

A Woman's Place is in the House — the House of Parliament

Research to Advance Women's Political Representation
In Forum Island Countries



A Regional Study
Presented in Five Reports



Participants at the Pacific Regional Workshop on Advancing Women's Representation In Parliaments, Rarotonga, Cook Islands, 19 – 21 April, 2006

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Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat

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Acronyms

AV	Alternative Vote
BPFA	Beijing Platform for Action for the Advancement of Women
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
CPA	Commonwealth Parliamentary Association
CPoA	Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
EMBs	Electoral Management Bodies
EPG	Eminent Persons Group
FPP	First Past the Post
FICs	Forum Island Countries
GADD	Gender and Development Division
IDEA	Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
IPU	Inter Parliamentary Union
LPR	List Proportional Representation
LPV	Limited Preferential Vote
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NWMs	National Women's Machineries
MMP	Mixed Member Proportional
PIAS DG	Pacific Institute of Advanced Studies in Development and Governance
PIFS	Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
PINA	Pacific Islands News Association
PPA	Pacific Platform for Action
PR	Proportional Representation
RRRT	Regional Rights Resource Team
SNTV	Single Non-Transferable Vote
TRS	Two-Round System
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNDP PSRC	United Nations Development Program Pacific Sub-regional Centre
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
WAMM	Commonwealth Ministers Responsible for Women's/Gender Affairs Meeting
WEDO	Women's Environment and Development Organisation
WIP	Women in Politics
WIPPAC	Women in Politics Pacific Centre

Foreword

In October 2005, Pacific Island Forum Leaders endorsed the landmark Pacific Plan for strengthening regional cooperation and integration, to achieve four over-arching goals of economic growth, sustainable development, good governance and security for the region. Improved Gender Equality is a crosscutting strategic objective in the Pacific Plan.

Pacific governments have committed to equality for women in decision-making through a range of international and regional commitments, such as the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the 1995 United Nations Beijing Platform for Action, The Millenium Development Goals (MDGs), the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015, and the 1994 Pacific Platform for Action. Despite these commitments, the Pacific as a region fares amongst the worst in the world in terms of women's representation and participation in parliaments.

There is a real need for a more coordinated and strategic approach to address the gross under-representation of women in all parliaments in Forum Island Countries (FICs). This is not just a matter of women's rights. Increased balance between the sexes in decision-making goes hand in hand with good governance as it ensures consideration of a diversity of perspectives and directs attention to issues that may otherwise be overlooked. Increased gender equality in decision making lends to better development decisions being made. As such, the Pacific Plan includes a specific initiative to develop a strategy for participative democracy and electoral process, with particular emphasis on women, youth, non-state actors, and people with disability, as groups that are currently significantly marginalised in decision-making.

This set of research reports provides a comprehensive analysis of both social and electoral barriers to women's parliamentary representation, which we hope will assist member countries and the region as a whole, to progress notions of participative democracy. Draft research findings were presented and discussed at the Pacific Regional Workshop on Advancing Women's Representation in Parliaments, which was convened in Rarotonga, Cook Islands from 19-21 April 2006. This workshop was a joint initiative by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), Secretariat of the Pacific Community, Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and UNIFEM Pacific, which brought together Ministers, Members of Parliament, representatives of National Women's Machineries, regional organisations, donors and academics, to discuss concrete ways forward for increasing women's representation to elected political positions. Outcomes of this workshop therefore provide a regional roadmap of strategies to fast-track Pacific women's political representation, which warrant due support at both regional and national levels.

PIFS would like to express sincere thanks to the authors – Elise Huffer, Jon Fraenkel, Fakavae Taomia, Susie Saitala Kofe, 'Ofa Guttenbeil Likiliki and Alamanda Lauti – for their hard work in producing a quality product. We hope you find this both an interesting read and useful resource.

