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Q1 What is your name?

Hilda Lini

Q2 If a group or organisation are making this submission then who is the primary contact?

Vanuatu National Council of Women

Q3 What is the email address for the primary contact?

cultureofpeacetours@gmail.com

Q4 What is the phone number for the primary contact?

+6787716635

Q5 Please provide the title and a brief summary of your submission, including any key recommendations. Please limit your response to no more than 150 words.

Governments Legislate 30% Gender Representation in Pacific Parliaments Pacific communities need Pacific women in parliament if Governments are serious about tackling good governance, development, climate change and humanitarian issues in line with 2012 Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration commitment "Adopt measures, including temporary special measures to accelerate women's full and equal participation in governance reform at all levels and women's leadership in decision making." Pacific civil society 50% target remains a dream as 2017 IPU Report ranks Pacific the lowest with 6.8% or 40 out of 594 seats occupied by women. Pacific women's voices on national, community and regional issues are not heard. As knowledge holders with wealth of experiences women's contribution on the Pacific way forward inevitable but Pacific women need support to fully engage in national law making, development priorities and budget allocations. This proposal seeks Pacific Leaders commitment to 30% minimum target for women to fully participate in Pacific parliaments.

Q6 What is the key issue or challenge that you seek to highlight in this submission? In responding to this section, consider the following questions: What is the issue or challenge, and what are its causes? Why has this issue not been resolved so far, from your perspective? Can this issue be addressed at the national level, for instance, by your national government or through your national development strategy, or does it require the collective and regional action of the Pacific Islands Forum member countries in order to be addressed? Please limit your response to no more than 750 words.

a) What is the issue or challenge, what are its causes

Under representation of Pacific women in Pacific parliaments is the key issue as although women make up 50% of most population they are not able to take their rightful place in national parliaments to decide national laws, development priorities and budget allocations.

Although several regional and global agreements have been signed there is lack of commitment by Government Leaders like:

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“Pacific Platform for the Advancement of Women”; the “Commonwealth Plan of Action” and “2012 Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration” (PLGED) which Governments committed to “Adopt measures, including temporary special measures to accelerate women’s full and equal participation in governance reform at all levels and women’s leadership in decision making.”

These commitments lack follow up and implementation by technocrats at national level due to policy gaps, priority focus and budget constraints.

Lack of Governments’ political will at national level to champion temporary special measures to enhance gender inclusiveness in parliamentary democracy continues to be a challenge.

Also lack of focus on women’s inactive participation and under representation by political parties spearheading peoples’ participation in democratic processes. They operate without any legal obligations and are not being held accountable for their actions.

PIF Leaders collectively, need to be proactive and take a stand on 30% minimum target for women’s representation in Pacific parliaments with clear strategies to achieve policy targets nationally.

Table: 2017 Inter-Parliamentary Union Report. Four PIF countries with more than 20% women parliamentarians while the rest are have less than 20%

Country	Total Seats in Parliament	Seats occupied by women	Percentage of women in parliament
French Polynesia	57	32	56%
New Caledonia	54	24	44%
New Zealand	120	41	34.2%
Australia	150	43	28.7%
Niue	20	5	25%
Cook Islands	24	4	16.7%
Fiji	50	8	16%
Tokelau	20	3	15%
Palau	29	4	12.5%
Nauru	19	2	11%
Samoa	50	5	10%
Marshal Islands	33	3	9%
Tuvalu	50	1	7%
Kiribati	46	3	7%
Solomon Islands	50	1	4%
Tonga	26	1	4%
PNG	111	0	0%
Vanuatu	52	0	0%
FSM	14	0	0%
Total seat	594	40	6.8%

Major causes include:

- Absence of modern democratic principles in the composition of democratic institutions. Once men enjoy the associated power, benefits and parliamentary immunity, they seem to hold on without wanting to share the responsibility of governance.
- Male traditional perception of women’s inferiority is translated into parliamentary democracy, believing it is exclusively their domain and expecting women to play supporting roles.
- Political parties and governments do not value women’s leadership and shared responsibilities in traditional governance structure in Pacific cultural societies to be considered for adaptation/translated into modern parliamentary democracy.
- No reform in outdated colonial electoral system of “first past the post” which is discriminatory to women and the losing candidates collectively.
- Governments being dominated by male do not initiate change for gender inclusiveness in democratic institutions, until they are pressured to do so.

b) Why has this issue not been resolved so far from your perspective?

Governments’ do not acknowledge gender inequality as a governance issue. Testimonies by parliamentarians during UNIFEM/UNWOMEN transformative Building Resources in Democracy Governance and Elections (BRIDGE) Gender and Elections trainings, admitted their lack of knowledge and understanding of gender justice issues and the need to prioritise this as human rights issue.

Key measures to rectify this issue began in Samoa constitutional amendment and PNG bill passed on 22 women’s electorates and

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Key measures to rectify this issue began in Samoa, constitutional amendment and FNU bill passed on 22 women's electorates and not endorsed for implementation, while Fiji reformed its electoral system to enable the increase in women parliamentarians.

