

Gender domestic violence and its big bite on small island states- Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu

Charlotte Taylor^{a*} Sivendra Michael^b

^aAssociate Lecturer, Faculty of Business and Economics, The University of the South Pacific, Suva, Fiji.

^bTeaching Assistant, Faculty of Business and Economics, The University of the South Pacific, Suva, Fiji.

ABSTRACT

This paper reviews the current literature of gender based violence in small island states, in particular, domestic violence. Domestic violence is one form of gender inequality and is a hindrance to economic growth and limits the well-being of individuals. Small island states are at a stage of increasing poverty levels and under utilisation of productive resources. In order to improve the livelihoods and reduce poverty levels it is important to achieve inclusive growth and sustain it. Studies have shown that the domestic violence is the most severe and global violation of human rights and causes social and economic repercussions to countries. Small island states suffer in terms of high health, legal and household costs. Moreover, it suffers through loss of productive labour and the negative repercussions on the health and mental state of children. By addressing domestic violence through education and workshops at the grass root level monetary funds can be diverted into other sectors within the economy, thus lifting a country's status quo. More importantly, women and girls will have equal outcomes of men and boys; eradicating the vicious cycle of domestic violence, thus enabling a country to reach its full economic potential.

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +679 323 2681; fax: +679 323 1506
E-mail addresses: charlotte.taylor@usp.ac.fj

1. Introduction

In many developing countries one of the biggest challenges is increasing the well-being of its people through achieving and sustaining high economic growth. The disparities in economic growth rates between developing countries and the developed nations have continued to increase and without steps to address this, the risks this trend poses - including social instability - will continue to grow¹. It is in this context that 'inclusive growth' has emerged as a new development paradigm in many countries. Inclusive growth focuses on economic growth which is a necessary and crucial condition for poverty reduction. It embraces both income and non-income dimensions of well-being. Inclusive growth is one of the three strategic objectives in Asian Development Bank's (ADB) Strategy 2020, along with environmentally sustainable growth and regional cooperation and integration (ADB 2008). Ali and Zhuang (2007) states that inclusive growth is not restrictive to growth that provides economic opportunities but most importantly growth that provides equal access to opportunity for all segments of the society. One key aspect in achieving and sustaining inclusive growth is efficient utilisation of human capital through the equal participation of men and women in development and governance processes. However, women continue to be under represented and experience discrimination in the development and governance process within a country. As a result gender inequality continues to be a major development barrier for economic development.² World Bank (2001) report states that gender disparities not only diminishes the wellbeing of women but also affects the wellbeing of children and men, thus, hindering long term economic growth. Development partners of developing countries have increasingly acknowledge the role of gender equality and women's empowerment as a powerful means to foster development and poverty reduction (ADB 2007, 2008; World Bank 2008).

One of the most significant consequences of gender inequality is gender based violence (GBV). GBV "reflects and reinforces inequality between men and women... [compromising] the

¹ Asian Development Bank. (2013). *From Poverty Reduction to Inclusive Growth*. Retrived from: <http://www.adb.org/themes/poverty/topics/inclusive-growth>.

² UNDP. (2010). *Human Development Report 2010: The Real Wealth of Nations: Pathways to Human Development*.

health, dignity, security and autonomy” of its survivors.³ GBV covers a wide range of human rights violations, including sexual abuse of children, rape, domestic violence, sexual assault and harassment, trafficking of women and girls and several harmful traditional practices. Violence against women is experienced globally irrespective of ethnicity, religion and economic status yet it is the least recognised human rights abuse in the world. UN reports⁴ that globally, one in three women will be beaten, coerced into sex or otherwise abused at some point in her life.

"Violence against women both violates and impairs or nullifies the enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms... In all societies, to a greater or lesser degree, women and girls are subjected to physical, sexual and psychological abuse that cuts across lines of income, class and culture."

—*Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, paragraph 112*

Despite women and girls in the small island states receiving higher education their economic and social access are hindered by religious and customary barriers. There exists a patriarchy social system that fosters male power and control over women and girls. This inequality of power within households and communities has seen many incidence of one aspect of gender based violence that is domestic violence or intimate partner violence (IPV).⁵

Domestic violence is pervasive, widespread⁶ and a serious national issue in Pacific countries.⁷ At the recent 40th Pacific Forum, the Forum leaders “acknowledged the prevalence of gender-based violence in the Pacific and the risk that it poses to human security” and collectively

³ Secretariat of the Pacific Community. Solomon Islands Family Health and Support Study: A study on violence against women and children. Noumea, New Caledonia: Secretariat of the Pacific Community; 2009. Retrieved from http://www.spc.int/hdp/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&gid=39&dir=ASC&order=name&Itemid=44&limit=5&limitstart=0.

⁴ United Nations Department of public information: 2008 Unite to end Violence against Women-Fact Sheet. February. Retrieved from http://www.un.org/es/women/endviolence/pdf/vaw_backgrounder.pdf

⁵ Secretariat Pacific Community 2010. *Beijing + 15: Review of progress in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action in Pacific Island countries and territories*.

⁶ DENISE LIEVORE & PEGGY FAIRBAIRN -DUNLOP, PACIFIC PREVENTION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAM: KIRIBATI REPORT (2007), available at <http://webapps01.un.org/vawdatabase/uploads/Kiribati%20-%20PPDVP-Kiribati-Final-Report-14-June-2007.pdf>.

⁷ Press Release, Secretariat of the Pacific Community, Kiribati Challenges Pacific Island Countries to Address Violence Against Women (Dec. 20, 2009), http://lists.spc.int/pipermail/press_releases_lists.spc.int/2009-December/000273.html.

committed to the “eradication of gender-based violence.”⁸ Therefore, it is timely that this paper assesses the present state of gender based violence; in particular, domestic violence experienced in the small island states of Fiji, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu. Most importantly it will look at the social and economic cost of domestic violence to the country and how best domestic violence can be addressed. There have been a number of accounting models developed to assess the impact of domestic violence on economic growth⁹ in the developed nations. However, due to the lack of data collection for consecutive years in these small island states, the application of these models could not be incorporated into this paper. The methodology adopted is a review of all available publications on IPV and its costs on the economic growth rates of Fiji, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu, including project reports, evaluations, qualitative and quantitative research reports, and policy briefs. The paper is organised as follows: Section Two provides the literature review the contributing factors of domestic violence and the costs of domestic violence globally and in the small island states. Section Three provides research results gathered through archival research and lastly Section Four comprises of recommendations for the study.

