

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

Balance of Power is a **Pacific Islander-led** initiative that is shifting attitudes and building **coalitions of influence** in support of women's leadership. It is achieving this through partnerships and networks with **strategic powerholders** – across national and provincial government,

the media, churches, and traditional structures. Supported by the Australian Government, Balance of Power is working in **Vanuatu, Tonga, Fiji** and at the **regional** level. Here are some highlights of the work of Balance of Power over recent months.

Tonga

"Balance of Power is an important program for shifting mindsets on inclusive leadership. There are entrenched traditional beliefs about leadership in Tonga that need to change to include more women".

Rev. Viliami Polota, Secretary for the Church Leaders Forum.

- Balance of Power is providing support to recently elected **Member of Parliament, Hon Dulcie Tei**, including progressing plans to **link her with other women parliamentarians in Vanuatu and Fiji**. Ms Tei reinforced her desire to encourage other women to realise their leadership potential at all levels – in their homes, villages and in the political sphere.



Tonga Country Manager, Tupou Fakakovi, at her recent meeting with Hon Dulcie Tei, MP.

- With the support of Balance of Power, the **She Leads Fale Alea** program of **Take The Lead** resulted in the publication of the **Fale Alea 'o Tonga** publication intended for class 1-4 students. Its aim is to **engage young people with the political process** and emphasise the **legitimacy of all Tongans** within the Parliament. Director Elizabeth Kite has shared copies of the publication widely, including with Crown Princess and her family, the Prime Minister of Tonga, and young students from the areas which were affected by the Hunga Ha'apai-Hunga Tonga volcanic eruption and tsunami.
- The **She Leads Fale Alea** program also contributed to one of its participants, Ms. Kiliisitina Moala, representing Tonga at the **Commonwealth Youth Parliament** in November 2022, where she received a standing ovation for her intervention on climate change action. See [here](#).
- The first Balance of Power **Strategic Advisory Committee** meeting for 2023 was held in January, chaired by Rev. Tevita Feke Mafi, and bringing together key drivers of change across government, private sector, churches, media and youth activism.



Vanuatu

"Through working with Balance of Power, my team, especially the men, got to see the importance of the role that women play, the importance of women's leadership, of empowering women to realise their leadership potential".

Moses Cakau, Vanuatu Broadcasting and Television Corporation and 'Tru The Lens' producer.

- The **male filmmakers** engaged by Balance of Power to capture the leadership stories of women driving change in Vanuatu, as part of the *Tru The Lens* documentary series, were featured in a sequence of **'Spotlight' publications**, shared widely on social media. These influential media actors openly spoke about **their own mindset shift** around women's leadership legitimacy as they conveyed these women's stories. See Spotlight example [here](#).
- Balance of Power is collaborating with the **Ministry of Health** and the Vanuatu Health Program, in partnership with the **Public Service Commission (PSC)** and the **Vanuatu Institute of Public Administration and Management (VIPAM)**, to support the **Emerging Women Leaders in the Health Sector** initiative. Balance of Power Country Manager, Wilson Toa, also facilitated a series of sessions with key staff in the PSC around inclusive leadership that positively challenged attitudes around the value of shared leadership.
- Balance of Power is providing support to the **Department of Women's Affairs'** and the **Shefa Provincial Government**, under the government's broader decentralisation agenda, with inclusive governance and leadership training for **Area Administrators and Area Secretaries**.
- Initial scoping is underway to support the **Department of Women's Affairs** research project on **understanding the motivations of voters and political parties**, in conjunction with the **Australian National University**.



Key staff from the PSC and VIPAM.

Regional/Fiji

"We thank Balance of Power for its partnership, and reaffirm our commitment to working together as like-minded partners in building a resilient and sustainable Pacific".

Secretary General, University of the South Pacific Students' Association (USPSA) Federal Council, Mr Emosi Vakarau.

- Building on our strong partnership with the USPSA Laucala, catalysed by the **groundbreaking joint research undertaken on student perceptions of women's leadership**, the Balance of Power team engaged in discussions with the USPSA Federal Council to **identify new strategies** to ensure a 'better balance' in women's and men's leadership roles and opportunities.
- Balance of Power is continuing to provide support to the **Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS)** for the review of the **Pacific Leaders' Gender Equality Declaration** to help ensure that regional commitments and policies are aligned to national priorities.



Dr Fiona Hukula, Gender Specialist PIFS, meeting with Jennifer Kalpokas Doan, Executive Director, Balance of Power

- Balance of Power is strengthening its relationship with the **Rewa Medical Subdivision** as a follow-on to its **research on Community Health Worker leadership**, in conjunction with the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of I Taukei Affairs, and the Fiji National University, with a particular focus on **Indo-Fijian settlements**.
- Balance of Power Executive Director, Jennifer Kalpokas Doan, was featured by the **Pacific Conference of Churches**, under its **16 Days of Activism Campaign**, as a powerful example of shifting norms around women's leadership roles and contribution. See feature [here](#).
- Balance of Power Executive Directors, Mereani Rokotuibau and Jennifer Kalpokas Doan, were invited to DFAT Canberra to share their insights on **local leadership in Australia's international development program**. They were also guest panelists for the *Emerging Leaders in International Development* workshop, a DT-Global initiative to promote local leadership across its DFAT programs.