

## Research Paper 42

# Power, Politics and Coalitions in the Pacific: Lessons from Collective Action on Gender and Power

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Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development (Pacific Women) is a 10 year \$320 million program of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). Pacific Women supports 14 Pacific countries to meet the commitments made in the 2012 Pacific Island Forum Leaders' Gender Equality Declaration. It works with Pacific governments, civil society organisations, the private sector, and multilateral, regional and United Nations agencies.

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## Abbreviations

AGM	Assistant General Manager
ANU	Australian National University
APPC	Asian and Pacific Population Conference
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CIMC	Consultative Implementation and Monitoring Committee
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
CWL	Catholic Women's League
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DJAG	Department of Justice and Attorney General
EVAW	Ending Violence Against Women
FSVAC	Family and Sexual Violence Action Committee
FWRM	Fiji Women's Rights Movement
HRD	Human Rights Defenders
IDAHOT	International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia
IFC	International Finance Corporation
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
IWDA	International Women's Development Agency
KPC	Kiribati Protestant Church
LGBTIQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NZ	New Zealand
PIFS	Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
PNG	Papua New Guinea
RAK	Reita-n-Aine Kamutu
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
SSGM	State, Society and Governance in Melanesia Program (Australian National University)
TBEC	Tongan Business Enterprise Centre
TFHA	Tonga Family Health Association
UN	United Nations
WISE	Women in Sustainable Enterprises

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# Executive summary

This paper presents findings from five coalition case studies in the Pacific region. It aims to address gaps in our understanding of the role played by civil society and coalitions in challenging gendered power structures and promoting women's leadership and decision-making in the Pacific. This in turn offers insights for better supporting and enabling the work of coalitions.

This study identifies four key factors that influence the formation and functioning of the case study coalitions. It also analyses how the formation and functioning of these coalitions shape the way in which they address power relations when attempting to promote transformative change, including changes to gender norms. Put another way, the paper outlines how the nature of a coalition's formation, shared purpose, leadership and ownership drive the ways in which that coalition challenges power relations.

## Coalitions and collective action on gender and power relations

The study starts with the proposition that coalitions play a leading role in creating change in gender norms in the Pacific and that gender can be seen as a 'power relation'.

The study first considers what factors influence coalition formation and function. Secondly, it examines how coalitions engage with various dimensions of power to achieve their transformative change objectives. Miller et al.'s conceptual framework (2006) is used to unpack how coalitions challenge gender norms, given that 'addressing types of power requires different strategies' (DFAT 2014, p 112). This framework outlines the following three types of power (Miller et al., 2006, p. 13):

- **Visible power:** The 'rules, institutions, decision-making structures, policies and laws' which can reinforce or challenge inequalities. For example, visible power is vested with legislators and policy makers and within documents such as rules, regulations, and human rights declarations.
- **Hidden power:** 'who gets to the decision-making table and what gets on the agenda'. For example, hidden power is vested with more vocal and influential lobby groups who are able to assert their agenda and control the direction and flow of information on key issues.
- **Invisible power:** 'socio-cultural norms and values, practices, ideologies, and customs' that label individuals, groups and behaviours as 'normal' or 'abnormal'. For example, the traditional customs and religious ideologies that dictate and underpin notions of 'appropriate' behaviour.

## Case studies

Coalition case studies were selected for this study using purposive sampling. There were three primary criteria for selection: geographic distribution, to select cases from each of the three Pacific sub-regions; spectrum of engagement, to select coalitions engaged across a range of issues and at local, national and regional/international levels; type of coalition, to include a range of coalitions that fall within Leftwich's definition (2012, p. 5), including both named and unnamed entities.

Case studies selected were:

- Talitha Project (Tonga), which responds to inequality and seeks to empower young women and girls.
- Women in Sustainable Enterprise (WISE, Tonga), a network for women in business.
- Nei Nibarara (Kiribati), a women's handicraft network/cooperative.
- Response to sorcery-related violence (Papua New Guinea).
- Response to human rights challenges (Fiji), a group working to protect and promote universal human rights, including the rights of women and LGBTIQ people.

## Factors important to the formation and functioning of coalitions

Four factors emerged from the case studies as influential in the formation and functioning of coalitions.

- **Formative events:** What brought people together to 'do something' in a concerted way? For example, the torture and death of a woman in a sorcery-related violence incident, followed by extensive media coverage and a conference generated the impetus for the formation of the PNG coalition examined in this study. Whether formative events are locally or externally driven appears to mould the future shape of a coalition and how it functions.
- **Shared purpose, interests and values:** Clarity of shared ground and common purpose helps coalitions increase their support base, coherence and influence. The dominant forms of common purpose identified by this study are shared values and interests. For example, the Fiji case study illustrates how shared values around universal human rights and a common purpose of fighting a constitutional amendment bound together a broad range of actors to challenge gender relations.
- **Forms of leadership:** The nature of a coalition's leadership can determine its sustainability and its ability to respond to changing circumstances, broker relationships and divergent interests, and challenge vested interests. This study found that some coalitions understood and practised leadership as a process of adaptation; others understood leadership to be a characteristic of leaders. For example, the Tonga Talitha case study revealed efforts to divest and decentralise leadership to overcome the limitations of individual leadership.
- **The nature of ownership:** The degree to which a coalition's agenda is locally owned and its ways of working are politically salient appears to be key to determining its effectiveness. This study found that the coalitions examined could be broadly characterised as local/hybrid variations. For example, the Kiribati coalition formed following a regional meeting and was initially supported by international donors. However, it quickly became 'localised' because its coordinator and members were I-Kiribati and they set its agenda and direction.

Coalitions are not static and nor are these factors. The interaction, for example between various types of local ownership and leadership mean that one informs the other. But when taken together, it appears that these four factors shape how coalitions address different types of power, and therefore the degree to which they challenge gender norms.

## Findings and reflections for coalitions and their supporters

A tentative hypothesis emerges from this study that suggests coalitions are more likely to challenge gender norms directly or indirectly, and promote transformational change, when they:

- are formed in response to local events and critical junctures;
- are locally driven and owned;
- share common purpose, interests and sometimes values (or are able to navigate between conflicting values); and
- have adaptive and distributed leadership that is regularly renegotiated.

The tables below set out the implications for donors and others seeking to support collective action that addresses gendered power relations. While these findings echo similar work<sup>1</sup> in the Pacific, this study adds an understanding of the gendered nature of coalitions, the issues they work on, and both the opportunities and obstacles they face. In particular, it raises important questions about how international actors can support local processes that challenge gendered norms in politically smart ways.

<sup>1</sup> While the factors identified in this study emerged from the case studies, they are nonetheless not unique or unidentified by previous studies including work on formative events and critical junctures (Acemoglu, Johnson, Robinson & Yared, 2008; Hogan, 2006; Hogan & Doyle, 2009); ownership (Chambers et al., 2001; Cornwall, 2003; de Campos Guimarães, 2009; Escobar, 1995; Fisher & Marquette, 2016; Gready & Ensor, 2005); leadership (Andrews, McConnell & Wescott, 2010; Lyne de Ver, 2009; Tadros, 2011b); and shared purpose and common ground (Deane, 2015; Donnelly, 2007; Leftwich, 2011; Whaites et al., 2015).

## Key findings

## Implications for coalitions and their supporters

### Formative events

Formative events in ripe social and political contexts can prompt the establishment of gender-focused coalitions and strengthen the resolve of existing alliances.

Formative events can be predominantly 'local', externally driven, or a mixture of both; however, entirely extrinsic events that are disconnected from local context are unlikely to produce or support effective coalitions.

Formative events are often accompanied by greater space to challenge the status quo of gender relations. The ability to respond to these emergent opportunities is critical.

In the crucial period following the formative event, a coalition's responsiveness relies heavily on the complex strategic task of finding allies to help influence agendas, particularly if they seek to challenge gender norms.

- Events for events' sake do not create coalitions, but events or a process of 'coming together' that questions social norms in the right contexts can. External actors need to assess the social and political context and understand which dimensions of power are being challenged.
- When supporting events with an extrinsic element (for example, facilitating a regional or international workshop on international standards), look for opportunities that are connected to local concerns and context. Avoid supporting events that are entirely extrinsic.
- Where there is local appetite to capitalise on an event, access to flexible support can be critical. Care should be taken by external actors to support but not overshadow informal networks.

### Shared purpose

Aligning or 'bundling' diverse interests enables a coalition to increase its support base and influence, but requires careful compromise.

Articulation of shared values within a coalition (and having the space to work towards this) can generate a sense of solidarity and commitment to 'a greater good' beyond shared interests.

In successful coalitions, managing differences in values and interests is critical. Coalitions with space to reframe gender issues and engage in open and honest conversations about differences help facilitate engagement with invisible power and promote shared or negotiated leadership.

- External actors seeking to support collective action need to be aware of the values and interests that can both underlie and threaten collective action, or they risk unintentionally undermining their own and their coalition partners' aims.
- Providing space and resources for a coalition's shared interests and values to be debated and reinforced can be useful.
- Coalitions also need the time and space to acknowledge and address differences in values and interests.

### Leadership

The nature of a coalition's leadership affects its sustainability and its ability to adapt to changing circumstances, navigate towards shared values and/or interests, and broker relationships.

Shifting an individual leadership style to a more negotiated form of leadership is challenging where coalition relationships are perceived to belong to the individual.

The nature of a coalition's leadership is dynamic and likely to change through the coalition life cycle. For example, individual leadership may catalyse coalition formation, but more negotiated or adaptive leadership may be needed to sustain the coalition.

- A coalition requires collective leadership that brings together the technical *and* political capabilities and skills it needs to be effective.
- Coalitions require leadership that enables them to respond to changing circumstances and challenge the status quo where necessary.
- However, donors need to be wary of prescribing coalition leadership structure. A coalition's leadership style needs to suit the context, issue and the stage of the coalition's life cycle.



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## Ownership

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'Local' ownership is important and widely lauded, but difficult to define: for instance, geographic proximity is no guarantee of shared values, shared interests or a shared understanding of and engagement with dimensions of power and gender relations.

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A group's self-determination about what work to do, where, how, with whom and why can be undermined by the need to shape work to fit externally defined gender-related funding silos.

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In some circumstances, 'hybrid' ownership can bring together international actors who can help to draw attention to a gender issue and amplify grassroots voices with local actors who ensure that action is taken at a national and local level.

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Tension can exist between gender equality (often seen as a Western concern) and local ownership, but hybrid forms of ownership could provide space to explore this.

- Look for coalitions and issues defined and selected by local actors, but don't expect uniform or 'one size fits all' articulation of values, interests and strategies to combat gender issues.
- Be careful to ensure that funding mechanisms do not create artificial incentives for actors to come together.
- External interventions alone will not generate the ownership required for coalitions to develop and function. Consider under what conditions and on what issues more 'hybrid' forms of ownership are feasible and desirable.
- International support for issues that threaten elite interests can create a backlash, but hybrid ownership can also create space to explore differences.
- Careful political analysis is required to navigate support from what might be considered contentious issues.

## 1

## Introduction

The role of coalitions in driving transformative social change is increasingly recognised in international development circles by local and international actors. <sup>1</sup>The Australian Aid program, in particular, articulates the view that achieving a more just and equitable world requires 'lasting and transformative change' in gender norms and power relations, and that coalitions have a 'leading role... in creating change' (DFAT, 2016, pp. 25–6). Yet despite this recognition, the mechanisms by which coalitions form and function (and therefore how they may be supported) is less understood, particularly where these coalitions do not take on a formal and recognisable identity.

'Coalition' is a broad term for a group of people who come together around objectives, interests and ideas. As Leftwich (2012, p. 5) explains:

Coalitions take many forms. Some may be formal and regard themselves as a constituted coalition (perhaps even with a name). Others may be less formal (and nameless) but nonetheless conscious of themselves as groups of players with a common objective. And yet others may simply be loose networks groups with similar interests and ideas.

The aim of this study is to address gaps in our understanding of the role played by coalitions in challenging gendered power structures and promoting women's leadership and decision-making in the Pacific. The findings enable coalitions and those supporting them to consider how to most effectively provide assistance. We start with the proposition that coalitions play a leading role in creating change in gender norms in the Pacific, and gender can be seen as a 'power relation' (DFAT, 2016, p. 22). As such, we firstly need to understand what factors influence coalition formation and function, and secondly, how coalitions engage with various dimensions of power to achieve their transformative change objectives. Understanding this, and challenging our assumptions about how collective leadership and action emerges and functions, will better inform program interventions intended to support coalitions engaged in changing gender norms and power relations.

Through five in-depth case studies of coalitions with varied attributes, this study asks:

- how do coalitions form?
- who is involved and why?
- what have they achieved and how did they engage with visible, hidden and invisible dimensions of power?
- how is their work enabled or constrained by external actors, including donors?

## Women in the Pacific

The Pacific has the lowest regional average of women's representation in parliament (PACWIP, 2015). Pacific women face a number of challenges entering politics, including perceptions of 'appropriate' gender roles, the pervasiveness of a highly masculine political culture, violence against women, and limited social mobility and economic independence (McLeod, 2008, 2015). Female political candidates face additional challenges mobilising block votes and funding political campaigns (Billy, 2002; Donald et al., 2002; McLeod, 2002). The nature and diversity of Pacific contexts shape the emergence of collective action and leadership, and impact how coalitions function in different contexts. This also impacts how women's leadership is exercised (Denney & McLaren, 2016; Hayley, 2016; Spark et al., 2016). It is therefore understandable that research on women's leadership and the promotion of gender equality in the Pacific has tended to focus on the formal political sphere and individual leadership (Baker, 2014, 2015; Donald, Strachan & Taleo, 2002; Douglas, 2002b; Hayley, 2016; McLeod, 2002, 2015; Quay, 2012).

