



Waka Mere Commitment to Action

Improving business outcomes in Solomon Islands
through advancing workplace gender equality

November 2019

AN INITIATIVE OF THE PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP



IN COLLABORATION WITH



DISCLAIMER

International Finance Corporation (IFC), a member of the World Bank Group, creates opportunity for people to escape poverty and improve their lives. We foster sustainable economic growth in developing countries by supporting private sector development, mobilizing private capital, and providing advisory and risk mitigation services to businesses and governments. This report was developed by IFC through its Gender Business Group in East Asia and the Pacific.

The conclusions and judgments contained in this report should not be attributed to, and do not necessarily represent the views of, IFC or its Board of Directors or the World Bank or its Executive Directors, or the countries they represent. IFC and the World Bank do not guarantee the accuracy of the data in this publication and accept no responsibility for any consequences of their use.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This publication was produced by IFC under the overall guidance of Henriette Kolb, Head of IFC's Gender Business Group. The report was written by Nhung Thi Nguyen, Result Measurement Analyst, and Shabnam Hameed, IFC Gender Operations Officer, with contributions from Sarah Twigg, IFC Gender Operations Officer in the Pacific, and Ruth Jazarr Basi Afia Maetala, IFC Gender Coordinator in Solomon Islands. The report was prepared under the leadership of Amy Luinstra, IFC Gender Lead in East Asia and the Pacific.

The team would like to thank Thomas Jacobs, IFC Country Manager in the Pacific, and Camille Annette Funnell, Head of Communications for low income & fragile and conflict affected states, Asia and the Pacific, and Communications Consultants, Jackie Range and Mia Cusack, for all their help and inputs. We would also like to thank the Solomon Islands Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SICCI), the apex representative organization for the private sector in Solomon Islands, for partnering with us in the Waka Mere Commitment to Action.

Many talented and dedicated consultants and experts contributed to the success of this program: Karen Mitchel, Rachael Konaka, and Kinnie Rema from WINGS, who led the Certificate IV course with passion and mastery; Hazel Kirkham of Breadfruit, who expertly led the training of contact teams of companies adopting domestic violence policies, and noted the need for — and then delivered — training on the basics of human resources policies; and Calvin Sese, our intrepid and innovative trainer, researcher, and go-to man on the ground. Finally, our sincerest appreciation for Ruth Maetala, whose wisdom, generosity, and dedication inspired us all.

Waka Mere would not have been possible without the commitment and support of our many dedicated partners: The Solomon Islands Chamber of Commerce (SICCI) including Dennis Meone, former CEO, and Atenasi Ata, current CEO, Jay Bartlett, Chairman of the Board, and all Board members have been tireless supporters and encouraged the program's progression and success from the beginning. We also wish to thank Vivienne Sykes and Vanessa Teutao from the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and all participating Waka Mere companies.

The work under the Wake Mere Commitment to Action is supported by the governments of Australia and New Zealand. Under the Pacific Partnership, Australia, New Zealand, and IFC are working together to stimulate private sector investment, promote sustainable economic growth, and reduce poverty in the Pacific.

Many thanks to Peter Rae for the photos and to Mark Lindop for designing the report.

Table of Contents

1	Executive Summary	5
2	Context	8
3	Waka Mere Commitment to Action	11
	- Promoting women in leadership	15
	- Building respectful and supportive workplaces	26
	- Increasing opportunities for women in jobs traditionally held by men	35
4	Cross-cutting Benefits of Waka Mere	41
	- Improving human resource capacities	41
	- Family-friendly initiatives	41
	- Improving business outcomes	42
5	Conclusion	45
	Appendix 1 - Methodology	47
	Appendix 2- Detailed Timeline of Activities	48



Ruth Maetala (centre) from IFC who runs the Waka Mere project with employees at Guadalcanal Plains Palm Oil Limited (GPOL).

1 | Executive Summary

The Waka Mere Commitment to Action has been a two-year initiative to improve business outcomes in Solomon Islands through advancing workplace gender equality. The initiative has contributed to a shift in employees' perceptions of safety and fairness at work, catalyzed companies to adopt new policies and practices, invest in their future female leaders, and open up skills training and jobs for women in roles traditionally held by men.

Launched in July 2017 at the Australian Solomon Islands Business Forum, 15 of the largest companies in Solomon Islands made a commitment to improve gender equality by promoting respectful and supportive workplaces for women and men. Through the combined efforts of these companies, IFC, and key partners, 6585 employees (42% women; 58% men) are now benefiting from more equal, supportive, and respectful workplaces. The initiative concluded in July 2019, with 14 companies completing the two-year commitment. This report summarizes the achievements to date.

Waka Mere, which means “She Works” in pidgin, was designed in close collaboration with Solomon Islands businesses. The goal was to address social norms that prevent women and men from fully participating in the workforce, thereby reducing business productivity, profitability, and reputation. Waka Mere was led by the International Finance Corporation (IFC), a member of the World Bank Group, in collaboration with the Solomon Islands Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SICCI), the apex representative organization for the private sector in Solomon Islands.

IFC modelled the Waka Mere program on its global initiative, She Works, which saw leading companies adopt measures proven to enhance women's employment opportunities. Before launching the program, IFC conducted scoping studies and consulted Solomon Islands companies through business roundtables. This helped localize the global initiative by identifying specific barriers to women's greater participation in business in Solomon Islands.

Companies identified gender gaps in leadership and in certain jobs traditionally held by men as top priorities. Further analysis pointed to gendered social norms and gender-based violence as the two key drivers of workplace gender inequality and low participation of women in the workforce.

Stereotypes and gendered norms around what jobs women can and cannot do impact their ability to access similar opportunities as men. They lead to few women in leadership roles and job segregation in workplaces. This prevents individuals from achieving their full potential and companies from employing the person best suited for the job. Gender-based violence can impact women and men's ability to attend work and to be safe and productive at work, regardless of whether the violence occurs at work, at home, or elsewhere.

IFC designed the program to support Solomon Islands businesses to address these issues. Participating businesses chose up to three commitments to target for measurable progress over two years:

- promoting women in leadership
- building respectful and supportive workplaces
- increasing opportunities for women in jobs traditionally held by men

IFC supported the participating companies by undertaking business case research and providing training, workshops, and peer learning opportunities throughout the initiative.

After participating in Waka Mere, companies and their employees are reporting significant advances in workplace gender equality, which include:

- increased feelings of safety and well-being at the workplace with the proportion of employees who feel safe and comfortable at work increasing by 15 percentage points to over 80 percent at the end of the initiative
- improved employee loyalty, particularly among women (the proportion of women willing to recommend their employer to male and female friends raising from around 70 percent to 86 percent).
- improved skills and confidence, and greater job opportunities for women who participated in Waka Mere activities with 80 percent of the first cohorts of leadership graduates receiving a promotion or additional responsibilities (such as budget, strategy, staff supervision, etc).
- increased number of women in jobs traditionally held by men, with 33 new female licensed drivers sponsored by seven different companies.
- Universal adoption of new policies and practices that support gender equal and supportive workplace.

Early indications show that advancing gender equality is improving business outcomes through increased productivity and innovation, and decreased absenteeism and employee turnover.

The business case for gender equality has been established. The progress made to date has created momentum for companies in Solomon Islands to continue advancing gender equality in their own workplaces, while advocating for more gender equal workplaces throughout the market.

Furthermore, SICCI is finalizing plans to ensure that refresher courses, peer learning opportunities, and leadership training remain available to their members as they continue their journey of promoting gender equal and productive workplaces.



“ You need champions to drive things forward, that’s where the private sector can play a role, in championing some of these initiatives. There is a very, very strong business case for women in the workplace at all levels. I think IFC has given us more of a global perspective on this that we can apply domestically.”

Jay Bartlett, Managing Director of Hatanga and Chair of Solomon Islands Chamber of Commerce and Industry



2 | Context

GLOBAL CONTEXT

Gender equality is not only a social and moral imperative, but also an economic necessity. Companies increasingly recognize they can gain greater competitive advantage and improve profits by targeting women as employees, entrepreneurs, consumers, and business leaders. Women's participation in the global labor market remains nearly 27 percent lower than men¹. Reducing this gap, globally, by 25 percent by 2025 could add \$5.8 trillion to the global economy¹.

