph's desire for fairness as reasons why they voted for them. By coincidence, one of the candidates (Audrey Kikolo) was the owner of a 'big shipping company', and one of the female candidates who contested one of the constituencies includes in the research also managed a shipping company. Again, the fact that the results of the mock election were largely consistent across all research sites, suggests that bias was minimal.

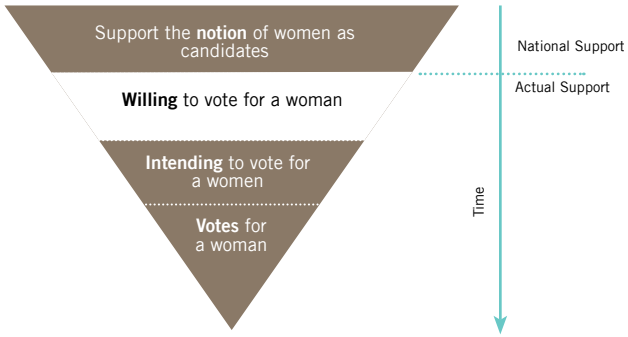
Another limitation of the research is that the research team consisted of one Solomon Islander and one foreigner. Although both spoke fluent Solomons Pidjin the presence of a foreigner may have created a degree of social desirability bias in the results. As with other limitations, the fact that the results of the mock election were largely consistent across all research sites, suggests that bias was minimal.

Finally, it was originally planned to only collect data in one Honiara constituency (East Honiara), however, because there were no adult men available to interview on the day of the research, a second collection was undertaken at the Honiara Central Market, which deliberately only included people who had voted in one of Honiara's three constituencies (East, West and Central). Unlike the other limitations, the results of the mock election in the East Honiara sample were inconsistent with the three other provincial samples (although broadly consistent with the Honiara Central Market sample). It is proposed that these differences are attributable to the difference in preferences by urban and rural voters, not necessarily voter sex. This is discussed further in the report.

KEY FINDINGS

It has been sufficiently proven that there are high levels of *notional* support for women's political participation in Solomon Islands, in other words the belief that women *should* and *can* be Members of Parliament.[22] What's more, it has been shown that rates of *national* support for women's political participation are increasing over time.[23] Contrary to popular opinion, the findings of this research suggest that Solomon Islanders are also *willing* to vote for a female candidate, as long as a number of prerequisites are met. Willingness to vote for a female candidate is important, because it is the first step on a path towards actual support. We propose that this stage occurs in between the 'notional support for women's leadership' and the 'intending to vote for a woman' stages identified in the 2014 Voter Behaviour Study.[24]

Figure 4: Revised trajectory of support for female candidates



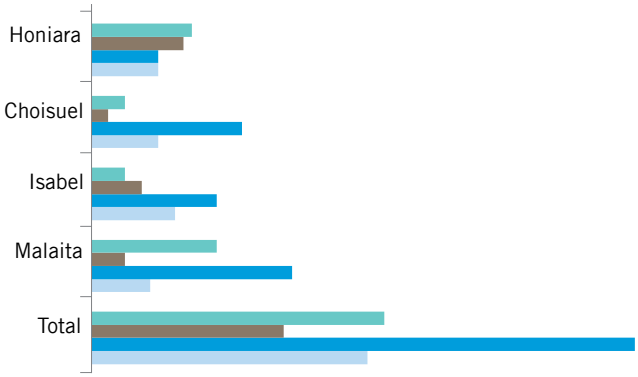
The key findings conclude that just because a female candidate meets these prerequisites, it doesn't mean that voters will vote for them. They then face an additional set of gendered barriers.

Results of the Mock Election

In the mock election, Audrey Kikolo (the female candidate with access to resources) was the winning candidate across all provincial locations, while Joseph (the male candidate without access to resources) was the losing candidate. The remaining two candidates (Hudson Matangi and Suzie Valevao) polled almost equal, but with great variance between locations. Suzie's overall ranking was lifted due to her popularity among women in Malaita, which was a larger sample size than the other locations and contained some bias towards support for female candidates (see limitations section). However, in Choiseul and Isabel, Hudson was a clear favourite among men and women.

In Honiara, the results of the mock election were notably different, Suzie Valevao (the female candidate without access to resources) winning and Joseph Ausuta (the male candidate without access to resources) coming second. Nonetheless, in all locations, the winning candidate was a woman.

Figure 5: Mock Election Results (by location)



	Total	Malaita	Isabel	Choisuel	Honiara
Suzie Valevao	35	15	4	4	12
Joseph Ausuta	23	4	6	2	11
Audrey Kikolo	65	24	15	18	8
Hudson Matangi	33	7	10	8	8

22 Roughan, K. & Wini, L. (2015). Report on Voter Behaviour Towards Women Candidates Before and After the 2014 SI National General Election. National Parliament of the Solomon Islands; Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI) People's Surveys 2006-2013. ANU Enterprise. Canberra, Australia. Available online at: http://www.ramsi.org/media/peoples-survey/

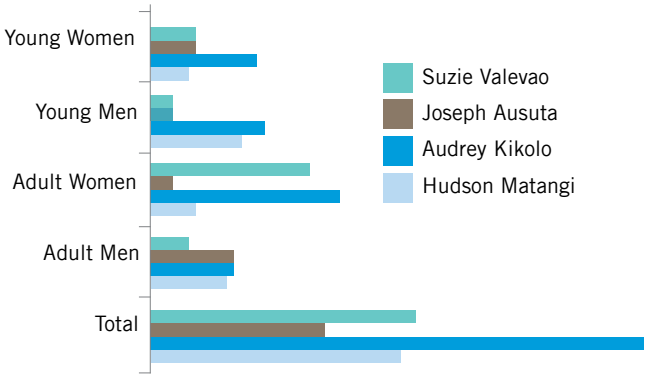
23 Ibid.

24 Amended from Roughan, K. & Wini, L. (2015). Report on Voter Behaviour Towards Women Candidates Before and After the 2014 SI National General Election. National Parliament of the Solomon Islands.

The variance between Honiara and provincial areas is attributable to the fact that urban voters were more concerned about political malpractice and showed a distinct preference for candidates without access to personal wealth. For example, 28% of the Honiara sample (combined) made no mention of resources at all in their mock election decision, compared to only 15% of the provincial sample. Furthermore, of the 84 respondents for whom access to resources was the dominant factor influencing their mock candidate choice, only 20% were in Honiara and the remaining 80% were in provincial areas.

Audrey Kikolo was also the winning candidate among voters of all ages and genders, but especially young women. Hudson Matangi (the male candidate with access resources) also polled well among men (including young men), although women voters preferred Suzie as the second favourite candidate.

Figure 6: Mock Election Results (by age/gender)



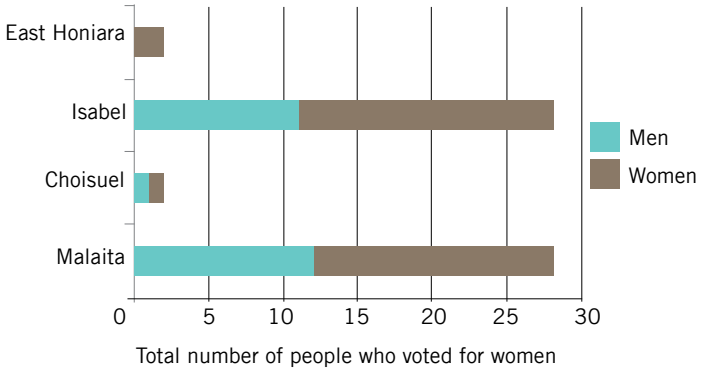
The mock election results show that voting decision-making is influenced by the intersection of gender and resources. Access to resources and a willingness to distribute resources directly to individuals and families appears to be the most significant factor influencing voting preferences. While discrimination against women throughout their lives makes them less competitive in this regard, the results of the mock election reveal that both women and men will vote for a female candidate that has access to resources and are perceived to be willing to distribute resources directly to individuals and families. Interestingly, when presented with a male and a female candidate with equivalent access to resources, participants still voted for the female candidate.

This is true across all ages, locations and genders. This poses the question: why can women win a mock election but not a real one?

Results of the 2014 National General Election

In addition to conducting a mock election, this research also asked participants the gender of the candidate they voted for in the 2014 National General Election. A total of 38% of participants included in this study (N=60) (42% of women and 34% of men) voted for a woman in the 2014 National General Election, however there was significant variance between research sites. In Malaita and Isabel, the relatively high percentage of people that voted for a female candidate is likely because the research sites were in, or close to, a village where the female candidate resided.