2. Literature Review

The gender inequalities exist because of discrimination in the family and societal institutions, and social, cultural, and religious norms that propagate stereotypes, practices and beliefs that are detrimental to women. The importance of reducing gender inequalities saw the adoption of the Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) by the U.N. General Assembly in 1979. CEDAW is explicitly guaranteed in many constitutions and statues globally (ADB et al. 2006). There have been studies investigating the importance of gender equality in achieving inclusive growth. World Bank (2001) report study found evidence to support the view that gender discrimination in the labour market and access to productive resources leads to inefficiencies in the allocation of inputs and output losses. The two studies concluded that gender inequality has a negative impact on economic growth as limiting women’s access to higher education and resources reduces human capital for the next generation and

⁸ Press Release, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Final Communique of 40th Pacific Islands Forum, Cairns(Aug. 5-6 2009), Retrieved from http://www.forumsec.org.fj/pages.cfm/newsroom/press_statements/2009/final-communique-of-40th-pacific-islands-forum-cairns.html

⁹For further reading refer to Klasen (2002), Nata, Grown and Redner (2004); Klasen and Lamanna (2009); World Bank (2012).

significantly increases child mortality and fertility. Studies have found that improving the quality of education and equal economic access for both women and men improves long-run economic growth. Increasing women's capabilities in the labour market, increases household incomes, lowers fertility thus achieving an overall reduction in household poverty (Knowles, Lorgelly, and Owen 2002; Klasen 2002).

Domestic violence is one form of gender inequality and it reflects and reinforces inequities between men and women and compromises the health, dignity, security and autonomy of its victims.¹⁰

“Violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of the full advancement of women, and that violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men....” -*The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, General Asseble Resolution, December, 1993.*¹¹

The two main sociocultural theories which aim to understand and explain gender inequalities, in particular domestic violence within societies are the feminist theory and power theory. Feminist theory or model seeks to understand violent relationships by examining the sociocultural context in which these relationships develop.¹² This theory proposes the existence of a patriarchal society as the main contributing factor of female inequality. The socially-defined gender roles as men being the providers and heads of families and women as only child bearers and subordinates to males have led to the victimisation of women and perpetration of violence against women by men (Dobash and Dobash, 1977; Mihalic and Elliott, 1997). Power theorists argue that the roots of violence stem not only from within the culture, but also from within the family structure (Straus, 1976). Earlier studies of power theory have proposed the following as contributing factors of domestic violence. Firstly, conflicting views between husbands and wives on the acceptance of patriarchal values (Smith, 1990; Leonard and Senchak, 1996); secondly

¹⁰ UNFPA. Ending Widespread Violence Against Women Retrieved from <http://www.unfpa.org/gender/violence.htm>

¹¹ Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women G.A. res. 48/104, 48 U.N. GAOR Supp. (No. 49) at 217, U.N. Doc. A/48/49 (1993).

¹² Bell, K. M., & Naugle, A. E., Intimate partner violence theoretical considerations: Moving towards a contextual framework, *Clinical Psychology Review* (2008), doi:[10.1016/j.cpr.2008.03.003](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2008.03.003)

households where husbands hold traditional sex-role attitudes but wives' have high economic statuses (Yllo, 1983; Yllo and Straus, 1984). Lastly, a number of studies have found higher IPV rates in families high in conflict, with greater levels of stress, and from lower socioeconomic statuses (Gelles, 1980; Coleman and Straus, 1986; Cascardi and Vivian, 1995; Leonard and Senchak, 1996; Mihalic and Elliott, 1997). Studies examining the impact of power structure on rates of family violence have also found the lowest levels of physical aggression in more egalitarian couples, supporting the notion that power imbalances may increase IPV risk (Coleman and Straus, 1986; Gray-Little, Baucom and Hamby, 1996).

According to the World Bank's 2012 World Development Report on Gender Equality and Development, between 60 and 70 per cent of women in Kiribati, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu report experiencing some form of domestic violence.¹³ Domestic violence exacts a heavy toll on its victims and society - children, education, health, families, businesses all suffer. The following estimated costs of domestic violence per country was derived by the World bank;¹⁴ UK study put the estimate at \$42billion; estimated cost of women's lost productivity capacity was put at \$1.7billion in Chile and at \$34million in Nicaragua and that number may well be conservative. In Uganda the cost of domestic violence was estimated at 2.5 million United States dollars in 2007.¹⁵ Many women don't report violence and many studies do not, or cannot, capture the long-term costs or the effects on the next generation. Those effects can be insidious. Evidence suggests domestic violence witnessed as a child is repeated in adulthood. A study in Australia estimated the annual cost of domestic violence at \$8.1billion in 2002.¹⁶ In the case of New Zealand, in 1996 economist Suzanne Snively estimated the cost of domestic violence in New Zealand to be between \$1.2 and \$5.8 billion per annum.¹⁷ In today's terms,

¹³ World Bank (2012) Raising awareness of violence against women in the Pacific (2012) November Retrieved from <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2012/11/25/raising-awareness-of-violence-against-women-in-the-pacific>

¹⁴ Viewpoint: The price of violence against women and girls By Caroline Anstey Managing director, World Bank (2013) March. Access on 14th April 2013 (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-21696469>)

¹⁵ Garcia-Moreno, C. and Watts, C. (2011). *Violence against women: an urgent public health priority*. Retrieved from : <http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/89/1/10.085217>

¹⁶ Economics 2004, The cost of domestic violence to the Australian economy: part I, Office of the Status of Women, Canberra. Retrieved from

http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/05_2012/cost_of_dv_to_australian_economy_i_1.pdf

¹⁷ Snively, Suzanne, *The New Zealand Economic Cost of Family Violence* (1996) Retrieved from <https://womensrefuge.org.nz/WR/Domestic-violence/Economic-cost-of-domestic-violence.htm>

that's up to about \$8 billion each year.¹⁸ In 2011, the cost of domestic violence to the Fijian economy was estimated around 6.6% of GDP by economist Professor Biman Prasad.¹⁹ Thus, domestic violence exhausts country's off productive resources and finances that could otherwise be diverted into funds such as education and improving women's human capital and productive capacity. For developing small island states these economic and human costs are unaffordable. The next section will be addressing the status of domestic violence in the small island states in the South Pacific; Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.