A greater pool of talent

they are more competitive in hiring, retaining, and promoting talent.

Stronger financial performance

companies with gender diverse leadership are more profitable.

A better reputation

gender diverse companies enjoy greater credibility and market share by understanding female consumers.

Increased innovation

gender diverse companies have collective intelligence to see around the corner.

Strong sustainability records

gender diverse companies report greater environmental, social, and governance outcomes.

SOLOMON ISLANDS

Women in Solomon Islands are half as likely as men to be in paid employment² and only one out of four private sector jobs are held by women³. Companies in Solomon Islands identified gendered roles and gender-based violence as the two key drivers of workplace gender inequality and low participation of women in the workforce.

Gendered roles impact women's ability to access, use, and benefit from similar opportunities as men. They create gender imbalance in leadership and job segregation in workplaces, preventing individuals from achieving their full potential. Consequently, companies are unable to employ the person best suited for the job.

Gender norms in Solomon Islands associate men with leadership roles. For example, Solomon Islands recently elected two women as Members of Parliament — its most ever at one time — in a parliament of 50⁴.

Gender-based violence can impact women and men's ability to attend work and to be safe and productive at work, whether the violence occurs at work or elsewhere. In Solomon Islands, the domestic and sexual violence rates are high and twice the global average. Sixty-four percent of women have experienced physical or sexual violence in their lifetime and 37 percent of women have been forced on their first sexual encounter⁵. There are no national level statistics on the prevalence of domestic and sexual violence against men. However, in IFC surveys of employees, 38 percent of men reported experiencing domestic and sexual violence in their lifetime⁶.

Solomon Islands is a post-conflict country. For many, the aftermath of 'the tensions' — ethnic violence between 1998 and 2003 — includes low trust, inability to assert their needs, and trauma. These dynamics often exacerbate interpersonal conflict, including within the workplace. This tends to limit the willingness and ability of people to speak up and seek help.



Solomon Islands

Economy Name:
Solomon Islands

Capital City:
Honiara

Region:
Pacific

Income Level:
Low Income

Population (2018):
652,858*

Female Population (2018):
320,910

Employment data**:

- Labor force participation rate: Male: 80.9% and Female: 62.4%
- Proportion of wage and salaried workers: Male: 21.6%; Female: 14.4%
- Proportion of self-employed: Male: 78.4%; Female: 85.6%

* Except otherwise stated, all data used for Solomon Islands were taken from the World Development Indicator (World Bank)

** Modeled ILO estimate for 2018 – World Development Indicator

Challenges:

Gender Inequality



Ranks **124th** among **128** countries in terms of women's economic opportunity¹

Only **1 out of 4** private sector jobs is held by a woman²

Proportion of firms having female top manager: **22.6%** (2015)

Only **4%** of national parliaments seats are held by women (2018)

Domestic Violence



2 out of 3 women experience domestic and family violence in their lifetime³

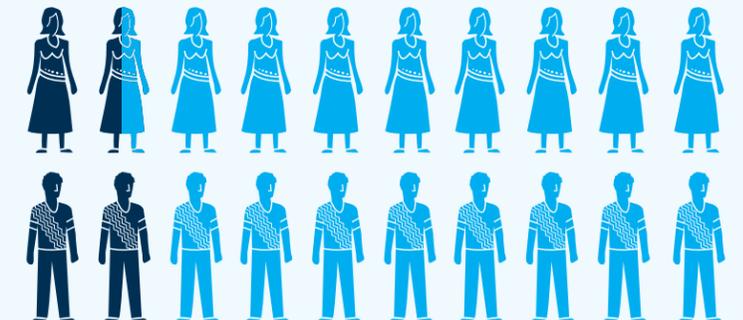


Conflict Affected

At a critical juncture in its development trajectory following a period of civil conflict

Illiteracy

Only **21% of men** and **14% of women** have adequate reading and writing skills



- 1 EIU's 2012 Women's Economic Opportunity Index and Report
- 2 2015 ADB Solomon Islands Country Gender Report
- 3 2009 Solomon Islands Family Health and Safety Survey

1 http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_557266/lang--en/index.htm

2 <https://www.statistics.gov.sb/statistics/social-statistics/labour-force>

3 2015 ADB Solomon Islands Country Gender Report

4 <https://thediplomat.com/2019/07/a-new-day-for-solomon-islands-women/>

5 Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), Ministry of Women, Youth & Children's Affairs, National Statistics Office (2009) Solomon Islands Family Health and Safety Study: A study on violence against women and children. Honiara: SPC, p.69.

6 https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/region_ext_content/ifc_external_corporate_site/east+asia+and+the+pacific/resources/solomon+islands-domestic+and+sexual+violence



“ In our experience at IFC, as the largest global development institution focused on the private sector in emerging markets, we have repeatedly and consistently seen how gender equality in the workplace drives productivity, profitability, and performance. It is exciting to see Waka Mere companies break new ground by establishing more gender equal and respectful workplaces in Solomon Islands. We hope this will set the example for others to follow, building on Waka Mere’s success. Such initiatives benefit not only the employees and the companies, but also, ultimately, the economy as a whole.”

Amy Luinstra,
Gender Lead in East Asia and the Pacific, IFC

3 | Waka Mere Commitment to Action

The Waka Mere Commitment to Action has been a two-year initiative to improve business outcomes in Solomon Islands through advancing workplace gender equality. It was launched in July 2017 at the Australian Solomon Islands Business Forum. Subsequently, 15 of the largest companies in Solomon Islands employing 6585 people made a commitment to improve gender equality with a focus on three target areas. The Waka Mere initiative concluded in July 2019, with 14 companies completing the two-year commitment⁷.

FOCUS AREAS

The companies engaged in various activities to support achieving their commitments, including those listed below which were implemented directly through the Waka Mere initiative.



Promote women in leadership

- by supporting female staff to participate in the Solomon Islands Professional Women’s Network (SIPNET)
- by supporting female staff to complete a leadership course that targets skills identified as important for professional women in Solomon Islands



Build respectful and supportive workplaces

- by adopting and implementing respectful workplace policies to address workplace bullying and sexual harassment
- by implementing a structured approach to support staff impacted by domestic and sexual violence



Increase opportunities for women in jobs traditionally held by men

- by identifying areas of skills shortages within the business and supporting female students to train in those areas. This is coupled with on-the-job training and placement opportunities
- by training existing female staff to take on jobs traditionally done by men

KEY PARTNERS

Waka Mere was led by IFC, a member of the World Bank Group, in collaboration with SICCI, the peak representative organization for the private sector in Solomon Islands.

As part of the program, IFC and SICCI undertook business case research and provided training, workshops, and peer learning opportunities to help the participating companies meet their commitments. They also helped monitor and share the progress of each company against its targets through accountability mechanisms such as company level baseline reports, the mid-term report — released after the first year of the Waka Mere initiative — and this final report.



⁷ One company completed the baseline survey but did not complete the endline survey. This company is not included in the endline results.

Participating companies and their commitments⁸

Commitments:



Promoting women in leadership



Building respectful and supportive workplaces



Increasing opportunities for women in jobs traditionally held by men



Bank South Pacific



Bulk Shop



Guadalcanal Plains Palm Oil Limited (GPPOL)



Hatanga Construction Ltd



Heritage Park



National Fisheries Development



Solomon Airlines



Solomon Brewery



Solomon Islands National Provident Fund



Solomon Islands Ports Authority



Solomon Islands Tobacco Company Ltd



Solomon Islands Water Authority



Solomon Power



SolTuna



“Some of our female staff were victims of domestic violence. Previously we had no mechanisms to be able to deal with that, but were able to develop policies internally. There has been examples where we've had staff go through these situations and we're now in a position where we can provide guidance to them, direct them to where they can get support, to the right organisations or the right contacts and give them the appropriate amount of support as a company.”

Jay Bartlett
Managing Director of Hatanga Constructions and Chair of Solomon Islands Chamber of Commerce & Industry

⁸ One company reported in the mid term report did not complete the endline survey and is not included in the results.