Vanuatu's is implementing 30% representation in the municipal councils.

At political party level, gender equality is obviously absent in party leadership, limiting the likelihood of identifying potential women candidates for parliament. Women also lack the capital to meet high costs of election fees and campaigning. They do not have the political network to seek financial sponsorship.

In theory, voters express willingness to support women candidates, but in reality they are rarely supported. These social barriers highlight the need for broader social change, civic education, election awareness and voter education and information.

Corrupt practices in elections are prominent in the region and evidence can be found on the PACLII website. Certain community leaders continue to manipulate women voters in their favour while some women accept and collaborate with male leaders to oppose women candidates.

Q7 Proposed Solutions Do you have a proposed regional policy recommendation to the issues outlined in your response to Question (3) above? In responding to this section, consider the following questions: What is the proposed regional policy solution or recommendation? Does this policy solution require the oversight of Forum Leaders? How does the proposed regional policy solution address the issue(s) presented in your previous answer? In your view, who are the main beneficiaries of this proposed regional policy? Has a regional policy initiative of this kind been carried out previously? Are there risks in implementing this regional policy initiative? Please limit your response to no more than 750 words.

a) What is the proposed regional policy solution or recommendation?

This proposal seeks Pacific Leaders commitment to 30% minimum target, so women can also participate in national law making, development priorities and budget allocations.

Civil society long-term aim is 50% representation of both men and women in parliament, taking their rightful place as equal custodians of their sovereign states and equal partners in law making and decisions, representing the entire population and gender perspectives.

Leaders' regional commitment to this issue will complement national efforts and PIFS objective of engaging civil society at regional level.

PIF Leaders will need to commit to rise above all the above-mentioned issues and challenges and take the following actions nationally.

a) Reform electoral systems and legislate permanent non-discriminatory electoral system, such as the proportional representation system or Preferential Representation System (PRS), where electors have a single vote for a closed list of candidates alternating between men and women.

b) Legislate temporary special measures for quotas or reserve seats to equate 30% women's representation in parliament until a permanent system is enacted.

c) Enact Political Party Integrity Law to guide and monitor democratic processes and accountability and include the following elements:

i. Eligibility criteria to qualify a political party to register as a political organisation that mobilizes people for democratic processes.

ii. Provision for leadership and good governance training, advocacy and awareness programs as criteria for registration.

iii. Provision for women's gender inclusiveness at party leadership level.

iv. Provisions for women's active participation at party level to be eligible for nomination as a candidate at all levels based on merit.

v. Legislate for party or candidate financing for parliamentary elections and criteria for reimbursement by Government

d) Does this policy solution require the oversight of Forum leaders?

Yes. We recommend that the PIF secretariat monitors progress and reports to PIF leaders for their review and action annually as a standing agenda item until the target has been met. In addition, ministers of Women's Affairs to monitor in-country progress and report to the Pacific Triennial Women Ministers' Conference.

e) How does the proposed regional policy solution address the issue presented above?

According to 2012 report titled "The Impact of Women's Political Leadership on Democracy and Development" indicates that with at

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According to 2013 report titled 'The Impact of Women's Political Leadership on Democracy and Development', indicates that with at least 30% participation of women in decision-making, society's overall performance improves. It enables women to have a stronger voice in national decisions, especially law making. This leads to gender responsive national budgeting and policy development which reflects national priorities.

f) In your view, who are the main beneficiaries of this proposed regional policy?

Pacific Island nations; citizens; families, communities; Pacific parliaments and governments.

g) Has a regional policy initiative of this kind been carried out previously?

Yes. The '2012 Pacific Gender and Equality Declaration' as well as the 'Pacific Platform for Action' (2018 - 2030) which highlights the need for increased women's representation in parliament but do not mention a specific target for achieving this.

There has also been research initiatives in the past such as 'Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development' which presented findings on women's issues including their level of political participation in parliament. However, none of these efforts have resulted in any specific decision on a target for achieving women's representation in parliaments.

h) Are there risks in implementing this regional policy initiative?

This policy proposal targets 30% women's representation in parliamentary democracies. This is in line with temporary special measures commitment in 2012 Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration (PLGED). At regional level there should be no risks involved since this is the Pacific leaders' commitment.

This issue has been prioritized for civil society engagement at regional level. There have been on-going efforts to educate the public on the value of supporting women's political participation. These efforts will need to continue at a wider scale across the region when the regional policy is passed.

The only risks are:

- National Governments may regard this proposal as a national issue that does not need regional mandate.
 - Male traditional perceptions on 30% policy target as a token for women's representation in parliamentary democracies.
 - Certain Leaders may still be ignorant of the value in increasing women's representation in parliament and the positive changes this will make nationally and in communities.
 - Use of biblical verses about women being created from Adam's rib, to try and undermine women's equal rights to power and office.
 - Loss of momentum by civil society to engage at regional level if this proposal does not receive PIF Leaders mandate.
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