3. Research results – Situation of gender inequality in the small island states.

Introduction

The small islands states contrasts in scale, structure, geographical make up, physical resources, social and customary systems presents a complex region with many challenges. Pacific Island Countries have been traditionally grouped along racial and cultural lines as Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia. The Melanesian islands include Papua New Guinea, New Caledonia, Torres Strait Islands, Vanuatu, Fiji and the Solomon Islands. The Micronesian islands include the Marianas, Guam, Wake Island, Palau, the Marshall Islands, Kiribati, Nauru and the Federated States of Micronesia. The Polynesian islands include New Zealand, Hawaiian Islands, Rotuma, Midway Islands, Samoa, American Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu, the Cook Islands, French Polynesia and Easter Island.²⁰ This paper will only be based on Fiji, Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands. All of which are part of the Melanesian group. The next section presents information on the political, economic social indicators that make up the complex web that exists within the three small island states. Due to the geographical make up of these small island states it is difficult to accurately capture a sense of all social, economic and political indicators and the development challenges facing Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. The subsequent section will

¹⁸The worldwide violence against women and children. Retrieved from <https://womensrefuge.org.nz/WR/Domestic-violence/Domestic-violence.htm>

¹⁹The Pacific Islands Cannot Afford the Human and Economic Cost of Violence Against Women.2012Retrieved from <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/opinion/2012/11/25/the-human-and-economic-cost-the-pacific-cannot-afford>

²⁰ Gender Responsive Budget in the Asia Pacific Region (2011). The Pacific Island Countries, Fiji, PNG, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Tuvalu.

try at best to address the social, economic and political indicators for each country. Followed by the possible social and cultural context and challenges faced in addressing violence against women.

Social, economic and political indicators of Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu

Fiji Islands

From the Gender Responsive Budget in the Asian Pacific Region (2011) the following information was gathered. The main industries in the Fiji Island's economy are agriculture, tourism and manufacturing. As of 2011 it had a population of 868,406 of which 48% resided in urban areas and the remaining 52% in rural settlements. As of 2011 Fiji Islands achieved a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) current of \$3.818 billion; experiencing an annual growth rate of 2%. Life expectancy of 65.63/69.6 to male and female respectively; males make up 78.4% of labour force participating and females making up 38.7%. It is ranked 92 on the Human Development Index for 2010. Gender-related development index (GDI) of 0.757 (rank 82) in 2005. In 1999–2000, the Fiji Islands had a record number of 15 women in Parliament out of a total of 109 seats in the lower and upper houses. In 1995, Fiji ratified the Convention of the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Reflecting that ratification, the Constitution which was amended in 1998, states that women are given with the same rights and the same status as men (Huffer 2004). Fiji has Gross secondary enrolment rate, female of 91%.

Solomon Islands²¹

The main industries in the Solomon Island's economy are agriculture, fisheries and forestry. As of 2011 it had a population of 515,870 of which 20% resided in urban areas and the remaining 80% in rural settlements.* As of 2011 Solomon Islands achieved a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) current of \$US 838.0 million; experiencing an annual growth rate of 9%.** Life expectancy of 60.6 /61.6 to male and female respectively; males make up 72.2% of labour force

²¹ Sources: * Secretariat of the Pacific Community (2012) Stock take of the gender mainstreaming capacity of Pacific Island governments - Solomon Islands. **Gender Responsive Budget in the Asia Pacific Region (2011) The Pacific Island Countries, Fiji, PNG, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Tuvalu.*** World Bank Database retrieved: <http://data.worldbank.org/region/PSS>

participating and females making up 60.4%. It is ranked 123/181 on Human Development Index for 2010. Gender-related development index (GDI) 0.557 (rank 109) in 1995. It has a gross secondary enrolment rate; female of 27%.As of 2009 there have been zero women representatives in the lower or single house of parliament. For the Solomon Islands the maternal mortality is high, estimated to be 130 per 100,000 live births. Women's health is compromised by widespread gender-based violence, both in times of peace and armed conflict, and by traditional practices that negatively impact women's health.²² There is no legislation specifically relating to domestic violence and Solomon Islands have yet to rectify CEDAW.

Vanuatu

The national economy has been expanding since 2003 with an average growth rate of 6% of GDP, led by tourism and construction and exporting of beef cattle (DFAT 2010c; World Bank 2010). This growth has slowed in 2009 due to the global economic crisis. More than 75% of the population is engaged in agriculture sector, mainly in subsistence agriculture (AusAID 2010c). As of 2011 it had a population of 245,600. As of 2011 Solomon Islands achieved a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) current of \$US 838.0 million; experiencing an annual growth rate of 1%. It is ranked 126/181 on the Human Development Index for 2007. Gender-related development index is unavailable. It has a gross secondary enrolment rate, female of 38%. As of 2011 there were only two women representatives in parliament. The Family Protection Act came into effect in early 2009. The Act also states that payment of bride price cannot be used as a defence in domestic violence cases.²³

NATURE AND EXTENT OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

In Fiji, the main forms of violence reported by Fijian women are: physical, sexual and emotional abuse by an intimate partner; sexual assault; and sexual harassment (AusAID 2008). Violence against women imposes a large cost: the Reserve Bank has calculated the direct and indirect costs of violence in Fiji to be FJ\$210.69-million per year, or 7% of GDP (Laqeretabua, Naidu, &

²² AusAID. Office of the Development Effectiveness (2007). Solomon Islands Supplement,

²³ UNIFEM Report (2010): *Ending Violence against women and girls; Literature Review and Annotated Bibliography*.