Figure 7: People who voted for a woman in the 2014 NGE (by location)



These results are broadly reflective of the 2014 National General Election results for female candidates in the constituencies where the research took place. For example, the female candidates from West Are Are (Malaita) and Maringe Kokota (Isabel) where our research was conducted received 18% and 19% of the total votes in their constituencies respectively, ranking them second and third in their fields. On the other hand, the female candidates for East Honiara and Choiseul only received 0.2% and 1% of the total votes cast in their constituency.[25]

25 Unofficial results for female candidates in the 2014 National General Election. UN Women Solomon Islands Country Office. Unpublished data, n.d.

More importantly, they show that there are a significant number of men and women who are willing to vote for a female candidate, in the right circumstances.

Based on the findings of this research, we propose that there are two main prerequisites that need to be met before voters (both male and female) are willing to vote for a female candidate:

1) Voters must believe the candidate understands the needs and daily realities of their constituents, usually demonstrated by residing in the constituency; and
2) Voters must believe that the candidate possesses personal wealth and will contribute additional resources to the community.

The word 'believe' is crucial here, because not only do female candidates have to meet these standards, but voters have to be convinced of it, something that is not only subjective, but heavily influenced by cultural beliefs and gender attitudes and norms. It is also important to note that just because a candidate meets these prerequisites, it doesn't mean that a person will vote for them, but it does mean that if they are not met, they will almost certainly not vote for them.

Understanding community needs

In Honiara and Choiseul, where female candidates gained virtually no support (both in our sample and according to the 2014 National General Election Results), voters believed that the candidates were out of touch with community needs and therefore unlikely to support them.

"She lives far from our community. Her village is on the other side of this Constituency. She also lives in Honiara and not in our village. We don't know her, so she may forget all about us if she gets elected."
Adult woman, Choiseul

"She did not come to campaign in our community, so we did not know her plans on how she will help us women, our families and communities. If she had come to us we will educate other women to support her. We do not know her."
Adult woman, East Honiara

"I really liked that woman but she never came here except to campaign, she just went back to town (Honiara) so I didn't know what she would be like. Custom spoils us, it says that women can't 'talk', but I don't agree with that."
Adult woman, Choiseul

"She didn't stay at home, she stayed in Honiara. We want someone who can come back and tell us news about government. We will not have any feedback from her."
Adult man, Choiseul

"She is from this constituency but she doesn't live here, even if she wins she will be still living in Honiara. If she lives with people she will know their situations and their needs."
Adult man, Choiseul

Personal wealth and willingness to contribute

In all research sites, women's personal wealth and willingness to provide financial and material support to the community was called into question. This was more evident in Choiseul and Honiara where there was a strong belief that the contesting female candidates lacked the resources to be considered legitimate candidates.

"I was thinking to vote for a woman but…. I know women can be good MPs…I wanted to vote for a woman but I didn't think she would be able to support me because she didn't have any money."
Young woman, East Honiara

"My family asked her for things like kopa (for house) or fare or my child to go to hospital, when he broke his arm but she said she did not have any money, so I did not vote for her because she can't help."
Young woman, Choiseul

"She also didn't have a lot of resources, she only had one campaign manager and he was young, also she arrived with only a fifteen horsepower engine, so that showed me that she didn't have a lot of resources to share with the community."
Adult man, Choiseul

"If a woman stood from our community I would have voted for her if she convinces me that she will address my financial needs."
Adult female Malaita

Lack of access to material resources is discussed in more depth later in the report, as it reappears as a barrier a number of times during a woman's election journey, both at the point where voters decide which candidate to align themselves with (the 'intention to vote' stage), and in the days and hours leading up to election day.

Barriers to women's political participation

Barrier 1: Cultural beliefs and gender attitudes toward's women

Women's inability to get elected in Solomon Islands is frequently attributed, by policymakers and citizens alike, to 'culture' and its implicit patriarchal gender attitudes and norms that result in women being seen as unsuitable leaders. In this context, as with other parts of the Pacific, Solomon Islanders use the word 'culture' interchangeably with the word 'custom' to describe a series of ideas, values and behaviours associated with pre-colonial times.[26] The influences of cultural beliefs and gender attitudes on voter preference are presented separately in this report, however it is important to keep in mind that cultural beliefs and gender attitudes are not mutually exclusive concepts, rather, they overlap and compound each other in complex ways.

The influence of cultural beliefs on voter preference

This study found that 37% (N=57) of research participants believe that 'culture' or 'custom' play a key role in why women fail to get elected into parliament, either in their constituency or in Solomon Islands more broadly. These findings are similar to those of both the 2014 Voter Behaviour Study, which found that 32% of respondents thought that 'culture' was the main reason why women didn't get elected,[27] and the 2009 RAMSI People's Survey, which that 45% of men and 33% of women believed that custom/culture was the main reason why men always get more votes than women.[28] Further analysis of the data, however, indicates that the influence of cultural beliefs on voter decisions may not be as significant as the above statistics would suggest. Despite 37% of participants stating that culture/custom is the reason women don't get elected in Solomon Islands, only 12% (N=18) cited cultural or customary beliefs as a reason why they either voted for a male or didn't vote for a female candidate, either in the mock election or in the 2014 National General Election. All but two of these respondents were male.

"I voted for a man because in my culture we can't make women 'big'. That is my cultural belief."
Young man, Malaita

Our culture is another reason. She talks down to men. She raises herself too much so the men didn't feel good, so we didn't want to vote for a woman."
Adult man, Choiseul

"Men are more suited to be in Parliament than women for cultural reasons."
Young woman, East Honiara

This finding is consistent with the findings of the 2014 Voter Behaviour Study, which found that while 32% of respondents thought culture/custom was the reason why women didn't get elected, only 4% of respondents listed 'culture' as a reason why they themselves were not intending to vote for a woman.[29]

These findings clearly show that while it is widely believed that Solomon Islands' cultures and customs preclude women's political leadership, these cultural beliefs do not have a significant influence on individual voting behavior and can therefore not fully explain why women do not get elected in Solomon Islands.

26 McLeod, A (2007). 'Literature Review of Leadership Models in the Pacific', State Society and Governance in Melanesia Program – Targeted Research Papers for AusAID. ANU: Canberra.

27 Roughan, K. & Wini, L. (2015). Report on Voter Behaviour Towards Women Candidates Before and After the 2014 SI National General Election. National Parliament of the Solomon Islands.

28 Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (2011) RAMSI People's Survey 2011. ANU Enterprise. Canberra, Australia.

29 Roughan, K. & Wini, L. (2015). Report on Voter Behaviour Towards Women Candidates Before and After the 2014 SI National General Election. National Parliament of the Solomon Islands.

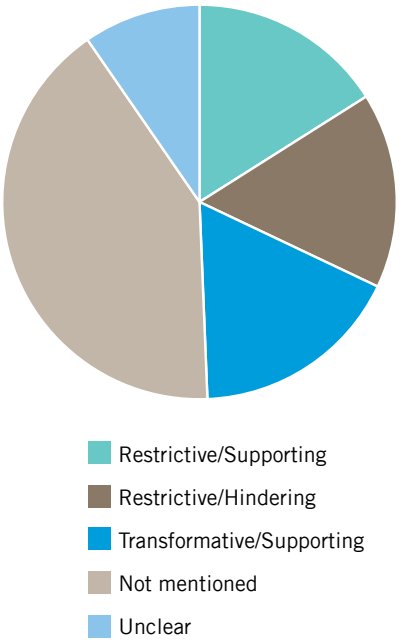
The influence of gender attitudes on voter preference

This research also explored the extent to which gender attitudes directly influenced participant's voting behaviour, both in the 2014 National General Election and the mock election. To do this, participant responses were coded by the research team into one of four categories.

1) Restrictive gender attitudes that hinder women's leadership.
2) Restrictive gender attitudes that support women's leadership.
3) Transformative gender attitudes/norms
4) No mention of gender.

The findings show that men and women who expressed restrictive gender attitudes that hinder women's leadership were much less likely to vote for a woman in the 2014 National General Election. On the other hand, both men and women who were supportive of women's leadership were more likely to vote for a woman, regardless of whether their support stemmed from restrictive or transformational gender attitudes. Most importantly, the large percentage of voters did not mention gender at all when describing why they voted the way they did in the 2014 National General Election.