That said, a number of works have considered women's collective action in the Pacific, often characterising it historically as an artefact of church groups, systematically established throughout the region since WWII (Douglas, 2002a; Dickson-Waiko, 2003). These groups provided Pacific women with new opportunities for rank and status. More recently, faith-based groups have enabled women to undertake formal and informal leadership training, education and networking at local, national and regional levels. Through participation in church groups and networks, and the relative ease with which they can gain status as prominent leaders in these spaces, women have been able to challenge the status quo in quieter rather than overt ways, often linking their concerns to global discourses (George, 2014b), legitimating their right to highlight specific issues while also broadening the range of issues under consideration.

<sup>1</sup> For example, the work of coalitions is at the heart of the World Bank's Collaborative Leadership for Development Program (<http://www.leadfordev.org/>) and is the subject of other research undertaken by the Developmental Leadership Program – see Leftwich (2012) and <http://www.dlprog.org/theme/reform-coalitions.php>.

## Opportunities for transformative change emerging from coalitions in the informal realm

According to Tadros (2011a), a dominant focus on formal political leadership can divert attention from possible ways of supporting transformative change in less formal spaces, including those in which coalitions tend to form and operate. The importance of understanding the more informal political realm in which coalitions function was also noted during a 2012 workshop on Coalitions in the Politics of Development: 'Analysing how coalitions work in different circumstances often provides a powerful lens for getting to the heart of the inner politics of change and development in any particular society or sector' (Leftwich, 2012, p. 6).

There is a growing recognition of the importance of collective leadership and action in the informal sphere for challenging and transforming gendered power structures and relations, including addressing obstacles that inhibit the emergence of women's leadership (Denney & McLaren, 2016; Domingo et al., 2015; Htun & Weldon, 2012; Leftwich, 2012; O'Neil, 2015; Peiffer, 2012, 2015; Spark, 2016). Such obstacles pertain to the fact that women's individual and collective leadership and the political and policy environment in which they work are 'gendered', and this in turn affects how coalitions function, what opportunities they are given, and what tools and strategies they adopt (Kretschmer & Meyer, 2013).

## Gender inequality, power and coalitions

Gender inequality is usually a symptom of power dynamics (Connell, 2002; Fletcher, 2015; Koester, 2015). It follows that shifts in gender relations require shifts in power dynamics, so there is a need to understand and consider the visible, hidden, and invisible dimensions of power as a number of development agencies have suggested (DFAT, 2014; Miller et al., 2006). Using Miller et al.'s three dimensions of power enables analysis of the motivations and functioning of coalitions engaged in challenging gender norms, and the different strategies required. By engaging coalitions and their supporters in discussions about what dimensions of power they are challenging and how, it is possible to shift one's gaze beyond immediately obvious work often done in the dimension of visible power, and ways of working in the realms of hidden or invisible power may be validated.

For the purposes of this study, we focus on how coalitions engage with the following types of power (Miller et al., 2006, p. 13):

- **Visible power:** The 'rules, institutions, decision-making structures, policies and laws' which can reinforce or challenge inequalities. For example, visible power is vested with legislators and policy makers and within documents such as rules, regulations, human rights declarations etc.
- **Hidden power:** 'Who gets to the decision-making table and what gets on the agenda'. For example, hidden power is vested with more vocal and influential lobby groups who are able to assert their agenda and control the direction and flow of information on key issues.
- **Invisible power:** 'Socio-cultural norms and values, practices, ideologies, and customs' that label individuals, groups and behaviours as 'normal' or 'abnormal'. For example, the traditional customs and religious ideologies that dictate and underpin notions of 'appropriate' behaviour.

Lasting and transformative change in gender norms requires work that addresses different types of change and engages with different dimensions of power. For example, DFAT's Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development program identifies four intersecting domains of change, drawing on the work of Rao and Kelleher (2005):

- Women and men's individual beliefs, abilities, attitudes and opportunities.
- Social norms and attitudes and space for women's voice.
- Access to resources such as income, education and health.
- Policies and laws that support women's safety, equality and contributions to national development (DFAT, 2014, p. 33).

## Relationship between coalitions' formation and functioning and how they challenge power

All but one of the coalitions in this study engaged in work seeking to address visible power, such as projects on gender-related rules, policies and laws. All coalitions in the study sought to influence hidden power by way of personal and organisational network mobilisation, and participants in the study acknowledged the significant transformative potential of engaging with invisible power. Four factors emerged from the case studies as of crucial importance to the formation and functioning of coalitions: formative events, ownership, leadership and shared purpose. This paper presents how each factor influences the formation and functioning of the five case study coalitions. It also analyses how the formation and functioning of these coalitions shapes how they address power relations when attempting to promote transformative change, including in gender norms. Put another way, the paper explores how the nature of a coalition's formation, ownership, leadership and shared purpose drives the ways in which that coalition challenges power relations. The research suggests that understanding this offers possibilities for better supporting and enabling coalition work that seeks to create 'lasting and transformative change' in gender norms and power relations (DFAT, 2016, p. 26).

## 2

## Research approach

This study uses a qualitative, collective case study research approach. This approach is most appropriately adapted to the exploratory nature of the study, the complexity of the subject matter and the dynamic nature of the contexts in which coalitions operate. Given the diversity of 'the Pacific'—in its cultures, histories, languages, races, ethnicities and land masses—as well as the diversity of the coalitions that make up the study, a case study approach affords the greatest opportunity to explore the inner mechanics, politics and power dynamics of coalitions and identify common factors that influence them<sup>2</sup> (see also Yin, 2003).

Five case studies were selected using a purposive sampling approach. This began with desk-based scoping (March–April 2015) to identify and shortlist potential cases. This scoping produced a list of 75 domestic and regional coalitions for consideration.<sup>3</sup> The shortlist was then developed in consultation with expert researchers and practitioners. The shortlist was refined according to three parameters. Firstly, geographic distribution (with a view to selecting case studies from each of the three Pacific sub-regions). Secondly, spectrum of engagement (with a view to selecting case studies of coalitions engaged across a spectrum of activities and at multiple levels of local, national and regional/international engagement). Thirdly, coalition typology (with a view to including a range of coalitions that fall within the Leftwich definition of both named and unnamed entities.) A number of practical considerations were also taken into account when refining this shortlist—including participant interest and availability.

Of the final five case studies, geographic distribution includes two case studies from Melanesia, one from Micronesia and two from Polynesia. The spectrum of engagement is represented by one case of a coalition engaged predominately at the local level and the remainder of cases engaged fluidly across a spectrum of levels (local, national, regional and international) but showing a predominance towards one level or another. Diverse coalition typology is represented by case studies of coalitions of various size, scope and focus, as well as coalitions formally recognised as organisations and those made up of a variety of individuals and entities convening for the same cause. All case study coalitions are engaged in work to address gender inequality.

Adopting a collective approach, where we developed each case study separately then considered them jointly, allowed us 'to analyse within each setting and across settings' (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 550). Cross-case study analysis was made possible by applying a uniform question guide to all case studies and following the same approach to case study development involving grey and academic literature review on context and issue, followed by individual interviews and/or focus group discussion and finally, analysis. Participants were actively engaged in the development of the draft case studies through opportunities for comment, revision and refinement. For the Fiji case study, a validation workshop was also held. The number of participants for each case study ranged from 5–12 depending on the size of the coalition, and each fieldtrip lasted from one to two weeks per site. Virtually all interviews and focus groups took place in the country of the coalition and were supplemented by phone and skype interviews as required. While formal participation from coalition members, representatives and people involved with case study coalitions is the primary source of data for this study, additional discussions with key personnel were undertaken in order to provide appropriate context and validation of findings. This occurred with representatives of civil society and non-government organisations as well as with DFAT. For the purposes of maintaining confidentiality and in accordance with ethics approval for this research, a full list of contact names of those interviewed has not been included in this report.<sup>4</sup>

All interview and focus group discussion data were transcribed, and data from each case study were analysed for themes emerging in relation to coalition formation, achievements, challenges and function. This inductive method enabled factors to emerge from the case studies. Simultaneously, we used a pre-existing analytical framework for power dimensions to collect data on how the factors identified shape the way coalitions engage with various power dimensions and why. Our analytical approach was a hybrid of conventional and directed content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Mayring, 2000; Mostyn, 1985); as a first stage, we analysed data for themes arising. This first-stage analysis was reviewed, refined for connections, dissonance and overlap, then applied across the different case studies.

2 On the appropriate use of case studies see Woolcock (2013) and Yin (2003).

3 Including, but not limited to, representatives from DFAT (Pacific Women and Governance), Pacific Women Support Unit, La Trobe University, Pacific Leadership Program, ANU, and the International Women's Development Agency (IWDA).

4 This study was granted approval by the La Trobe University College of Arts, Social Science and Commerce Human Research Ethics Committee (approval no. R15/19).

As with all research, there are limitations to this work. This includes the issue of research fatigue (particularly in Melanesia) where participants had multiple commitments to simultaneous research projects. Another challenge relates to timing and access. For example, the Tonga case study fieldwork overlapped with a period of intense activity and debate around the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) ratification. Sample size and representativeness is also a limitation; the nature of a small case study sample size (five case studies) will always limit the representativeness of this research but nonetheless gives rise to valuable propositions and conclusions that could be further explored through more varied and illustrative studies of coalitions, in order to test the findings at scale. Regardless, the study enables significant insight to the inner workings of five different coalitions in the Pacific, establishing a strong exploratory base for further work.

The findings in this paper capture an in-depth look at five coalitions at one point in the life-cycle of a coalition. They warrant testing through further dialogue with coalitions and across various samples in future research. Coalitions are not static entities. Within the life-cycle of a coalition there are peaks and troughs of activities. Coalitions may become dormant or reactivated, members change, individual or collective leadership styles may adapt in response to activities and challenges encountered. The same issues and factors identified in this research may look different at different points in time in the life-cycle of the coalition. It follows that this variation in the form and function of a coalition will shape the way a coalition engages across different dimensions of power at different points in time. It is important to recognise that this study is part of a broader package of research being undertaken on gender inequality, power, leadership and politics of coalitions in the Pacific – see for example Denney & McLaren (2016); Hayley, 2016; Spark & Corbett, (2016).

## 3

## The case studies in brief

This section provides an overview of the five case studies. While each of the case studies fits within Leftwich's broad definition of 'coalition', this word was not used by many participants when they spoke about their work.<sup>5</sup> Instead, they described themselves as groups, networks, partnerships, organisations and, in the case of Fiji, a social movement. For reasons of clarity we continue to use the term 'coalition' in this report.

The table below summarises the coalitions and the three parameters for their selection (geographic distribution, spectrum of engagement and coalition type).

## Summary of case studies

Location	Coalition	Spectrum of engagement	Type of coalition
<b>Polynesia</b> Tonga	<i>Talitha Project Inc.</i> responds to inequality and seeks to empower young women and girls (aged 10–25), including those living with disabilities.	Local, national and regional but predominantly local and national.	Highly networked organisation working at a medium scale on advocacy and empowerment.
<b>Polynesia</b> Tonga	<i>Women in Sustainable Enterprises (WISE)</i> , a network for Tongan women in business.	Local, national and regional, but predominantly national.	Fast-growing formalised professional network from the private sector with intentions to include women from the informal employment sector.
<b>Micronesia</b> Kiribati	<i>Nei Nibarara</i> women's handicraft network.	Predominantly local.	Small semi-formalised network with fluctuating membership of individual handicraft producers; focuses on income-generating activities.
<b>Melanesia</b> Papua New Guinea	Response to sorcery-related violence.	Local, national and international, but predominantly national.	Collection of individuals, organisations, institutions and informal coalitions collaborating in response to an issue.
<b>Melanesia</b> Fiji	A group working to protect and promote universal human rights, including rights of women and LGBTIQ people.	Local, national, regional and international, but predominantly national and regional.	'Social movement' involving individuals and institutions collaborating to advance an agenda.

<sup>5</sup> 'Individuals, groups or organisations that come together to achieve social, political and economic goals that they would not be able to achieve on their own' (Leftwich, 2012, p. 5).

## Talitha Project, Tonga

### Coalition

The Talitha Project,<sup>6</sup> established in 2009, works in coalition with a range of actors in order to achieve its aim of 'giving young women and girls an opportunity to have a voice and make informed choices'.<sup>7</sup> The Talitha Project is a highly networked and registered organisation working at the local, national and regional levels but its advocacy and empowerment is focused predominantly at the national level.

While being a formally registered organisation, the nature of membership of the Talitha Project is fluid. As is common in Tongan civil society, individual members of the Talitha Project are frequently involved in multiple organisations simultaneously in a variety of different positions (e.g. staff, volunteer, board member or advisor), and often move between organisations. This feature is crucial to understanding how Talitha works in coalition with other organisations—via these networks forged by individuals.

Talitha works in coalition with a range of partners to increase its impact and respond to gaps in service delivery; an example provided during the research was of the way in which Talitha cultivated relationships with female candidates in Tonga's 2014 election. This resulted in the candidates acting as mentors and role models for the young women involved with Talitha, and amplified young women's voices in the election campaign as the candidates listened to and learned from the young women.

Talitha is heavily involved in collective action to enhance women's voices through media and is a core partner in FemLINK Pacific's network of regional correspondents. Funding for Talitha is provided on a project-by-project basis by a variety of donors, including DFAT.

### Rationale for selection

This coalition was selected for the study due to its links across local, national and regional networks, and its ability to provide useful insights into the opportunities and challenges of partnership and coalition-building within Tonga's civil society sector. Talitha also offers an opportunity to explore collective action in the context of transgenerational processes.