Bhagwan Rolls, 2009). Domestic violence appears widespread in Fiji. Figures from the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre show that 80% of women have witnessed some form of violence in the home; 66% of women have been physically abused by partners and nearly half repeatedly abused; 26% of women have been beaten while pregnant; 48% of married women have been forced into sex by their husbands; and 13% of women have been raped. Police statistics show that domestic violence made up around 13% of all crimes against the person between 2003 and 2007. Workplace sexual harassment is also prevalent: a 2002 study found that one in three women had been sexually harassed in the workplace (AusAID, 2008). In many cases, the offender is known to the victim. There is evidence that violence against women is increasing in Fiji: reports of sexual violence increased by 155% from 2003-2007 and there have been an increasing number of violent deaths of women (UNFPA, 2008, p. 18; Laqeretabua, Naidu, & Bhagwan Rolls, 2009). Fiji's four political coups have been cited as a cause of increased violence. Research shows that violence against women, both from intimate partners and strangers, increases during and after coups. At the same time, police have diminished capacity and willingness to respond to violence against women (AusAID, 2008).

In the Solomon Islands domestic violence is the most common form of violence against women and is widespread. Other forms of sexual violence include: incest; commercial sexual exploitation of girls (especially related to the logging and fishing industries); sexual violence during the civil conflict of 1999- 2003 (referred to as "the tensions"); gang rape of girls (AusAID 2008). There is a high rate of intimate partner violence in the Solomon Islands, with 64% of ever-partnered women aged 15-49 reporting physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner. Sexual partner violence was experienced by 55% of women and physical partner violence was experienced by 45% of women (SPC, 2009). Violence against women was greatly heightened during the tensions from the years 1999-2001. Three-quarters of women reported direct personal trauma during this period, including rape, death of family members, threats of violence and intimidation and being held up at gunpoint (AusAID, 2008). Gender-related violence occurred throughout Guadalcanal and other provinces impacted by the crisis.

In Vanuatu there have been no systematic studies of domestic violence, however, a study based on the WHO methodology is underway. However, information collected by women's groups

indicates there are high rates of gender-based violence, especially intimate partner violence (AusAID, 2008). The Vanuatu Women's Centre reported three thousand and six hundred cases of family violence from 1993-2000 and around half of the Community Legal Centre's business relates to domestic violence (UNIFEM 2010). There are reports of girls being sold by their fathers into early and transactional sex around bars in Port Vila (Laqeretabua, Naidu, & Bhagwan Rolls, 2009).

Social and cultural contributing factors of domestic violence

Low status of women and girls

Fiji, Solomon and Vanuatu decision-making processes are entrenched in custom and religious teachings. Women are still sidelined when it comes to decision making at the household level, community level and country level. In the case of the Solomon Islands, traditionally it had a matrilineal land system whereby women played a significant role in the decision making of land and resource management and was highly respected, however, over the years these roles eroded with the introduction of the patriarchal religious, legal, economic and political systems.²⁴ Women's rights to equal participation in the workforce and household as well as a say in customary decisions have been ignored as women have very little say in everyday decisions. This social attitude of male domination has led to discrimination against women in the workforce. Furthermore, this change in custom over the years, has led to a saying among the Wontok people that goes "women 'no save tok' (cannot/must not talk)", and that they must 'stand behind' men when it comes to speaking about and dealing with resources in the public arena. The 'kustom' of women 'no save tok' has constrain women's ability to enter the formal political system, making Solomon Islands one of the only few countries with no female parliamentarians in its fifty members parliament.²⁵ This inferior treatment on women has led to severe domestic violence against women and where women are to remain silent and not shame their family and community. Similar results are also found in Vanuatu and Fiji Islands. Men gave

²⁴ Secretariat of the Pacific Community, 2012. Stocktake of the gender mainstreaming capacity of Pacific Island governments - Solomon Islands

²⁵ AusAID. Office of the Development Effectiveness. 2007. Solomon Islands Supplement.

the following reasons for intimate partner violence: alcohol, gender inequality, justified as discipline, bride price. Male perpetrators most often become angry with their wives for not conforming to traditional gender roles, for example, not preparing food or completing housework on time, refusing sex, being disobedient or rude to them. Almost all men said they hit their wives as a form of discipline and most said that to improve the situation, their wives should learn to be obedient and do what men ask (SPC, 2009).

Research shows that many Solomon Island women have absorbed these social norms. The majority of women agree with the statements: “a man should show his wife who is boss” (71%) and “a good wife obeys her husband even if she disagrees” (66%). Only half of women agree that “women should be able to choose their own friends” and a significant proportion of women agree that “a wife is obliged to have sex with her husband, even if she doesn’t want to” (40%). Overall, 73% of women agree there is at least one situation where a man has a good reason to beat his wife. The main justifications for violence that women agree with are: he finds out that she has been unfaithful (63%); she disobeys him (41%); and he suspects that she has been unfaithful (27%). Most women agree that a woman has a right to refuse sex with her husband in at least one situation (87%) (SPC, 2009).

Marriage practices and age of consent

The practice of bride-price is cited as a key factor in perpetuating violence against women in the Pacific. Frequently, wives believe that they must put up with violence as leaving the marriage would involve repaying the bride-price. The modern practice of paying the bride-price in cash reinforces the view that a husband has “bought” his wife and has property rights (AusAID 2008). In Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands the traditional practice of bride price is still being carried out. Women link the violence and discrimination they suffer at the hands of men to the tradition of bride price. Many people view bride price as giving a husband ownership of his wife and the right to beat her and treat her as he wishes. Women whose bride price has not been fully paid are particularly vulnerable: they are more than 2.5 times more likely to experience violence than women whose marriage did not involve bride price. Some women gave bride price as a reason for staying in a relationship despite violent incidents. (Amnesty International, 2011; SPC, 2009). Marriage at a young age is common, which can put girls at high risk of physical abuse. The legal age of marriage is usually between 14-16 for girls and higher for boys. The practice of early

marriage occurs in Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. Arranged or fixed marriages are common in Indo-Fijian communities, with young girls betrothed to marry as young as fifteen years old. A new form of marriage is the sale of daughters to foreigners in return for large cash payments (Laqeretabua, Naidu, & Bhagwan Rolls, 2009)

Role of Religion

The major religions in the region – Christianity and Hinduism – support the belief that the husband is the head of the family. Most of the mainline churches in the Pacific have not taken a proactive role to denounce gender inequalities or violence against women and girls (AusAID 2008; Laqeretabua, Naidu, & Bhagwan Rolls, 2009).