Figure 8: Gender attitudes and voter preference in the 2014 NGE



When asked why they voted for either a male or female candidate in the 2014 National General Election, 32% of the sample (N=50) expressed gender attitudes that were 'restrictive', or in other words, attitudes that assigned men and women specific and rigid roles according to their gender. Of these, 40% (N=20) are women and 60% (N=30) are men. In half of these instances (16% of the total sample), these attitudes hinder women's leadership, and in half (16% of the total sample), the attitudes support women's leadership.

Men were much more likely to express restrictive gender attitudes that hinder women's leadership. Of the 25 participants who expressed restrictive gender attitudes that hinder women's leadership, 76% are men and 24% are women. All of these people voted for a male candidate in the 2014 National General Election.

"She talks down to men. She raises herself too much so the men didn't feel good, so we didn't want to vote for a woman."
Adult man, Choiseul

"During her campaign her husband didn't come with her, she went alone, so I thought that if she was elected she would work alone."
Adult man, Choiseul

Women are more likely than men to express restrictive gender attitudes that support women's leadership. Of the 25 participants who expressed restrictive gender attitudes that support women's leadership, 66% are women and 44% are men. Almost all (92%) of men and women who expressed restrictive gender attitudes that support women's leadership voted for a female candidate in the 2014 National General Election.

"Women are the mothers of the house, they look after what the family needs so I know when she goes to Parliament she would look out for the needs of everyone, especially the women."
Adult woman, Honiara

"One advantage of women in Parliament is that they have the experience of raising families, so she would have the qualities of looking after people and the heard for the needs of the people. Some women do not want to be out the front and be seen as bossy."
Adult man, Isabel

17% of participants (N=27) expressed transformational ideas about women's leadership, that is, their support for women's leadership extends beyond, or challenges, women's traditional gender roles. Of the 27 participants with transformational attitudes, 44% are men and 56% are women. Of the men and women who expressed transformational ideas about women's leadership, 82% voted for a woman in the 2014 National General Election.

"If women are wise, they have the right to also lead and be leaders. In our custom, women are highly respected. So they should be able to become good MPs and be leaders."
Adult man, Isabel

"Until 2014 no women had ever stood for elections. Women are equal, women have as good education and thinking as men."
Adult woman, Malaita

When asked why they voted for the candidate of their choice in the 2014 National General Election, 41% (N=64) did not mention gender at all, and the remaining 10% (N=15) were coded as 'unclear'.

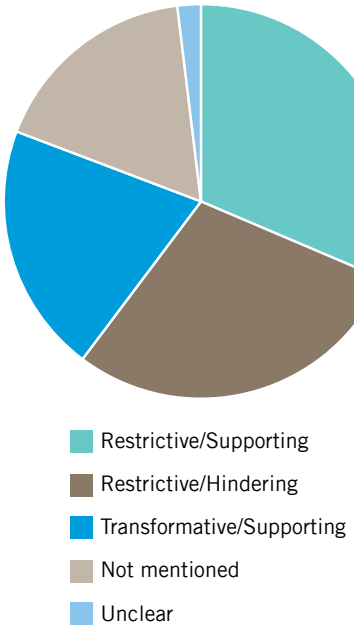
"It wasn't because he was a man or a woman, they are the same, I just voted for what he said."
Young man, Malaita

"It wasn't because he was a woman or a man but because of his attitude."
Adult woman, Malaita

"If a woman stood I would listen to what she says and if it is according to my liking then I will vote for her. If not, I won't"
Adult woman, Choiseul

There are small but significant differences in the extent to which gender attitudes influenced voter preferences in the mock election. Not only were participants much more likely to draw on gender attitudes of any kind in the mock election than the 2014 National General Election, but these gender attitudes were significantly more likely to be restrictive. We propose that gender attitudes expressed in the mock election provide a more accurate representative of actual gender attitudes, as it allowed for other factors influencing voter preference to be controlled.

Figure 9: Gender attitudes and norms and voter preference in the mock election



Overall, participants were twice as likely to show restrictive gender attitudes in the mock election compared to the 2014 National General Election (60% of people in the mock election, compared the 32% in the 2014 National General Election). In fact, gender attitudes and norms were much more likely to come into play overall in the mock election. Furthermore, only 17% of participants did not mention gender at all when explaining their candidate choice in the mock election, compared to 41% in the 2014 National General Election.

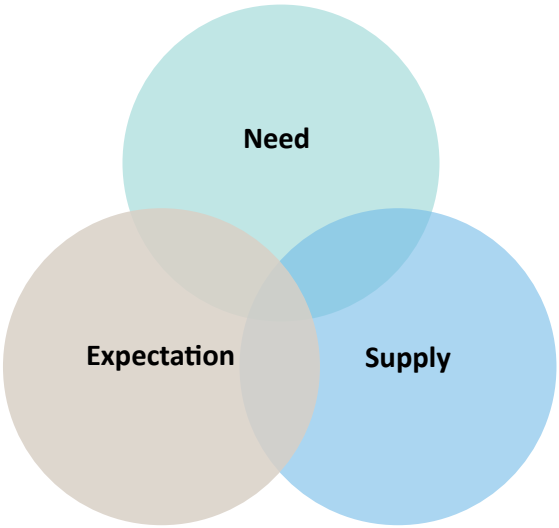
One possible explanation for this difference is that in a fictional situation such as the mock election, where real resources are not 'on the table', gender attitudes are more likely to influence voter decision-making. Interestingly, 25% of people who expressed restrictive gender attitudes and limiting beliefs towards women in the mock election, still voted for a woman in the 2014 National General Election. This suggests that voter preferences during elections cannot entirely be explained by cultural beliefs or gender attitudes alone.

Barrier 2: Lack of access to finance and material resources

Politics and elections in Solomon Islands operate in a unique socio-economic political context, driven by an interplay of three main factors.

1) A **need** for resources, which is a direct result of high rates of urban and rural poverty and low rates of development.
2) A cultural **expectation** that leaders will provide for their extended families (wantoks), which has its origins in the Melanesian kinship system.
3) A **supply**, in the form of a Constituent Development Fund (CDF) that is directly administered by Members of Parliament (MPs).

Figure 10: The socio-economic-political context of elections in Solomon Islands



While the first two factors do not necessarily distinguish Solomon Islands from other developing economies in the Global South, the addition of the third factor, specifically, the Rural Constituency Development Fund (RCDF), does. Solomon Islands is one of at least 23 countries globally that have adopted or are considering adopting Constituency Development Funds, and one of an even smaller number where MPs have direct influence over how these funds are disbursed.[30]

As a result, elections in Solomon Islands are largely a transactional event as opposed to a transformational one. In other words, national elections are seen by the majority of voters as an opportunity to secure resources for themselves and their family, as opposed to an opportunity to elect leaders capable of governing the country toward long-term development goals. This in confirmed by the results of the 2009 RAMSI People's Survey, which found that 42% of respondents believe that the main job on a Member of Parliament (MP) is to 'assist those who voted for them', compared to 16% who said the main job of an MP is to 'govern the country'.[31] Research has found that transactional political cultures are most attractive in conditions of low productivity, high inequality, and starkly hierarchical social relations.[32]

This research found that the vast majority of men and women voted for the candidate who they thought would most likely give them resources. Terrance Wood describes this phenomenon as 'local voting', which he calls a 'sensible act in a poorly governed State'.[33] In other words, given the fact the reach of government in Solomon Islands into most people's lives is minimal, and because national political movements are non-existent, the only way elections are likely to bring improvements for voters is if they vote for a candidate who will help them or their community directly.[34]

Across the sample, 64% of voters said that the reason they voted for their chosen candidate in the 2014 National General Election was because they believed that their family or community would benefit, or had already benefited from resources provided by them. People that demonstrated local voting were significantly more likely to vote for a male candidate in the 2014 National General Election. For example, 65% people that demonstrated local voting motivations voted for a male candidate, compared to 35% who voted for a female candidate.

30 Baskin, M. (2010). Constituency Development Funds (CDFs) as a Tool of Decentralized

31 Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (2009) People's Survey 2009, pg. 133. ANU Enterprise. Canberra, Australia.

32 See James Robinson and Thierry Verdier, ''Political Economy of Clientelism,'' Working Paper (University of California, Berkeley, 2001).