“ A lot of females in Solomon Islands, they seem to be holding back: not really feeling able to be in the front. But these three ladies when they finished the (leadership) training, they just became very confident... They feel like they can talk, and they can plan, they can delegate tasks to men.”

David Upwe
HR Manager, Bulk Shop



Promoting women in leadership

Participating Companies:

Bulk Shop	Solomon Airlines
Guadalcanal Plains Palm Oil Ltd	Solomon Islands Ports Authority
Heritage Park	Solomon Power
National Fisheries Development	SolTuna

THE BUSINESS CASE

Numerous studies demonstrate that businesses with gender diverse leadership teams perform better on a range of metrics. This includes better returns on equity, net profit margins, and earnings per share.^{9 10}

Timeline of Activities

- 2016**
 - Solomon Islands Professional Women's Network (SIPNET) launched
- Jul 2017**
 - **Launch of Waka Mere initiative**
 - Baseline Survey completed
 - Certificate IV in Leadership and Management [1]
 - Certificate IV in Leadership and Management [2]
- 2018**
 - SIPNET event - International Women's Day breakfast
 - Training - Improving HR Capacities
 - SIPNET event - Roundtable: 'Challenges and Opportunities as Women Business Leaders'
 - SIPNET event - 'Career Planning'
 - Waka Mere midline progress report
 - SIPNET event - to establish working committees
 - SIPNET event - on 'Domestic Violence'
 - SIPNET event - nominations of two women to SICCI board
 - Certificate IV in Leadership and Management [3]
- Jul 2019**
 - SIPNET event - 'Domestic Violence and Work'
 - Changing Workplace Behavior Forum
 - SIPNET event - 'Mere Care'
 - Certificate IV in Leadership and Management [4]
 - **Waka Mere ends**
 - Endline survey completed

Eight Waka Mere companies signed up for the commitment to increase opportunities for women in leadership. All of them invested in training 35 female future leaders with a certificate course on business management and leadership, in addition to supporting employee participation in the Solomon Islands Professional Women's Network (SIPNET). Employee surveys show a significant positive change in both men's and women's perception of equal opportunities to be hired and promoted.

Participating companies had a slight increase in the share of women as Top Managers (from 19 to 20 percent). There was also a substantial growth in the absolute number of women at Senior Management level, from 28 at baseline to 42 percent at the end. However, because some companies restructured management and added many men as well, overall change in proportion slightly declined at this level.

Increasing the representation of women in leadership positions takes time and requires significant effort, but continued effort does pay off as is visible in the early results.

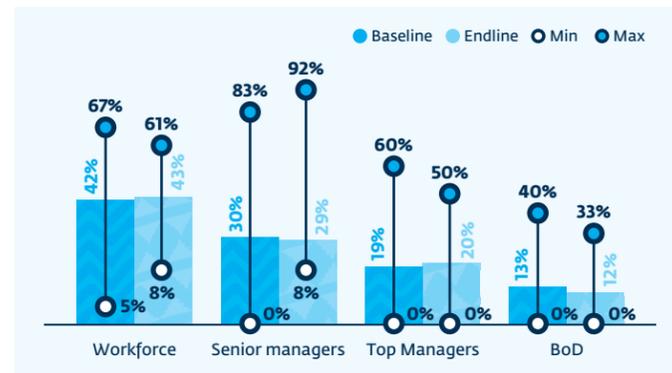
As part of the commitment, companies are building a pipeline of female talent and a way to monitor progress. **Half (four out of eight) of them have now set targets for the percentage of women in the workforce, in senior management and/or in board positions.**

An equal number of companies have programs to develop a pipeline of female top talent and all the companies have invested in leadership training.

9 Zuabi, R. (2015)

10 Morgan Stanley, 2017

Figure 1. Share of women by levels of eight Waka Mere companies signing up for commitment 1



In addition, two Waka Mere companies (Bank South Pacific and Solomon Water), although not a member of this commitment, have started setting their own targets for women in leadership positions in their workforce.

The benefits of continued commitment to women in leadership is well demonstrated by SolTuna, one of the Waka Mere companies and an IFC gender advisory client since 2015. After four years of effort to build management and leadership teams that more closely reflect the gender balance of the workforce, the company has made significant progress, with top management moving from 20% female to a perfectly balanced 50% and progress at middle and senior management as well (Figure 2).

Figure 2. SolTuna share of women by levels¹¹



¹¹ Top managers are those who report directly to the CEO; senior managers are those who report to top managers; middle managers are all those who report to senior managers.

¹² The course was open to all Waka Mere companies as well as other SICCI members.

IFC and SICCI supported Waka Mere participating companies to improve gender diversity in management by:

- demonstrating the business case for women in leadership at various Waka Mere events
- establishing SIPNET, which aims to increase opportunities for women through networking events and skill-building activities (SIPNET has 55 members and has hosted several events on a range of topics, as well as a one-day business networking course)
- supporting the ‘Certificate IV in Leadership and Management’ course for high-potential women

The ‘Certificate IV in Leadership and Management’ is an intensive 18-day training course. It is offered in three one-week blocks over six months with assignments and assessments in between. For many of the participants, this course certificate was the first formal qualification they had ever received.

Fifty-one women from 17 companies have now completed the ‘Certificate IV in Leadership and Management’ course¹². Follow-up studies of the first cohort of graduates show that 80 percent of women who completed the leadership course were promoted or assigned broader responsibilities in terms of budget, strategy, or staff supervision. We expect similar results from the following two cohorts who will celebrate their graduation in December 2019.

Feedback from participants and managers demonstrates the significant growth of the course participants.

“ One of the changes that is outstanding, and I am so happy about, is being able to stand in front of an audience and speak. This is something I have always wanted, and I am so happy to achieve it.”

Joanna Mypana
Reporting Accountant, Solomon Power





“ I love it because it has changed how I do things here. Before, I would procrastinate, but after the training, I use time management to finish my tasks according to what my priority is.”

Florence Tione
Engineer, Solomon Power

Feedback from graduates

“ I have the courage to speak confidently and can now volunteer to speak. I am comfortable with building networks and I am well equipped with skills to be good leader.”

Celia Biliki
Payroll & Human Resource Coordinator, Solomon Islands Tobacco Company

“ The positive change that I have noticed in myself and my colleagues is the growth in our confidence levels compared to when the training started. All of us have shown courage to communicate and share ideas.”

Nancy Puloara Kame
Billing Administrator, Solomon Power

“ Communication skills — this is very important for business growth. Feedback – it helps me to improve in my job. Networking – builds trust and relationships. Resilience – always bounce back when you are hit hard.”

Grace Gukuna
Payroll Supervisor, National Fisheries Development (NFD)

Efforts made to improve gender diversity in leadership and build leadership skills among high-potential women have not gone unnoticed by employees of Waka Mere companies. **Employees’ perception of equal opportunity in hiring and promotion have improved significantly over the course of the Waka Mere initiative.**

- **Equal access to hiring:** At baseline, nearly one in five (18 percent) employees reported that women and men **did not** have the same chances of being hired by their company, with little difference between women and men’s responses. At endline, this was reduced to 6 percent with women’s perception (5 percent) better than men’s (8 percent). By the end of the initiative, 90 percent of employees across Waka Mere companies signing up for this

commitment, agreed that women and men have the same chances of being hired by their company.

- **Equal access to promotion:** At baseline, one third of employees (33 percent) reported that women and men **did not** have the same chances of promotion. At endline, only 22 percent felt this was the case. The changes among female employees were particularly noticeable with 57 percent of women agreeing they had an equal chance of promotion in the baseline survey and 73 percent agreeing by the end of the initiative.

