

## **The Cost of Gender Based Violence in the Pacific – Extract**

Estimating the costs of gender-based violence is vital as it brings to light the hidden costs to society and the resources needed to end violence.

This was the message from participants at a side event to better understand the cost implications of gender-based violence and inequality, at the 12th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women in Rarotonga, Cook Islands in October.

There is growing interest in this area of work in the Pacific as a number of studies show that gender-based violence places a huge burden on national economies. The University of the South Pacific, for example, has estimated that domestic violence costs the national economy of Fiji F\$498 million annually. Similarly, a recent study published by the journal *Reproductive Health* estimated that preventing unintended pregnancies in Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands could save up to US\$112 million in health and education expenditures between 2010 and 2025.

Pacific Islands Countries have been working with development partners to test and implement a range of approaches, including costing the implementation of laws to address gender-based violence, as well as gender-based budgeting and looking at costing the impact of gender-based violence. In the Pacific, several countries have found successes in estimating the cost of implementing legislation to address gender-based violence.

Ruta Pokura from the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Cook Islands noted that costing the draft Family Law Bill helped the three key ministries of Internal Affairs, Justice and the Police, which would be involved in its implementation, come to understand that the costs could be manageable.

From the Marshall Islands, Daisy Alik-Momotaro from the Ministry of Internal Affairs spoke on the Marshall Islands' experience with costing the implementation of the Domestic Violence Prevention and Protection Act 60-2011, saying that "the costing exercise really helped us to raise awareness in the ministries involved in implementing the law. Going forward we have details on the activities needed to do this, and how much it is going to cost."

Simone Troller from the United Nations Development Programme Pacific Centre noted that the experience in the Pacific shows that the costing of legislative implementation can be an effective tool to secure government funding towards a law's implementation, but it is not a cure-all to address systemic challenges with regards to resource allocation for gender equality. The discussion also covered broader approaches to costing gender-based violence and inequality in the Pacific.

Yamini Mishra, UN Women's Asia-Pacific Regional Gender Responsive Budgeting Specialist gave participants an overview of such approaches, and provided insight into good practice at the global level. Mishra noted that understanding the cost implications of gender-based violence and gender inequality helps to facilitate enhanced coordination across sectors to prevent and respond to violence against women, and helps to make a more solid case for the implementation of domestic violence legislation.

She noted that costing is a political exercise, part of the political process. Without dedicated budgets to implement laws and policies, the services are less likely to follow.

Having reviewed a range of costing methodologies in the discussion, moderator Maha Muna from the United Nations Population Fund highlighted the panel's consensus on the importance of developing approaches that fit Pacific settings and will be a tool towards delivering accountable governance.

The side event was co-sponsored by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, UNDP, UN Women, UNFPA, and UNESCAP.

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