33 Wood, T. (2013). 'The causes and consequences of local voting in Solomon Islands', State, Society & Governance in Melanesia In Brief 2013/17. Australian National University, Canberra.

34 Ibid.

"I have two children and we have many needs. When he campaigned he said he will pay for school fees and I want that. He also said I could make a proforma (invoice) with my needs and he would pay on the spot, but two years now he has not met my needs. I sent him my proforma but he did not pay for it."

Young woman, Honiara

"He gave people small things in order to vote for him (like 20 watts solar) and said he would provide more after the elections if he won. My main consideration was to vote for someone who would provide things for my family."

Young man, Honiara

"I thought that woman would be good, but last minute I thought I will vote him (the male candidate) just because of my kids, because my husband drinks and wastes money and does not help me so I am the only one. The woman candidate said that children are parent's responsibility not MPs so when the candidate I chose said he will pay for my children's fees, I voted for him."

Adult woman, Malaita

Another associated type of voting behaviour evident in this research was ethnic voting, referred to by participants as 'wantok biznis', in other words, voting along family or clan lines. Ethnic voting is a sub-set of local voting, and in many cases voters demonstrated both. 24% of research participants said that the reason they voted for their chosen candidate in the 2014 National General Election was because they were a relative (wantok), someone they knew, or lived in their village.

"He was involved with the Church, he can help us. He was a cousin brother from my tribe. If someone is from your 'line' they can't say no to you."

Adult woman, Choiseul

"I thought I could ask him for help because he is my wantok."

Young man, Choiseul

"…we decided to vote for him also because he is our relative so it will be easier for us to see him and get financial and other assistance from him if he becomes an MP."

Young woman, East Honiara

Research elsewhere has suggested that clientelist form of voting, such as local voting, drives ethnic voting[35], in other words, voting for a wantok is an additional means of securing resources available to those who happen to be related to a candidate. Of those research participants who voted for a relative or someone they knew, 70% also demonstrated local voting behavior. In total, 17% of all research participants exhibited both local and ethnic voting behaviour.

On the other hand, a candidate's professional background, education level, leadership skills, campaign policies and personal characteristics were less likely to be the deciding factor for voter decision-making. For example, 33% of voters indicated that they had considered the candidate's education/professional background, leadership skills or personal characteristics in a way that was not related to access to resources.

In order to win in an election characterised by local voting, candidates need to have large amounts of cash at their disposal. The most common 'bargaining chips' in elections are relatively inexpensive consumer goods such as solar panels, water tanks and copper roofing, as well as sea fares and school fees. The exchange of cash for votes, particularly in the lead up to election day, was also mentioned by a number of participants. This presents a significant barrier for women, who as a result of a lifetime of inequality, are unlikely to have amassed the same level of wealth as their male counterparts.

Some MPs go as far as to formalise their promises by recording names of constituents on lists, to be honored if the candidate is successful. List keeping is also used by MPs to ensure that resources given during the campaign period are converted into votes on election day. Throughout participant interviews it was clear that voters took these 'contracts' very seriously and few dared lie about their vote.

35 Wantchekon, Leonard (2003) 'Clientelism and Voting Behavior: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Benin', World Politics 55: 399-422.

"When I voted one of his campaign managers took down my name and ID on a list so he would know that I voted for him. He said he would give us 24 pieces of copper roofing if we voted for him, and he did, I got my copper."
Young man, Honiara

"I voted for him because during his campaign, one of his people gave me $200 and said 'this is your bus fare'. Lots of people took his money. He didn't exactly say we had to vote for him, it was my own decision, but I voted for him because I was scared not to vote for him because they put my name on a list."
Young woman, Honiara

This research suggests that a culture of transactional political leadership, which is characterised by local voting is the primary barrier to women getting elected in Solomon Islands. Due to patriarchal gender norms that relegate women from public space and a lifetime of gender inequality, women are far less likely than men to have secured personal wealth over their lifetimes. Further, compounding this is a perception that women are less capable of securing resources from government for their constituency.

"In our custom men are the leaders not women. He will be able to fight and represent us better in Parliament."
Young man, Choiseul

"She will not be able to struggle hard enough to get our needs heard. It is not fitting for women to argue with men in Parliament."
Young man, Choiseul

Barrier 3: Male feedback loops

Transactional notions of political leadership rely on the belief among voters that once elected, MPs will only support those who voted for them (thus completing the transaction). As a result, many voters believe that the most effective strategy for securing resources from MPs is to vote for a *winning* candidate, regardless of whether they were the best person for the job.

"Because I heard men talk that the man will win, because he has good ways and he will help us, so looking at the weight, I voted for the man."
Adult man, Malaita

"I looked to who everyone was voting for and I followed them because I wanted to vote for the winning candidate so I could ask him for things. Also he is from the area where I live so I thought it would be easy for me to go to him."
Adult woman, Honiara

In some cases, the desire to vote for a winning candidate was so strong that voters 'switched' their vote at the last minute, from their intended candidate, to the candidate who they thought would win.

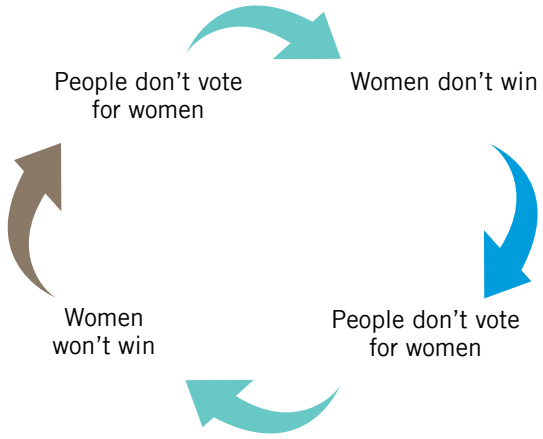
"...I wanted to vote for a woman, but when I realised that the man was going to win, I chose to go with the man, because if I voted for a losing candidate, I wouldn't be able to ask him for anything, so I switched to the person I thought would win."
Young man, Malaita

Other voters reported splitting votes between family members to increase the odds that at least one person in the household would support a winning candidate.

"I decided to vote for the man but. I told my family 'vote for the woman so that if I lose, we will still have support since your candidate may win'. If we just vote for one we might lose out altogether. Right now my family is benefitting from my candidate because we won."
Adult man, Isabel

This desire to vote for a winning candidate results in self-perpetuating cycle, where women fail to win elections, not because voters doubt their ability to lead, but because historically women have failed to both contest and win elections. The 2014 Voter Behaviour Study described this as a 'male feedback loop'.

Figure 11: Male feedback loops



It is suggested that male feedback loops are most likely to pose a barrier to women at the final stages of the election journey, as they are able to dissuade someone who may otherwise be intending to vote for a female candidate from doing so. In this context, voting for a female candidate is seen as a risk that voters simply cannot afford to take.

"*I've never seen a woman win, so people do not want to waste their vote on a candidate who will lose. If you vote for a winning candidate you can go and ask for support, but they won't help you if you didn't vote for him.*"
Adult man, Isabel

"Because the story is that even if you vote for a woman, she will never win and she will not give us anything. Some women too advised me not to vote for the woman candidate."
Young woman, Malaita

"There were so many male candidates and she was the only female candidate so her chances of winning were low, so I voted for a male."
Young woman, Choiseul

Barrier 4: Inequality in family decision-making

The research revealed that voter decisions in the Solomon Islands are not made by individuals, but by families. When asked how they made the decision about who to vote for in the 2014 National General Election, 35% of men and women indicated that they voted together as a family unit. In some cases a number of related family groups came together to 'back' a particular candidate.

"All of us in my extended family, about 50 of us in total, discussed then agreed to vote for this candidate. We decided to vote for him because he is our relative so it will be easier for us to see him and get financial and other assistance from him if he becomes an MP."
Young woman, Honiara

It was also evident that as a result of gender norms within families, male elders had a significant amount of control over the voter decisions of both women and young people. 17% of research participants suggested that men's control of decision making in the family was a key reason why women failed to get elected.

"Husbands made their wives not vote for the female candidate, but to vote for their husband's candidate."
Adult woman, Malaita

"If all of us [women in this constituency] voted for the female candidate, she will win. But many women were like me, their husbands made them vote for the husband's candidate of choice."
Adult woman, Malaita

The findings show that when men influence family decision making, they are much more likely to do so in favour of a male candidate. 26% of women who voted for a man in the 2014 National General Election admitted that their choice of candidate was influenced by their husband, father or a male elder, compared to only 3% of women who voted for a woman candidate. This may also suggest that relationships among families who vote for a woman candidate are more egalitarian.