Greg Urwin
Secretary General
Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat

Pacific Regional Workshop on Advancing Women's Representation In Parliaments*

Rarotonga, Cook Islands

19 – 21 April, 2006

Final Outcomes Document

Preamble

Noting that the representation of women in politics is critical to achieving democracy, the wellbeing of communities and improving the status of women, parliamentarians, ministers, national directors and civil society organisation delegates from Australia, the Cook Islands, Fiji, French Polynesia, Kiribati, New Zealand, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Wallis and Futuna, at the Pacific Regional Workshop on Advancing Women's Representation in Parliaments held in Rarotonga, from 19-21 April 2006, endorsed the following outcomes.

Despite international commitments to gender equality; notably CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action, the Millennium Development Goals and UNSCR1325, women's participation in decision making and women's representation in Pacific parliaments is amongst the lowest in the world. We note with concern that most Governments have yet to realise these commitments and allocate necessary financial and technical resources. We also note with concern the decline in direct donor support to advancing women in politics.

Recalling the Auckland 2004 Forum Leaders call to address the low levels of women in decision-making, within the framework of the Pacific Plan and consistent with the Pacific Platform for Action and its emerging critical areas of concern;

Considering the findings and recommendations from PIFS and UNIFEM commissioned research on barriers to women's political representation; taking into account the importance of engaging men, women and youth in communities, and the media, to advance women's representation in parliament;

Emphasising the need to strengthen partnerships between National Women's Machineries, Ministers, Members of Parliament, civil society, regional and international organisations and the donor community, to build political will to address the issue of women's political representation;

The meeting endorsed the need to urgently address barriers to women's representation and participation in Pacific parliaments through the following Regional and National actions:

Regional Actions

I. PIFS to establish a monitoring centre for the Advancement of Women in Politics and Decision-Making in Forum Island Countries. The monitoring centre would:

- 1) Coordinate, collect, analyse and disseminate data on the political, socio-economic and legal status of women in FICs in partnership with international and regional intergov-

* Convened by Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) UNIFEM, UNDP, and Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA).

ernmental organisations, national institutions and non-governmental organisations and partners such as UNIFEM, SPC Pacific Women's Bureau, UNDP [including the Pacific Sub Regional Centre (PSRC)] and Regional Rights Resource Team (RRRT) and the University of the South Pacific (USP).

- 2) Maintain a database on the status of women in the region which is accessible to the public, and exchange data on a regular basis with countries, regional and international partners.
- 3) Establish and maintain an electronic network throughout the region.
- 4) Provide policy advice to the respective divisions of the Forum Secretariat and the Pacific Plan Office on achieving political and economic equality of women and men, drawing on relevant research, networks and national input.
- 5) Providing policy advice and working closely with Forum Member Countries on implementing special measures to increase women's representation in parliaments.

II PIFS to initiate and coordinate sub-regional workshops on special measures and electoral reform to promote the political representation of women with international and regional partners and selected FICs.

The workshops should:

- bring together countries which have commonalities;
- include key decision-makers and stakeholders;
- be organised with national, regional and international partners with specialisation in these areas;
- use indigenous researchers; and,
- where feasible, be extended to include Pacific Forum Observers.

III PIFS to facilitate in collaboration with regional partners and donors, the continuity of support, including funding and legal advice, to Member Countries, National Women's Machineries and Non Government Organisations to enable special measures to be pursued.

IV PIFS with national and regional partners to initiate and/or support for further research on:

- barriers and opportunities for women's representation and participation in decision-making;
- local government and traditional leadership including the roles of women;
- voting patterns; and family voting; and
- linkages between women, politics and media.

Research endorsed by PIFS should be tabled with the respective national parliaments.

- V Regional agencies and stakeholders including SPC, PIFS, USP, UNIFEM and UNDP (including PSRC and RRRT) and PINA are encouraged to support Pacific media and women in politics initiatives aimed at increasing quality coverage of the current status of women in Pacific politics, and challenging negative stereotypes about women as political leaders.**
- VI The importance of gender related issues such as increasing the proportion of women in decision-making positions, especially parliament, be included on the Forum Leaders agenda in 2007. PIFS and member countries to follow through on this action.**
- VII PIFS in collaboration with IPU, IDEA and CPA to assemble toolkit materials on women's representation and participation which could include:**
- summary of electoral systems impact on women's participation;
 - best practice in pre-election training of candidates;
 - support network for elected women MPs; and
 - how to use the media as well as support the media in promoting women in politics/decision-making.
- VIII Countries to consider the role of youth parliaments and other measures in fostering young women leaders and their understanding of the constitutional process in country.**

