



**SPC**  
Secretariat  
of the Pacific  
Community

## HUMAN RIGHTS PROGRAMME (RRRT)

### Changing Laws, Protecting Women Project



A female market vendor at the Port Vila market, Vanuatu, April 2014

**Location/Countries:**

Kiribati, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu

**Duration:**

2009 - ongoing

**Goal:**

The project's goal in these countries are two-fold: to build legislative lobbying teams and to facilitate the introduction of comprehensive violence against women legislation and family law.

**Partners:**

National Governments in the Countries  
National Civil Society Groups  
Fiji Women's Crisis Centre Regional Network on VAW  
Pacific Prevention of Domestic Violence Program  
United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)  
UN Women  
Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat Sexual and Gender Based Violence Reference Group

**Success in numbers:**

3 Pacific Island countries passed Family Protection legislation to protect families especially women and girls from violence;

Tonga: passed its Family Protection Act in 2013  
Kiribati: passed its Family Peace Act in 2014  
Solomon Islands: passed its Family Protection Act in 2014  
Tuvalu has a draft Family Protection Bill of 2014

**Project details:**

The Pacific region has some of the highest rates of violence against women (VAW) in the world. Current laws are ineffective in securing justice for women and children subjected to violence throughout the region.

SPC RRRT's *Changing Laws Protecting Women Project*, which began in 2009, aims to fill the existing legislative gaps by assisting Pacific Island countries to support comprehensive integrated VAW legislation.

A comprehensive approach covers not just protection but looks at prevention of violence and support of the survivor. Furthermore it puts measures in place to ensure the implementation and evaluation of the law.

**Success in words:**

*'This is an historical moment in Tonga's parliament, the bill has taken us three weeks to debate, and on behalf of the women, children and men of Tonga, I thank the Chair of the Whole Committee for his good guidance during those deliberations and the members of parliament for showing their support for this bill,'* a proud Minister for Tonga's Internal Affairs, Hon. Lord Vaea said, after the full majority vote in favour of the Tonga Family Protection Bill in September 2013.

*'We acknowledge the technical and financial support rendered under the MOU in 2010 between government and SPC RRRT that has culminated in this fruitful outcome for the protection of families in Tonga, especially the women and children,'* a statement from Tonga's Ministry of Internal Affairs said.



The Changing Laws, Protecting Women Project was funded by the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women (UN Trust Fund) until mid-2012. The project now receives continued funding from the Australian Government. RRRT has pioneered human rights training in the Pacific region, working to build a culture of human rights and assisting nation states to commit to, and observe, international human rights standards. RRRT receives core funding from the Australian Government. For more information visit [www.rrrt.org](http://www.rrrt.org)