"I did not go [to campaign meetings] because I was busy in the house and I thought my husband should go and tell me later how to vote. I would like to have my choice but my husband controls my vote."

Adult woman Malaita

"My husband is strong in deciding who we should vote for. I wanted to vote for [a female candidate] because she has helped me as a member of Rokotanikeni provided solar for my family, but my husband and sons said I must vote for his nephew or else husband will get cross with me."

Adult woman Malaita

Male elder's control over voter decision-making was also highly evident among young people, including young men. For example, of the young people in the study who said they voted as part of a family unit, 45% also said they were told who to vote for. Of those, 87% voted for a male candidate in the 2014 National General Election.

"My father told me who to vote for. Not really sure why my father chose him, maybe because he goes to my Church?"

Young man, Honiara

These figures are likely to underrepresent the true extent of men's control of family decision-making. This is for a number of reasons, including that women may be reluctant to admit that their husband/father has told them who to vote for fear of reprisal, or because male control over family decision-making is a common social norm in Solomon Islands, it often happens without thought. In a number of instances, women who explicitly described a situation where their vote was influenced also maintained that they made their own decision about who to vote for.

As with male feedback loops, male control over decision-making is most likely to influence the choices of women and young people in the final stages of the election journey and prevent someone who may otherwise be intending to vote for a female candidate from doing so.

Opportunities for women's political participation

Opportunity 1: Dissatisfaction with male political leadership

The RAMSI People's Survey has found that a steadily increasing number of Solomon Islanders are dissatisfied with their current MP, culminating in 56% of all survey respondents in 2013.[36] This research confirmed these findings, and also found that dissatisfaction with male leadership contributed to voter preferences for women candidates. Of the people that voted for a woman in the 2014 National General Election, 45% indicated that one of their main reasons for doing so was because they were dissatisfied with male MPs and they thought a woman would do a better job.

"I want to try a woman this time around and see if any changes will happen in my community and constituency."

Adult man, Isabel

"Men do not worry about the needs of women and families. Men only recognise important people like the educated people in the communities…"

Adult woman, Malaita

"Since the last election until now I have not seen any changes. They only give boats and engines to individuals, which are things that do not bring development in our communities, just personal benefits to individuals. They (the other MPs) usually give to their voters who are benefitting from them."

Adult man, Malaita

"Because every time we vote for a man they don't do what we want so I chose a woman. Women can think about the people because they are the mothers of the island."

Adult woman, Isabel

36 Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (2013) People's Survey 2013. ANU Enterprise. Canberra, Australia.

It should be noted however that all of these people were from the Malaita and Isabel sites, where women candidates polled well. This suggests that while dissatisfaction with the current MP can work in favour of female candidates, it is not reason enough for people to vote for a woman, and the prerequisites described earlier still need to be met.

It is unclear to what extent voter's dissatisfaction is a result of the MPs actual performance, or the voter's often wildly unrealistic expectations. If the latter is true, voters will most likely be dissatisfied with any MP, regardless of their gender. However, this does not prevent candidates and other stakeholders leveraging this dissatisfaction to the benefit of women candidates in communications and advocacy messaging.

Opportunity 2: Leveraging grassroots women's networks

While no specific data was collected on the role of community based organisations in influencing voter decision-making, it was clear during the research that the female candidates in West Are Are (Malaita) and Maringe Kokota (Isabel) constituencies had effectively leveraged the influence of local women's organisations to increase their share of votes, particularly by women. For example, in West Are Are, the candidate was also the founder of Rokotaekeni, an organisation working towards women's economic empowerment through savings clubs. Voters clearly articulated the role that Rokotaekeni had played in supporting her campaign.

"Me and my husband decided to vote for a woman. I told him to vote for a woman and he agreed. We Roko women discussed it and all decided to vote for a woman."
Adult woman, Malaita

"I voted for a woman because I listened to what she said and I believed she would make a good MP. And she is a big businesswoman from Rokotanikeni too. Women should vote for women, because she can look after her house and pikinini and she will help us women."
Adult woman, Malaita

"If all of us Rokotanikeni voted for the female candidate, she will win. But many women were like me, their husbands made them vote for the husband's candidate of choice."
Adult woman, Malaita

Similarly, in Maringe Kokota, the female candidate had leveraged the support of the Mother's Union in her campaign:

"For the first time all of us women in the constituency agree to vote for her, then when she went to campaign everyone women supported her, but we were surprised with the election result. She lost, so all of us Mother's Union members had decided to vote for her."
Adult Woman, Isabel

This suggests that grassroots women's organisations may have significant potential to mobilise female voters to support the campaigns of women candidates, they also provide a legitimate structure through which resources can be directed to support their campaigns.

Casting votes during the simulated voting exercise, Lau Valley, East Honiara, 2016. UN Women/Kiri Dicker

RECOMMENDATIONS

This section outlines a number of recommendations for future advocacy and programming priorities, based on the findings of this research. These are divided into two strategies, which we propose need to be enacted simultaneously to achieve short-term and long-term change.

1) **Changing the system so that it better enables women's participation:**

   Including interventions that transform the political culture in Solomon Islands from one that is transactional (i.e. which encourages local and ethnic voting) to one that is transformational (i.e. which encourages voting based on candidate's policy priorities). Activities may include systemic advocacy and political lobbying, working with male champions of women's political participation, and voter education and awareness initiatives.

2) **Equipping women to operate more effectively within the current system:**

   Including interventions that build the knowledge and skills of future, intending and actual women candidates and assist them to negotiate the current political environment more successfully. Activities may include assisting women candidates to build connections with their communities and exploring models for increasing the resources available to female candidates.

This section concludes with a third recommendation as to how stakeholder efforts could be better coordinated to ensure a more cohesive and effective approach.

1. Changing the system so that it better enables women's participation

A key finding of this research is that the transactional nature of politics in Solomon Islands, which is fuelled by the MP's RCDF, is the foremost barrier to women's political participation. Not only do women lack the money to fund campaigns that meet voter expectations for material resources, but they are historically unlikely to win in a context where 'winning is everything'. Until this culture transformed, it is unlikely that rapid increases in women's political representation will take place. Therefore stakeholders should continue efforts to secure the introduction of Temporary Special Measures (TSMs) in the form of reserved seats for women, as the quickest route to women's political participation.

Reform of the Rural Constituency Development Fund (RCDF)

There is significant evidence to show that CDFs directly contribute to a culture of clientelist voter behaviour (where constituents pledge political support to MPs according to the distribution of resources)[37] and that this in turn encourages constituents to vote along ethnic, clan, or family ties.[38] This research indicates that this culture has created an expectation that candidates will use their personal funds to secure the political support of constituents. This creates a significant barrier to women candidates, who are far less likely to have access to the large amounts of cash required to run a successful campaign. CDFs also perpetuate the gender imbalance in parliament as they offer a significant advantage to incumbent MPs, who in Solomon Islands, are not women.[39]

In Solomon Islands, there has been some recent civil society advocacy on the reform of the RCDF, led by Transparency International Solomon Islands (TISI). It is recommended that political lobbying and advocacy efforts to reform the RCDF are sustained and strengthened and that resources are dedicated to conducting a more comprehensive gender analysis of

37 Van Zyl, A. (2010). International Budget Partnership Budget Brief No. 10. What is wrong with the Constituency Development Funds? International Budget Partnership. Available at: http://www.internationalbudget.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/brief10.pdf

38 Lindberg, Staffan and M. K. C. Morrison (2008) 'Are African Voters Really Ethnic or Clientelistic? Survey Evidence from Ghana', Political Science Quarterly, vol. 123, pps: 95-122.

39 Wood, T. (2014). Why Can't Women Win? Impediments to Female Electoral Success in Solomon Islands. CDI Discussion Paper 2014/01. Austrsalian National University, Canberra.

the RCDF, including conducting research into the specific barriers that it poses to women's political participation in Solomon Islands. The RCDF is intensely political and it is unlikely that it will be eliminated entirely, however any reforms that increase accountability will undoubtedly contribute to a more enabling environment for women's political participation.