Focus on compensation and reconciliation

Maintaining peace between groups and their (male) leaders is highly regarded. The interests of women and girls are not seen as separate from those of the group, so injuries against a female are dealt with by compensating the males who had “rights” to her. In Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, a woman who has been raped can be forced to marry the offender to normalise relations between the two groups (AusAID 2008).

Economic dependence and poverty

Economic dependence and poverty put women and girls at risk of sexual violence. Women’s reliance on a male breadwinner is seen as a major deterrent to complaining about violence or leaving her husband (AusAID 2008). The majority of ever-partnered women (58%) reported controlling behaviour by an intimate partner. Forms of controlling behaviour include: wanting to know where she is at all times (42%); becoming angry if she speaks with other men (32%); controlling her access to health care (32%); and often suspecting her of being unfaithful (31%). Women who had experienced intimate partner violence were significantly more likely to report that their partner had been financially controlling, for example, 19% of women who had experienced partner violence had their earnings or savings taken by their partner against their will compared with 5% of non-abused women (SPC, 2009). This form of economic abuse has led to the vicious cycle of poverty for women and in turn children.

4. Gender based Policies

Gender is a critical and cross-cutting consideration in policy development. Failure to strive for gender equality creates an opportunity cost ill afforded by the Pacific Island Countries, as their development is reliant on maximising the potential of their human resources. The Pacific Island Countries that have ratified to CEDAW (Convention on Elimination on All Forms of Discrimination Against Women) are working towards addressing overall gender inequalities through development of legislations and policy for countries in the Pacific region.

While much violence may have its origins in the household with violence against women, s recent studies undertaken by the Fiji Women Crisis Center (2012) shows that the patterns of violence against women across countries in the Pacific were reported to be highest among most developing countries. Figure 1 below graphically illustrates that the most common form of violence against women within the context of this paper is lifetime physical or sexual violence by partners. (Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and Fiji all have reported this as the common form of violence).

Figure 1: Patterns of violence against women across six Pacific Island countries

(Fiji data recalculated for 18-49 year old for comparability)

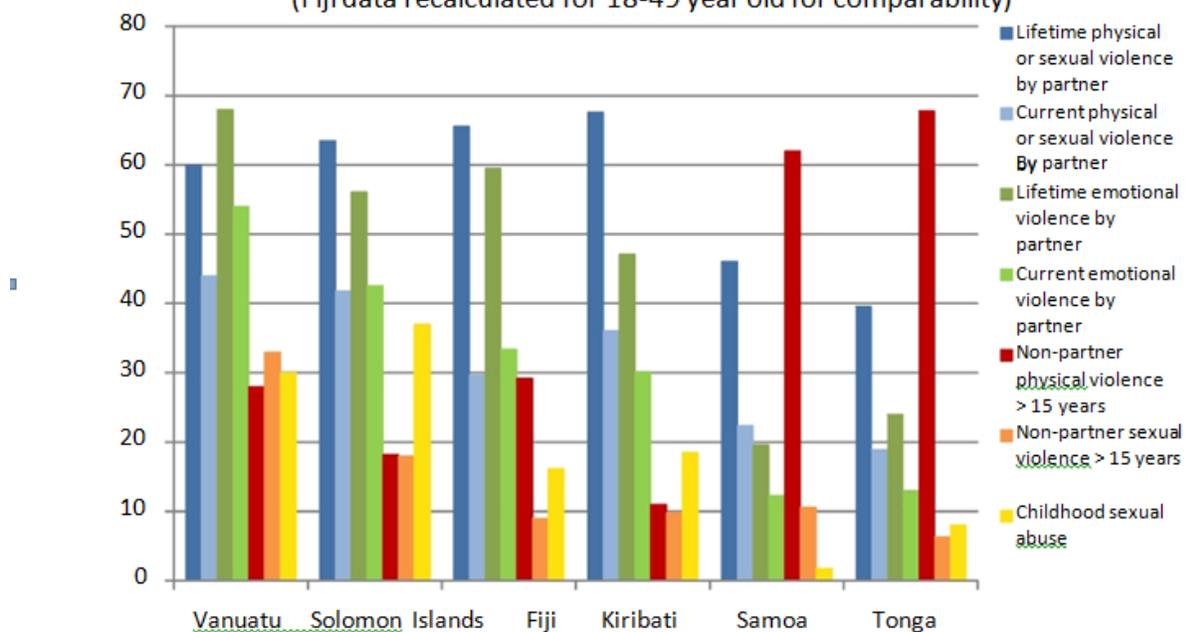
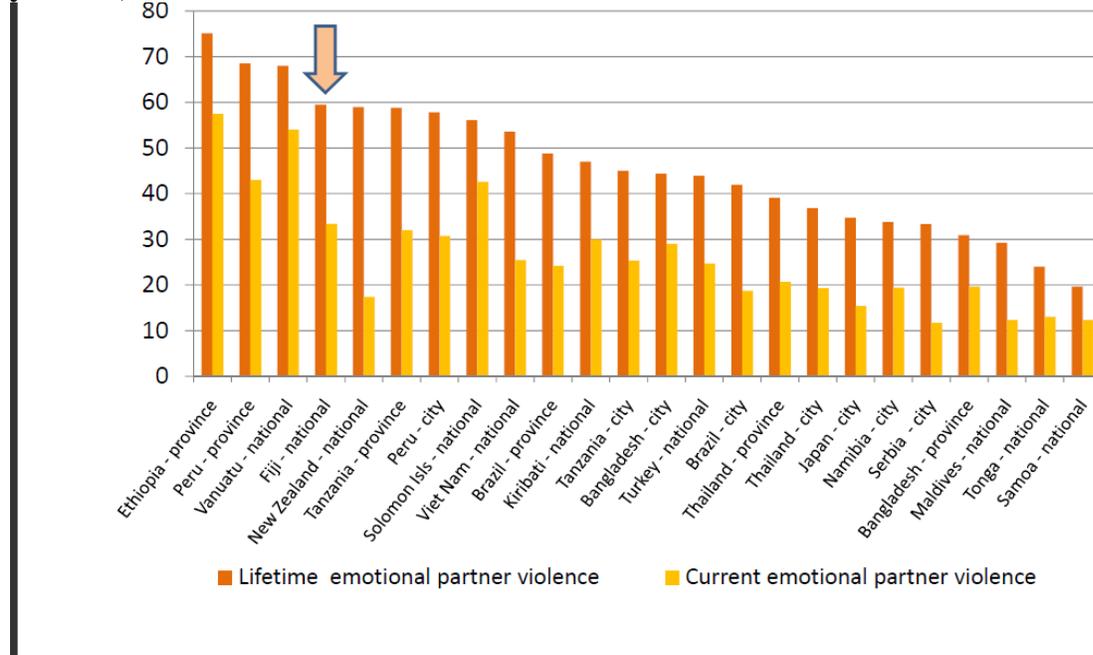


