

From: HONIARA

Sent: Monday, 18 December 2023 12:32 pm

To: PACMM; DEVPP; PACREG; DS PDG; PACPF

Cc: DCE; CEO; ...ALL POSTS; ALL DIVISIONS; FM.P/S MFA (Seemail); FM.P/S Associate MFA (Seemail); Cable Exchange DFAT-AUS

Subject: FORMAL MESSAGE: SOLOMON ISLANDS: AMBASSADOR FOR GENDER EQUALITY (PACIFIC)/TUIA TĀNGATA LOUISA WALL VISIT 29 NOVEMBER – 2 DECEMBER 2023

[RESTRICTED]

ĀPITIHINGA – ATTACHMENTS

- Action Points from Ambassador Wall's Solomon Islands visit

RĀPOPOTO – SUMMARY

Ambassador for Gender Equality (Pacific)/Tuia Tāngata, Louisa Wall and Senior Adviser Gender (DEVPP), Tara D'Sousa visited Solomon Islands from 29 November – 3 December for the Closing Ceremony of the 2023 Pacific Games.

Ambassador Wall's visit provided the opportunity to discuss gender equality in Solomon Islands within the context of the recently endorsed Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration (PLGED). Ambassador Wall met with a range of government officials, women parliamentarians, and sport and civil society organisation representatives and activists.

s6(a)

a strong policy environment for gender work in Solomon Islands, s6(a)

The visit highlighted

HOHENGANGA – ACTION

DEVPP (Health):

- s9(2)(ba)(i)
- s6(a)

PACREG (Pacific Connections): s9(2)(g)(i)

HON/PACMM/DEVPP: Follow up on visit outcomes (see attached)

All others: For information

PŪRONGO – REPORT

1. Ambassador Wall's four day programme of engagements with government, civil society, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and sportspeople highlighted opportunities for MFAT to connect with gender equality actors across sectors working collectively towards a shared goal. The purpose of

the visit was to strengthen key partnerships, and draw on Ambassador Wall's sporting achievements to bring together the themes of sports diplomacy and gender equality.

2. The programme included a reception with Manaaki New Zealand Scholarships alumni and officials-level meetings with the Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs (MWYCFA) and Ministry of National Planning and Development Coordination (MNPDC). A series of meetings were held with UN Resident Coordinator in Fiji Dirk Wagener, Transparency Solomon Islands CEO Ruth Liloqula, National Sports Council (NSC) CEO Alison Burchell, national sportswoman Shalom Akao Waita, and a variety of non-government stakeholders including Solomon Islands National Council of Women (SINCW), the Solomon Islands Planned Parenthood Association (SIPPA), Negotiated Partnership NGO partners ChildFund, World Vision, Save the Children, and Seif Ples. Ambassador Wall also had an informal dinner with women parliamentarians including Minister of Education and Human Resource Development and Minister for Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs. She also reconnected with Member of Parliament Hon. Silas Tausinga.

Government s6(a)

3. Meetings with Permanent Secretary Cedric Alependava and Director for Women Vaela Ngai of MWYCFA provided an overview of measures that the Solomon Islands Government (SIG) is taking in advancing women's political leadership and ending violence against women and girls. They noted that while there was strong policy commitment to gender equality efforts, s6(b)(i)

There is little capacity within the Ministry for implementation, with only six staff at national level and one in each province.

4. MWYCFA have almost finished consulting across the provinces, and so far have received 94% support for the introduction of Temporary Special Measures (TSMs) to accelerate political representation of women in Provincial Assemblies. The TSM proposal will be recommended to Cabinet in the coming months. MWYCFA are also working with the Ministry of Traditional Peace and Governance on the Traditional Governance and Customs Recognition Bill s6(b)(i)

5. MWYCFA also discussed their role in managing SAFENET, a referral network of organisations providing sexual and gender based violence (GBV) crisis response services including accommodation, counselling, medical and legal support. Ambassador Wall later visited Seif Ples, a government-run 24/7 crisis centre which also hosts the 24/7 SAFENET GBV hotline which is being strengthened through MFAT's Negotiated Partnership with ChildFund NZ. MWYCFA noted that their partnerships with civil society were a critical component of gender equality efforts in Solomon Islands. s6(a)

6. MWYCFA also emphasised the importance of providing support to youth to increase women's political participation. Youth make up 70% of the population, including a huge proportion of young women and there should be a greater effort to empower them.