National Actions

Governments, legislatures and other state entities are urged to consider:

- IX The introduction of reserved seats to fast-track women's representation in Parliament, especially in countries with weak political party systems or without political parties.**
- X The adoption of voluntary party quotas or quotas established by legislation particularly in countries with strong political party systems.**
- XI. Electoral reform away from single member constituencies towards multi-member constituencies with the intention of encouraging larger numbers of successful women candidates.**
- XII. Enacting legal quotas, where there are existing constitutional provisions for special measures for women.**
- XIII Actions taken at the national level should be matched with special measures for enhancing women's representation at the local level whether through both formal or informal institutions.**
- XIV Support for efforts to create an enabling environment that supplements institutional reforms to promote increased participation of women in politics. This would include engagement of civil society organisations, politicians, private sector and the community at large.**

- XV** Increased resourcing through gender budgeting for the implementation of measures to advance women’s political representation as mandated by CEDAW, the BPA, the PPA and national commitments.
- XVI** The adoption, review and/or implementation of campaign financing provisions or legislation in support of women’s political representation.
- XVII** Review of legislative and or policy environment for freedom of expression and information to assist political campaigns and voter education, advocacy on national issues, and partnerships towards a stronger voice and representation for Pacific women in the political life and governance of their nations.
- XVIII** Strengthening relevant data collection agencies to collect, analyse and publish sex disaggregated data to inform monitoring of women’s participation in political life.
- XIX** Providing capacity building to parliamentarians and parliaments to provide enabling environment to address gender equality and equity issues.
- XX** Promote the adoption of structural changes within parliament to advance gender equality and equity such as specialised committees or parliamentary caucuses.

Introduction

In spite of the advances in democratic and popular representation throughout the world, women continue to be unequally represented globally. Currently women make up only 16.6 percent of national parliamentary representatives worldwide; they hold only 14.3 percent of ministerial positions and the number of women heads of state or government decreased from 12 in 1995 to 8 in 2005.¹ The lack of equality applies to all levels of representation: international,² regional, national and local, and to most regions of the world. And it is only with the introduction of special measures that women have been able to substantially increase their representation. Indeed, “no country has attained the critical 30 percent women in government mark without some form of quota.”³

In the regions of the world which have had a tradition of representative democracy for over 50 years, the Nordic countries lead the world with an average of 40 percent of women represented in national legislative bodies. This is partly as a result of countries such as Finland, Sweden, Norway and Denmark’s adopting voluntary quotas from the 1980s onwards but is also due to their use of proportional representation (list PR) and to the strength and persistence of women’s movements in those countries.⁴ As a result Sweden was consistently ranked first in terms of representation of women in Parliament throughout the last three decades until 2003 when Rwanda moved into first place.

A handful of other Western countries have more recently committed to achieving equal representation for women through the introduction of specific measures. This is the case of Spain and the UK which adopted voluntary party quotas and of France and Belgium which introduced legal quotas (see box on the French Parity Law).

Other Western democracies such as the US (which is ranked 69th in the world for representation of women in national parliaments)⁵ and Italy (ranked 89th)⁶ have fared less well in terms of representation of women. This is in spite of the fact that they have a large pool of well educated and qualified women. This indicates that having large numbers of able women does not translate automatically into political representation even in countries which have had strong women’s rights movements and which pride themselves on being democratic.

Table 1: Women’s Representation in Global Legislatures

Nordic Nations	40%
Americas	20%
Asia	16%
Europe (excl Nordic)	17%
Sub-Saharan Africa	16%
Pacific	13%
Arab	7%
World Average	16%

www.ipu.org, 30th April 2006

Demonstration of the importance of implementing pro-active measures to improve women’s representation is illustrated by the fact that a number of younger states and democracies in Africa

and Latin America⁷ have overtaken some of the older Western states in achieving fairer gender political representation. Rwanda is now ranked first among the 150 countries listed by the Inter-Parliamentary Union's ranking of women in national parliaments with 48.8 percent representation for women, thus overtaking Belgium (its former colonial power). This was the result of a combination of party quotas and 30 percent reserved seats for women. Mozambique, which has voluntary party quotas, is listed ninth and South Africa, in 13th position, has 32.8 percent representation of women in the national parliament as of 2004.