### Sample of activities and achievements

- Regional advocacy as part of FemLINK Pacific's network of regional correspondents, serving as an entry point to key regional and international events such as the Triennial Conference of Pacific Women, and UN CSW processes
- Collaboration with the Tonga Family Health Association (TFHA) for the provision for the development of youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health education, and training materials targeted at young women living with disabilities
- Engagement with media partners to leverage a variety of platforms, including a national talkback radio show, for awareness-raising on gender-based violence, challenging stereotypes of young women and girls, and providing a platform for youth voices
- Partnering with female candidates from Tonga's 2014 election to cultivate a network of transgenerational mentors and role models
- Using its media networks to try and counter the rapid outpouring of protests, petitions and advocacy from the conservative majority opposed to Tonga's ratification of CEDAW.

This was done in collaboration with a ratification lobby group that largely comprised representatives from the Tonga Women and Children's Crisis Centre, Civil Society Forum Tonga, Tonga Family Health Association, Talitha, and donor representatives such as UN Women.

## WISE, Tonga

### Coalition

Launched in 2011 with assistance from the World Bank's International Finance Corporation (IFC), Women in Sustainable Enterprises (WISE) was formed with the aim of providing support, training and networking opportunities for Tongan women in business, as well as offering a platform through which to lobby for relevant business reforms. WISE received funded through a variety of different sources, including NZ Aid.

<sup>6</sup> The name 'Talitha' means 'young girl, rise up' in Tongan.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.peaceportal.org/web/talitha-project>

## Rationale for selection

During the initial research planning stage, WISE was proposed as a successful example of a coalition. The reasons given were the speed with which the group was established and gained popularity (Kirkby, 2012), and its ability to ‘...boost the engagement of women in business’ (Jolly et al., 2014, p. 32). However, during fieldwork it became clear that the network has stopped meeting regularly, and there is uncertainty over its future direction. The case study is included because it provides some lessons on coalition sustainability and the role of leadership.

## Sample of activities and achievements

- Facilitation of training opportunities for network members through partnership with the Tongan Business Enterprise Centre
- Provision of networking opportunities for Tongan women in business
- Organisation of ‘market nights’ to raise the profile of businesses run by Tongan women
- Ensuring the implementation of a number of lapsed government regulations (e.g. requirements for export businesses to have a specific customs broker to improve efficiency of customs processes).

## Nei Nibarara, Kiribati, Micronesia

### Coalition

Nei Nibarara is a grassroots women’s handicraft network that provides income-generation opportunities for women on Tarawa through the sale of handicrafts through NZ Trade Aid. In addition, the group provides training and support for members, particularly in the marketing and quality control of handicraft products. The group comprises approximately 20 individual producers from the women’s arms of the Catholic and Protestant churches.

Formed in 2005 as the result of a regional meeting facilitated by Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), Nei Nibarara received support in the form of training from PIFS in conjunction with the trade arm of the Government of Kiribati, as well as a 2007 training from NZ Trade Aid. The group was dormant for a few years before being reinvigorated in 2010/11. It has been filling orders with NZ Trade Aid since 2010, and is now self-funded, although NZ Trade Aid has provided some key materials (e.g. a computer).

### Rationale for selection

Preliminary document analysis indicated that this network was unique in the Kiribati context, because it is comprised of women from both the Catholic and Protestant churches. Further, Nei Nibarara offered a chance to understand coalition work that occurs at the community level, and is often ‘under the radar’ of international organisations.

### Sample of activities and achievements

- Formation of a supply chain with NZ Trade Aid for the sale of handicrafts
- Organisation of training of handicraft producers in marketing, packaging, pricing and quality control
- Promotion of traditional handicrafts through the establishment of an umbrella association for handicraft producers.

## Response to sorcery-related violence, PNG

### Coalition

This coalition is a collection of individuals and organisations who coalesce around a shared concern over sorcery-related violence in PNG.<sup>8</sup> The organisations and individuals are linked thematically and share a clear sense of identity that was forged through a series of ongoing processes over time. This coalition comprises a broad range of actors, including grassroots actors known as ‘Human Rights Defenders’ (HRDs); Catholic priest Fr. Phillip Gibbs; a national Haus Krai campaign movement; academics from PNG and Australia (including from the Melanesian Institute); PNG’s Department of Justice and Attorney General; the Family Sexual Violence Action Committee; the Catholic Church; INGOs; and the UN.

<sup>8</sup> As noted by Eves (Amnesty International Australia, 2009), the word ‘sorcery’ and ‘sorcerer’ have been used in PNG to refer to a wide range of practices, intent and identities that are culturally and geographically diverse. In this paper, ‘sorcery’ is used to refer to practices understood to be related to magic or the supernatural in which the intent is to harm. There is also divergence of opinion regarding just what counts as sorcery-related violence. This paper uses the term ‘sorcery-related violence’ to refer to violence against those who are accused of having used what are believed to be magical or supernatural means to cause harm to others (see Amnesty International Australia, 2009).



It is possible to identify intersecting 'circles of practice' within the coalition, in which larger, institutionally based partners took the lead in work related to policy (predominantly through the Committee against Sorcery Accusation Related Violence), while the HRDs and Fr. Gibbs (with some INGO support) took the lead in community-level response.<sup>9</sup> The *Haus Krai* movement was a major contributor to creating the conditions in which a collective response could occur. Responses to sorcery-related violence in PNG have received various forms of funding, with DFAT funding development of the Sorcery National Action Plan. The grassroots work has been funded on a more ad hoc basis through INGOs such as Oxfam and IWDA (in the case of the HRDs) and Caritas Australia (in the case of the work of Fr Gibbs).

### Rationale for selection

This coalition was included in the study due to the breadth and diversity of individuals and institutions engaging in this work, and because of the importance attributed to this work in PNG. It is also an example of a range of entities working together for a common interest, but who do not necessarily identify as a formal organisation or single entity.

### Sample of activities and achievements

- A national grassroots campaign plus international campaigns against sorcery-related violence
- Community-level research
- Two conferences to examine issues of sorcery-related violence and explore responses
- Development of a Sorcery National Action Plan
- Development of a Catholic Church course that encourages people to question the use of violence to deal with accusations of sorcery; and
- Village level work to prevent or minimise sorcery-related violence. This work has been largely catalysed and supported by Fr. Philip Gibbs, (Secretary of the Commission for Social Concerns for the Catholic Bishops' Conference of PNG/ Solomon Islands and a Research Advisor for Caritas Australia), and by a group of PNG women known as the Human Rights Defenders.<sup>10</sup>

## Response to human rights challenges in Fiji, Melanesia

### Coalition

This group, described by many involved as a social movement rather than a coalition, has developed in recent years around the protection and promotion of universal human rights. Organisations<sup>11</sup> and campaigners in Fiji that previously worked on rights issues but in a more siloed, 'group-focused' way—e.g. women's rights, youth rights, disability rights, rights for lesbians, gays, bisexuals, trans, intersex and queer people (LGBTIQ)<sup>12</sup>—began to strategise and coordinate together in order to protect and promote universal rights, while recognising the specific structural, legal and socio-cultural factors that affect different groups.<sup>13</sup> The Fiji coalition does not receive funding as an entity: the organisations involved in the coalition receive funding from various sources (including DFAT), and where possible have worked together to find funding for joint activities, such as the establishment and meeting of the Pacific Feminist Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) Coalition.

### Rationale for selection

This coalition was included in the study because of the breadth and diversity of individuals and institutions engaging in this work, and because of the potential for this to inform broader work in the gender and sexuality arena. The coalition's longevity and capacity for cooperation (sometimes rare in a Pacific context where fragmentation between civil society organisations

9 Committee members are recorded as: The Department of Justice & Attorney General – Legal Policy & Governance Branch; Consultative Implementation & Monitoring Council; University of Goroka; Commission for Social Concerns (Catholic Bishops Conference); Melanesian Institute; State Society and Governance in Melanesia (ANU); Australian High Commission; and United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (Committee Against Sorcery Accusation Related Violence, 2014, p. 1).

10 Human Rights Defender is a term adopted by the UN OHCHR to describe 'people who, individually or with others, act to promote or protect human rights' (UN OHCHR, 1996–2015). In PNG, the term is applied to an informal network of women who have intervened in dangerous situations to protect the rights of others (initially, often in tribal warfare situations). Interviewees referred to a meeting held in 2005 (believed to have been called by the UN) at which the decision was taken to form the Highlands Human Rights Defender Network. As of 2015, the Network was receiving some support from Oxfam PNG, the International Women's Development Agency and UN OHCHR.

11 Including civil society organisations such as Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM), Fiji Women's Crisis Gender, FemLINK Pacific, Haus of Khameleon, Drodrolagi Movement, and Diverse Voices and Actions for Equality (DIVA).

12 The terms lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer and the abbreviation LGBTIQ are acknowledged as imported English-language terms. Their use here is pragmatic.

13 During a validation workshop held in Fiji, the question was asked: 'is this a coalition?' Those present refer to the work covered in this report as being carried out by a movement.

is regularly reported) is well-known, as are the coalition's responses to threats to human rights if and when they present themselves.

### Sample of activities and achievements

- Contributing strongly to successful protests against the proposed removal of protection on the grounds of sexual orientation from the Fijian Constitution
- Successfully advocating the inclusion of protection from discrimination on the grounds of 'gender identity and expression' in the (still contested) 2013 Bill of Rights
- 'Internal' coalition partner questioning of the term 'women', and expanding its definition to include all those who identify as women, rather than just those medically designated female at birth
- Acknowledging, and seeking to include, people of non-normative gender identities or sexual orientation in the work of all coalition participants
- Working to ensure that LGBTIQ communities contributed to the shaping of the regional youth framework
- Including trans\* women in the influential Fiji Women's Forum<sup>14</sup>
- Influencing the Ministerial Declaration from the sixth Asian and Pacific Population Conference (APPC)<sup>15</sup>
- Formation of the Pacific Feminist Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) Coalition, with the coalition's inaugural meeting Outcomes Statement being discussed as part of the 57th session of the UN's Commission on the Status of Women (CSW).

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14 The Women's Forum, established in the lead-up to Fiji's 2014 elections, is co-convened by four organisations: two relatively conservative organisations, Soqosoqo Vakamarama (SSV)—'founded in 1924 as a Methodist organisation to foster Fijian women's crafts' (Leckie, 2005 [2002], p. 161)—and the National Council of Women Fiji; and the explicitly feminist organisations Fiji Women's Rights Movement and FemLINK Pacific.

15 The Declaration expressed 'grave concern at acts of violence and discrimination committed against individuals on the grounds of their sexual orientation and gender identity' (Economic and Social Council, 2013, p. 3) and committed signatories to a policy direction of 'work to reduce vulnerability and eliminate discrimination based on sex, gender, age, race, caste, class, migrant status, disability, HIV status and sexual orientation and gender identity, or other status' (Economic and Social Council, 2013, p. 11).

## 4

## Findings

### Introduction to factors important to coalitions' formation and functioning

Coalitions are dynamic entities highly influenced by the contexts within which they form and function. This study analyses five coalitions. From this analysis, four factors that influence the formation and functioning of coalitions emerged and are documented in this paper. While these factors emerged from the case studies, they are nonetheless not unique or unidentified by previous studies including work on formative events and critical junctures (Acemoglu et al., 2008; Hogan, 2006; Hogan & Doyle, 2009); ownership (Chambers et al., 2001; Cornwall, 2003; de Campos Guimarães, 2009; Escobar, 1995; Fisher & Marquette, 2016; Gready & Ensor, 2005), leadership (Andrews, McConnell & Wescott, 2010; Lyne de Ver, 2009; Tadros, 2011b) and shared purpose and common ground (Deane, 2015; Donnelly, 2007; Leftwich, 2011; Whaites et al., 2015). This study's contribution is in demonstrating the complexity of these factors (and their intersections) within and across the case studies when the research was undertaken. Further, we demonstrate the intersections between these factors and the ways in which case study coalitions engaged with the dimensions of visible, hidden and invisible power.

These factors are:

- **Formative events.** This refers to what brought people together to 'do something' in a concerted way. Formative events are important because the nature of the event as locally or externally driven appears to mould the future shape of a coalition and how it functions.
- **Different forms of shared purpose, interests and values within the coalition.** Clarity of shared ground and common purpose helps coalitions increase their support base, coherence and influence. In this study, the dominant forms of common purpose include shared values and interests.
- **Different forms of leadership.** Leadership is important because the nature of coalition leadership can determine its ability to respond to changing circumstances, broker relationships and divergent interests, challenge vested interests and be sustained over time. In this study, some coalitions understood and practised leadership as a process of adaptation and others understood leadership to be a characteristic of leaders.
- **The nature of ownership.** Ownership is important because the degree to which a coalition's agenda is locally owned and its ways of working are politically salient appears to be key to determining the coalition's effectiveness. In this study, the coalitions can be broadly characterised as local/hybrid variations.

Together, these factors appear to heavily influence how a coalition forms and functions at various points in time. Just as coalitions are not static, nor are these factors. The interaction, for example between different natures of local ownership and different forms of leadership mean that one informs the other. But when taken together, it appears that these factors shape the ways in which coalitions address different types of power in the case studies.

A tentative hypothesis resulting from these findings suggests coalitions are more likely to challenge gender norms, directly or indirectly, and promote transformational change if they:

- are formed in response to local events and critical junctures;
- are locally driven and owned;
- share common interests and sometimes values (or could navigate between conflicting values); and
- have adaptive and distributed leadership, which is regularly renegotiated.

Of course, it is unlikely that all four factors are present at a particular point in time or throughout the life-cycle of a coalition. This tentative hypothesis is the result of a limited study of five case studies and additional research would be required in order to nuance, explore and substantiate the hypothesis appropriately in the context of gender, power and coalitions in the Pacific.

What follows is analysis of each of the four factors influencing the formation and functioning of coalitions, a description of how these factors influenced each coalition case study and how this shaped their approaches to challenging various dimensions of power.