7. MNPDC Permanent Secretary Susan Sulu discussed MNDPC's role managing the allocation of Ministry budgets against national planning and development priorities and the coordination of development cooperation. She highlighted the "plethora of policies" in government s6(b)(i)

s6(b)(i) She is keen on implementing gender and youth responsive budgeting based on country wide assessments; Vanuatu and Fiji have made some progress in these sectors. In response to Ambassador Wall's question about how Solomon Islands would promote the PLGED, the Permanent Secretary was clear that her Ministry would be undertaking PLGED reporting, so she is interested in the Implementation Plan.

Civil society - the advocacy and delivery role

8. A series of meetings with civil society highlighted the broad range of support Aotearoa provides to gender equality through a range of NGO and regional partnerships. A meeting with the Solomon Islands National Council of Women (SINCW) highlighted their role of advocacy and holding SIG accountable to fund and implement gender equality policies. The discussion covered the influence of colonisation and religion in undermining traditional roles, responsibilities and power for women. SINCW also expressed a critical concern for the high rates of breast cervical cancer among Solomon Island women.

Briefing from a coalition of agencies working to prevent violence against children

9. Ambassador Wall received a briefing from a coalition of NGOs (ChildFund, Save the Children and World Vision) and young people working through MFAT Negotiated Partnerships to end violence against children. The *Solomon Islands Endim Vaelens Agenstim Pikinini (SIEVAP)* partners discussed the 'Make it 18' campaign, which is working with children and parents in Malaita, Western Province and Honiara and with the Solomon Islands Law Reform Commission to advocate for a raise in the legal age of marriage from 15 to 18 through the reform of the *Islanders Marriage Act*.

10. The briefing was a unique opportunity for Ambassador Wall to hear directly from young people about the issues that affect them. They discussed the lack of sexual and reproductive health education, *tabu* around discussing sex, and lack of education and employment opportunities for young people which all contribute to high rates of child marriage and pregnancy in Solomon Islands. These are all areas in which MFAT is working alongside education and health partners.

Field visit: Solomon Islands Planned Parenthood Association

11. Ambassador Wall met with Ben Angoa, Executive Director of SIPPA. s6(a)

12. s9(2)(b)(i) Aotearoa provides core funding to SIPPA through Pacific regional funding to the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) as well through the NGO Manaaki Fund via Surfaid to strengthen GBV services. SIPPA expressed that the proportionality of funding via IPPF did not fully meet their needs. s6(a), s9(2)(ba)(i)

There are opportunities to develop our relationship with SIPPA through an application to the Equity and Inclusion Fund, particularly as an avenue to be able to support the advancement of SOGIESC rights and youth empowerment in Solomon Islands.

s9(2)(ba)(i)

13. s9(2)(ba)(i)

14. s6(a)

s6(b)(i)

Multilateral funding challenges

15. UN Resident Coordinator (RC) Dirk Wagener was in town at the same time as the Ambassador which provided the opportunity to hear about his priorities for gender equality in the Pacific, following on from a previous meeting with Post in September. s6(b)(ii)

16. Post convened a roundtable of agencies involved in the implementation of the PLGED and associated domestic violence law reform. While all agencies were actively involved in Pacific regional gender equality mechanisms, a common thread between groups was the challenges they were facing to fund their activities. Organisations including Seif Ples, Christian Care Centre and Family Support Centre have historically received funding through international development partnerships. In light of recent trends of the reallocation of development fundings s6(a) many providers of GBV crisis services told us that they do not know how they were going to be able to continue operations.

Pacific Games 2023

17. The visit also contained a large sporting component with opportunities to watch the women's football final match and present medals at the women's netball and mixed touch rugby competitions, along with officially representing New Zealand at the Closing Ceremony.

18. The intersection of Ambassador Wall's interests in sports and gender equality provided for interesting discussions over lunch with CEO of the NSC Alison Burchell and former national sportswoman and gender and development professional Shalom Akao Waita on how sport can be used

as a modality of advancing gender equality. They discussed the importance of teaching Physical Education in schools, which Aotearoa New Zealand is supporting through our Education Sector Support Programme. s9(2)(g)(i)

TĀKUPU – COMMENT

19. Many Solomon Islands agencies are working steadily at a policy and legislative level to address gender challenges systemically. However, the lack of funding to implement policies is acute and impacts the delivery of services and ability to adequately staff the agencies working at the frontline. Despite this, initiatives such as MWYCFA's consultations on TSM for women in provincial government are positive and there would be benefit in supporting MWYCFA to showcase these efforts at a regional level.

20. s6(a)

However, it seemed that the majority of people knew someone in their family who would be considered LGBTQI+ but did not have the terminology or framework within which to recognise them. s6(a)

it was encouraging to see work that organisations s6(a) are doing to ensure equal rights for all.

KA MUTU / ENDS