

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.

Fiji

"I once again want to acknowledge FCOS and BOP for championing the Women's Leadership Pipeline, a model that is already bearing fruit. Women who once believed leadership was 'not for them' are now District Advisory Councilors; leaders in village committees, youth committees, and women's groups; participants in national, regional, and international forums; and advocates shaping dialogues from the grassroots to the global stage. These achievements are not small steps, they are breakthroughs." Eseta Nadakuitavuki, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Women, Children and Social Protection

- In partnership with the Pacific Centre for Peacebuilding, BOP convened a *Women in Religion Dialogue* for faith-based organisations in Fiji's Central Division. The dialogue brought together women leaders from the Christian and Hindu faiths, creating a safe and respectful space for participants to reflect on the everyday challenges they encounter in their leadership roles. Through facilitated *talanoa*, the women shared experiences, explored common barriers, and strengthened solidarity across faith traditions. The session also aimed to build participants' practical peacebuilding skills, to enhance both the effectiveness and legitimacy of their leadership within their respective faith communities.
- With support from BOP, the Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources sent three female managers, Raksha Rani, Elizabeth

Cavuilati, and Lia Tavola, to represent Fiji at COP30 in Brazil. Under the guidance of Permanent Secretary, Paula Cirikiyasawa, their participation highlighted the Ministry's commitment to women's leadership and Fiji's engagement in global climate discussions on resilience, land governance, and sustainable development.

- BOP, in partnership with the Fiji Council of Social Services, supported the *Promoting Empowerment and Resilience through Leadership (PEARL)* training, part of the Women's Leadership Talent Pipeline Program. The initiative is preparing women leaders likely to contest in Fiji's upcoming municipal and national elections. Working across the District Council of Social Services network, the training strengthened leadership and advocacy skills, deepened understanding of governance and electoral systems, and equipped participants with campaign and voter-engagement tools. The program also focused on enhancing media and communication capabilities and improved digital readiness and online safety.
- BOP facilitated governance-focused training in Suva for members of the National Executive Committee and Secretariat of the Soqosoqo Vakamaram iTaukei (SSVM). The training forms part of BOP's ongoing institutional strengthening support to SSVM as it prepares to roll out its 2025–2030 Strategic Development Plan (SDP) across Fiji. BOP also worked with the Department of Women, the iTaukei Affairs Board, and the Pacific Centre for Peacebuilding to deliver leadership training for SSVM Tailevu women leaders and to the SSVM Ra Province,

in partnership with the iTaukei Trust Fund. These activities are building women's leadership capacities and affirming their critical roles in development at village, Tikina, and Yasana levels, in line with SSVM's national priorities.

Vanuatu

"It was a very humbling experience to be requested to be part of the Nation Builders book. Our histories are oral and expressed through dances. Now that we're able to document these stories of women who are growing and thriving in their communities, it's a very beautiful thing because it's now on ink in a book." Roslyn Arthur David, Advisor at the United Nations Population Fund

- The Diocese of Banks and Torres (DOBT) supported by BOP, hosted a 'Bishop's Event' to engage youth on Motalava, in partnership with Motalava Youth Council, bringing together young people from various villages and denominations. It featured sports tournaments, leadership sessions, and community discussions on transparency, corruption and voter motivation, in partnership with Transparency International Vanuatu and the Right to Information Unit. Its purpose was to positively influence youth attitudes around inclusive leadership, political participation and demonstrate the compatibility of gender equality with Christian values.
- BOP also facilitated a MANGO financial training with the DOBT as follow-up to the July session, with a focus on financial reporting mechanisms and budgeting. The training equipped DOBT staff with essential financial management skills for strengthening institutional capability, while simultaneously building trust between BOP and this core organisation of societal influence at the community level.
- BOP supported the Vanuatu National Youth Council to host the *Toktok blong ol Nabanga Forum* at the Malvatumauri Chiefs' Nakamal in Port Vila as part of Vanuatu Constitution Day activities. The forum brought together youth and Constitution signatories to reflect on the history, drafting, and ongoing significance of the Vanuatu Constitution. Through intergenerational dialogue, young people deepened their understanding of



Participants with the Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Protection, Eseta Nadakuitavuki (front row, fourth from left), following the official opening of the PEARL Training.



On-the-mat session with secondary students during the Vanuatu National Youth Council Constitution Day.

nation-building, constitutional values, and inclusive leadership.