The Pacific

As stated, in terms of the world's regions, the Nordic countries continue to lead in women's representation with an average of 40 percent. This is in large contrast with the two bottom regions which are the Pacific (despite New Zealand's 32.2 percent representation of women and Australia's 24 percent)⁸ and the 'Arab states'. The regional average for the Pacific is 13.9 percent (as of end of 2005) with five Pacific Islands countries ranking in what has been called the "dirty dozen", in other words in the bottom 12 countries ranked globally. Five out of eight countries in the world which have no women members of Parliament are Pacific countries and Forum Island Countries (FICs): the Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, Solomon Islands and Tuvalu. Other Pacific countries such as Vanuatu have only two women representatives in Parliament while Tonga and the Republic of the Marshall Islands have only one each. The Pacific Islands which have achieved higher representation are New Caledonia and French Polynesia which have implemented the French law on parity and adopted a list PR electoral system which, combined, have led to over 40 percent representation of women in the legislatures.

The inadequate representation of women in the Pacific may, in some ways, appear surprising. The Pacific is a generally democratic region with countries adopting parliamentary systems and liberal constitutions at independence. Many countries of the region have a substantial pool of educated women who hold high level responsibilities in a variety of areas.⁹ Many Pacific cultures have traditionally placed a high value on the contribution and role of women even if this has been transformed (if not transmogrified) by the missionary, colonial and contemporary political influences (as well as growing ignorance of customary values). Furthermore, as countries became independent in the 1960s and 1970s, they did not consider the value of promoting the advancement of women. Constitutional and electoral systems were designed with other concerns in mind, and it was only in the 1990s that the issue of the political advancement of women began to be raised in earnest in the Pacific. This reflects the fact that expected 'natural' and incremental change in raising the political representation of women has not occurred. In some countries the number of women in decision-making positions has actually declined in the years since independence while in others it has stagnated.

The Women in Politics Project

In addition to its work with the Center for Asia-Pacific Women in Politics (CAPWIP), in the mid-1990s, UNIFEM launched its Women in Politics project to raise awareness about the need to increase women's participation and representation, and to assist and train women wishing to enter politics. The project organised workshops, jointly with national Women in Politics (WIP) committees formed by women leaders in government and civil society, in areas such as voter education, how to run campaigns

and lobby, and on electoral systems. In 1995 UNIFEM established the Women in Politics Pacific Centre (WIPPaC) as part of its (WIP) project, with the aim of transforming politics throughout the region.¹⁰ The assistance of WIP to women running for election has been invaluable to many of the candidates who have run as independents and have received little support elsewhere, but this assistance has not been effective in changing the environment in which women candidates have to run.

Thus even though the UNIFEM WIP project has continued in the early 2000s to assist with the training and capacity building of candidates as well as women leaders and officials, it has also begun to focus on the reform of electoral systems as a way to substantially increasing the number of women represented in politics.

A New Approach

This 'top-down' approach fits in with the Pacific's rising consciousness of the need to tackle the lack of women's political representation. This was made clear in the Eminent Person's Group review of the region and its institutions in 2004. The review listed "women and gender" as an issue as requiring "*immediate action*". In particular it stated that: "there is a view within the region that Pacific institutions and processes are not as gender sensitive as they should be. Given the changing roles and responsibilities of men and women, and the increasingly recognized role that women play in society, the Forum needs to acknowledge and encourage the participation of women in decision-making at all levels". The review concluded that the "challenges facing Pacific Island Leaders are to: *increase the current low level of participation by women at all levels in decision-making processes and structures*: reduce and eliminate domestic violence; and promote and improve the health of women" (EPG, 2004: 31).