Advocacy and lobbying for Temporary Special Measures (TSMs)

In recent years there has been a united effort among Solomon Islands Government, donors and civil society stakeholders to lobby for the introduction TSMs in the form of reserved seats for women. These efforts have been led by Women In Shared Decision Making (WISDM), a multi-stakeholder working group of organisations dedicated to women's political participation. Despite receiving some support by political leaders, the underlying political will for change in Parliament remains low.[40] This is unsurprising, given that the introduction of TSMs would essentially challenge the current status quo, in which men have almost total governing power. Furthermore, the current Minister for Women (the sole woman was elected in the 2014 National General Election) has been slow to publically support reserved seats for women. There has also been some progress on the introduction of quotas for women on political parties. The 2014 Political Parties Integrity Act mandated that at least 10% of the candidates of each registered political party must be women, but also stated that this was optional. This Act is currently under review and there is a push from donors for this quota to be increased to 30% and become mandatory.

While progress to date has been slow, there are some signs of change. One recent opportunity is the handing down of the concluding observations by the UN Committee on the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), to which Solomon Islands is a signatory of both the Convention and its Optional Protocol. These included the recommendation that Solomon Islands Government:

> *"...Strengthen the role of the task force to discuss temporary special measures as part of a necessary strategy to accelerate the achievement of substantive equality of women and men in all areas where women are underrepresented or disadvantaged..."* [41]

In response to this, the Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs (MWYCA) had, at the time of writing, engaged a consultant to identify priority areas for affirmative action strategies (including TSMs) and was awaiting their report.

It is recommended that the advocacy momentum to introduce TSMs to support women's political participation are sustained, and that donors explore opportunities to effectively resource collective action by civil society organisations. It is also not unreasonable to suggest that civil society groups consider requesting that the CEDAW Committee conduct an inquiry under the Optional Protocol. While it is no doubt a lengthy and involved process, this has been used to affect change in other countries on issues that violate women's human rights under CEDAW.

Gender-sensitive voter education and mobilisation programs

Research has shown that voter education and awareness initiatives are an important part of achieving a strengthened democracy. For example, a recent meta-evaluation of ten research studies across a range of low-income democracies found that voters are receptive to new information about politician performance and are willing to change their voting behaviour on the basis of this information, even in settings that are characterised by clientelist and ethnic voting.[42]

40 Wood, T. (2014). Why Can't Women Win? Impediments to Female Electoral Success in Solomon Islands. CDI Discussion Paper 2014/01. Austrsalian National University, Canberra.

41 2014 CEDAW Concluding Observations for Solomon Islands. 14 November, 2014. Available at: http://rrrt.spc.int/country-activities/solomon-islands/state-reportsitem/667-cedaw-2014

42 Pande, R. (2011). 'Can informed voters enforce better governance? Experiments in low-income democracies', Annual Review of Economics, vol. 3, pp:. 215-237.

There are a plethora of voter awareness programs operating in Solomon Islands, which mostly ebb and flow as elections approach and pass. At the time of writing, the Solomon Islands Electoral Commission (SIEC) is in the process of supporting the establishment of the Voter Awareness Coordination Committee (VACC) to implement the Commission's National Voter Awareness Strategy. This study suggests that long-term, coordinated and gender sensitive VAPs can be a powerful tool to change gender and cultural norms and improve women's political participation. Potential activities include working through the newly formed VACC to provide training and mentoring and gender mainstreaming support to organisations implementing VAPs and providing input into learning and communication materials to ensure that they are gender sensitive.

It is recommended that voter awareness programs (VAPs):

- Respond to the unique needs and contexts of male and female voters, including young men and women.
- Engage people in discussions about gender attitudes and norms as they relate to women's political participation and encourage actual support for women as parliamentarians by framing women as providers of assistance.
- Target men and women in family units to challenge and change gender and cultural norms that prevent women from making independent voting decisions. Caution should be taken when implementing initiatives that only target women (i.e. that exclude men), due to the potential of backlash.
- Include practical strategies for dealing with coercion by friends, family members and candidates (including campaign managers), including addressing myths regarding list-keeping and false loyalty towards candidates who buy votes.
- Adopt transformative, but relevant messaging that supports women's rights to political participation, and that considers women both inside and outside their traditional roles.

It is further recommended that specific voter awareness and mobilisation programs be designed for young people, especially young women, who are most likely to have their vote controlled by a male elder and least likely to cast a vote at all.[43]

2. Equipping women to be more effective within the current system

To date, women's political participation programming in the Solomon Islands and the Pacific region more broadly has been heavily weighted towards developing the knowledge and skills of women leaders and intending candidates. Implicit in these kind of activities is an assumption that a) voter preference is determined by the skills and policies of candidates, and b) that if more women stand for election, more will women be elected. The results of this research casts doubt on this assumption, instead suggesting that there are more systemic barriers in play for women.

Given that there is no evidence to suggest that candidate training to date has provided female candidates with any discernable advantage,[44] this report recommends that future candidate training programs are delivered with caution. Encouraging women to stand for parliament who are clearly not suitable in the eyes of voters (i.e. they do not meet the prerequisites described earlier in this report) has the potential to do more harm than good, especially if it has a negative impact of women's finances, family and/or reputation. Where candidate training programs are delivered, they should work more intensely, and over a longer period of time, with women who have a realistic chance of being elected. In determining this, a number of factors need to be considered, including the politics of the constituency (i.e. are the majority of constituents dissatisfied with the current MP?) and the candidate's own circumstances (do they have the resources, networks and understanding of community needs required to be considered by voters?).

43 The 2010 RAMSI People's Survey found that 18.9% of young men and 25.3% of young women surveyed did not vote in the 2010 National General Election.

44 Wood, T. (2014). Why Can't Women Win? Impediments to Female Electoral Success in Solomon Islands. CDI Discussion Paper 2014/01. Austrsalian National University, Canberra.

It is recommended that stakeholders take a longer-term approach to working with potential female candidates, and implementing programming that focuses on helping women leaders meet the pre-requisites required to be considered as a legitimate candidate, by assisting them to develop build community level networks and relationships and increasing the resources available to them. Examples how this might look in practice are discussed further below.

Assisting women leaders to build relationships with their communities

It was clear through this research that one key attribute that communities expect of candidates is that they have a thorough understanding of the needs of their constituency, demonstrated through a track record of community service and providing for community needs. This is something that can be difficult for women to achieve, particularly if they do not have the financial security required to leave formal employment and return to live in their village prior to an election.

Currently, candidate training programs are primarily focused on teaching aspiring candidates gender-sensitive leadership skills and improving their understanding of politics and governance (e.g. through mock parliaments), with a smaller focus on campaigning strategy. The problem with this approach is that, while these skills may make women better leaders in the eyes of donors, they are not more likely to get women elected. In fact, the more accountable, transparent, honest and gender-sensitive we encourage female candidates to be, the *less* appealing they become to voters. Consider the fact that donors choose to provide this so-called 'support' to female and not male candidates, and it could be said that candidate training programs have the capacity to contribute to female candidates poor performance at the polls. The results of this research clearly show that voters define 'leadership' in a vastly different way to donors, that is, they want someone who can provide for them, not necessarily someone with high levels of emotional intelligence, or the right technical skills to effectively govern the country. It is suggested that in designing candidate training programs, it is the wants of voters that should be given paramount importance, since they are the ones doing the electing.

Terrance Wood has recommended that donors and stakeholders work over longer timeframes to help strengthen networks that link prominent women to their constituencies, and helping aspiring women candidates make use of such networks as a means of garnering a reputation as a candidate who can help and who is worth voting for.[45] A candidate training program that achieves this must assist women to identify and provide for community needs and most importantly, convince community leaders of their ability to do this. It is recommended that programs focus on teaching women the skills to analyse and map community needs and locate resources for projects that have been identified as important by constituents. These projects should be obvious, practical and aligned with community expectations, such as the provision of adaptable technology, income generation projects, solar panels and water tanks. These are the things that voters want. Programs should also include practical opportunities for women to demonstrate leadership within their communities, and become more 'visible' through increased community-level dialogue. Finally, programs should leverage the influence of grassroots women's networks to support female candidates. This could involve developing suitable candidates from within these networks, or linking aspiring female candidates with them.

Increasing the resources available to female candidates

Providing funding directly to women candidates, whether up-front, or in the form of rebates, is fraught with practicalities and sensitivities and not generally considered an option for donors. That said, there are other examples of models that leverage private donations to the benefit of female candidates. Most notable of these is EMILY's List, which was founded in the USA in 1985 as a donor network to raise campaign funds for pro-choice women candidates affiliated with the Democratic Party. A version of EMILY's List also operates in Australia, but is open to female candidates across all parties. An adapted model, which mobilised past female candidates and/or prominent businesswomen to fundraise and provide grants, in kind support and mentoring to female candidates is a realistic option in Solomon Islands.