In November, BOP was in Malekula to socialise its Unspoken Rules of Politics: *Uncovering the Motivations of Voters in Vanuatu's Elections* research report across a range of communities. The team was also invited by the Women's Influencing Network team on Uripiv Island to present the research findings. This year, the BOP team will travel to Tanna and Santo to continue to share the research with the communities that were part of the data collection two years ago and to generate discussion on women's political leadership legitimacy.

BOP conducted a MEL 101 session with Department of Women Affairs to strengthen institutional capacity. The training built understanding of monitoring and evaluation, equipped staff with practical tools for designing indicators, collecting data, and tracking progress in gender-related programs, and linked M&E practices to national and Pacific regional gender priorities.

BOP launched *Nation Builders: Volume 3*, celebrating 26 ni-Vanuatu women leading boards and development organisations. The event, attended by diplomats, officials, media, and community leaders, showcased the women's contributions to improved governance and service delivery. Produced in collaboration with the *Vanuatu Daily Post*, the launch took place during the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, reinforcing the link between leadership and safe communities.

BOP partnered with Vanuatu Association of NGOs (VANGO) and the Ministry of Internal Affairs to support the annual NGO Day on 27 November 2025 as part of the 16 Days of Activism. The event showcased the work of CSOs, including recognition for women leaders and activists.

Tonga

"Women's leadership is not new to Tonga. Queen Sālote gave women the right to stand for Parliament, but it took twenty-four years before a woman was elected. That tells us how far we've come, but also how far we still have to go." Lord Fakafanua, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Tonga 2025, speaking at the BOP-supported Press Club

- BOP supported the Tonga Press Club on 21 October 2025, commemorating 150 years of Tonga's Constitution. This event brought together students, media, government, and women's groups, with 90 participants and panelists including Lord Speaker Fakafanua, Lord Vaea, 'Ofa Likiliki, and Rev. Dr. 'Ungatea Kata. Discussions explored Tonga's constitutional history, women's leadership in politics, and the role of youth in shaping the nation's future. Students actively engaged with questions on human rights, governance, and leadership, while online streaming reached over 33,800 viewers.
- BOP held *Tano'a 'a Hina: Ko e Talanoa Fun-gani* sessions with Hofoa and Huolanga Kava Club members, providing safe spaces for men and youth to explore leadership, shared decision-making, and family roles. Facilitated by the Women and Children Crisis Centre, participants discussed inclusive leadership, respect, collaboration, and creating homes free from violence, grounded in Christian teachings. The sessions aimed to promote men as allies in gender equality and support women's leadership, reaching 50 participants (15 women and 35 men), resulting in expressed commitment to apply these principles within families and the wider community.
- BOP joined the *Women in Media* retreat at Ha'akame, aiming to strengthen networks among women journalists, promote inclu-
- sive media practices, and identify opportunities for continued collaboration and coordinated advocacy to amplify women's voices in the media.
- BOP partnered with the Civil Society Forum of Tonga (CSFT) to socialise the Tupou Tertiary Institute (TTI) *Youth Voter Motivations Research Report*, supporting the Tonga Electoral Commission (TEC) to elevate youth participation ahead of the November 2025 General Elections. From September to November, the engagement reached 405 young people across Tongatapu, 'Eua, Ha'apai, and Vava'u, with 63% of participants being women. The activities included voter registration drives in collaboration with TEC, media outreach, and interactive sessions where youth learned about voter eligibility, rights, and responsibilities.
- BOP supported Tonga's Public Service Commission in delivering Adaptive Leadership Training for Cohort 3 through a three-day workshop engaging 24 participants from across senior levels of government. Through discussions, case studies, storytelling, and practical tools, participants explored authority, questioned default behaviors, and learned to tackle adaptive challenges through mindset shifts, including around women's leadership legitimacy.
- In December, *Ke Tau Talanoa* concluded its eight-episode, youth-led podcast series supported by BOP and recorded at Lalo Niu Studio. The final episode featured the BOP Tonga team reflecting on key learnings from the series and sharing BOP's approach to inclusive, youth-led dialogue. Across the eight episodes, the podcast amplified youth voices, particularly young women and created space for open *talanoa* on inclusive leadership and civic participation, reaching approximately 13,000 viewers.



Tonga High School students with panelists at the Tonga Press Club event commemorating 150 years of Tonga's Constitution.