At a recent Pacific Roundtable on Progressing the Implementation of CEDAW, the Vice-President of Fiji iterated similar sentiments: "There continues to be a need for women in leadership roles whether in government, the corporate sector, the church or the traditional sphere... One such field that requires affirmative intervention is parliamentary seats. I believe in quotas because that is only way the imbalance of males and females will be readily redressed. This is required because there is no level playing field. The odds are stacked against women from the beginning and it is nonsense to suggest that candidates be selected on merit" (Madraiwiwi, 2006: 4).

The regional concern with political representation of women, as well as that expressed by His Excellency Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi, is coherent with the international arena's current focus on achieving "equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels", one of the two themes on the agenda of the UN Commission on the Status of Women which met in March 2006. It is also in line with the UN General Assembly's endorsement in the World Summit Outcome (September 2005) to "promot[e] increased representation of women in government decision-making bodies..." (UN, 2005).

The increasing international attention accorded to the lack of women's political representation worldwide is a question above all of legitimacy and justice.¹¹ In a global context where representative democracy is hailed worldwide, the fact that half the population is so inadequately represented raises serious questions about the legitimacy of democracy. In addition, unequal representation has become an increasingly visible injustice which must be redressed, as women integrate more spheres of public life in a variety of roles but still remain outside the realm of political decision-making. There is also a symbolic aspect to women's representation: if women are found and seen in a multitude of occupations in the public and private sectors, why are they not seen in the political arena?

Related to this is the question of how women's welfare will be enhanced if women are not involved in decision-making at the highest level. As identity politics has risen in profile so has the issue of women's representation (although women are represented across all identities throughout the world and can therefore be considered differently from other categories).¹² It has become unacceptable (and indeed doubtful) that men-only legislatures and governments can adequately look after the interests of society as a whole, and women in particular. A balance is required to guarantee that all members of society's varied (and sometimes competing) interests are considered in decision-making bodies at all levels. In addition, greater gender equality allows for a greater diversity of views to be heard and for potentially better management and distribution of resources.¹³ Women's strong presence in parliaments has been shown to lead to higher levels of (gender) equitable development and to reduced corruption.¹⁴ Many consider this justification enough to advance equal representation of women in all spheres of decision-making internationally, regionally, nationally and locally.¹⁵

Advancing Women's Political Representation in Forum Island Countries (FICs)

Objective

The objective of this study of political representation of women in the Pacific is to begin to address the need to "increase the current low level of participation by women at all levels in decision-making processes and structures". The regional study is divided into five separate reports. The first regional report seeks to:

1. understand the assets of the region which can be built on to increase the level of participation by women in political decision-making;
2. understand the barriers to women accessing leadership positions throughout the countries of the region, whether these are legal, political, institutional/structural, cultural, religious or socio-economic; and,
3. make recommendations to address existing barriers at a regional level.

The second regional report, authored by Dr Jon Fraenkel:

1. reviews the electoral systems used in the countries of the region and discusses their impact on women's political representation;
2. assesses international best practices for the enhanced representation of women in political decision-making, and includes a discussion on quotas, reserved seats and campaign financing, and,
3. proposes measures to increase the level of representation of women in political decision-making processes and structures in the region, based on international best practices and national specificities.

Three country reports on Nauru (Alamanda Lauti and Jon Fraenkel), Tonga ('Ofa Guttenbeil-Likiliki) and Tuvalu (Susie Kofe and Fakava Taomia) are also part of the overall study.

This study is in line with the international commitments¹⁶ made by the Pacific countries, such as through their endorsement of the Beijing Platform for Action (Fourth World Conference on Women at Beijing, China, in 1995), and particularly with the recommendation that UN Member Governments "Review the

differential impact of electoral systems on the political representation of women in elected bodies and consider, where appropriate, the adjustment or reform of those systems” (Beijing Declaration, 1995:75).¹⁷

Structure

The study examines the region as a whole¹⁸ and also focuses on three individual countries: Nauru, Tonga and Tuvalu, all of which have very low levels of women’s representation in the national legislature. It follows on from a UNIFEM commissioned study on ‘Developing a More Facilitating Environment for Women’s Political Participation in Fiji’ carried out in 2005.¹⁹