Figure 2. Prevalence of lifetime and current emotional partner violence around the world (studies that used WHO methodology; where applicable recalculated for 15-49 or 18-49 year old)



Source: Fiji Women’s Crises Centre (FWCC) 2012

As illustrated in Figure 2 above, Fiji, Vanuatu and the Solomon islands are in the high bracket of incidences of women and girls’ experiencing lifetime and current emotional partner violence. Therefore, there is a need for government agencies and the community to seriously address domestic violence. The three island states have now taken domestic violence seriously and this is evident through the number of policies that is being implemented. Although the effective implementation of these policies have yet to eventuate it is still encouraging to note that domestic violence has reached the agenda of government and donor agencies. The next section provides a brief description of gender policies that supports the elimination of violence against women for the countries included in this study are outline in the table below.

Tables 1: Gender Policies in the Fiji, Vanuatu and Solomon Islands.

	<u>Policies and Legislations implemented</u>
Fiji	<p><u>No drop policy – (introduced by the Fiji Police Department)</u></p> <p>In September 1995 the Fiji Police Department introduced the “No Drop” Policy which requires all cases of domestic violence to be investigated. Prior to the introduction of this policy, the police force tended to put emphasis on reconciliation of cases involving domestic violence. The policy empowers any member of the community to report on domestic violence and apply for a temporary restraining order and under the order one can put in conditions.</p>
	<p><u>Domestic Violence Decree 2009</u></p> <p>The government enacted the decree on 14 August 2009 but it only came into effect on September 6, 2010. The Decree is a “Decree to provide greater protection from domestic violence, to clarify the duties of police in that regard, to introduce domestic violence restraining orders and other measures to promote the safety and wellbeing of victims of domestic violence and to promote rehabilitation of perpetrators of domestic violence and for related matters.”</p>
	<p><u>State party to CEDAW</u></p> <p>Fiji became a state part to CEDAW on 28 August 1995. The convention seeks to protect and promote women from elimination of all forms of violence against women</p>

Solomon Islands	<p><u>Eliminating Violence against Women (EVAW) Policy²⁶</u></p> <p>Policy was endorsed in 2009 but implemented in 2010. EVAW policy includes: “(1) Zero tolerance of violence, (2) Recognition of women’s rights, (3) Sharing responsibility for elimination of violence against women and (4) Achieving gender equality.</p> <hr/> <p><u>National policy Gender Equality and Women’s Development Policy (GEWD)</u></p> <p>The policy was implemented in 2010. The national women machinery is working on a National Action Plan to translate this Policy into programmes and activities for implementation at all levels.</p> <hr/> <p><u>State party to CEDAW</u></p> <p>Solomon Islands became a state part to CEDAW on 6 May 2002. The convention seeks to protect and promote women from elimination of all forms of violence against women.</p>
Vanuatu	<p>In 2009, Vanuatu Parliament enacted its Domestic Violence legislation, the Vanuatu Family Protection Act. This Act criminalises all forms of gender based violence, provides access to protection orders against such violence. It specifically states that customary reconciliation is not a defense. The government is currently working with selected communities to pilot the implementation of the Act especially in the current absence of formal legal and support services.</p> <hr/> <p>Vanuatu is currently working on finalizing its National Gender and Women's Empowerment Policy 2013 - 2023. This policy aims to provide direction and guidance on strategic interventions in addressing gender inequalities. It also acts as a coordinating document for government ministries to integrate and mainstream gender perspective in all policies.</p>

²⁶ The EVAW policy will be implemented in tandem, as a subsidiary to the GEWD policy, through a similarly participatory and whole-of-government approach, detailed in its National Action Plan (NAP)

	<p><u>State party to CEDAW</u></p> <p>Vanuatu became a state part to CEDAW on 8 September 1995. The convention seeks to protect and promote women from elimination of all forms of violence against women.</p>
--	--

With the support towards advocating the elimination of all forms of violence against women, the Pacific Island Forum Secretariat alongside SPC RRRT is working towards a revised Pacific Platform for Action on the Advancement of Women and Gender Equality. This would be the key operational instrument in the promotion of gender equality for sustainable development in the Pacific Islands Region. Not only will this platform raise awareness but also push for Pacific Island Countries to undergo legislative/Policy review towards development of a National Policy on Eliminating Violence against Women.²⁷

5. Cost of domestic violence to small island states

The 2012 World Bank report highlights some of the key economic impacts of GBV are divided as follows: Direct costs — these are the costs directly incurred because of domestic violence, including, but not limited to, medical expenses, crisis services, legal services. Indirect costs — these costs include impacts on the productivity and earnings of women who are abused, including productivity loss from early death or days out of the workforce due to injury. These can also include the costs (lost productivity, lower tax revenues) incurred from the incarceration of the abuser, as well as some health costs (for example, the need for later-life counseling or support for children who have witnessed violence).