“Women and men have the same chance of being hired by this company”

TOTAL			
Endline	90%	3%	6%
Baseline	78%	4%	18%
MALE			
Endline	88%	4%	8%
Baseline	79%	4%	17%
FEMALE			
Endline	92%	3%	5%
Baseline	77%	4%	20%

“Women and men have the same chance of being promoted by this company”

TOTAL			
Endline	69%	8%	22%
Baseline	60%	7%	33%
MALE			
Endline	66%	7%	27%
Baseline	63%	7%	30%
FEMALE			
Endline	73%	9%	18%
Baseline	57%	7%	36%

● Strong agree + agree
 ● Neither agree or disagree
 ● Strongly disagree + disagree



“ The leadership course is not only for the office, you can use it in the community, your churches, your family.”

Marielah Patovaki
*Immigrations Officer
National Fisheries Development*



“ My confidence level and professionalism level has grown. I am able to smile whenever I meet someone dressed properly and how I approach people in my work place, church, home or in meetings.”

Gloria Beuka
*Finance Analyst
Solomon Islands Tobacco Company*



“ With the training I recognized that I was important and I have the confidence that I can do it.”

Celia Otaraa
HR Manager, Solomon Ports



“ Now I can talk to anyone, I have the confidence to speak to them. I'm not shy anymore. I can even approach my managers; before the training I was afraid to talk to the boss.”

Bridget Wafuni
*Finance Manager
Solomon Islands Ports Authority*



“ I think the big challenge that women face when they step up to a leadership role is that they have the inclination to not assert themselves too much, because of cultural considerations. I think this type of course is a catalyst to really uplift them and make them more confident in their work.”

Frank Wickham
*Managing Director
National Fisheries Development*

Committed to Action

Bulk Shop is seeing the win-win benefits of gender equality in the workplace

Participating in Waka Mere has helped women employees thrive and improved business outcomes for the Bulk Shop

The Bulk Shop has seen a significant change in their female staff who have participated in Waka Mere training initiatives. The program has had a positive impact on their confidence, their performance and their capabilities and this has flow on benefits for the business.

“ All these three females are being promoted to higher roles after completing their study and after we evaluated them and saw how they performed after attending this training.”

David Upwe, HR Manager, Bulk Shop

Employee perception of equal access to hiring and promotion has also shifted dramatically through this process from the start to the finish.

- Proportion of employees who believe that women and men have the **same chances of being hired** by the company increased by almost 30 percentage points, from 58% to 87%. Within this finding the greatest change was in female perceptions which rose from 49% at baseline, to 84% at end line.
- Proportion of employees who believe that women and men have the **same chances for promotion** by the company increased by almost 30 percentage points.

Women now share equal representation with men in top manager positions

- At base line, the share of women at top management positions was just 14 percent. (This is an increase of 36 percentage points)

Bulk Shop is committed to:



Promoting women in leadership



Building respectful and supportive workplaces



Increasing opportunities for women in jobs traditionally held by men

BULK SHOP

Bulk Shop is a leading food retailer in Solomon Islands. They have incorporated gender equality throughout Human Resources (HR) policy and practice.

- > In 2017: two HR policies in place
- > In 2019: four additional HR policies introduced including Domestic Violence and Respectful Workplace Policy



“ It has given me the perspective of how I value myself as a woman, and how we women should be respected more... We should be considered as equal.”

Shabella Rathmana
Senior Procurement Officer,
Bulk Shop

bulkshop
buy more for less



“I'm a female and in my department the majority are male, and you know in Solomon culture men don't listen to women. So a man is always the head and women listen to men. For me, going through this training has helped me build the confidence to lead my team, especially knowing how to approach my staff, how to work with them and knowing how they learn.”

Linda Randeh
Manager Distribution Center, Bulk Shop



Committed to Action

A significant increase in the number of women in management and technical positions

Implementing a range of measures to create a more respectful, capable and supportive workforce has helped women move into all areas of SolTuna's business

Whilst SolTuna had a majority of female employees, very few of them held leadership or technical positions.

“ Since implementing gender smart solutions, staff are happier working for SolTuna, they are coming to work more often and staying employed longer.”

Bella Simiha, Human Resources Manager, SolTuna

Through strengthened policies and training initiatives, SolTuna has increased the number of women in jobs traditionally held by men, because they want the *best person* for the job.

Achievements from 2015-2019:

SolTuna has tripled the number of women in top and senior management to 30.4%. They have also increased the number of women in jobs traditionally held by men from nine to 22.

- 3 women report directly to General Manager
- 4 women in senior management
- 34 women in middle management
- 33 of the 151 supervisors are now women
- 70 of the 129 team leaders are now women

SolTuna is committed to:

-  Promoting women in leadership
-  Building respectful and supportive workplaces
-  Increasing opportunities for women in jobs traditionally held by men

SOLTUNA

Soltuna is a pioneer in gender equality

- > In 2015: 1714 employees, 67% female
- > In 2019: 2280 Employees | 61% Female
- > In 2015: Only one relevant HR policy was in place.
- > By 2019: a complete suite of eight policies in place promoting and ensuring gender equality in the workplace



“ When women were moved into butchering for the first time, men worked faster, smarter, with less smoke breaks and completed tasks on time”

*Suzy Aquino
Operations Manager
SolTuna*





Building respectful and supportive workplaces

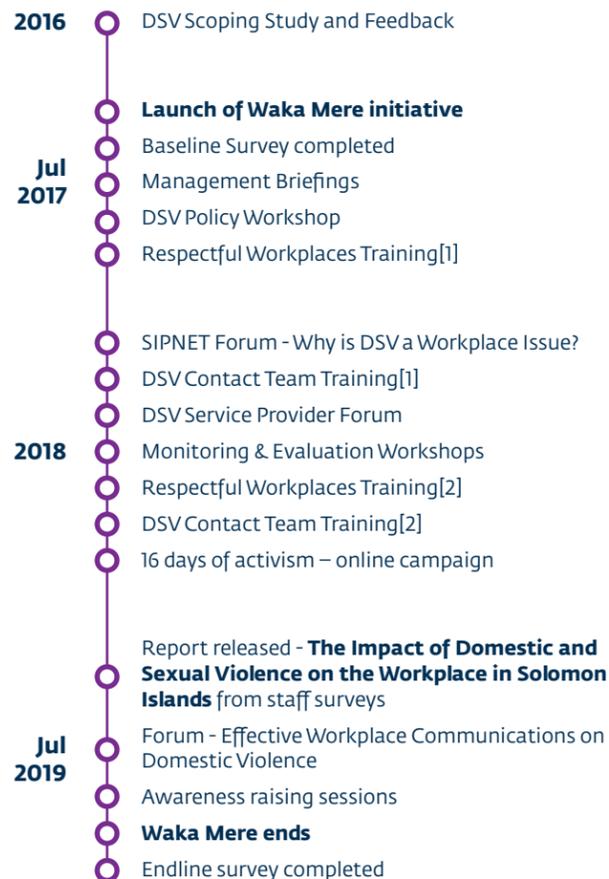
Participating Companies:

Bank South Pacific	Solomon Islands National Provident Fund
Bulk Shop	Solomon Islands Ports Authority
Guadalcanal Plains Palm Oil Ltd	Solomon Islands Tobacco Company
Hatanga	Solomon Islands Water Authority
National Fisheries Development	Solomon Power
Solomon Airlines	SolTuna
Solomon Brewery	

THE BUSINESS CASE

Gender-based violence can impact women and men's ability to attend work and to be safe and productive, whether the violence occurs at work or elsewhere. Effective workplace anti-bullying policies, anti-sexual harassment policies, and structured support for employees experiencing domestic or sexual violence can improve staff health, safety, and well-being. It can further increase staff engagement and loyalty, decrease absenteeism and staff turnover, demonstrate corporate social responsibility, drive financial performance, and position the organization as an employer of choice.

Timeline of Activities



Thirteen Waka Mere companies completed their commitment to promote respectful and supportive workplaces for women and men. At the beginning of Waka Mere, only four companies had a workplace policy on anti-bullying, seven companies had a policy on anti-sexual harassment, and one company had a policy to support staff affected by domestic and sexual violence.

Through Waka Mere, seven more companies developed workplace anti-bullying policies, five companies developed anti-sexual harassment policies, and all companies developed domestic and sexual violence policies.