Notes

- 1 See <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/econvention.htm> - accessed on 6/12/05 and Report of the Secretary General to the Commission on the Status of Women, 50th Session, February 27- March 10, 2006.
- 2 At the United Nations, out of the 191 permanent representatives, there are only 17 women (the highest number ever). See Report of the Secretary General to the 50th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women.
- 3 See Strachan and Dalesa, 2003. The critical 30 per cent mark refers to the United Nations’ Economic and Social Council’s endorsement of having 30 percent of women in positions of decision-making levels by 1995. “The figure of 30 percent forms the so-called “critical mass” believed to be necessary for women to make a visible impact on the style and content of political decision-making”. See DAW, 2005: 2. The 30 percent is considered a minimum, not a limit for women’s representation.
- 4 Voluntary party quotas were introduced “when women already occupied 20 to 30 percent of seats in parliament.... In the Nordic countries, electoral quotas have been seen as a *critical act* made by an already large minority of women” (Friedenvall et al., 2006: 56).
- 5 The US has only 15.2 percent representation of women in the House of Representatives and 14 percent in the Senate. See Women in National Parliaments, Situation as of 26 February 2006, at <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm> - accessed on 27/3/06.
- 6 Italy passed two quota laws in 1993 but these were declared unconstitutional in 1995. For more details, see <http://www.quotaproject.org/displayCountry.cfm?CountryCode=IT> , accessed March 27 2006.
- 7 Johnsson writes that “the impressive 7 percentage point increase in women’s parliamentary representation in the Americas over the past 10 years is in large part attributable to the enthusiasm with which many countries in Latin and Central America have implemented affirmative action measures. Different types of quota now exist in 17 countries of the Americas” (2006: 4).
- 8 See <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm> , accessed 27 March 2006. The Pacific Islands States’ (ie not including territories and Australia and New Zealand) average women’s representation is a low 3.5 percent. See Ballington, 2006.
- 9 The exceptions to this rule nonetheless include some of the larger countries, notably Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, where the education of girls lags behind that of boys quite considerably.
- 10 See <http://www.unifempacific.com/wip.html>
- 11 This is particularly so as the commitment made by UN member countries at Beijing “to increase the number of women to 30 percent in all governmental and public administration positions” has not yet been met. The number of countries which have reached that percentage has nonetheless increased from five in 1997 to 20 in 2006. See IPU, Women in National Parliaments at <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm> , accessed April 11, 2006.
- 12 See Childs 2004, p.8. The French argument for ‘parity’ is based on women’s ‘universal’ existence. In other words, parity, unlike quotas, does not seek to redress injustice to a particular group but rather to ensure that half of humanity is adequately represented. This distinguishes the parity argument

- 13 This is also the argument put forward by the current Norwegian government in favour of achieving equality in membership of corporate boards. Women have been excluded from boards in spite of their increased representation in all other sectors of society, including politics. They reached less than 8 percent membership before the government passed a law requiring 40 percent representation by 2007.
- 14 See Dollar, D., Fisman, R., and Gatti, R., 1999. *Are Women Really the Fairer Sex? Corruption and Women in Government*, Policy Research Report on Gender and Development, Working Paper Series No.4, Development Economics Research Group, The World Bank, Washington DC.
- 15 The four arguments listed above are known respectively as the justice, interests, resources and democracy arguments. See Krook, 2003:23.
- 16 See below for a full listing of international and regional commitments made by FICs.
- 17 It also coincides with the Commission on the Status of Women's consideration of "equal participation of women and men in decision processes at all levels as one of the two thematic issues during its fiftieth session in 2006" as part of its multi-year programme of work for 2001-2006. See DAW, 2005.
- 18 The authors have attempted to include information from as many Pacific countries and territories as possible. However, as no travel was possible, the authors have had to rely on available written documents, short interviews and questionnaires. Documentation across the region is unequal and this report reflects this gap.
- 19 See Siwatibau, S, et al, 2005.