## Formative events

### Summary of findings

Consistent across all five case studies is that formative events play a crucial role in the 'coming together' (Leftwich, 2012, p. 5) or the fusing of new or existing individuals, organisations and institutions that have a shared purpose. In the case studies presented here, the formative events took the shape of either national crises, personal experiences or organised opportunities. Such events generally occurred during the alignment of a complex and shifting set of conditions that made change possible. These conditions included the existence of individuals and organisations that were able to capitalise on the event, and the existence of trust relationships between those individuals and organisations. In each of the case studies, formative events were crucial to the formation of coalitions but that is not to say that the same events, played out in different social, political, economic or individual contexts, would necessarily have led to the same outcome (Hudson and Leftwich, 2014). Put simply, just because, for example, the threat to human rights can prompt the formation of a robust coalition in one instance, doesn't mean that this will always produce robust coalitions unless the other conditions and factors influencing the emergence of coalitions are ripe. Nonetheless, in this study, there was no coalition that formed in the absence of one or more formative events.

#### Key findings: Formative events

Formative events in ripe social and political contexts can prompt the establishment of gender focused coalitions and strengthen the resolve of existing alliances.

Formative events can be predominantly 'local', externally driven or a mixture of both; however, entirely extrinsic events that are disconnected from local context are unlikely to produce or support effective coalitions.

Formative events are often accompanied by greater space to challenge the status quo of gender relations. Ability to respond to these emergent opportunities is critical.

In the crucial period following the formative event, a coalition's responsiveness is highly reliant on the complex strategic task of finding allies to help influence agendas, particularly if the coalition seeks to challenge gender norms.

#### Implications for coalitions and their supporters

- Events for events' sake don't create coalitions, but events or a process of 'coming together' that questions social norms in the right contexts can. External actors need to assess the social and political context and understand which dimensions of power are being challenged.
- When supporting events with an extrinsic element (for example, facilitating a regional or international workshop on international standards), look for opportunities that are connected to local concerns and context. Avoid supporting events that are entirely extrinsic.
- Where this is local appetite to capitalise on an event, access to flexible support can be crucial. Care should be taken by external actors to support but not overshadow informal networks.

### Formative events in the case studies

The **Fiji** coalition working to protect and promote universal human rights, including rights of women and of LGBTIQ people, identified the country's 2006 military coup, and resultant threats to the 1997 Fijian Constitution's protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation, as formative events.<sup>16</sup> Crucially, these events occurred when Fiji had a growing LGBTIQ movement (both in growing numbers of organisations and advocacy space occupied) that was mobilising around rights.<sup>17</sup>

Earlier responses to a threat to the constitutional provision on discrimination based on sexual orientation in 1999 saw Fiji's Women's Action for Change and its Sexual Minorities Project begin protesting (George, 2014a), and other individuals cooperating but there was no overall 'coming together'. One participant recalled working with a 'small group' to develop an LGBTIQ submission on constitutional change at that time but, he said, 'we weren't even an organisation, we were just young people concerned about what was happening' (Fiji K115).

One participant described the 2009 threat to Fiji's democracy and its constitution as a 'turning point' (Fiji K114). She explained:

<sup>16</sup> The Fijian constitution was amended in 1997 to explicitly protect against discrimination based on sexual orientation (making Fiji only the second country in the world to do so, after South Africa). Tora (2006, p. 58) notes: 'The inclusion of this clause was immediately opposed by fundamentalist Christian groups that, led by a government backbencher and lay preacher, used the country's first Constitution Day to march against same-sex marriages, despite the fact that Fiji's Constitution does not make provisions for same-sex marriage'.

<sup>17</sup> Organisation around LGBTIQ issues in Fiji is generally traced back to the establishment of the Sexual Minorities Project established under the auspices of feminist organisation Women's Action for Change in 1998 (George, 2014a; Tora, 2006).

This is where I think that we, the coalition became a lot more formalised because prior to that we were ... supporting each other but we were still working in silos ... Prior to that, the feminist movement was really segregated around women's rights and biological women and everybody else ... It was actually what happened with the coup that made us realise that we don't have the numbers and we had to start getting more people inside ... that was sort of the rallying call. (Fiji K114)

In Fiji, the formative events described as leading to collective action came to a head in the visible dimension of power; through threats to the constitution. However, countering these threats required active engagement in the hidden, and invisible, dimensions of power.

In PNG, participants identified the 2013 torture and murders of 20-year-old Kepari Leniata (known locally as Angeline) and women's rights activist Helen Rumbali, which occurred within months of each other,<sup>18</sup> as key to bringing people together to act against sorcery-related violence. These deaths were certainly not the first sorcery-related deaths in PNG; indeed, there is a long history of those thought to be engaged in 'bad' sorcery being killed within communities in the Highlands. However these killings are reported as having occurred infrequently, in secret, without the incidence of torture, and as a result of the decision of community leaders 'that it was necessary for the well-being of the community' (Health Services and IMR, 2004, cited in Oxfam, 2010, p. 4). The deaths received widespread national and international press coverage and included images of Kepari Leniata being burned alive on top of a pile of tyres, surrounded by a large crowd of men, women and children.

The deaths, the press coverage, PNG's long history of gender-based violence and the growth of a cohort of PNG women who are 'active participants and leaders' in civil society (National Council of Women, 2010, p. 22), together prompted collective action. After Leniata's death, a civil rights group called Women Arise was established by leading PNG women's rights activists to draw attention to violence against women and sorcery-related violence. After Rumbali's death, Women Arise—with a wide array of predominantly civil society organisations—organised a wave of local events calling attention to their cause, called *Haus Krai*.<sup>19</sup> These garnered national and international media attention and led PNG's Minister for Justice and Attorney General, Mr Kerenga Kua, to state: 'It has gone to a level where, I think, we have crossed the threshold in Papua New Guinea' (cited in Robinson, 2013, p. 3). One participant remembered: 'Certainly in 2013, I4, it was like sorcery, sorcery, was on the lips of everyone as far as the big issue in Papua New Guinea' (PNG K112). Participants also pointed to the June 2013 conference on Sorcery and Witchcraft-Related Killings in Melanesia: Culture, Law and Human Rights Perspectives at the Australian National University as helping to provide a focus for collective action.

Women Arise, and the conferences that contributed to the development of a more concerted response to sorcery-related violence in PNG challenged and transformed norms.<sup>20</sup> Participants described these events as drawing heavily on the hidden dimension of power in that both events (and the coverage they received) contributed to bringing sorcery-related violence on to the national agenda. This, in turn, led to work in the visible dimension of power: the revoking of the Sorcery Act 1971 and development of the Sorcery National Action Plan.

In contrast to both the Fiji and PNG coalitions, which emerged from identifiable points of national crisis, **Tonga's Talitha Project** and the networks through which it amplifies its work emerged gradually through the experience of personal level events. These events existed predominantly in the invisible dimension of power; such as where stigma still attaches to unmarried mothers and where gender norms and stereotypes find their strongest attachments. In the first instance, Talitha's founder experienced formative events in her personal life, when she became an unmarried mother:

I was labelled as an 'unwed single mum' ... I remember the time I gave birth I didn't even have the right to name my own child ... [family members] were financially supporting me, so I didn't have any right to make decisions for myself or for my daughter while I was living under their roof ... I had never felt so degraded.

18 Along with the non-sorcery related gang rape of an American tourist in the same month as Helen Rumbali's death.

19 The *Haus Krai* movement was coordinated by Women Arise but involved the following wide array of organisations: National Council of Women; Coalition for Change (established to campaign for a Family Protection Bill in PNG); Business and Professional Women; University of PNG School of Social Science and Human Services; Young Women's Christian Association; Country Women's Association; Salvation Army; Red Cross; Papua Hahine; Women in Politics; Melanesian Solidarity; PNG Trust; Partners with Melanesia; The Voice; Women in Business; Family Sexual Violence Unit; Tribal Foundation; CIMC PNG; Trades Union Congress; Port Moresby Chamber of Commerce; NBPOL Women; PNG Greens Party; NCD Women's Alliance; NCD LLG Division; PNG Against Domestic Violence; Sojourner Mission; Patriots PNG; and All PNG Musicians (Seeds Theatre Company, 2013). *Haus Krai* events occurred in several locations in PNG and in countries where PNG people have settled, including Australia. However the main event was held in Port Moresby, and attracted an estimated 300 people for an all-night prayer vigil. The crowd swelled to an estimated 1,000 people for an afternoon of speeches and public grieving (Blackwell, 2013b). Attendees included Australian High Commissioner Deborah Stokes and US ambassador Walter North, but the emphasis was strongly on PNG nationals (and particularly, PNG women) mourning. *Haus Krai* is a Tok Pisin term for a traditional mourning ceremony, or wake.

20 In rural PNG, where the good of the community is viewed as more important than the rights of the individual and where a pluralist legal system exists, community-level violence has long been sanctioned if it is seen as the 'right kind' of violence; violence that 'protects the collective'. Evidence of the long-standing acceptance of 'sorcerers' being killed for the greater good was provided by several interviewees who had been born and raised in PNG. One said: It was done secretly when I was a child ... It's the communal decision that came up within the community and the leaders ... they [came] together and they plan. And then the rest of the community will say the next morning 'oh, this person is not here' but then they are not allowed to mention it in public because they know that ... someone ... has been taken away and that's it ... but now it's done publicly. (PNG K116)

I had low self-esteem and I looked down on myself. (Tonga KI6)

These experiences of shame and powerlessness stayed with the interviewee, and inspired her to 'set up a program for young women, something to provide support and let them know that we are here for them' (Tonga KI6). But she was only able to do so after two additional experiences: first, having gained an overseas education; and second, having worked in Tongan NGOs on her return to Tonga and gaining insight into the way in which Tonga's civil society functions. The 'coming together' of these events was identified as key to the Talitha Project's work and partnerships: 'It is not a really easy thing to set up an NGO here, so I started talking with some people to see if they could help me, and then we all came together' (Tonga KI6). Talitha's founder engaged in NGO work in Tonga (before establishing the organisation) she began a process of engagement in the hidden power—finding allies. These processes of leveraging support, and building momentum were necessary traction in the establishment of Talitha, and served to build the 'strength in numbers' necessary to voice key concerns and bring relevant issues to the policy table.

The formative events identified as leading to the development of **Nei Nibarara** in Kiribati and **WISE** in Tonga were organised events: meetings at which regional and/or international actors brought together groups of women who shared characteristics, with specific outcomes in mind. These events served to shape and catalyse action, setting in motion plans and enthusiasm for coalitions to be formed.

**Nei Nibarara** was formed as the result of a regional meeting facilitated by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) in 2005. This event, attended by government representatives and policy makers from throughout the region, identified the need to establish networks of women as handicraft producers and facilitate links to international trade bodies. It prompted initiatives in Fiji, Nauru and Kiribati to establish handicraft networks. PIFS, in conjunction with the trade arm of the Government of Kiribati, ran a number of national workshops in support of this objective. A total of 30 female handicraft producers were nominated to attend. Half of those women represented Reita-n-Aine Kamutu (RAK), the women's arm of the Kiribati Protestant Church (KPC); the other half represented Teitoingaina, the women's arm of the country's Catholic Church.<sup>21</sup> The handicraft group now known as Nei Nibarara was formed following these workshops.

**WISE** was formed in the wake of a 2010 IFC report on the gendered dimensions of regulatory business reforms in the Pacific. The report was launched at a 2010 Economic Opportunities for Pacific Women in Business Conference, held in Vanuatu and supported by IFC and the Australian Government. Given that the IFC research identified a need for country-specific organisations to represent women in business, one of the primary topics discussed was the establishment of such national organisations. A total of 50 leading businesswomen from throughout the Pacific attended the conference, including five Tongan women. One of the participants in this research, who attended the conference, described the value of sharing and hearing stories of success in such a forum:

It was so good. Empowering women to think about entrepreneurship... I saw and met other women who had their own businesses that encouraged me to think that I'm not the only woman – there are others like me. (Tonga KI1)

Upon returning to Tonga, the five Tongan representatives who had attended this event formed the first WISE executive committee and formally launched the network in 2011. It was noted that the IFC heavily supported the establishment of this group, providing an external consultant to draft a constitution and assisting in the development of draft action plans, which were implemented with assistance from Australian and NZ volunteers.

## Shared purpose, interests and values

### Summary of findings

Recent research in the international development fields of political science and governance has tended to focus on the importance of donors putting aside their ideas of 'what is right and wrong ... or ... about how the world works' and creating space to bring together actors with shared interests in order to achieve development outcomes (Whaites et al., 2015).

The findings of this study support the importance of contextual understanding of the drivers of collective action, but imply that a focus on interests alone will not be sufficient. Findings highlight the role of values in framing, guiding and constraining work by our case study coalitions, whether universal values or the values individuals give to tangible goals such as being able to earn enough to send children to school, and less tangible cultural and social norms.

Interests and values are, of course, often intertwined. Shared values can arise out of shared interests and vice versa. We do not suggest that coalitions form around either shared interests or shared values; rather, we wish to emphasise the interplay between the two. What is more, coalitions engaging with, and challenging, invisible power can provide a strong identity-based or value-based sense of shared ground. This is often reinforced through the formulation of safe spaces for reflection and difficult discussions, and a sense of mutual solidarity and support, particularly when facing backlash for work on sensitive

21 The women's arms of both the KPC and Catholic Church are the primary producers of handicrafts in Kiribati, but there is a history of conflict and rivalry between the two groups hindering previous efforts to foster collaboration.



issues. However, for interest-based coalitions, or coalitions that demonstrate a mixture of shared values and shared interests, engagement with invisible power is approached more cautiously, with a greater diversity of personal beliefs within the coalition and divergences of opinion needed to be respected in order for coalition work to be carried out. Similarly, coalitions based more on shared interests demonstrated engagement in the realm of hidden power to build informal networks and more tactical alliances to get their issues 'on the agenda'.

### Key findings: Shared purpose, interests and values

Aligning or 'bundling' diverse interests enables a coalition to increase its support base and influence, but requires careful compromise.

