



Balance of Power: A game-changer for Women's Leadership in the Pacific

Balance of Power (BOP) is a multi-country, locally led initiative that supports more inclusive leadership in line with national and regional priorities. Building on lessons learned about what works and what doesn't in the Pacific context to improve gender equality, BOP provides strategic support to local actors working to increase women's voice and agency in leadership and decision-making, particularly in the political sphere.



BOP co-Executive Director, Jennifer Kalpokas Doan, presenting at the Interorganizational Forum at the United States Institute of Peace in Washington.

VANUATU

"Many donor-funded gender programs in Vanuatu have not understood what it takes to shift sensitive norms and power dynamics. Thanks to BOP's context-savvy approach, I can already see the impact it is making in shifting people's perceptions around the legitimacy of women's leadership."

Hon. Ralph Regenvanu, MP

- The Balance of Power Vanuatu Country Manager, Wilson Toa, was invited to participate in the **Women's Leadership Initiative (WLI)** workshop focused on 'Approaches to Engaging Men in Support of Women's Leadership', in Brisbane, Australia.
- The latest installment of the **Tru The Lens** documentary series - *A legacy built out of stone* - was launched during this period, featuring the pioneering work of tourism entrepreneur, Merian Numake, owner of Evergreen Resort, Tanna. The launch was undertaken in collaboration with **Tafea Provincial Government** as part of Tafea Day celebrations.
- The **Tru The Lens** regional roadshow also continued with screenings of films with the Vanuatu Cultural Group at **Fulton Adventist University College** in Sabeto, Nadi, and with the **USP Vanuatu Students' Association** executives at the Vanuatu High Commission in Suva.
- Balance of Power collaborated with the Vanuatu Skills Partnership to support the **Vanuatu Institute of Public Administration and Management (VIPAM)** and the **Public**

Service Commission by facilitating a series of **inclusive leadership and management training sessions** for government officers across Tafea province.

- Balance of Power co-Executive Director, Jennifer Kalpokas Doan, moderated the recent **Press Klab** event at the **National University of Vanuatu** on the subject of political parties and the proposed Political Party Integrity Bill. Panelists included Former Vanuatu President, Kalkot Mataskelekele, former Director General of the Prime Minister's Office, Dr Gregoire Nimbtik, and Pacific policy specialist, Anna Naupa.
- The book and photographic exhibition, '**Nationbuilders – Celebrating Women in the Private Sector**', produced by Balance of Power, was launched in partnership with the **Vanuatu Chamber of Commerce and Industry**, the **Department of Women's Affairs and Sista**. The initiative showcases 40 women leaders in the private sector and their extraordinary contributions to the nation's development.
- Data collection across Tanna has been undertaken as part of the collaborative **research project** between the **Department of Women's Affairs**, the **Australian National University** and Balance of Power to understand the motivations of voters and political parties. A core part of the process is the training of local enumerators and facilitation of community forums on inclusive, developmental leadership.

FIJI/REGIONAL

"Fiji Council of Social Services acknowledges BOP's support to our program in building a women's leadership talent pipeline from the community to the national level. BOP's approach recognises that women don't work in isolation and there is a need to work with men to open up spaces for women in leadership".

*Ms. Vani Catanasiga, Executive Director,
Fiji Council of Social Services*

- Balance of Power's partnership with **Soqosoqo Vakamarama (SSVM)** has continued over this period, with joint outreach to its branches in the provinces of Macuta, Bua and Cakaudrove to **strengthen women's networks** at the sub-national level, and their coordination with the national level.
- Balance of Power is collaborating with the **Fiji Council of Social Services (FCOSS)** on the theme of '**Building a**

Women’s Leadership Talent Pipeline: from Community to National level’. The initiative seeks to support FCOSS women leaders through promotion of their leadership capabilities, and facilitating pathways to access further leadership opportunities, especially in running as candidates for the **2024 municipal elections**. Balance of Power has also facilitated adaptive leadership training sessions with these women leaders.

- Following the completion of the collaborative research project on the **community impacts of labour mobility schemes**, including shifts in gender roles, Balance of Power is working with the **Ministry of iTaukei Affairs** to socialise the findings of the research, including reporting back to the 29 villages involved. This socialisation process aims to raise awareness of women’s increased exercise of leadership in many communities, and thereby increase its legitimacy. It also aims to work actively against any extractive research practice, aligned with the **Vanua Research Framework**.
- Balance of Power was formally recognised as a key partner by the **Ministry of iTaukei Affairs** and the **iTaukei Affairs Board**, and was requested to participate in a workshop to contribute to the development of the **Ministry’s new Strategic Plan**.
- Balance of Power supported the annual planning process of the **SPC Human Rights and Social Development** team and participated in the Pacific Women Lead annual Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) workshop. The Balance of Power Fiji Country Manager, Josaia Osborne, also supported the drafting of the Youth Outcome Statement of the **Pacific Resilience Meeting (PRM) Youth Forum**, presented at the closing of the PRM.
- Initial discussions have been conducted with the **Women’s Fund Fiji** to identify areas of cooperation and collaboration, and a formal partnership meeting has now been scheduled for January 2024.
- The Balance of Power co-Executive Lead, Jennifer Kalpokas Doan, was invited to give a keynote address at the **United States Institute of Peace Interorganisational Forum** in Washington on the political and cultural context of Vanuatu.



Ministry of iTaukei Senior Research Officer with research participants during community talanoa/consultations for the research on the Social Impacts of Labour Mobility Schemes on Women and Families.

TONGA

“BOP’s ways of working emphasise the importance of engaging local experts. The Adaptive and Inclusive Leadership training was highly successful thanks to the two facilitators who are well aware of the social, professional and political context of Tonga, and were able to navigate discussions professionally and sensitively”.

Ronny Fono, Deputy CEO for the Workforce and Professional Development Division



BOP Tonga Country Manager, Tupouhau Fakakovi, with senior government officials from Tonga’s Public Service Commission with Adaptive Leadership training facilitators, Ofa Guttenbeil Likiliki and Rev. Dr. ‘Ungatea Kata.

- Over this period, Balance of Power, in partnership with **FI-E-FI-A’a Fafine Tonga (FFFT)**, has continued to engage in **outreach programs** across Vava’u, Ha’apai and ‘Eua to build understanding of the importance of inclusive political leadership. This has involved supporting communities to establish their **own FFFT branches** to strengthen networks and communication, especially in relation to generating buy-in for initiatives such as **Temporary Special Measures (TSMs)**. “This is the first time I have participated in a human rights training like this”, shared one woman from the newly established committee in Vava’u. “I am learning a lot about my rights and dignity as a woman”.
- Support for the **‘Talatalanoa’ media campaign** has continued, raising awareness on the importance of increasing women’s leadership across all domains through radio, television and social media. The television panel themes in September and October focused on young people as leaders and women’s leadership in the private sector.
- Balance of Power has rolled out its **Adaptive and Inclusive Leadership training** with the **Public Service Commission**, facilitated by ‘Ofa Guttenbeil Likiliki and Rev. Dr. ‘Ungatea Kata, with complementary international coaching support. The final module was conducted in Vava’u, where at the end of the program the participants - 11 senior government officials - received their certificates of completion. The **Governor of Vava’u** was the guest of honour and presented the certificates.