

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.



Senior government officials from Tonga's Public Service Commission with Adaptive Leadership training facilitators, Ofa Guttenbeil Likiliki and Rev. Dr.'Ungatea Kata

TONGA

“Before the local government elections, I had second thoughts about standing for a second term; however, the FFFT/BOP radio program motivated me to contest because, as a woman, I still have a lot to offer the people of my village and ‘Eua”. Meliame Tu’ifua, Town Officer, Angaha Village, ‘Eua

Over this period, Balance of Power, in partnership with **FI-E-FI-A ‘a Fafine Tonga (FFFT)**, has engaged in outreach programs across Vava’u 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). Community feedback has validated the success of these sessions, emphasising how they are **addressing the ‘many misconceptions’** around issues such as TSMs and CEDAW.

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 August theme was ‘youth’, coinciding with International Youth Day, and DCEO MIA Youth Division, Ms Sinama Tupou, spoke on the **importance of youth mobilisation to address**

discriminatory gender norms. Feedback from the FFFT outreach programs confirms the impact of these media programs on building women's confidence in the exercise of their leadership (see quote).

Balance of Power is rolling 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.

Balance of Power is playing a key **convening role in implementation of the TSM Roadmap**, with drafting of proposed legislation for submission to Government well underway. Part of this role in bringing together a range of external support, including a talanoa evening with **Senator the Hon. Sue Lines, President of the Senate, Parliament of Australia**, and engagement with New Zealand Gender Equality Ambassador, Hon Luisa Walls.

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



BOP co-Executive Director visiting a Vanuatu Skills Partnership Skills Centre in Malekula as part of regional coalition-building

underway, through the tripartite partnership brokered by Balance of Power with the **Department of Women’s Affairs and the Australian National University (ANU)**. The research is enabling first-time collection of data across the country on the key factors influencing voting decision-making and perceptions of women candidates. As part of the research process, Community Conversations are being run in each province, with **survey findings stimulating discussion and new perspectives** on the importance of electoral participation, as well as the legitimacy of women in the political sphere. Locations to date comprise villages across Efate, Malekula and Santo.

On the request of the **Vanuatu Public Administration and Management Unit** of the Public Service Commission, Balance of Power has facilitated a series of workshops on **inclusive and adaptive leadership** as part of the **induction program** for mid-management and senior staff across government departments.

Through the partnership established with the **Vanuatu Broadcasting and Television Corporation** and the **University of the South Pacific (USP)**, Balance of Power has continued to support the *Press Klab* outreach events. Last month’s theme was ‘Unity in Diversity’, held at Malapoa College – the first time the *Press Klab* has been **hosted at a high school**.

Balance of Power has strengthened its relationship with the **Wilkins Foundation** and its scholarship recipients, given the shared aim of supporting young women develop their leadership skills and confidence. A joint session included the screening of the ***Tru The Lens* film**, highlighting Vanuatu Tourism Officer CEO, Adela Aru.

FIJI / REGIONAL

“The ITaukei Affairs Board acknowledges Balance of Power’s massive contribution towards the social labour mobility impact survey in Tailevu, providing significant findings on the impact on women. We look

forward to working together to expand this research and implement the recommendations emerging from it.” Pita Tagicakirewa, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of ITaukei Affairs

Balance of Power has continued to support the **Ministry of ITaukei Affairs** with the research study on the social impact of **labour mobility schemes**. Through gathering in-depth perspectives across 14 ITaukei villages, in-depth findings on the positive and negative impacts of the schemes on families and communities have been captured – including shifting gender roles and the potential for increased **recognition of women’s leadership** value and legitimacy.

Balance of Power teams across Fiji and Vanuatu participated as panellists in the joint **UNDP/Women’s Empowerment Nauruan Organisation (WENA)** workshop focused on ‘Enhancing Women’s Political Participation and Leadership in the Pacific’, with participation also from **Hon. Lenora Qereqeretabua**, Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs; **Hon. Sashi Kiran**, Assistant Minister for Women, and **Mereseini Rakuita**, SPC.

Executive Director, Mereani Rokotuibau, continued her role as **one of only two women** to be part of the inaugural review of the **Great Council of Chiefs (GCC)**. This review is providing a unique opportunity to facilitate a shift towards **greater representation by women** in this traditional governance mechanism. Balance of Power also supported the indigenous women’s association, **Soqosoqo Vakamarama**, to develop a submission to the GCC Review Committee.

Balance of Power has strengthened its relationship with the **Fiji Council of Social Services (FCOSS)**, including facilitating an inclusive leadership workshop with its members and providing the opening addresses at the **FCOSS AGM**. Balance of Power also facilitated an inclusive leadership training with the Australian-funded **Fiji Facility**.



BOP Fiji & Regional Country Manager and Executive Director with Honorable Lenora Qereqeretabua, UNDP staff and the Women’s Empowerment Nauru Association (WENA) participants