Articulation of shared values within a coalition (and having the space to work towards this) can generate a sense of solidarity and commitment to 'a greater good' beyond shared interests.

In successful coalitions, effectively managing differences in values and interests is critical. Coalitions with space to reframe gender issues, and engage in open and honest conversations about differences help facilitate engagement with invisible power and promote shared or negotiated leadership.

### Implications for coalitions and their supporters

- External actors seeking to support collective action need to be aware of the values and interests that can both underlie, and threaten, collective action, or they run the risk of unintentionally undermining their own and their coalition partner's aims.
- Providing space and resources for a coalition's shared interests and values to be debated and reinforced can be useful.
- Coalitions need the time and space to acknowledge and address differences in values and interests, as well as those that are shared.

## Shared purpose, common ground, interests and values in the case studies

Participants' descriptions of the **Fiji** case study focused on the shared ground of values, in that coalition members saw themselves as standing together to protect and promote universal human rights. Research participants involved in the coalition had previously worked on one or more aspects of human rights—rights of disabled people, women, LGBTIQ people, members of ethnic and religious minorities—but the coup, and threats to constitutional protection on the grounds of sexual orientation, galvanised people into taking a shared, broader stance.

As one participant put it, there was recognition that 'equality and rights is one issue' (Fiji KII4), and that fighting for rights for one identity group without recognising and supporting the rights of others was, in fact, inequitable. One participant, in explaining why she had moved from fighting for LGBTIQ rights to fighting for universal rights (while recognising the particular constraints on rights for LGBTIQ people), said: 'If you're gonna stand for one type of equal rights, all others fall in the same category' (Fiji KII5). Similar comments were made by all participants. A feminist participant recalled her realisation that claiming to be a feminist but not working with trans\* women meant 'it's like you're discriminating [against trans\* women] on biology' (Fiji KII4).

The coming together of feminists, LGBTIQ activists and others from the fields of disability and ethnic minorities was also prompted by shared interests, in that 'what happened with the coup that made us realise that we don't have the numbers and we had to start getting more people onside' (Fiji KII4). For the Fiji case study, articulation of shared ground based on universal human rights was recognised as requiring engagement in the invisible dimension of power. People's own attitudes and beliefs related to women's rights, LGBTIQ rights and the rights of others (including people living with disabilities) had to be explored by coalition members, within safe spaces, before the coalition was able to advocate externally for universal rights.

**Tonga's Talitha Project** and its networking for collective action (as in the case of CEDAW ratification) is based on staff members and collaborators explicitly sharing values about the importance of promoting women's rights and empowering young women. Activities organised by Talitha promote the rights of women to participate in political life, to be economically independent, to be free from violence and to exercise their sexual and reproductive health rights. In other words, as one participant said: 'We're trying to get women to break free from all the clutter and bullshit that's keeping them down' (Tonga KII2). She added: 'We want gender equality'. Another participant clearly attributed the 'coming together' that occurs in relation to the Talitha Project to shared concerns over the discrimination and disempowerment faced by young women in Tonga:

We want to provide positive role models for young girls and promote positive empowerment... there is a need to promote increased pride and decision-making value in order to promote positive lifestyle choices in the future. (Tonga FGD 1)

At the time of the research, Talitha was also actively engaged in the CEDAW ratification lobby, operating in the context of a vocal anti-CEDAW lobby led by Tonga's conservative majority, which was characterising CEDAW as seeking to impose

a set of western ideas on top of traditional Tongan values. Lobby group members including Talitha all supported the values enshrined in the convention, and strove to advocate for CEDAW on this basis. Talitha was heavily involved in media advocacy work as part of the lobby, thanks to the organisation's strong media networks in Tonga and regionally through FemLINK Pacific's network of regional correspondents. Talitha's director published an open letter in a Tongan national newspaper, expressing full organisational support for CEDAW, and noted: 'Our vision and goals of empowering young women are well aligned with the clauses and terms outlined by the convention' (Heleta, 2015).

In the case of Talitha, support for CEDAW ratification in Tonga was spoken of as an act born of shared values of equality, but CEDAW's opponents (Tonga's conservative majority) presented it as an attack on what they framed as 'Tongan-specific' family values. Considerable community backlash was directed at Talitha, and other members of the CEDAW ratification lobby. Participants in this research articulated the sense of strength and comfort that they were able to draw from coming together in spaces of mutual solidarity and support, particularly during times of criticism and backlash from the community, including religious leaders and family members. These safe spaces for reflection enabled participants to share these experiences and their strategies for responding to such criticism.

In the cases of **Nei Nibarara (Kiribati)** and **WISE (Tonga)**, research participants spoke more about members' interests than about a broader set of shared values.

At the time of this research, Nei Nibarara focused on supporting women who are already handicrafts producers, and whose shared interest is in generating economic opportunity and improving income-generation for members, at an individual level:

... now membership is restricted to ... women who are reliant on handicrafts as their main source of income  
... they ... have been trained and continue to be trained to meet the demands of the market. (Kiribati K111)

A great deal of Nei Nibarara's work was reported as focusing on promoting individual producers (rather than the network itself), supporting them to understand sales preferences in different locations, and to adjust handicraft production and presentation accordingly. There is a strong business model: 'What sets Nei Nibarara apart from other handicraft producers is the quality control and expert knowledge regarding pricing' (Kiribati K111). For the 20 women involved in Nei Nibarara, this income is crucial; one participant described how she is able to pay her daughter's fees at the University of the South Pacific, and how she makes between \$30 to \$50 a day from her handicrafts (Kiribati K114).

The rationale for the establishment of **WISE** was to help women in business address regulatory hurdles and other challenges (Carlyle, 2012; Kirkby, 2012). The IFC research that sparked development of WISE showed that by far the greatest level of women's engagement in business occurred in the informal sector, and one of WISE's nine objectives is, reportedly, 'to promote women in business to move from the informal to the formal sector' (Carlyle, 2012, p. 6). For participants, there was a sense of shared interest in promoting, and raising the profile of, Tongan women in business. However, there was a divergence of values, when it came to decisions about how this should be done, and who should be included.

For the founding members of WISE, including those who had participated in the 2010 regional conference, shared values existed in the form of empowering rural business women and gaining recognition for women working in the informal sector:

It [being involved in establishment of WISE] was initially my own interest to develop women, because I believe in empowering women, and I believe in the talent and capacity of women to make some changes especially in the community... (Tonga K118)

However, other participants advocated a competing perspective that the strongest shared interest within the organisation was to support women who were already engaged in the formal sector, many of whom were already very successful businesswomen. For example:

We used to try and get grassroots women—women who had started little businesses and such...but they [WISE] didn't include a lot of women in the grassroots level, they only included women who were already established. (Tonga K116)

During the research, some participants suggested that WISE's more elite members benefited the most from the network:

I felt that awareness and ability to access these opportunities [training] was restricted to the more elite WISE members, and the members of the Executive. Those further down the membership line were unaware of those benefits and unable to take advantage of them. (Tonga K110)

A lot of people involved in WISE are people who are already established, they have a license and they are running as a formal business...Some of the members... they always want the [membership] subscriptions to be increased to \$50 [from \$20], which is not affordable for those in the informal sector. I prefer the informal sector to be coming...just bring them in to participate for free, but of course the Executive want some money to help with the operations of the office and the things that we are doing. (Tonga K118)

In both the Nei Nibarara and WISE case studies, the identified sets of shared interests did contribute to challenging certain values related to gender. The beneficiaries of both of these coalitions are women, and when women start making money in



their own right it can challenge norms. Indeed, one participant described the Nei Nibarara handicraft producers as ‘major money makers’, and added:

Husbands are starting to respect their wives. As well, there are many single mothers—they are powerful now because they have money. Before they were dependent on their sons and their children for resources and now they are the decision-makers. (Kiribati KII)

However, the WISE case study also illustrates the changing nature of shared purposes and values over time. While the value of empowering grassroots women was strongly held by the founding members of the group, this was challenged over time as the group adapted to focus more on established businesswomen.

Earlier in the report, the PNG case study was identified as demonstrating a hybrid form of ownership; neither entirely local nor entirely internationally owned. Considering issues of shared ground, the same sense of hybridity emerged. While the coalition was described by reference to universal human rights (in this case, the right to freedom from violence), there were conflicting interests operating within the coalition, as well as conflicting interpretations of the extent of these rights.

In relation to the shared ground of universal rights, everyone interviewed for the research was clear that work on sorcery-related violence in PNG was driven by a desire for justice and protection of human life. However, conflicting interests arose around interpretations of universal rights, and around issues of national sovereignty.

The PNG government wanted to defend victims of sorcery-related violence (and their rights), and the government’s own Constitutional and Law Reform Commission report—presented to Minister for Justice and Attorney General Kerenga Kua after the murder of Kepari Leniata—‘concluded the Sorcery Act should be repealed in its entirety due to its inappropriateness and ineffectiveness in addressing sorcery and sorcery-related killings’ (Puka-Areni, 2013). This was in line with the international community’s position with regards to the Sorcery Act, a position that played out in the international and local media (Amnesty International Australia, 2009; Manjoo & Mendez, 2011; Oxfam, 2010; Sekaggya, Mendez & Manjoo, 2011).

The PNG government revoked the act, then added a new provision to the Criminal Code Act 1974 that extended the death penalty to cover cases where someone is found guilty of intentionally killing another person on account of an accusation of sorcery. A PNG government officer interviewed as part of this research described the death penalty as ‘the only way to deal with this’, adding: ‘There’s a reason why we resorted to the death penalty. If you do this then you die too’ (PNG KII3).

However, international agencies—many of which were engaged in the coalition against sorcery-related violence—have opposed the death penalty in PNG (Blackwell, 2013a; UN Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights, 2013). Participants connected to international agencies were unanimous in voicing ethical concerns about the introduction of the death penalty. One called it ‘a knee jerk reaction’ (PNG KIII) to internal and external pressure on the government to revoke Sorcery Act, and added: ‘we’re all committed to the same end ... [but we disagree on] the means to get there’ (PNG KIII).

The PNG case study, with its hybrid mix of shared values, shared interests and points of divergence, manoeuvred a path between visible, hidden and invisible power in which the more ‘institutional’ partners—for example the Department of Justice and Attorney General, Family Sexual Violence Action Committee, ANU and others—concentrated on engagement with the hidden and visible dimensions of power in order to repeal the Sorcery Act and develop the Sorcery National Action Plan, while more community-level partners—specifically, the HRDs and Fr Philip Gibbs—engaged with the hidden and invisible dimensions of power in order to respond to incidents of sorcery-related violence at village level. They worked through allies, navigated hierarchies and respected people’s beliefs in sorcery while enabling discussions about justice and peace in order to save lives.

## Leadership

### Summary of findings

Much has been written on the importance of leadership in progressive social change work (TWP Community of Practice, 2015; Andrews, McConnell & Wescott, 2010; Domingo et al., 2015; Lyne de Ver, 2009; Lyne de Ver & Kennedy, 2011). Lyne de Ver (2009, p. 3) notes that leadership ‘is a political process’, which is inevitably contextual and occurs ‘within a given indigenous configuration of power, authority and legitimacy, shaped by history, institutions, goals and political culture’ (Lyne de Ver, 2009, p. 4). Similar understandings of leadership can be found in the literature on adaptive leadership; as Heifetz et al. (2009, p.66) writes: ‘The art of leadership in today’s world involves orchestrating the inevitable conflict, chaos and confusion of change so that the disturbance is productive rather than destructive’.

From these perspectives, a key aspect of leadership is creating the space for the negotiation and reshaping of ‘configuration[s] of power, authority and legitimacy’ (Lyne de Ver, 2009, p. 4) and challenging the status quo by ‘creat[ing] a culture of courageous conversations’ (Heifetz et al., 2009). As shown in the section on ownership below, the use of dialogue and creation of safe spaces are often important in such work.

Coalitions themselves are imbued with various power dimensions, and a gendered understanding of this draws attention to the fact they can either reproduce or challenge existing norms. Internal processes of reflection and framing allow coalition members to unpack and reflect upon their own intersection with invisible power as they question and rearticulate their own assumptions, norms, attitudes and beliefs. Coalitions with leadership that encouraged these processes appeared to more directly engage with challenging deeper set gender norms. However, coalitions with a more fixed, individual leadership model seemed less able to challenge and address these forms of invisible power.

### Key findings: Leadership

### Implications for coalitions and their supporters

The nature of a coalition's leadership affects its ability to adapt to changing circumstances, navigate towards shared values and/or interests, broker relationships and be sustainable.

Shifting a coalition's individual leadership style to a more negotiated style is challenging where coalition relationships are perceived to belong to the individual.

The nature of a coalition's leadership is dynamic and likely to change through the coalition life cycle. For example, individual leadership may catalyse coalition formation but more negotiated or adaptive leadership may be needed to sustain the coalition.

- A coalition requires collective leadership that brings together the capabilities and skills (technical *and* political) it needs to be effective.

- Coalitions require leadership that enables them to respond to changing circumstances and challenge the status quo where necessary.

- However, donors should be wary of prescribing coalition leadership structure. A coalition's leadership style needs to suit the context, issue and the stage of the coalition's life cycle.

### Leadership in the case studies

Several of the case studies provided examples of the importance of respectful discussion in generating leadership that negotiates power, authority and legitimacy and opens up space for courageous conversations. For example, in the Fiji case study, young women within coalition organisation Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM) demonstrated leadership by raising questions about why trans\* women had not been included in FWRM's Emerging Leaders Forum, after realising that their friends or women they knew who were trans\* were not being included (Fiji KII8). Inter-organisation discussion on this issue subsequently resulted in FWRM moving beyond a biological definition of 'women'. Where no one person could be identified as a single leader of the coalition, this created space for different individuals to step forward in different ways in order to drive the agenda forward. This notion of leadership was largely based on responding to needs, expertise and opportunity, rather than the more fixed leadership that is often hierarchical in nature.