45 Wood, T. (2014). Why Can't Women Win? Impediments to Female Electoral Success in Solomon Islands. CDI Discussion Paper 2014/01. Austrsalian National University, Canberra.

This would be even more effective if support was conditional of female candidates adopting pro-women policies (including for the implementation of CEDAW and the introduction of TSMs). In addition to funding the coordination of an EMILY's List style group, donors may look towards providing funding and resources, through existing grassroots community organisations, to fund projects initiated by women leaders (as discussed earlier), as long as they are completed outside the election year so as not to be seen as de-facto campaigning on behalf of women.

Engage male champions of women's political participation

The results of this research clearly show that the opinions of male elders carry significant weight in determining election outcomes. While a number of men who expressed transformative attitudes about women's leadership was small, it was nonetheless significant, as these men have the potential to become male champions of women's political participation and influence the attitudes of voters. Examples of male champions may include prominent public servants (teachers, government staff), local leaders (including chiefs) and businessmen. While it is essential that programs provide opportunities for potential female candidates and women leaders to connect with male champions, it is important the programs are conducted separately, and safe spaces are created for both men and women to explore cultural and gendered dimensions of leadership.

Conduct research on the impacts of unsuccessful campaigns for women

Little is known about the impact of unsuccessful campaigns on women candidates. This includes impacts on women's financial situation, employment prospects, family and public reputation. It is recommended that stakeholders conduct further qualitative research with unsuccessful women candidates and their families to better understand these impacts and ensure that they adopt a 'do not harm' approach to supporting potential female candidates. The results of this research should be used to inform future programming efforts, including post-election support to unsuccessful female candidates.

3. Developing a comprehensive strategy for women's political participation

In recent years, efforts to increase women's political participation in Solomon Islands have been led by the Women in Shared Decision Making (WISDM) Taskforce, which was co-chaired by SIG MWCYFA, and the National Council of Women (NCW). While WISDM had the foundations of an effective model of stakeholder collaboration,[46] in the absence of external resourcing, a strategic plan and formal terms of reference, stakeholder interest has waned.

Despite this, there remains a significant amount of interest among stakeholders in supporting the aims and objectives of WISDM. This is evident in the large number of people who attended a workshop to validate the key findings of this research (35 people from 23 organisations). The release of this report, and the conclusion of the European Union (EU) funded Strongim Mere program, presents an opportunity for stakeholders to re-energise, re-group and develop a clear strategy for future efforts increase women's political participation. The first activity of the group should be to develop a clear and targeted multi-stakeholder strategy to implement the recommendations of this research.

It is recommended that WISDM be retained as a multi-stakeholder forum for collaboration on improving women's political participation, and that:

- The body is formalised through a clear terms of reference;
- Membership is extended to a wider group of stakeholders, including the newly formed Political Parties Commission, Political Parties Working Group and Voter Awareness Coordination Committee and other groups with a stake in strengthened democracy in Solomon Islands;
- Alternative models of governance are explored that allow the group to coalesce around issues of interest/relevance and respond rapidly to specific 'windows' of opportunity (e.g. the reform of the Electoral Act).[47]
- The coordination of the group is funded.

46 In 2009 the group made a concerted, but ultimately unsuccessful effort to lobby government to introduce reserved seats for women in national parliament.

47 For example, the Constellation Model of Collaborative Social Change http://socialinnovation.ca/constellationmodel

ANNEX A -
CANDIDATE VOTING MATERIALS

Candidate 1:

Hudson Matangi

Symbol:

- Age blo hem 50
- Hem garem 4 fala pikinni
- Famili blo hem go lotu evri week
- Garem university degree lo financial management
- Hem wanfala successful bisnisman and hem garem staka seleni.
- Hem givim plenty seleni lo komuniti an olketa poor pipol.
- Hem stanap bicos hem laek mek sure gavman improvim services lo disfala constituency.

Candidate 2:

Audrey Kikolo

Symbol:

- Hem mariet wetem tufala pikinni
- Age blo hem 52 years
- Tufala ownim wanfala bigfala sipping kampani
- Active lo Church
- Hem bin wanfala primary skul tisa but distaem hem retire
- Garem staka seleni and hem always willing for helpim komuniti blo hem, especially side lo skul fees
- Hem stanap bicos hem laek mek sure olketa lo gavman no forgetim disfala constituency inside lo national budget

Candidate 3:

Joseph Ausuta

Symbol:

- Age 53 years.
- Marit wetem 4 fala pikinini
- Boss blo youth group lo Church
- Accountant wetem degree lo SINU
- Garem wanfala smol bisnis for selim wetem 3 fala moto canoe.
- Hem stanap bicos hem laek mekem gavman lo Solomon Aelan fair lo iumi evriwan.

Candidate 4:

Suzie Valevao

Symbol:

- Age 49 years.
- Mariet wetem 3 fala pikininni.
- Treasurer lo Church.
- Garem degree lo bisnis and management studies lo USP.
- Waka osem wanfala financial controller lo farming suppli stoa
- Hem stanap bicos hem laek giv bak lo komuniti and hem tingse bae hem mekem gudfala MP.

OFFICIAL BALLOT

Cross the box next to the candidate of your choice. Only vote for **one** candidate

Example X

 **Hudson Matangi** ☐

 **Audrey Kikolo** ☐

 **Joseph Ausuta** ☐

 **Suzie Valevao** ☐

OFFICIAL BALLOT

Cross the box next to the candidate of your choice. Only vote for **one** candidate

Example X

 **Hudson Matangi** ☐

 **Audrey Kikolo** ☐

 **Joseph Ausuta** ☐

 **Suzie Valevao** ☐

OFFICIAL BALLOT

Cross the box next to the candidate of your choice. Only vote for **one** candidate

Example X

 **Hudson Matangi** ☐

 **Audrey Kikolo** ☐

 **Joseph Ausuta** ☐

 **Suzie Valevao** ☐

OFFICIAL BALLOT

Cross the box next to the candidate of your choice. Only vote for **one** candidate

Example X

 **Hudson Matangi** ☐

 **Audrey Kikolo** ☐

 **Joseph Ausuta** ☐

 **Suzie Valevao** ☐

ANNEX B -
QUESTIONNAIRE V 1.0

2014 Post Election Gender Research Questionnaire

Demographic Questions

1. Sex

- ○ Male
- ○ Female

2. Age

- ○ < 35
- ○ 35 +

3. Research Site

- ○ Malaita
- ○ Isabel
- ○ Honiara
- ○ Choiseul

2014 Post Election Gender Research Questionnaire

Questions about the Mock Election

4. Who did you vote for in the mock election?

- ○ Hudson Matangi
- ○ Suzie Valevao
- ○ Audrey Kiloko
- ○ Joseph Ausuta
- ○ Don't Know/Decline

5. Why did you vote for that person?

Prompt Questions for Question 5:
What do you remember about the Candidate?
What do you like about them?
Do you like that person better because they are a man/woman?

6. Why did you vote for that person?

7. Why do you think that person would make a good MP?

Prompt Questions for Question 7:
Did you talk to anyone about the Candidates? Who?
What did other people say?
Did talking to other people help you make your decision?
When deciding who to vote for, do you consider who your family or the Chief are voting for?

8. How did you make your decision about who to vote for?

2014 Post Election Gender Research Questionnaire

Questions about the 2014 National General Election

9. Did you vote in the 2014 National General Election?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ Don't Know/Can't Remember

10. Why didn't you vote?

- ◯ Didn't want to vote
- ◯ Couldn't get to a polling station (transport)
- ◯ Wasn't enrolled at all
- ◯ Was enrolled in another constituency
- ◯ Someone stopped me from voting
- ◯ Couldn't get to a polling station (too busy)
- ◯ Forgot

Other (please specify)

11. What constituency did you vote in?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

12. Did you vote for a male or female candidate?

- ◯ Male
- ◯ Female
- ◯ Dont know/Decline

13. Why did you vote for that candidate?

Prompt Questions for Question 5:
What do you remember about the Candidate?
What did you like about them?
Did you like that person better because they are a man/woman?