Share of companies with policy in place



IFC and SICCI supported Waka Mere participating companies to promote respectful and supportive workplaces for women and men:

- by demonstrating the business case for respectful workplaces (anti-bullying and harassment) and for workplace responses to domestic and sexual violence in leadership at various Waka Mere events
- by undertaking business case research on the 'Impact of Domestic and Sexual Violence on the Workplace in Solomon Islands'
- by facilitating workshops, trainings, and peer learning forums on respectful workplaces and workplace responses to domestic and sexual violence

Five companies (Bulk Shop, Hatanga, Solomon Power, Solomon Water, SolTuna) trained over 100 line managers on Respectful Workplaces. SolTuna has since adopted the training and is continuing the training with all staff.

Twelve companies trained their staff to be the first point of contact on domestic and sexual violence issues and refer staff affected by violence to service providers and assist them by making reasonable workplace adjustments.

IFC also worked with nine Waka Mere companies to undertake research on how problems at home affect employees at work.¹³ Based on surveys of more than 1,200 employees, the study found that lost work time due to feeling distracted, tired, or unwell or being late or absent from work because of violence adds up to two working weeks per year per employee in Solomon Islands. A further five-person days are spent *per employee* per year responding to the effects of domestic and sexual violence in the workplace in an unstructured way, that is, through ad hoc conversations and offers of support by colleagues and management without specific training.

This study shows much lower levels of acceptance of violence than previous studies.¹⁴ As the surveys were conducted after the companies had already started taking action on domestic violence,

researchers concluded that workplace responses can reduce the acceptance of violence. IFC plans to repeat this survey in 2020 to evaluate the impacts of workplace responses to domestic and sexual violence in Solomon Islands.

“Before we participated in this challenge, we would have disciplined or terminated staff who have been affected [by domestic or sexual violence] without knowing what the root cause was.”

Freda Fa'aitoa
HR Manager, Bank South Pacific

Employees' perceptions about respect and support in the workplace have also improved.

- **Feeling safe or comfortable at work:** At the start, about one in four employees reported that they **did not** feel comfortable or safe at work. By the end of Waka Mere, this proportion was down to one in 10. Similarly, at baseline, 22 percent of employees, with more women (25 percent) than men (20 percent) did not feel comfortable discussing problems with their managers. At endline, only 12 percent reported this to be the case, with no difference between men and women.

- **Addressing worker grievances:** More than three quarters (77 percent) of employees now believe that their company has adequate mechanisms in place to address worker grievances, a significant increase from the starting point of Waka Mere (63 percent).

Employees were also more aware of the impact of domestic and sexual violence on their workplace: The proportion of employees who believed that domestic violence was affecting the ability of some employees to attend work and perform well increased from 77 percent to 88 percent with no difference between male and female responses.

¹³ IFC (2019). The Impact of Domestic and Sexual Violence on the Workplace in Solomon Islands. <https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/84d03924-2d9f-42ae-bdbc-c7c3920577fd/executive+summaryreport+Solomon+Islands+impact+of+violence+on+workplace.pdf?MOD=AJPERES>

¹⁴ In the IFC Waka Mere survey, 31 percent of participants said they believed that domestic and sexual violence is sometimes acceptable, with men more likely to have this opinion than women (36 percent and 27 percent respectively). This compares positively with 71.2 percent women, and 56 percent men, employed in income-earning jobs, who had agreed with at least one specific justification for wife beating in the Demographic and Health Survey.



"I believe that domestic violence is affecting the ability of some employees to come to work and/or perform their best at this company"

TOTAL			
Endline	88%	5%	7%
Baseline	77%	9%	14%
MALE			
Endline	87%	5%	8%
Baseline	78%	9%	13%
FEMALE			
Endline	88%	5%	7%
Baseline	75%	10%	15%

"I feel comfortable at work"

TOTAL			
Endline	81%	9%	10%
Baseline	66%	7%	26%
MALE			
Endline	78%	9%	13%
Baseline	65%	7%	27%
FEMALE			
Endline	84%	9%	7%
Baseline	68%	8%	25%

"This company has adequate mechanisms in place for addressing worker grievances"

TOTAL			
Endline	77%	7%	17%
Baseline	63%	13%	24%
MALE			
Endline	71%	6%	23%
Baseline	63%	12%	25%
FEMALE			
Endline	82%	7%	11%
Baseline	63%	14%	24%

"If I had an issue affecting my work I would feel comfortable discussing the issue with a manager or other designated company representative"

TOTAL			
Endline	83%	5%	12%
Baseline	70%	8%	22%
MALE			
Endline	84%	5%	12%
Baseline	72%	7%	20%
FEMALE			
Endline	83%	6%	11%
Baseline	66%	10%	24%

"I feel safe at work"

TOTAL			
Endline	84%	6%	10%
Baseline	70%	6%	23%
MALE			
Endline	80%	7%	13%
Baseline	69%	6%	24%
FEMALE			
Endline	89%	5%	7%
Baseline	72%	6%	22%

- Strong agree + agree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Strongly disagree + disagree

Committed to Action

Creating a safe, respectful and supportive workplace is a top priority for Solomon Islands Ports Authority (SIPA)

SIPA is aiming to become an employer of choice across the board, introducing more initiatives to better support their staff, especially working mothers

Participating in Waka Mere has led to many changes for SIPA as an organisation. Their commitment to creating a respectful and supportive workplace is reflected in the positive changes in employee perception around safety and comfort at work from the beginning to the end of Waka Mere.

“ The positive change I noticed within our group is mainly on professionalism, the way we approach each other, giving feedback and dresscode as well. We have grown in confidence and have the courage to go forward.”

Stacy Yunagi Benisi, Secretary, Solomon Islands Ports Authority

At an individual level, women are finding greater confidence in themselves and learning new skills, all of which contribute to a more productive workforce and reflect a more supportive workplace.

Employee perception of their employer has improved significantly:

- Staff feel **more comfortable at work**: 100% of women and 94% of men reported feeling comfortable at work. This is significant 41 percentage point increase for women and 22 percent point increase for men.
- Staff feel **safer at work** with 9 out of 10 employees reporting this compared to the beginning of Waka Mere, when only 70% of female and 77% of male staff reported this to be the case.
- **SIPA is an Employer of Choice for both men and women**: 95% of male and female employees would recommend the company to their male friends. Similarly, 93% of employees, both men and women alike, would recommend the company to their female friends. This is in stark contrast to the beginning of Waka Mere when only 59% of female employees and 63% of male employees would do so.

Solomon Islands Ports Authority is committed to:

-  Promoting women in leadership
-  Building respectful and supportive workplaces
-  Increasing opportunities for women in jobs traditionally held by men

SOLOMON ISLANDS PORTS AUTHORITY

- > 2017: 473 employees | 10% female
- > 2019: 455 employees | 11% female
- > During Waka Mere, anti-bullying, domestic violence policies and child-care support (flexible work options for working mothers) were introduced



“ Now I can delegate tasks to my workmates so that I'm not overloaded with jobs... It's the same back at home, whenever there were things to be done. I just did it by myself, but now I delegate jobs, and teach my two kids as well..”

*Emily Houkeni
Manager, Solomon Islands Ports Authority*



Committed to Action

Solomon Islands National Provident Fund (SINPF) is building a safe and supportive workplace for both women and men

Implementing five new policies over the two year commitment, SINPF has transformed their workplace for the better

Waka Mere highlights the importance of encouraging organisational awareness and understanding around the barriers that women face and the benefits of building a more respectful and supportive workplace for all.

“ At first, I only hear the word 'domestic violence' and did not take it seriously. But after attending the training, I have the knowledge and understanding of real-life domestic violence situations and how it affects children, women and men. It does affect them emotionally and physically.”

Temaleti Gholomo, Senior Human Resources Officer Transcript

Solomon Islands National Provident Fund has made significant strides with their policy implementation, engaging their staff through workshops and training in the process. The shift in staff perception of their company and understanding of the barriers is evident their feedback.