In the PNG case where leadership of the coalition itself was distributed and networked (in the sense that the coalition was made up of a range of individual and organisational actors rather than led by a single entity), different elements of the coalition made decisions according to their contexts. In this sense, the PNG coalition leadership style was effective at context monitoring, learning and adapting, which made for flexible or adaptive ways of working. Furthermore, this adaptive approach meant that when coalitions engaged with visible power, and had individuals or institutions with direct decision-making power involved in the coalition (as in the case of revoking the Sorcery Act or developing the Sorcery National Action Plan in PNG), they were able to 'shift form' and let the lead be taken directly by those individuals or institutions (e.g. Department of Justice and the Attorney General). Participants acknowledged that getting sorcery-related violence 'on the agenda' at a national level—particularly in relation to repealing the Sorcery Act—was directly related to finding the right people to champion it. 'It just shows you how easy it is to change the law here if someone wants to ... if the right people want to,' said one interviewee (PNG KII2). She defined 'the right people' as those 'that have a lot of power'.

PNG participants who identified as Human Rights Defenders described their work in communities as requiring constant scanning of the environment—and, specifically, the power dynamics in that environment—to assess whether and how they could move forward. These power dynamics include clan ties and the customary practice of focusing on the good of the community rather than on individuals' rights. Knowledge of the existence and importance of these dynamics was considered part and parcel of being Papua New Guinean. As one participant said, 'We have to think twice and go into the community so we don't lose [the local] leadership, [the senior] men in the community' (PNG KII7). She added that while the Human Rights Defenders—individuals who may or may not hold 'official' leadership positions—can and do involve the police in cases of sorcery-related violence and seek legal prosecution of offenders, they are also constantly aware that communities see court cases and imprisonment as threatening community cohesion. She noted that clan-level decision-making is customary practice:

We ... face [people] telling us 'look you cannot do this, you know we're gonna have a tribal fight, there's gonna be a lot of family disputes, you cannot do this' ... [if] we're trying to get the perpetrators to court, we face a lot of this intimidation, a lot of violence for just taking someone to court so it's really, really hard ... It's just that [village leaders] prefer to, they've seen tribal fight for the last 20 to 30 years in their life ... like and a lot

of them didn't go to school because of tribal fight and there's a lot of disturbance so the community leaders decided to come together and they said we won't, we don't want tribal fight in the village ... it's a way of like threatening us like you don't have to take him to court because there will be tribal fight. (PNG KII7)

In late 2014, Human Rights Defenders in Simbu Province used their leadership skills to find a 'middle way' through this maze, when they supported a woman who had been severely tortured after being accused of sorcery to go to Provincial Mediation (rather than to the criminal court system). A research participant with direct knowledge of the case said:

We really had a battle on how we could come up with the best decision; some said, like 'they can just shake hands and ... say sorry' ... and others ... we could say no, no it looks a bad meaning; they, you know they got the worst torture ... [If this happens] we'll refer [the] case back to the community police and they can take it up and go to the courts ... So you know like we had to argue to you know come up with the good decision.

The two perpetrators in that case were ordered to pay 3,000 kina each plus three pigs: 'And everyone just made a big crowd you know like it was the first mediation of sorcery' (PNG KII9).

**Tonga's** civil society sector is populated by individuals who are frequently involved in multiple organisations simultaneously, either through employment or participation on boards and advisory committees. In addition, indirect associations are often formed between organisations through staff changing roles, family relationships and friendship between staff. This all contributes to the ability of individuals and organisation leaders to strategically negotiate alliances and to have clear ideas on who to call on, when, and for what, and how to reciprocate for assistance received.

Talitha's partnership with women candidates from the 2014 election is a good case in point. Talitha's connection to the women candidates came about through the project's networks and connections. The women candidates were able to play an important mentoring role for the young women with whom Talitha works; indeed, during a focus group discussion held as part of this research one participant who had been an election candidate was clear that for her it was about acting on shared values: 'we wanted to provide positive role models for young girls and promote positive empowerment' (Tonga FGD1). On the other hand, engagement with the young women involved in Talitha proved beneficial to the candidates themselves, and exposed them to networks that they might not otherwise have had access to:

[through partnership with Talitha] we have been exposed to a range of issues that we were previously ignorant about, and now we have gained an increased appreciation and understanding of these issues ... Often we may have mixed visions and work towards different missions or from different perspectives, but working together gives us a chance to learn from each other's perspectives... something we often take for granted. There is a need for us to increase our knowledge about young women and youth and the issues they face. (Tonga FGD1)

In its collective endeavours, Talitha engages in negotiation and reshaping of 'configuration[s] of power, authority and legitimacy' (Lyne de Ver, 2009, p. 4). Internally, however, the organisation still follows a model in which leadership is vested in an individual, in this case Talitha's founder and director. As such, much of Talitha's current funding opportunities, partnerships and relationships are bound up with this individual identity and pre-existing relationships of trust and friendship. That said, there is a recognition within the group that this centralised leadership model could have ramifications for Talitha's sustainability, and as a result, discussions have begun about ways to divest and de-centralise leadership to Talitha's network of youth volunteers (although it remains to be seen how this would work in practice).

Similarly, in **Kiribati**, **Nei Nibarara** has wrestled with different notions of leadership and the difficulty associated with attempting to foster a negotiated or shared leadership style in practice. Initially, the group was coordinated by a fixed, individual leader who centrally managed stakeholders. However, upon the death of this individual, the group stagnated due to a lack of leadership and poor lines of communication and coordination between members in the absence of any clear direction or substantial records of the group's previous work.

Previously there was just a coordinator who was responsible for all admin and when they passed it was difficult accessing information about the group as there was little transparency and little capacity to continue group activities in their absence. (Kiribati KIII)

After the installation of the current coordinator in 2011, the group was reinvigorated. While the current coordinator is still responsible for a large amount of the administrative duties, including primary communication and liaison with NZ Trade Aid, there is increasing recognition of the need to diversify and share leadership roles within the group. In light of this, the group formed an executive committee in 2013 with the aim of upskilling group members and promoting self-governance.

In theory there should be a rotating system for the executive every 12 months to ensure that all members can participate and gain the necessary skills, although in reality it tends to be the same people putting up their hands. The job of the executive is to manage their own women at meetings, with the chairperson responsible for admin and correspondence with NZ. (Kiribati KIII)

The case of **WISE** illustrates the risks inherent in dependence on individual leaders. Registered as an association in 2010, WISE was formally launched in 2011 with a business showcase market day and an inaugural membership of 140. There was a founding president—a prominent Tongan businesswoman—and an Executive Board of 10 members operating on a volunteer basis. This Executive was elected at WISE's first AGM in 2012, with the responsibility for managing events and promotion, finance, donor funding, media and communication and advocacy.

WISE became largely dependent on the work of a strong executive, headed by a president who devoted a great deal of personal time, energy and resources to the maintenance of the network. The momentum of the group became inextricably linked with the energy of the president as described by one participant:

Her profound personal generosity is largely what sustained the group for as long as it did contributing a large amount of money and resources from her own personal business—donating staff and meeting spaces etc. (Tonga KIII2)

A 2014 report raised questions regarding the viability of this model:

As long as WISE remains active and can tap into external forms of support for activities such as training programmes, the group will continue to boost the engagement of women in business. However, it is reliant on the energies and expertise of particular individuals, so its future depends on their continued involvement or that of others from within its small pool of members. (Jolly et al., 2014)

Over time, the success and reputation of the president's business became linked with the success and reputation of the network, and when the terms of the first elected executive expired, and a new executive was formed, headed by a new president, the momentum of the group diminished and it ceased meeting. While at the height of WISE's popularity its membership base reportedly numbered around 280, research participants indicated that since 2014 this has decreased to around 200. A number of participants suggested that WISE's decreased momentum can also be attributed to the voluntary nature of its executive, comprised exclusively of successful businesswomen with many competing time commitments.

...a typical WISE member is a busy woman. Her day often starts at 5am and does not finish until 11pm. Sunday is also not a day of rest for her, as this is the day she cooks for her extended family and or visits sick and needy relatives and community members. She is time poor, often having to juggle many others' demands and has to invest her time and money with care. (Carlyle, 2012, p. 7)

Reflecting on the need to balance competing demands and manage time, the current president noted: '... it's something that I will never do again, being involved in an organisation while I'm running my own business because it's too much on my plate' (Tonga KIII1). For participants in the WISE case study, it was most difficult to challenge the hidden power dynamics operating within the network, largely as a result of perceptions of power, rank and status among members.

It was often daunting for new people who became involved in WISE due to the presence of very successful, elite businesswomen who met in cafes surrounding the capital city...so in that sense, there was a sense of disconnect between the WISE Executive and the rest of the members, particularly those from rural areas. (Tonga KIII0)

As a result of these dynamics, it was difficult to encourage open and honest debate within the network, especially participation by younger members. Similarly, due to the high profile of successful businesswomen within the network, a general fear of failure was fostered within the network, which placed additional pressure on members of the broader network.

## The nature of ownership

### Summary of findings

The nature of ownership of a coalition and its agenda produced a rich body of information shared by participants involved in this study. The importance of domestic or local ownership of development interventions has long been acknowledged and, indeed, promoted in international development rhetoric, if not always in practice (Chambers et al., 2001; Cornwall & Eade, 2010; de Campos Guimarães, 2009; Escobar, 1995; Gready & Ensor, 2005). Fisher and Marquette (2016, p. 117) have written: 'There is widespread acceptance among policy makers and academics that local ownership (however defined) is imperative for any external intervention to be successful and have any sustained positive impact.' However 'local ownership' is a slippery term that covers a range of 'patterns of relationships' (Buffardi, 2013).

The question of ownership resonated strongly among Pacific Islanders we interviewed at a local, national and regional level. The case studies show the complexity of these questions and, therefore, the complexities that need to be considered by any organisation when working with coalitions. In particular, the case studies demonstrated that hybrid forms of ownership, where active relationships exist between local, regional and international players, means that 'ownership' is a dynamic concept.

## Key findings: Ownership

'Local' ownership is important and widely lauded, but difficult to define: for instance, geographic proximity is no guarantee of shared values, shared interests or a shared understanding of and engagement with dimensions of power and gender relations.

A group's self-determination about what work to do, where, how, with whom and why can be undermined by the need to shape work to fit externally defined gender-related funding silos.

In some circumstances, 'hybrid' ownership can bring together international actors who can help to draw attention to a gender issue and amplify grassroots voices with local actors who ensure that action is taken at a national and local level.

Tension can exist between gender equality (often seen as a Western concern) and local ownership, but hybrid forms of ownership may be able to provide space to explore this.

## Implications for coalitions and their supporters

- Look for coalitions and issues defined and selected by local actors, but don't expect uniform or one-size-fits-all articulation of values, interests and strategies to combat gender issues.
- Be careful to ensure that funding mechanisms do not create artificial incentives for actors to come together.
- External interventions alone will not generate the ownership required for coalitions to develop and function. Consider under what conditions and on what issues more 'hybrid' forms of ownership are feasible and desirable.
- International support for issues that threaten elite interests can create a backlash, but hybrid ownership can also create space to explore differences.
- Careful political analysis is required to navigate support for what might be considered contentious issues.

## 'Local' ownership in the case studies

In the Fiji and Talitha case studies, 'ownership' could be simply defined as local in the sense that the relevant coalitions were established and remained controlled by national citizens deeply embedded within the contexts of the Fijian threat to human rights, and of Tongan gender norms. While those engaged in both the Fiji coalition and in the Talitha Project and its networks had substantial regional and international advocacy networks, the work carried out was firmly rooted in Fijian and Tongan activism. Yet for participants in both the Fiji and Talitha Project case studies, 'local ownership' was a multidimensional phenomenon, in which geographic location was only one element. Case study participants rejected the idea of 'local' as inherently positive and somehow politically and values neutral (an idea that, they felt, was held by some in international development). The participants pushed back against this to call for recognition of complexities of negotiating shared values, shared interests, and dimensions of power within the 'local' space.

For example, in the case of **Fiji**, the Fiji Methodist Church is inextricably linked to communities, to the political arena and to the everyday life of about one-third of the populace (Weir, 2015). They are undoubtedly considered 'local', despite their colonialist history. Yet the Assistant General Secretary of the Methodist Church of Fiji has been quoted as stating: 'Gay rights are something the church will always be against as it is against the church's moral stand' (Pacific Islands News Association, 2012). The church's hierarchy, therefore, is 'local' to the Fijian progressives who campaign for universal rights, but in no way aligned with their work—although there are notable Methodist Church progressives who are seen very much as standing with the Fiji universal rights movement.<sup>22</sup>

In **Tonga**, the **Talitha Project** was set up and staffed by Tongan young women and exists within a civil society sector that has been described as 'a diverse and active space ... [with] CSOs ... organised across all strata of society, from the village level to the national level' (Asian Development Bank, 2015, p. 3). Much of this civil society work is related to issues of gender and gender equality, but gender equality work in Tonga is described as particularly challenging because of 'the conflicting views held by women in relation to gender equality', which mean that some organisations are 'often unable to work together to push for social protection, assistance and services because of their diverging perspectives of the "cultural" role and status of women' (Jolly et al., 2014, p. 31).

This was supported by case study data, with these challenges particularly evident in the debates around CEDAW ratification in Tonga that were at their height when this research took place. The Catholic Women's League (CWL)—an organisation that developed to include a mandate for the promotion of human rights—was part of the anti-CEDAW lobby. The CWL's Deputy President, who has high social standing as the wife of the former PM, spoke publicly of her opposition to CEDAW, in both international and local media (Munro, 2015). For anti-CEDAW lobbyists, Tongan culture and tradition (including notions of respecting and valuing women under the *fahu* system)<sup>23</sup> enable Tongan women to have greater freedom and choice than many women in other areas of the Pacific, reinforcing the argument that CEDAW's provisions are neither needed nor welcome in Tonga:

22 Examples given during the research included Rev. Akuila Yabaki and Fr. Jeremaia Wāqainabete.

23 Under Tonga's *fahu* system, female children are given precedence in Tongan households as *mehikitanga*, or 'sacred aunts' (Guttenbeil-Likiliki, 2007).