14. Why did you think that candidate would make a good MP?

15. How did you make your decision about who to vote for?

Prompt Questions for Question 7:
Did you talk to anyone about the Candidates? Who?
Did talking to other people help you make your decision?
When deciding who to vote for, do you consider who your family or the Chief are voting for?

16. Where do you get information from about candidates in the lead up to the election?

17. Was there anything you wanted to know about the elections or the candidates that you didn't get informed of?

18. Did you get more information about some candidates than others?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ Don't Know

19. Have you ever heard any programs on the radio (SIBC) that discuss the issue of women in parliament?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ Not Sure

20. What did you learn from these programs?

21. Where do you get information from about government and elections

22. Were you aware if any female candidates contested the 2014 NGL in this constituency?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

How did you hear about their campaign?

23. Why do you think that a female candidate failed to get elected in this constituency in the 2014 NGL?

ANNEX C -
QUESTIONNAIRE V 2.0

V 2.0 of 2014 Post Election Gender Research Questionnaire

Demographic Questions

1. Sex

- ◯ Male
- ◯ Female

2. Age

- ◯ < 35
- ◯ 35 +

3. Research Site

- ◯ Malaita
- ◯ Isabel
- ◯ Honiara
- ◯ Choiseul

V 2.0 of 2014 Post Election Gender Research Questionnaire

Questions about the Mock Election

4. Who did you vote for in the mock election?

- ◯ Hudson Matangi
- ◯ Suzie Valevao
- ◯ Audrey Kiloko
- ◯ Joseph Ausuta
- ◯ Don't Know/Decline

5. Why did you vote for that person?

Prompt Questions for Question 5:
What do you remember about the Candidate?
What do you like about them?
Do you like that person better because they are a man/woman?

6. Why did you vote for a man/women? (whichever applicable?)

7. Why didn't you vote for a man/woman? (whichever applicable)

8. Why do you think that person would make a good MP?

9. How did you make your decision about who to vote for?

Prompt Questions for Question 7:
Did you talk to anyone about the Candidates? Who?
What did other people say?
Did talking to other people help you make your decision?
When deciding who to vote for, do you consider who your family or the Chief are voting for?

V 2.0 of 2014 Post Election Gender Research Questionnaire

Questions about the 2014 National General Election

10. Did you vote in the 2014 National General Election?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ Don't Know/Can't Remember

11. Why didn't you vote?

- ◯ Didn't want to vote
- ◯ Couldn't get to a polling station (transport)
- ◯ Wasn't enrolled at all
- ◯ Was enrolled in another constituency
- ◯ Someone stopped me from voting
- ◯ Couldn't get to a polling station (too busy)
- ◯ Forgot

Other (please specify)

12. What constituency did you vote in?

- ◯ This constituency

Other (please specify)

13. Did you vote for a male or female candidate?

- ◯ Male (go to Q14)
- ◯ Female (go to Q15)
- ◯ Dont know/Decline

14. Were you aware if any female candidates contested the 2014 NGL in this constituency?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

How did you hear about their campaign?

15. Why did you vote for that candidate?

Prompt Questions for Question 5:
What do you remember about the Candidate?
What did you like about them?
Did you like that person better because they are a man/woman?

16. Why did you vote for a man/woman? (whichever applicable)

17. Why didn't you want to vote for a man/woman? (whichever applicable)

18. Why did you think that candidate would make a good MP?

19. How did you make your decision about who to vote for?

Prompt Questions for Question 7:
Did you talk to anyone about the Candidates? Who?
Did talking to other people help you make your decision?
When deciding who to vote for, do you consider who your family or the Chief are voting for?

20. Where do you get information from about candidates in the lead up to the election?

- ◯ Candidate's campaign meetings/rallies
- ◯ Campaign managers
- ◯ Radio
- ◯ Newspaper
- ◯ Direct family members (who I live with)
- ◯ Other people in the community
- ◯ Newspaper
- ◯ Church

Other (please specify)

21. Of these, which is your MAIN source of information?

22. Have you ever heard any programs on the radio (SIBC) that discuss the issue of women in parliament?

- ◯ Yes (Go to Q23)
- ◯ No (Go to Q24)
- ◯ Not Sure

23. What did you learn from these programs?

24. At the time of the 2014 election, would you have liked more/less/same amount information about contesting candidates?

- ◯ More
- ◯ Same (satisfied with the amount of information I had)
- ◯ Less

25. Why do you think that women fail to get elected in the Solomon Islands?

ANNEX D -
FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Annex D – Focus Group Discussion Questions

1. Do the results (of the mock election) surprise you? Why? Why not?
2. Why do you think people voted for (winning candidate)?
3. Why do you think people did not vote for (losing candidates)?
4. Why do you think <Candidate> got more results than <Candidate>?
5. Why do you think that women were elected/polled well but in the mock election but not in the NGL?
6. Why don't people vote for female candidates, even when they believe there should be more women in parliament?
7. What would have to change for more people vote for women?

ANNEX E -
CONSENT SCRIPT AND FORM

UN Women Post 2014 Election Gender Research

Participant Consent Procedure

Part A: Participant Consent Script

Note: Research team member to read the below text aloud to participant in Solomon Pijin

- I am going to tell you about the research project we are doing your community and then ask if you would like to be involved.
- You do not have to be involved if you do not want to, the choice is up to you.
- We are visiting your community because we want to find out more about how people decide who to vote for in elections.
- We are especially interested to know what people think about male and female candidates who stand for election.
- The reason we are asking these questions is because we want to make it easier for anyone who wants to stand for elections to successfully get elected. We hope that this will improve political leadership in the Solomon Islands.
- In order to find out this information, we will be holding a fake election and asking people to select from fake candidates. The reason why we are doing this is the help us understand how people make decisions about who to vote for.
- After you make your vote, you will attend an interview with one of our team, followed by a group discussion. In these discussions we will be asking you questions about who you voted for in the fake election, but also in the 2014 National General Election. You don't have to answer the questions if you don't want to.
- This research project is being conducted by an organisation called UN Women. UN Women are independent from the Government of the Solomon Islands.

Do you understand what this project is about? Do you have any questions?

If you choose to take part in this research there is some important things you must know:

- Everything you say in the individual interview and group discussion will be kept confidential by the research team. Even though we might write down what you say, we won't tell anyone that it was you who said it.
- However, we can't promise that everything you say in the group discussion will be kept confidential by the other people in the group. Please keep this in mind.
- We will use the information you give us in lots of different ways, we might even write it in a book or a report. Nothing that we write about this research will ever include your name.
- You can change your mind about being involved in the research at any time, just tell someone from the research team.
- If you have any questions about the research, you can ask us at any time. We have included our phone numbers if you need to contact us.

Do you understand everything I have said? Do you have any questions?

Part B: Participant Consent Form

Participant Name:……Number:……

Research Site:……Date: / /

Note: The participant should write their own name, if they are unable to write their own name, a member of the research team should write it for them.

Having listened to everything I have said, would you like to be involved in this research project? Remember, the choice is up to you.

☐ **NO:** That's okay, thank you for taking to time to find out more about our project.

☐ **YES:** That's great!

Are you happy for us to take **photos** of you?	☐ **Yes**	☐ **No**
Are you happy for us to make **videos** of you?	☐ **Yes**	☐ **No**
Are you happy for us to **tape record** your voice?	☐ **Yes**	☐ **No**
Do you want us to tell you what we **learnt** in the study?	☐ **Yes**	☐ **No**

Consent recorded by Kiri Dicker / Afu Billy / Other _____ (please circle).

Signature.....

UN WOMEN IS THE UN ORGANIZATION DEDICATED TO GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN. A GLOBAL CHAMPION FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS, UN WOMEN WAS ESTABLISHED TO ACCELERATE PROGRESS ON MEETING THEIR NEEDS WORLDWIDE.

UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to implement these standards. It stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on five priority areas: increasing women's leadership and participation; ending violence against women; engaging women in all aspects of peace and security processes; enhancing women's economic empowerment; and making gender equality central to national development planning and budgeting. UN Women also coordinates and promotes the UN system's work in advancing gender equality.

Fiji Multi-Country Office
Level 3, Kadavu House
Victoria Parade
Suva
Tel: +679 330 1178

Solomon Islands Office
United Nations Joint Presence Office
Ground Floor, ANZ Haus, Kukum Highway, Ranadi
Solomon Islands
Tel: + 677 22453

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EUROPEAN UNION

United Nations Peacebuilding
Peacebuilding Fund

UN WOMEN
United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women