Five new policies and practices promoting gender equality have been implemented since the beginning of Waka Mere: anti-sexual harassment, maternity leave, paternity leave, equal employment opportunity and domestic violence policy

Employee perception of their employer has improved significantly:

- **Addressing worker grievances:** at baseline, less than half of the surveyed employees believed that the company had enough mechanisms to address worker grievances. By endline, this share had increased to 90%.
- **Feeling safe at work:** at the end of Waka Mere, none of surveyed employees reported that they **did not** feel safe at work as compared to 18% at the beginning of the initiative.
- **SINPF is an employer of choice for both men and women:** close to 100% of surveyed employees, both men and women, would recommend the company to either their male or female friends.

Solomon Islands National Provident Fund is committed to:

-  Building respectful and supportive workplaces

SOLOMON ISLANDS NATIONAL PROVIDENT FUND

- > 2017: 115 employees | 43% female
- > 2019: 119 employees | 57% female



“ The Waka Mere program is supporting women to move forward, to progress in life, especially in their work and their career path. Just lately we have one lady that is coming up and taking the role of an assistant manager, next to the managerial role. At SINPF in terms of management we have a balance of male and female.”

*Manasseh Taloafiri
HR Manager
SINPF*



Committed to Action

Solomon Airlines has prioritized staff safety and wellbeing through an all-encompassing violence policy

In a first for the region, the policy sets out a company position and guidelines on all forms of violence including domestic and sexual violence, anti-bullying and harassment

Solomon Airlines has made considerable progress in its policy development and implementation. For many staff, the process has helped them consider and understand the impact violence has not just on the workplace, but also, the wider community.

“ Solomon Airlines is committed to providing a safe and secure organizational climate and workplace for all employees and considers all forms of violence unacceptable ”

Solomon Airlines Violence Policy

Solomon Airlines has played an active role in raising staff awareness of the Waka Mere initiative and policy changes. Their efforts have led to a dramatic increase in staff, particularly female staff's perceptions of their employer and feeling comfortable in the workplace when it comes to challenging issues such as anti-bullying and harassment and domestic and sexual violence.

Achievements under Waka Mere

- 92% of employees are aware of the impact of DV on the workplace
- The number of employees who believe there is adequate support and mechanisms in place for employees **has doubled** to 82%.
- Almost 90% of employees now **feel comfortable at work**, a 20 percentage point increase
- Almost 90% of staff **feel comfortable to discuss workplace issues** with their manager, an increase of 18 percentage points

Solomon Airlines is committed to:



Building respectful and supportive workplaces



Increasing opportunities for women in jobs traditionally held by men

SOLOMON AIRLINES

- > In 2017: 221 employees, of which 66 (30%) were women
- > In 2019: 281 employees, of which 103 (37%) are women



“ Having this in the policy, I see that people are seeing the company in a different way... Now, I see that even men are willing enough to come into my office and sit there and just talk about what's happening at home”

*Margaret Vatia
Solomon Airlines*



Bradley Pitakaji, Solomon Airlines





“ My family was really happy, especially my husband and my brothers as well, because my brothers already drove automatic vehicles, but me, I drive manual. So when I got into one of the Bulk Shop vehicles and I drove back home, it was a big three ton truck, and they were like, “Wow, Linda is that you in the three ton?”

Linda Randeh
Manager, Distribution Center, Bulk Shop



Increasing opportunities for women in jobs traditionally held by men

Participating Companies:

Bulk Shop	Solomon Islands Ports Authority
Guadalcanal Plains Palm Oil Ltd	Solomon Power
Hatanga	SoiTuna
National Fisheries Development	

THE BUSINESS CASE

Investing in opportunities for women in traditionally male-dominated jobs such as technical roles, trades, and sectors such as engineering, construction, mining and other heavy industries makes business sense. Creating more gender diverse teams is good for safety, productivity, and innovation. Male-dominated occupations also tend to be higher paid than the traditionally female-dominated positions. Creating more opportunities for women in these occupations helps improve women’s earning capacity and allows them to better support their families while improving business outcomes.

Seven Waka Mere companies signed up for the commitment to increase opportunities for women in jobs traditionally held by men. They have undertaken various initiatives to address gender-based job segregation, including:

- Three additional companies introduced equal employment opportunities or nondiscrimination policy. As a result, 100 percent of participating companies now have this policy in place.
- Five companies identified areas of skills shortages within the business and supported female students to train in those areas, coupled with on-the-job training and placement opportunities.
- Three companies trained existing female staff to take on jobs traditionally held by men.

IFC and SICCI also supported participating companies to address gender-based job segregation by facilitating driver’s licenses training for female employees. Thirty-three women from Bulk Shop, BSP, Heritage Park, National Fisheries Development Limited, Solomon Islands Ports Authority, Solomon Power and Solomon Water have at least received their provisional license with the majority completing practical driver training and receiving their driver's license.

Timeline of Activities

- Jul 2017**
 - **Launch of Waka Mere initiative**
 - Baseline Survey completed
 - Roundtable on opportunities for women in non-traditional jobs
 - Job Types identified for more female participation
- 2018**
 - Training - driver’s license [1]
 - Qualification - women obtained driver’s license
 - Waka Mere midline progress report
- Jul 2019**
 - Training - driver’s license [2]
 - Qualification - women obtained driver’s license
 - Training - driver’s license [3]
 - **Waka Mere ends**
 - Endline survey completed

“ In other ports in other countries, women are seen driving the type of machines and equipment that we have here. So you know, things have changed, times have changed, so why not?”

James Gere
General Manager, Corporate Services
Solomon Islands Ports Authority

“Change is difficult, and change is slow, but it’s been a really good start.”

Jay Bartlett

Managing Director of Hatanga and Chair of Solomon Islands Chamber of Commerce & Industry

Increasing the number of women in jobs traditionally held by men is difficult over a two-year period, particularly when there are few women trained for these roles. Nonetheless, some companies have reported excellent progress including SolTuna, which increased the number of women in technical roles such as carpentry, electrical, forklift driving, machine labelling, plumbing, and security from one in 2014 to 53 in 2019.

Female employees from these companies have started noticing the effort their companies are making to give equal access to job types and training and development opportunities. This is demonstrated by remarkable changes in women’s perception from baseline to endline employee surveys on the opportunities available to them:

- **Equal access to jobs in all departments and job types:** At baseline, only half of the female workforce (54 percent) reported that qualified men and women have equal access to jobs in all departments and job types in their company. At endline, this increased to 72 percent.
- **Equal access to training and development:** At baseline, more than one in five (21%) females reported that women and men **did not** have equal access to training and development opportunities. At endline, only 15 percent reported this to be the case. The percentage of women who believe that men and women have equal access to training and development went up from 69 percent to 85 percent.

Overall, the companies that have made this commitment are also playing an advocacy role by helping change mindsets. They serve as agents of change by teaching women how to drive or having female engineers or speaking publicly about the business value of women in male-dominated roles.

“Qualified women and men have equal access to jobs in all departments and in all job types in this company”

TOTAL			
Endline	69%	9%	23%
Baseline	59%	7%	34%
MALE			
Endline	65%	7%	27%
Baseline	64%	7%	29%
FEMALE			
Endline	72%	10%	18%
Baseline	54%	7%	39%

“Women and Men have equal access to training and development in this company”

TOTAL			
Endline	80%	4%	15%
Baseline	74%	6%	21%
MALE			
Endline	75%	4%	21%
Baseline	76%	5%	19%
FEMALE			
Endline	85%	5%	10%
Baseline	69%	7%	24%

- Strong agree + agree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Strongly disagree + disagree

“I am with the communications team, and we’re doing awareness in the communities and schools. I really need a driver’s license to do this work. So now, instead of disturbing other work colleagues to drop me off, I can drive. I just have to ask for the key and then I can do my job.”

Sophia Tango

Sophia Tango, Solomon Water

Committed to Action

When it comes to gender equality, good policy provides a guiding framework for best practice

In the traditionally male-dominated construction industry, Hatanga Constructions are laying the foundation for a fair and equal work environment for both women and men

Hatanga has thoroughly incorporated gender equality through newly developed Human Resources (HR) policies and practice. By the end of the initiative, eight policies supporting gender equality in the workplace were in place.