I was asking one lady about CEDAW and how she understands it, and she said that Tonga already has gender equality...that women have value in this country and are respected by their brothers as aunty to his children, or future children. So we're alright, we don't need CEDAW, we already have equality. (Tonga KI13)

Talitha was engaged in collective action with like-minded organisations and individuals as part of the CEDAW ratification lobby group<sup>24</sup> but, at the time of data collection, the lobby group was 'on the back foot' trying to counter a wave of misinformation and scaremongering that connected CEDAW ratification to same-sex marriage and free abortion (topics deeply and emotionally connected to the domain of invisible power):

...people don't get their facts straight before they believe something. Gossip and the amount of misconception about certain issues is very strong ... you can see it with CEDAW – the biggest issues are misconceptions about abortion and same-sex marriage. They don't even try to understand it first, Google it, read it or ask us about it to try and clarify what this convention is about. (Tonga KI17)

Tongan research participants also spoke of 'local' tensions in civil society between those organisations that receive project-based funding (which does not cover ongoing operating costs, and often requires organisations to reshape themselves to fit thematic funding windows) and those that receive regular and sustained core funding and which are often seen (and see themselves) as having 'ownership' over specific thematic issues. The Talitha Project is reliant on project-based funding and perceives that it must reshape its work to fit funding opportunities available. Collective action around CEDAW has coincided with a funding environment where individuals perceive that most funding is targeted at programs tackling violence against women, 'the only funding regularly available is EVAW [Ending Violence Against Women] funding' (Tonga KI16). In this sense, the issue of CEDAW has become a further catalyst for groups competing for funding and ownership of thematic areas.

### Challenging culturally-embedded norms with locally-owned dialogue in the case studies

Work to change gendered norms and power relationships is often critiqued as being culturally inappropriate, and built on English-language concepts that do not 'fit' other cultures. In both the **Talitha** and **Fiji** case studies, great emphasis was placed on countering such challenges by working with what one Fijian participant called 'contextual specificity' and which has been framed within governance literature as 'working with the grain' (Booth, 2011). The rationale for such an approach can be summed up as 'solutions which work tend to be culturally embedded' (Booth, 2011, p. 6). Yet the challenge of shifting gender norms is, precisely, that they are culturally embedded. The difficulty associated with identifying and naming invisible power presents a challenge for locally owned coalitions, as invisible power is often so closely intertwined with one's cultural and religious beliefs. That being said, invisible power also provides a challenge for external organisations involved in coalitions with more hybrid ownership, to be sensitive to cultural concerns while forging a path for the challenging of harmful beliefs.

So how does a coalition deal with these issues and still be 'culturally embedded' and locally owned? 'Sharing stories' and discussing experiences within safe spaces were presented as highly important aspects of working in a locally owned way by participants in the **Fiji** case study. This case study is notable among the five in that in order for collective action on universal rights to be taken by case study participants, individual and collective reflection on and reframing of attitudes and beliefs that ran contrary to acceptance of the interplay between women's and LGBTIQ rights was essential.

For participants who were straight and had been involved in the women's movement for many years, two key internal struggles were identified: one regarding whether fighting for LGBTIQ rights would 'water down' their focus on women, and one regarding whether trans\* women should be included in the women's movement or not. During the validation workshop for this study, the 'gender non-conformity' of trans\* women was recognised as being 'challenging' for the feminist movement, with interviewees attributing this shift from avoiding to embracing LGBTIQ issues as a result of personal discussions with fellow activists who were also trusted friends. Other interviewees spoke of one-to-one, small group or, in the case of FWRM, organisational conversations in which the arguments over 'women' understood to mean only biological women were unpacked, connections drawn between women's rights and LGBTIQ and other rights. Recognition grew that promotion of shared values (universal human rights) was a positive position from which to develop, while fear of losing ground for women was a negative, defensive position.

This reflection and reframing was most commonly described as involving the sharing of personal stories and drawing on the process of *talanoa*, defined by Halapua (2006, p. 1) as 'strengthening relationships that not only connect us, but also enable us to respect and learn from each other'.<sup>25</sup> One Fiji interviewee referred to 'that whole Pacific thing of oral histories and oralness of us as Pacific Islanders that ... when you stand and you're honest ... they really hear you' (Fiji KI15). Another said that working collectively and from a position of respecting others' views was simply 'the Pacific way; we get together ... we share ... it's kind of a give and take' (Fiji KI16).

24 Comprising representatives from the Tonga Women and Children's Crisis Centre, Civil Society Forum Tonga, Tonga Family Health Association, Talitha, and donor representatives such as UN Women.

25 *Talanoa* is the Fijian term for a discursive process that takes somewhat different forms (and names) in different Pacific countries, but that always involves dialogue.

Participants in the Fiji validation workshop argued that central to such dialogic process is 'having space for conversations that challenge thinking' in a safe environment. Such safe space can present itself within formal or informal events, but requires dedicating time to encouraging relationship building and open discussion: 'not just formal discussion, but the one-on-one of you just talking and getting to know each other' (Fiji KII8).

### Hybrid ownership in the case studies

The three remaining coalition case studies demonstrated hybrid forms of ownership,<sup>26</sup> in which 'push and pull' relationships existed among local, regional and international players. 'Ownership' was constantly shifting, although the balance of ownership in these three case studies rested more in the 'local' sphere than at regional or international level at the time of case study development.

**PNG** has been described as 'one of the most heterogeneous nations in the world', with 'an extremely diverse socio-cultural profile[...] ... multi-faceted and complex culture [and estimates of] more than a thousand different cultural groups ... with most having their own language' (Government of Papua New Guinea, 2009, pp. 10–11). PNG cultures include particular understandings of kinship, reciprocity and responsibility.

It has, been argued that for many people in PNG, their primary allegiance is not to a nation state but, rather, to their clan or extended family. This is particularly true in the Highlands, where sorcery-related violence is prominent. As one key informant commented: 'Nationhood is celebrated on Independence Day, but feelings are pretty superficial' (personal communication, January 2016). Further, it is widely acknowledged that PNG has a pluralist legal system in which state laws and systems exist alongside customary laws and systems that prioritise the collective above the individual (Rivers & Amankwah, 2003). Given this, it is unsurprising that work around sorcery-related violence in PNG has involved balancing local, customary, national and international attitudes, approaches, processes and power relationships.

The research indicates that collective action on this issue progressed despite these challenges because a hybrid form of ownership developed. International actors brought attention to the issue and helped to support local activists, while local actors ensured that action was taken at a national and local level.

An example of this interplay can be found in two conferences held in 2013. The first was instigated and hosted by the Australian National University (with speakers from Australia, PNG and elsewhere in the Pacific). It helped to highlight the complexities of sorcery-related violence in PNG, and the widespread perception that it was increasing, informed in large part by the experiences of those living and working in the PNG Highlands (Eves & Kelly-Hanku, 2014; Gibbs, 2012; Oxfam, 2010; Schwarz, 2011; Zocca, 2010).

A second conference in PNG was then held. One research participant, a PNG government official, explained that 'we felt that ANU was not the forum to discuss these issues. So we ... said to them ... "we need to bring this in country" and so we went up to Goroka' (PNG KII3). This conference, held in the PNG Highlands city of Goroka, was convened by the PNG Department of Justice and Attorney General (DJAG), together with the Consultative Implementation and Monitoring Committee (CIMC), and partners from the Melanesian Institute, the University of Goroka, SSGM, and DFAT (Conference on Sorcery and Witchcraft Accusation Related Violence, 2013). Its Outcome Statement served as a first draft for the Sorcery National Action Plan. Finalisation of this plan was overseen by a committee led by DJAG and the Family and Sexual Violence Action Committee (FSVAC), and involved a two-day workshop held in Port Moresby, 'with participation from 80 stakeholders from Government, civil society, churches, and academic institutions from around the country' (Committee Against Sorcery Accusation Related Violence, 2014).<sup>27</sup> One participant noted: 'to their credit, [they] brought many people from the provinces, different police officers, Human Rights Defenders, counsellors, service providers, [all of whom] fed into that document' (PNG KIII).

However, research participants discussed several instances in which the 'balancing act' of hybrid ownership faltered, with negative consequences. One interviewee from an international organisation reported that their organisation was involved in early-stage development of the Sorcery National Action Plan, but 'we weren't ... invited back'. While no reason for this was given, the interviewee was of the opinion that it was related to media coverage the organisation received in relation to sorcery-related violence: 'I think they [national actors] weren't so thrilled that [we] got ... [that] press' (PNG KIII). It is possible that the local actors had their own reasons for not wanting to engage with the international press on this issue and felt that international actors 'overstepped' their role by doing so.

As noted above, **Kiribati's Nei Nibarara** network was established following a regional meeting. Individual handicraft producers received Kiribati-based training from PIFS in conjunction with the trade arm of the Government of Kiribati, ultimately forming a handicraft network, with an I-Kiribati woman as the network's coordinator. Despite this, research participants reported that

26 We use the term 'hybrid' ownership to identify forms of coalition work that were instigated with significant 'non-local' engagement and in which ownership is neither completely local nor external.

27 The FSVAC is described as 'one of the 12 sectoral committees of the Consultative Implementation and Monitoring Council (CIMC). Established in 1998 by a decision of the National Executive Council, the CIMC facilitates communication between government, the private sector, NGOs, churches and academic and research institutions. The CIMC is chaired by the Minister for Planning and Implementation but is an independent body located outside the public service' (Government of Papua New Guinea, 2009, p. 33).

in its first few years Nei Nibarara functioned on an ad hoc basis, and that it then lay dormant for about two years (during which time the coordinator was ill and eventually died).

Its resurrection was attributed to a newly appointed president and executive committee, and a shift in focus to concentrate on members who produced handicrafts on a daily basis. Previously, training and activities were open to those who were members of the network but who produced few, if any, handicrafts. Participants also acknowledged that the relationship between the network and NZ Trade Aid played an important role in the network's revitalisation. NZ Trade Aid conducted training with the group in 2007 (run in conjunction with the Pacific Finance, Trade and Investment Commission), 2010 and 2012, and Nei Nibarara began receiving direct orders from NZ Trade Aid after the 2010 training.

Thus Nei Nibarara was quickly 'localised' in that its coordinator and members were I-Kiribati, and the Kiribati government contributed to the training. The description provided by participants of its revitalisation can be understood as the result of hybrid ownership, in which there was international engagement and a restriction of membership. While there is a clear connection between Nei Nibarara's inception, and participation in a regional event, it is also noted that the continuation of momentum within this group is largely attributed to more localised processes.

Since this time, they have done a remarkable job of fostering local ownership and continuing in an organic way after starting from an initial, regional workshop. The Nauru group equivalent imploded rather quickly, and there has been reflection since this time that the processes for setting up these groups offered limited support. So, it is impressive what Nei Nibarara have been able to accomplish after humble beginnings. (Kiribati KII6)

The network is now self-funded, and its approximately 20 active members are reportedly considered to be 'the best weavers and crafters on [the Kiribati island of] Tarawa' (Kiribati KIII).

In the case of **WISE**, the establishment of the network was strongly influenced by external forces, with a large amount of administrative and logistical support provided by IFC in order to facilitate the formalisation and registration of the network. However, the ownership of the network after its establishment was more local. WISE's executive committee, formed after the network's registration, comprised exclusively local businesswomen who maintained control over the network's activities. While WISE was catalysed by an external event and the group shaped by external factors during its establishment phase, at the point in time of this study, the nature of the group appeared largely locally owned.

### Ownership and power—PNG and Fiji examined

In this study, case study coalitions operated in the dimension of hidden power in order to capitalise on the opportunities offered by formative events. They found allies and worked with them to ensure that the issues they were concerned about made it on to the decision-making agenda. Given the complexities described above, it is not surprising that the hidden dimension of power was, again, of major importance in relation to coalition ownership. In the **Fiji** case study, individuals and organisations worked in a complementary manner to identify who to approach, with what message, by whom and in what way; in other words, how to make and keep allies that helped to get the issue of universal rights on the agenda.

Given the coalition's focus on universal rights—including rights for LGBTIQ people—this also required paying attention to the invisible dimension of power, and seeking to identify and engage with the attitudes and beliefs of potential allies in order to find common ground. Allies were actively sought and maintained by coalition members in a range of locations, including: the Methodist Church (which, as noted previously, may be anti-LGBTIQ at the top level but which contains a host of people who share human rights values with coalition members), local and national government, the civil service, INGOs and NGOs, donor agencies, the police force and elsewhere. As one interviewee said:

It's important for even those of us who work in the feminist movement to recognise that there are feminists who are bureaucrats and we can work together; it's about identifying those people and seeing how they can use their power to be able to support [our work]. (Fiji KII4)

The form of hybrid ownership found in the **PNG** case study appeared to rely heavily on engagement with the hidden dimension of power, as a result of the diversity of players involved. Maintaining relationships between international, regional, national and community-level participants required continual assessment by those involved of shifting planes of professional, personal, kinship-based and organisational relationships. There was also a second layer, here, of what appeared to be a conscious non-engagement with invisible power, in that at no point were coalition members required to reveal their own personal beliefs regarding sorcery. As noted by Rashida Manjoo—the UN's Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences—in her report to the Human Right Council of a March 2012 field trip to field trip to PNG:

The belief in sorcery and witchcraft is widespread across the country ... This belief is reportedly shared by persons of all educational and socioeconomic levels, who fear harm or misfortune that they see as caused deliberately through supernatural powers. People do not easily accept natural causes of illness, sickness or death, and commonly dismiss medical reasons that explain them. (Manjoo, 2013, p. 8)



## 5

## Coalition engagement with dimensions of power

Lasting and transformative change in gender norms requires work that addresses different domains of change (at multiple levels and across both formal and informal systems), and engages with different dimensions of power.