In addition, it states the inadequacies in accounting-based measures of GBV costs, precisely because they fail to consider the non-monetary social costs of such violence. The report advocates for a more comprehensive measure of GBV costs, while acknowledging the difficulty of obtaining full data. On a micro level, an accounting approach also fails to recognise household or individual costs for women who leave abusive relationships — costs of relocating, replacing

²⁷ Out of the three countries included in this paper, only Solomon Islands has established a National Policy on Eliminating Violence against Women.

personal and family items like cookware or clothing, the cost of losing land or property, costs from potentially being excluded from village or family networks, or the loss of subsistence or market food production from land exclusion. These national-level cost figures also neglect the significant household shocks that can be caused by even a small shift in productivity in subsistence economies. A relatively small loss of income can have impacts on child nutrition, health and access to education.²⁸ Additionally, according to the WDR2012, children who witness domestic violence are more likely to perpetrate or experience violence themselves, so there is clearly a cyclical effect at play, which unless addressed, will continue to create constraints for women's agency and economic development as a whole in the longer-term. In short, there is significant interplay between the issues associated with domestic violence and economic development, both at the household and national level. Domestic violence has imposed a large economic cost on Pacific Island countries. Last year, Professor Biman Prasad, Dean from the University of the South Pacific, calculated that the cost of domestic violence to the Fijian economy was around 6.6 percent of GDP. One could imagine the economic costs to be similarly high in Pacific Island countries like Kiribati, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, which have comparable rates of gender based violence. This human and economic cost is unaffordable.

Finally, it has been noted that the three island states have seriously taken the fight to reduce gender based violence through being a state partner to CEDAW and implementing legislations to protect women and children experiencing gender based violence. However, the results of having these policies, which is a decline in domestic violence, are still in its infancy stage. Culture and tradition still takes precedence and more advocating of these legislations and women's rights need to be done in order to see positive results in having these legislations in place.

²⁸ World Development Report on gender (WDR2012) GENDER EQUALITY AND DEVELOPMENT Retrieved from <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWDR2012/Resources/7778105-1299699968583/7786210-1315936222006/Complete-Report.pdf>

6. Recommendations

International²⁹ and regional legal and policy instruments have clarified the obligations of countries to eradicate and punish violence against women. However, States are failing to meet the requirements of the international legal and policy framework. Violence against women must be prioritized at all levels — it has not yet received the priority required enabling significant change. Leadership and political will is critical. There is a need to firstly, involve men in gender sensitive workshops to change the mindset of men and children. The primary and secondary education levels need to incorporate gender studies to educate children, both girls and boys the need to address gender equality and change the socially defined roles of gender.

Furthermore, access to justice system and access to support services for victims of violence needs to be readily available at minimum cost. Police officers and legal practitioners need to be more sensitive to domestic violent cases and avoid seeking traditional solutions. Most Pacific Island countries have customary reconciliation practices, which involve forgiveness ceremonies between the families of the offender and survivor, such as ‘I-bulubulu’ (Fiji) and ‘ifoga’ (Samoa). Police and courts often use these ceremonies to justify reduced sentences or not prevent charges from being filed (Jalal, 2010).

Recently the Pacific Women’s Network Against Violence Against Women met in Fiji, to discuss actions to address gender violence in region. Amongst other priorities, they called on Pacific governments to make and maintain budgetary commitments over the long term to implement legislation on violence against women and girls.³⁰ This kind of investment, alongside sustained efforts to promote gender equality and protect Pacific women, will build a stronger and more resilient region.

²⁹ The World Bank and the Solomon Islands Government have signed a grant agreement to help improve services for those affected by gender-based violence. Source: World Bank & Solomon Islands join to end domestic violence. 2013. Retrieved from (<http://www.theinformationdaily.com/2013/04/08/world-bank-solomon-islands-join-to-end-domestic-violence>)

³⁰ UNIFEM Pacific (2010) Ending Violence against Women and Girls: Literature Review and Annotated Bibliography. ISSN: 2219-7133

REFERENCES

- Amnesty International, 2011. International Submission to the UN Universal, Periodic Review.
- Anstey, C. 2013. *Viewpoint: The price of violence against women and girls*. Retrieved from (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-21696469>)
- Asian Development Bank (ADB). 2007. *Gender and Development Plan of Action (2008–2010)*.
- . 2008. Strategy 2020: The Long-Term Strategic Framework of the Asian Development Bank 2008–2020.
- . 2013. *From Poverty Reduction to Inclusive Growth*. Retrieved from: <http://www.adb.org/themes/poverty/topics/inclusive-growth>.
- Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) (2010c). Vanuatu Country Brief. DFAT: Canberra. Retrieved from: http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/vanuatu/vanuatu_brief.html.
- AusAid (Australian Agency for International Development) 2008. *Violence against Women in Melanesia and East Timor: building on Global and regional promising approaches*.
- . 2007. *Office of the Development Effectiveness. Solomon Islands Supplement*.
- Bell, K. M., and Naugle, A. E. 2008. *Intimate partner violence theoretical considerations: Moving towards a contextual framework*, *Clinical Psychology Review*. doi:10.1016/j.cpr.2008.03.003
- Cascardi, M., & Vivian, D. 1995. *Context for specific episodes of marital violence: Gender and severity of violence differences*. *Journal of Family Violence*, 10, 265–293.
- Coleman, D. H., and Straus, M. A. 1986. *Marital power, conflict, and violence in a nationally representative sample of American couples*. *Violence & Victims*, 1, 141–157.
- Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women G.A. res. 48/104, 48 U.N. GAOR Supp. (No. 49) at 217, U.N. Doc. A/48/49 (1993).
- Lievore, D. and P. Fairbairn-Dunlop. 2007. Pacific prevention of domestic violence program: Kiribati report. Retrieved from <http://webapps01.un.org/vawdatabase/uploads/Kiribati%20-%20PPDVP-Kiribati-Final-Report-14-June-2007.pdf>.
- Dobash, R. E., and Dobash, R. P. 1977. *Wives: The appropriate victims of marital violence*. *Victimology*, 2, pp.426–442.
- Economics. 2004. *The cost of domestic violence to the Australian economy: part I*, Office of the Status of Women, Canberra. Retrieved from http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/05_2012/cost_of_dv_to_australian_economy_i_1.pdf
- Fiji Times. 2008. *Women Welcome No Drop Policy*. Retrieved from <http://www.fjitime.com/story.aspx?id=91547> –
- Fiji Government Portal online. 2009. *New Domestic Violence Decree will protect victims* Retrieved from http://www.fiji.gov.fj/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=672:new-domestic-violence-decree-will-protect-victims&catid=71:press-releases&Itemid=15
- Fiji Women's Crises Centre (FWCC) 2012. *Prevalence, Incidence and Attitudes to Violence Against Women in Fiji: Findings from the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre National Research*, 2011.
- Jalal, Imrana, 2010. *Harmful Practices Against Women in Pacific Island Countries: Customary and Conventional Laws*.