“One of the things that was highlighted for us, is that there’s been a lot of gaps in policy to support women in the workplace. I think this program has highlighted that and has enabled the companies that have participated to address some of those gaps in policy so that they can address some of these gender issues”

Jay Bartlett, Managing Director, Hatanga

Participating companies have been enthusiastic about the various mechanisms of support to help them meet their commitments. Companies have also been vocal about the benefits and willing to share their own lessons learnt as part of the process. This commitment to sharing the journey has been an important part of Waka Mere’s success.

Achievements under Waka Mere:

During the Waka Mere initiative, Hatanga introduced five new policies:

- Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) policy and/or Non-discrimination policy
- Equal pay policy
- Anti-bullying policy
- Anti-sexual harassment policy
- Domestic violence policy

Hatanga is committed to:

-  Building respectful and supportive workplaces
-  Increasing opportunities for women in jobs traditionally held by men

HATANGA

- > 100 percent of female employees believe that their company genuinely supports equality between men and women (up from 83% at baseline)



“The workshops were helpful because they did it in a way where it related to the workplace, which directly applies to me. It’s more practical to me... and it gives me confidence to do my work as an HR Manager.”

Janet Inito
HR Manager
Hatanga



Committed to Action

More women overall and more women in leadership and technical positions

National Fisheries Development (NFD) are tackling their low female staff numbers and ensuring women are provided with a supportive workplace in which to excel

Through a range of corporate policies implemented with support from the Waka Mere initiative, NFD is seeing positive changes within their workforce and workplace culture.

Though change can be slow, especially in a strongly male-dominated industry, early efforts have paid off and NFD plans to continue to build on the momentum of Waka Mere.

“ We want to develop an increasing number of heads of department and managers. We want a pathway for young women to be able to proceed on to higher positions in the company.”

Frank Wickham, Managing Director, National Fisheries Development

Achievements under Waka Mere:

- From 2 – 4 females in middle management/supervisor roles
- From 4 – 6 female Senior Managers
- From 0 – 3 females on board fishing vessels
- From 0 – 2 females in engineering department

Actions taken and benefits:

NFD have implemented:

- Policies that cater for female needs
- A private room for females onboard fishing vessels
- Corporate policies that are more family oriented

Which has led to:

- Greater respect for women in management and supervisor levels
- Male and female employees working more closely together
- More understanding that women can also do work that was traditionally done by men.

National Fisheries Development is committed to:

-  Promoting women in leadership
-  Building respectful and supportive workplaces
-  Increasing opportunities for women in jobs traditionally held by men

NATIONAL FISHERIES DEVELOPMENT

- > In 2017: 363 Employees | 5% Female
- > In 2019: 489 Employees | 8% Female



“ I was interested to do the driving training because it helps me when there's work. If we need to run things into town... we can do it ourselves, which helps make our work much easier.”

*Andrea Ruth Ngengere
National Fisheries
Developments*



Committed to Action

Solomon Power are elevating more women into leadership and technical positions

Solomon Power is committed to bringing about positive change in their workforce by promoting gender equality

Solomon Power committed to the Waka Mere initiative to address the low number of women in their workforce and encourage female staff to progress further in their careers. Traditionally a male-dominated industry, Solomon Power had few women in leadership and technical positions. Through Waka Mere, they have been able to change this.

“ We have focused on training, mentoring and succession planning to encourage more women to apply for these roles.”

Levan Respioh, Human Resources Manager

Achievements under Waka Mere:

Employees' perception on equal access to all job types in the company and equal access to training and development have improved remarkably:

- **Equal access to all departments and job types in the company:** 90% of surveyed employees believe they have equal access to all types of job at Solomon Power (at baseline this proportion was only 77%). Women's view changed so substantially: at baseline, almost one in three women could not agree on this. At end line, this was reduced to only 4%.
- **Equal access to training and development:** at end line, 88% of women and 83% of men reported that they have equal access to training and development at the company.

Actions Taken:

- Recruitment: all positions were opened up to both women and men
- Gender sensitive role titles were introduced (e.g. a 'Linesman' became a 'Line Mechanic')
- New focus on training and mentoring of female employees
- Females were selected as part of the Graduate Trainee program
- High school students (girls included) were selected as part of the Apprentice Program

Solomon Power is committed to:

-  Promoting women in leadership
-  Building respectful and supportive workplaces
-  Increasing opportunities for women in jobs traditionally held by men

SOLOMON POWER

Solomon Power is energising the nation and elevating women

- > In 2017: 240 Employees | 22% Female
- > In 2019: 274 Employees | 19% Female
- > Policies introduced during Waka Mere: domestic violence, Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) and equal pay



“ As an Engineer... I manage seven electricians, all technical men. Management training has changed the way I see things and the way I manage my team.”

*Grace Kikiribatu
Manager
Solomon Power*





“ I am going to coach two other women in my team, I believe that what I have learnt in the management training, I can pass on to these women.”

Regina Gatu Pokana
Sustainability Manager, Guadalcanal Plains Palm Oil Limited

4 | Cross-cutting Benefits of Waka Mere

Improving human resource capacities

While supporting the Waka Mere companies across the three commitment areas, an opportunity was identified to improve the knowledge and experience of Human Resources (HR) managers and their teams in relation to the design and use of human resources policies. Building the capacity of HR managers and their teams was identified as an important part of ensuring sustainable change through the Waka Mere Commitment to Action.

- In response, HR managers from seven companies completed training on the fundamentals of developing Human Resources Policies, particularly as they relate to gender equality, and on effective implementation of those policies.

Participating companies: Bank South Pacific, Hatanga, National Fisheries Development, Solomon Airlines, Solomon Islands National Provident Fund, Solomon Ports, SolTuna



Family-friendly initiatives

Through Waka Mere, some companies also advanced **family-friendly policies**: At baseline, most companies (93 percent) had a maternity leave policy, less than half (43 percent) had paternity leave policies, and none had any childcare support. During Waka Mere the following additional family friendly initiatives were introduced:

- Bulk Shop established a health-care center, which provides health care for employees and immediate family members.
- Solomon Islands National Provident Fund introduced a paternity leave policy.
- Solomon Islands Ports Authority implemented greater flexibility for female employees who have babies.
- Solomon Power arranged transportation for employees' children to get to school.
- SolTuna introduced a paternity leave policy and subsidized school fees for children (over two years old) of employees.

Employees' perceptions about working for their company also improved substantially, particularly among women.

Employees felt that they had more flexibility to balance work and personal life

At baseline, almost one in three employees (30 percent) — with more women (34 percent) than men (27 percent) — **could not** agree that they have flexibility for work-life balance. At endline, this proportion went down by half to 15 percent. Women's perception changed considerably more than men's, with 83 percent agreeing that they have adequate flexibility compared to only 57 percent at baseline.

- Employees were more comfortable to recommend their company to both male and female friends: At baseline, 72 percent of employees would recommend their company to female friends and 76 percent would recommend to male friends. At endline, these proportions increased to 84 percent and 86 percent, respectively.

"In this company, I have flexibility I need to balance my work and personal life"

TOTAL			
Endline	79%	6%	15%
Baseline	60%	9%	30%
MALE			
Endline	76%	6%	18%
Baseline	63%	9%	27%
FEMALE			
Endline	83%	6%	12%
Baseline	57%	9%	34%

"I would recommend this company to my female friends"

TOTAL			
Endline	84%	8%	8%
Baseline	72%	10%	19%
MALE			
Endline	82%	9%	9%
Baseline	73%	9%	18%
FEMALE			
Endline	86%	7%	7%
Baseline	71%	10%	19%

"I would recommend this company to my male friends"

TOTAL			
Endline	86%	8%	6%
Baseline	75%	8%	17%
MALE			
Endline	86%	8%	6%
Baseline	80%	7%	13%
FEMALE			
Endline	86%	7%	7%
Baseline	70%	9%	21%

- Strong agree + agree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Strongly disagree + disagree

Improving Business Outcomes

There are early indications that advancing gender equality improves business outcomes through increased productivity and decreased absenteeism and staff turnover.

SolTuna has reduced controllable absenteeism by a third and halved turnover of staff.