Research participants were clear that shifting social norms carries great transformative 'weight'. This is because values and judgements about what is 'normal' in relation to gender affect people's feelings and attitudes, and these norms are inextricably connected to people's lived experience. Highlighting the pervasive nature of social norms, one participant from Kiribati noted:

When I go to a meeting with my husband I can't sit in front of him...it doesn't feel right. No one told me, and the men wouldn't openly tell me off...just something inside of me tells me that I can't...publicly women are encouraged to sit at the front, but privately women sit at the back. (Kiribati K11)

Miller et al.'s three dimensions of power is a useful way to understand the motivations and functioning of coalitions engaged in challenging gender norms. The model presents three intersecting realms of power (as opposed to siloed categories or 'levels') and the coalitions in this study demonstrate how their work may overlap in one or more of the dimensions. Working with the model shifts one's gaze beyond the immediately obvious work often done in the dimension of visible power (for example, law reform) and helps us to uncover other activities that may contribute to challenging gender power relations that are sometimes overlooked (for example, sharing stories that challenge cultural values). What is less understood, however, is how a coalition's engagement with one form of power may help, hinder or otherwise shape the nature of its engagement with other dimensions of power. While some may argue that a coalition engaging and challenging deeply entrenched social norms in the dimension of invisible power is the only (or preferred) way to shift gender norms, others will advocate for work that may be less contentious and have more chance of succeeding in the highly visible dimension, such as law reform. This study suggests that there is a more dynamic relationship between the dimensions of power than this kind of dichotomy suggests. That is to say, engaging in the visible dimension of power, for example through a law reform activity, may also provide scope for coalitions to engage in other dimensions of power or may indeed facilitate this pathway.

Nonetheless, the cases in this study provide us with some useful lessons about how these different dimensions of power might be addressed as well as outlining some of the complexity, tensions and opportunities experienced by the coalitions.

### Invisible power

Shaping meaning, values and what's 'normal' within coalitions requires safe space for personal reflection and reframing through personal storytelling.

Coalitions in this study largely chose to engage with invisible power as it manifested itself within the coalition through reframing socio-cultural norms with members internally rather than engaging the community more broadly. Evidence of actions by coalition members to address 'shaping meaning, values and what's "normal"' within their own coalitions were also found in the Fiji case study. These actions mainly took two forms: personal reflection on, and reframing of, attitudes and beliefs; and engaging others in reflection and reframing, often by sharing personal stories. In both cases, safe space for exploration of attitudes and beliefs was an essential criterion for success. Participants also emphasised the importance of framing issues in ways that were non-confrontational. Further, these actions arose from recognition that for the coalition to have an external impact, those involved in the coalition had to first look internally. This is congruent with feminist understandings of the way in which 'the personal is political', and how institutions can either reproduce or challenge gender norms through their own behaviour.

### Backlash from directly challenging gender norms

Directly challenging existing gender norms is risky and can create a backlash, and the risks of doing so were widely acknowledged by participants. In small Pacific Island countries personal, social and professional networks are dense and overlap, and political calls to 'protect our culture' from outside ideas can carry a lot of weight. This underlines the importance of local actors determining their own appetite for risk as well as how best to navigate the complexities of local political and cultural dynamics.

At the same time, while it was acknowledged that invisible power was one of the most pervasive and difficult to engage with, it was also recognised as being central to other dimensions of power, due to the intersection of culture and religion with formal processes of decision-making.

Culture is both visible and invisible ... there are unwritten rules when it comes to culture and we all know them. There are a lot of unwritten rules, but there are more for women than there are for men ... it's the powers that aren't 'out there' [visible or codified] that are very influential in deciding what goes on and what happens to women ... not only are women considered below men, they are also driven much further by a lack of self-esteem ... it's not just the way society structures gender relationship, but also confidence and self-esteem which is particularly lacking among young women in Tonga ... what we're not seeing is what is hidden inside them—the capability and the ability within each girl to rise up. (Tonga KI12)

For example, religious beliefs were noted as crucial in shaping power dynamics due to the influence of religious beliefs across both public and private domains, but particularly difficult to engage with due to the perception of religious leaders as 'gods walking among us' whose 'word is law' (Tonga KI12).

Talitha staff and volunteers, for example, experienced backlash from their own family members and friends because of their participation in gender equality advocacy and women's rights campaigns, particularly CEDAW ratification. Talitha's founder has been labelled an 'anti-Christ' by Tonga's conservative religious leaders, and a number of Talitha's partners have experienced internal pressure from their friends and families, with allegations that they were financially benefiting from promoting CEDAW, or had something personal to gain from their advocacy (Tonga FGD1). Other risks were identified as the risk of being vilified and excluded from certain spaces (for example, the church) and of rupturing relationships.

### Collective leadership and reframing 'what's normal'

The Fiji coalition provided one example of an attempt to help shift social norms that was coordinated by a range of coalition members: a video produced for Fiji churches as part of the International Days Against Homophobia and Transphobia (IDAHOT) 2014. The video, made by a Fijian LGBTIQ activist with funding sourced from local contacts and support from other coalition members, was a documentary in which:

one gay man, a lesbian woman, a transgendered woman, a bisexual and a closeted gay man ... spoke about their ideas of religion and all of them still accessing their religion 'cos they believe that God is bigger [than someone who discriminates], and even though people [within the church] judge them they just go in and do it. (Fiji KI15)

The video was shown to young people in certain churches, and was followed by discussion sessions. Several interviewees referred to the effect those stories had on people, including the following:

They were really, really incredible interviews, [which were shown to] church leaders ... and because the interviews were really personal and you saw them as people who were battling with their own sexuality in themselves and with society and community and with the church, and [you saw] how they worked through that to come to an acceptance. And, and there was a really positive response from the church and then there were a few sort of welcomes into the church. It's still difficult for the church but it was just to start the conversation. (Fiji KI12)

## Hidden power

### Contextual and political knowledge, personal and organisational networks

Successes in making visible that which, previously, had been kept off the decision-making table were found across all case studies. The research showed, for example, that prior to the establishment of the WISE network, there were limited avenues for the voices of Tonga's businesswomen to be heard in government. WISE brought businesswomen's perspectives and issues onto the agenda.

This would not have occurred without coalitions first influencing 'who gets to the decision-making table and what gets on the agenda'. In all case study coalitions, influencing the hidden dimension of power occurred largely as a result of being able to utilise personal and organisational networks. This, in turn, relied on deeply contextual and political knowledge regarding who to approach, with what message, by whom and in what way; all of which required paying attention to the attitudes and beliefs of those within these networks, and being able to identify when and how to appeal to shared values and interests.

In both Tongan coalitions (WISE and the Talitha Project), great emphasis was placed on the need to carefully negotiate close webs of interconnection in ways that help to raise issues of interest to the coalitions, without generating too much pushback:

Often we may have mixed visions and work towards different missions or from different perspectives, but working together gives us a chance to learn from each other's perspectives ... something we often take for granted. (Tonga FGD1)

## Visible power

All but one of the coalitions studied were clearly engaged in work that attempted to reform 'rules, institutions, decision-making structures, policies and laws' (Miller et al., 2006, p. 13). Engaging visible power often requires research, policy, legal and technical knowledge of decision-making, budgets and legal processes. Engaging in visible power has the potential to produce clear, tangible outcomes for coalitions which can make it an attractive space to work in, but engaging in hidden and invisible power spaces is also necessary to underpin changes in legislative and regulatory spaces.

Direct attempts at policy reform included the work carried out by Talitha and its lobby group partners in support of CEDAW ratification in Tonga, despite strong opposition. Tonga's conservative majority is adamantly opposed to CEDAW ratification, with community and church leaders publicly raising objections in a variety of fora: commissioning a letter from the new Catholic Cardinal of Tonga opposing the ratification, instigating public demonstrations and presenting petitions to parliament and the King. CEDAW's opponents worked hard to keep discussions about CEDAW in the realm of social norms about 'values, and what's "normal"'. This illustrates how political opposition to attempts at policy reform can often seek to undermine these campaigns by calling upon broader societal norms and values. Although the coalition was seeking a change in the visible power domain, the opposition to this changed used the hidden power domain to combat the case. This is an example of the overlapping and intersecting nature of the three dimensions of power.

PNG's coalition on sorcery-related violence concentrated a great deal of work on the development of a Sorcery National Action Plan.<sup>28</sup> The Fiji coalition on universal human rights contributed to defence of the Fijian constitutional protection on the grounds of sexual orientation; successfully advocated the inclusion of protection from discrimination on the grounds of 'gender identity and expression' in the (still contested) 2013 Bill of Rights; and influenced the Ministerial Declaration from the sixth Asian and Pacific Population Conference (APPC).<sup>29</sup>

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28 A wide range of institutions and individuals were widely acknowledged as engaged in collaborative and valuable work to develop the Sorcery National Action Plan, both through the Committee against Sorcery Accusation Related Violence and through committee-organised consultations. Committee members are recorded as: The Department of Justice & Attorney General – Legal Policy & Governance Branch; Consultative Implementation & Monitoring Council; University of Goroka; Commission for Social Concerns (Catholic Bishops Conference); Melanesian Institute; State Society and Governance in Melanesia (ANU); Australian High Commission; and United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (Committee Against Sorcery Accusation Related Violence, 2014, p. 1).

29 The Declaration expressed 'grave concern at acts of violence and discrimination committed against individuals on the grounds of their sexual orientation and gender identity' (Economic and Social Council, 2013, p. 3) and committed signatories to a policy direction of 'work to reduce vulnerability and eliminate discrimination based on sex, gender, age, race, caste, class, migrant status, disability, HIV status and sexual orientation and gender identity, or other status' (Economic and Social Council, 2013, p. 11).

## 6

## Conclusion

This study set out to start to address some of the gaps in our understanding of the role played by coalitions in challenging gendered power structures and promoting women's leadership and decision-making in the Pacific. By understanding four key factors that influence coalition formation and function, and how coalitions engage with various dimensions of power, insights have been gained into how collective leadership and action function. In addition to the findings and reflections described in the previous sections, the authors would like to make four concluding remarks.

### **Women's movements are strong predictors of gender equality policies**

Firstly, the role of coalitions and collective action in driving transformative social change is critical. Research from United Nations Women (2016, p.7), citing the work of Htun and Weldon (2012), indicates that, 'Women's organising and the strength of their autonomous movements are the strongest predictors of gender equality laws and policies across a range of areas, from family law to violence against women and from non-discrimination in employment to childcare services.' Htun and Weldon also point to the importance of 'vibrant civil society' in domestic contexts to enliven and contextualise global gender norms. While there is much research to date on coalitions and gender norms that has occurred beyond the Pacific, this study along with parallel work suggests that the role of coalitions in driving transformative social change in the Pacific is also of vital importance (see for example Denney & McLaren, 2016;<sup>30</sup> Haley, 2016, Spark, 2016).

That is not to say there are not variations in how this occurs between Pacific jurisdictions. The work of Barbara and Hayley (2014) points to differences for example, between the strength of formal and informal institutions that govern behaviour in Tonga and Samoa and the more fragmented political systems of Vanuatu and Solomon Islands, and what these contrasts mean for the space that this affords groups pursuing social change.

In this study, we saw that the context and issues that coalitions worked with determined the types of resistance faced and alliances needed to pursue agendas. Understanding these institutional contextual differences between and within countries is imperative to understanding coalitions, which leads us to our second point.

### **Coalitions will evolve over time**

Coalitions are inherently dynamic entities influenced by a complex array of factors. Their memberships change, their leadership styles change, and they will look, operate and engage differently at different points of their life-cycle. What emerged from this study, however, was four consistent factors that each coalition identified as being highly influential on how they form and function. Formative events refers to what brought people together to 'do something' in a concerted way. Formative events are important because the nature of the event as locally or externally driven appears to mould the future shape of a coalition and how it functions. Different forms of shared purpose within the coalition helps coalitions increase their support base, coherence and influence. Different forms of leadership is important because the nature of coalition leadership can determine its ability to respond to changing circumstances, broker relationships and divergent interests, challenge vested interests and be sustained over time.

And finally, the nature of ownership is important because the degree to which a coalition's agenda is locally owned and its ways of working are politically salient appears to be key to determining the coalition's effectiveness. Future research endeavours could further unpack the interrelationship between these factors or consider how each factor changes over time.

### **Links between different forms of power need to be understood**

Finally, the use of Miller et al.'s three dimensions of power has proven to be a useful analytical framework within which to understand the motivations and functioning of coalitions engaged in challenging gender norms, and the different strategies that are required. By engaging coalitions and their supporters in discussions about how and what dimensions of power they are challenging, a shifting of one's gaze beyond immediately obvious work often done in the dimension of visible power is possible, and ways of working in the realms of hidden or invisible power may be validated. What is less understood, however, is how a coalition's engagement with one form of power may help, hinder or otherwise shape the nature of its engagement with other dimensions of power. This study would suggest that there is a dynamic relationship between the dimensions of power which requires further research.

<sup>30</sup> Denney & McLaren (2016) provide useful insights into the implications for the donor community.

## **Challenging gender norms in politically smart ways**

The implications for donors and others seeking to support collective action which addresses gendered power relations are set out in the tables in the executive summary. Much of what is said here echoes similar work that has been done in the Pacific which among other things underlines the importance of taking into account the fluid, evolving and informal nature of coalitions, and the importance of locally led processes (notably Denney & McLaren, 2016). What this research adds to this is an understanding of the gendered nature of the coalitions; the issues they work on; and the opportunities as well as obstacles they face. In particular it raises important questions as to if, and how, international actors can support local processes which challenge gendered norms in politically smart ways.

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