- Gelles, R. J. 1980. *Violence in the family: A review of research in the seventies*. Journal of Marriage & the Family, 42, 873–885.
- Gender Responsive Budget in the Asia Pacific Region (2011) *The Pacific Island Countries, Fiji, PNG, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Tuvalu*. Gray-Little, B., Baucom, D. H., and Hamby, S. L. 1996. *Marital power, marital adjustment, and therapy outcome*. Journal of Family Psychology, 10, 292–303.
- Garcia-Moreno, C. and Watts, C. 2011. *Violence against women: an urgent public health priority*. Retrieved from : <http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/89/1/10.085217>
- Gender Responsive Budget in the Asia Pacific Region. 2011. The Pacific Island Countries, Fiji, PNG, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Tuvalu.
- Huffer, Elise. 2004 *Review of Institutional Mechanisms, Policies, Legislation and Programmes in Support and Promotion of Gender Equality in the Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa and Fiji*. Report prepared for the United Nations Development Fund for Women and the Pacific Women’s Bureau of the Secretariat for the Pacific Community.
- World Bank. 2001. *Engendering Development*. Washington, DC: World Bank.
- Klasen, S. 2002. *Low Schooling for Girls, Slower Growth for All? Cross-Country Evidence on the Effect of Gender Inequality in Education on Economic Development*. The World Bank Economic Review 16 (3): 345-73.
- Knowles, S., Logerlly, P.K. and Owen, P.D. 2002. *Are educational gender gaps a brake on economic development? Some cross-country empirical evidence*. Oxford economic papers, 54(1), pp118-149.
- Leonard, K. E., & Senchak, M. 1996. *Prospective prediction of husband marital aggression within newlywed couples*. Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 105, 369–380.
- Laqueretabua, A., Naidu, V., & Bhagwan Rolls, S. 2009. *Pacific Perspectives on the Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse of Children and Youth*. Bangkok, Thailand: United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.
- Mihalic, S. W., and Elliott, D. 1997. *A social learning theory model of marital violence*. Journal of Family Violence, 12, pp. 21–47.
- Nata, D., Grown, C. and Redner, J. 2004. *Costs of Intimate Partner Violence at the Household and Community Levels: An Operational Framework for Developing Countries*, Washington, DC: International Center for Research on Women.
- Republic of Vanuatu. 2013. *Elimination and Prevention of violence against women and girls*. Retrieved from www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw57/.../Vanuatu.pdf
- Secretariat of the Pacific Community. 2009. *Solomon Islands Family Health and Support Study: A study on violence against women and children*. Retrieved from http://www.spc.int/hdp/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&gid=39&dir=ASC&order=name&Itemid=44&limit=5&limitstart=0.
- _____. 2010. *Beijing + 15: Review of progress in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action in Pacific Island countries and territories*. Published by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, Noumea, New Caledonia.
- Secretariat of the Pacific Community (2012) *Stock take of the gender mainstreaming capacity of Pacific Island governments - Solomon Islands*
- Smith, M. D. 1990. Patriarchal ideology and wife beating: A test of a feminist hypothesis. *Violence & Victims*, 5, 257–273.

- SOLOMON ISLANDS GOVERNMENT Ministry of Women, Youth & Children Affairs
NATIONAL POLICY ON ELIMINATING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN
- Solomon Times. 2009. *New Policy on Violence against Women*. Retrieved from
<http://www.solomontimes.com/news/new-policy-on-violence-against-women/4615>
- Straus, M. A. 1976. Sexual inequality, cultural norms, and wife-beating. *Victimology*, 1, 54–70.
- Snively, Suzanne. 1996 *The New Zealand Economic Cost of Family Violence*. Retrieved from
<https://womensrefuge.org.nz/WR/Domestic-violence/Economic-cost-of-domestic-violence.htm>
- Sydney Morning Herald, 2009. *Secretariat of the Pacific Community, Kiribati Challenges Pacific Island Countries to Address Violence Against Women* (Dec. 20, 2009), Retrieved from
http://lists.spc.int/pipermail/pressreleases_lists.spc.int/2009-December/000273.html.
- The Pacific Islands Cannot Afford the Human and Economic Cost of Violence Against Women.2012. Retrieved from
<http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/opinion/2012/11/25/the-human-and-economic-cost-the-pacific-cannot-afford>
- United Nations Department of public information: 2008 Unite to end Violence against Women- Fact Sheet. February. Retrieved from
http://www.un.org/es/women/endviolence/pdf/vaw_backgrounder.pdf
- UN Statistics Division MDG Indicators Database 2008 Adopted from “*Pursuing Gender Equality*”, ADB/UNDP/UNESCAP, 2006, and Fiji Islands Bureau of Statistics, *Key Statistics*.
- UNDP 2010. Human Development Report 2010: The Real Wealth of Nations: Pathways to Human Development.
- UNIFEM Pacific (2010) Ending Violence against Women and Girls: Literature Review and Annotated Bibliography. ISSN: 2219-7133
- World Bank. 2001. *Engendering Development: Through Gender Equality in Rights, Resources and Voice*. Policy Research Report. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- _____. 2007. *Global Monitoring Report 2007: Confronting the Challenges of Gender Equality and Fragile States*. World Bank, Washington, DC.
- _____.2010 Pacific Islands Brief. World Bank. Retrieved from
<http://go.worldbank.org/J54LZGNYB0>
- World Development Report on gender 2012. Gender Equality and Development. Retrieved from
<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWDR2012/Resources/7778105-1299699968583/7786210-1315936222006/Complete-Report.pdf>
- Yllo, K. 1983. *Sexual equality and violence against wives in American states*. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 14, 67–86.
- Yllo, K., & Straus, M. A. (198). *Patriarchy and violence against wives: The impact of structural and normative factors*. *Journal of International and Comparative Social Welfare*, 1, 1–13.