Other Waka Mere participating companies are also reporting benefits including:

- improved employees' attitudes and behavior including changing gender norms related to the role of women and men at work and at home
- increased productivity and innovation, particularly of staff who attended the 'Certificate IV in Leadership and Management' course

“ We saved on costs. Costs for medical expenses. Costs for transportation. And also, we saved on costs where staff have improved their performance. They were not absent anymore due to issues relating to family violence back at home.”

Freda Fa'aitoa
HR Manager, Bank South Pacific





“ I have a lot of time for Waka Mere. I think it’s all very good and in places like Solomon Islands, which is a developing country, it’s very important.”

Lily Lomulo
HR Manager, Solomon Islands Tobacco Company

5 | Conclusion

Waka Mere participating companies have demonstrated that it is possible to address prevailing social norms that prevent women and men from fully participating in the workforce by improving workplace gender equality. This benefits both employees and businesses: workplace gender equality helps individuals achieve their full potential and gives companies access to the person best suited for the job.

Companies in Solomon Islands are now leading the way in creating more gender equitable workplaces. The Solomon Islands Chamber of Commerce is currently finalizing a plan to ensure there is continued support for member companies to deepen progress on gender equality in the workplace, whether they participated in Waka Mere or not. This initiative is likely to involve support for building a local market of experts and trainers on implementing a domestic violence policy, offering training and refresher training for domestic and sexual violence policy contact teams; at least annual offerings of leadership training; and Peer-to-Peer learning events for companies to share lessons on what works – and why it matters.

The business case for gender equality has been clearly established. Companies are engaging in a multitude of initiatives to advance gender equality in their workplace and are advocating for more gender equal workplaces both locally and internationally.





Junelyn Tanabose
Security Manager
Solomon Brewery

Appendix 1 | Methodology

To measure the impact of Waka Mere, two surveys (Human resources (HR) Survey and Employee Survey) were administered at the start and completion of the commitment with participating companies.

BASELINE SURVEYS

Two baseline surveys were administered by Waka Mere to participating companies (excluding SolTuna) between August and November 2017¹⁵:

The HR Survey was completed by a representative of the human resources department of 15 participating companies.

The Employee Survey was completed by 1,491 employees which represented 35 percent of the workforce across the 15 companies. 42 percent of respondents were female

ENDLINE SURVEYS

At the completion of the two-year commitment period, all Waka Mere companies were invited to complete the same surveys that were administered during the baseline period. Fourteen participating companies completed the endline survey¹⁷ (including SolTuna) between May and August 2019.

The HR Survey was completed by a representative of the human resources department of 14 participating companies.

The Employee Survey was completed by 2,279 employees across 14 companies (including SolTuna), representing 35 percent of the total workforce across the Waka Mere companies. Forty-nine percent of respondents were women.

¹⁵ SolTuna, in addition to signing up for Waka Mere, was an IFC deep-dive client since 2015. The company undertook similar surveys in 2015 and therefore skipped the HR or Staff survey at baseline. The data collected in 2015 was used as baseline. The company completed the endline surveys together with other companies for this final report.

¹⁶ One company did not complete the endline survey. Another company underwent restructuring and put their participation on hold. Neither company is included in the endline results.

Appendix 2 | Detailed Timeline of Activities



Commitment 1: Promoting women in leadership

Dec 2016	Solomon Islands Professional Women's Network (SIPNET) launched by the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Hon Julie Bishop.
Jul 2017	Launch of Waka Mere Initiative Baseline Survey completed
Jul 2017 – Dec 2017	Certificate IV course in Leadership and Management completed [Cohort 1] (delivered to staff from 12 companies) Certificate IV course in Leadership and Management completed [Cohort 2] (delivered to women from eight companies)
Jan 2018 – Jun 2018	Improving Human Resource Capacities – two day practical training delivered to HR managers of nine Waka Mere companies on HR policies and practice SIPNET event - International Women's Day breakfast (with 143 women) SIPNET event - Roundtable: 'Challenges and Opportunities as Women Business Leaders in Solomon Islands' hosted by DFAT SIPNET event - 'Career Planning' hosted by Solomon Power
Jul 2018 – Dec 2018	Waka Mere midline progress report completed SIPNET event - working meeting to establish working committees SIPNET event - on 'Domestic Violence' SIPNET event - nominations of two women to the SICCI board
Jan 2019 – Jul 2019	Changing Workplace Behavior Forum – held with participating companies on lessons learned through Waka Mere. Seven companies presented on their progress under each of the Waka Mere commitment areas. The forum was attended by 25 companies. SIPNET event - 'Domestic Violence and Work' - led by IFC in conjunction with Solomon Airlines SIPNET event - 'Mere Care', a local health service focused on women's health needs, hosted by Solomon Power Certificate IV course in Leadership and Management [Cohort 3] (delivered to women from five companies)
Jul 2019	Waka Mere ends Endline survey completed



Commitment 2: Building respectful and supportive workplaces

Dec 2016	DSV Scoping Study and Feedback
Jul 2017	Launch of Waka Mere Initiative Baseline Survey completed
Jul 2017 – Dec 2017	Management Briefing - Waka Mere Commitment to Action briefing on Commitment 2 (delivered to 11 companies) SIPNET Forum - Why is DSV a Workplace Issue? DSV Policy Workshop – How to adapt and implement a policy to support staff affected by domestic violence (delivered to 12 companies) Respectful Workplaces Training - one day training covering business case, policy and assertive communication. (delivered to 21 line managers from three companies)
Jan 2018 – Jun 2018	DSV Contact Team Training [1] - DV Contact teams to build capacity of staff acting as first points of contact for staff affected by domestic violence. DSV Service Provider Forum – with DV contact teams from participating companies and 20 staff from 10 DV service providers including: National Referral Hospital, Police, Public Solicitors Office, SAFENET, Seif Pleis, and Social Welfare Monitoring & Evaluation Workshops – on domestic violence policy and M&E (delivered to representatives from company DV contact teams from nine companies)
Jul 2018 – Dec 2018	Waka Mere midline progress report completed Respectful Workplaces Training [2] - delivered at Solomon Power on including: Senior Management Briefing, Training for Line Managers and Training of Trainers DSV Contact Team Training [2] - of Contact Teams from five companies to build capacity of staff acting as first points of contact for staff affected by domestic violence. 16 days of activism online campaign including the launch of animation on 'Addressing violence in the workplace.'
Jan 2019 – Jul 2019	Report released - The Impact of Domestic and Sexual Violence on the Workplace in Solomon Islands from staff surveys conducted with nine companies. Results were presented to Waka Mere companies and other members of SICCI at a launch event. Forum - Effective Workplace Communications on Domestic Violence with Waka Mere companies that have completed the training on the domestic violence policy. Awareness raising sessions
Jul 2019	Waka Mere ends Endline survey completed



Commitment 3:

Increasing opportunities for women in jobs traditionally held by men

Jul 2017	Launch of Waka Mere Initiative Baseline Survey completed
Jul 2017 – Dec 2017	Roundtable - IFC hosted discussion with four companies to discuss opportunities for women in non-traditional jobs. Job types identified - key jobs were selected where participating companies would like to see more women included. <i>Initial focus on more women getting qualified to drive heavy vehicles such as trucks</i>
Jan 2018 – Jun 2018	Training - driver's license – delivered to [cohort 1] <i>Three companies co-sponsored female staff to obtain their driver's license, the first step towards training women to operate heavy vehicles</i>
Jul 2018 – Dec 2018	Waka Mere midline progress report completed Qualification - women from three companies obtain their provisional driver's license
Jan 2019 – Jul 2019	Training - driver's license – delivered to [cohort 2] Qualification - 10 women from two companies obtain their driver's license Training - driver's license – delivered to [cohort 3]
Jul 2019	Waka Mere ends Endline survey completed

Future leaders: Ruth Maetala taking her granddaughter to kindergarten in Honiara





Visit www.ifc.org/gender/EAP to find more testimonials and inspiring stories about Waka Mere.

AN INITIATIVE OF THE PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP



IFC International Finance Corporation
WORLD BANK GROUP

Creating Markets, Creating Opportunities



IN COLLABORATION WITH

