

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

“Gender equality is very important for me as a leader and Permanent Secretary, it's imperative that I walk the talk and ensure that I am an avid champion of gender equality in action.”

Paula Cirikiyasawa - Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources

- BOP convened a reflection meeting with the Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources to review progress on women's leadership, GEDSI, and climate-responsive land governance in Fiji. The discussion highlighted how targeted support from BOP, particularly enabling three senior women leaders to attend COP30, has strengthened their roles as internal champions and advanced efforts to integrate GEDSI into policy, legislative reform, and inclusive land governance. This reflects BOP's broader strategy of linking women's leadership with climate-resilient governance.
- BOP participated in the Multi-Stakeholder Divisional Consultation Workshop to help shape the National Rural Development Policy (NRDP), contributing to discussions on strengthening rural service delivery, resilience, and governance in Fiji, while advocating for the integration of GEDSI principles and inclusive leadership in sustainable development.
- BOP participated in the Ministry of Health and Medical Services' Women in Health Leadership (WIL) Industry Awareness Workshop, helping to support the career advancement of Fijian women health professionals, aligned with national policies and, workplace realities, and reinforcing

BOP's commitment to advancing women's leadership across sectors.

- Through an invitation from the Fiji Program Support Platform, BOP delivered a Leadership for Positive Change training to 48 officers from the Fiji Corrections Service, marking its first engagement with women leaders in the disciplined forces. The session equipped participants with practical tools to strengthen their confidence and leadership effectiveness.
- In partnership with Fiji Council of Social Services (FCOSS), BOP continues to strengthen the Women's Leadership Talent Pipeline through *talanoa* sessions that build confidence, networks, and leadership capacity among women. BOP also facilitated three TV talkback appearances featuring an FCOSS representative and women leaders from the Fiji Impact Story Series, amplifying their voices. Complementing this, BOP also contributed to the “Healing the Heart of Fiji by Reclaiming True Masculinity” session, organised by FCOSS, Pacific Communities University, and faith-based organisations, emphasising men's role as allies. Together, these efforts reflect BOP's holistic approach to advancing inclusive and resilient communities.
- BOP joined the Vakatawa Noke Taskforce in engaging Biliniwai Settlement, in Wailoku, to socialise the proposed community council model and highlight the importance of women's participation. The engagement also helped identify local challenges in accessing basic services, and demonstrated BOP's commitment to inclusive, community-led governance that

elevates women's voices and supports local development.

- BOP facilitated a leadership session for 277 participants as part of the Women in School Leadership Program, organised by the Ministry of Education and the Fiji Program Support Platform.
- BOP held an initial engagement with Women in Media (WIM) Fiji to explore opportunities to work together and support each other in amplifying stories of women's leadership through media platforms. The session brought together journalists, editors, and media professionals to share organisational priorities, discuss potential ways to support one another, and explore how media can influence public narratives on women's leadership in Fiji.



Members of Women in Media Fiji and BOP staff pictured during the Media Engagement in Suva.

Vanuatu

“It is an important time for us to come together to recognise the achievements and vital roles women play in society. We must appreciate and support them, while also encouraging the next generation of women to step forward.”
Right Reverend Bishop James Tama-Bishop of the Diocese of Vanuatu and New Caledonia

- BOP supported the first joint International Women's Day celebration by the Diocese of Vanuatu and New

Caledonia and the Diocese of Banks and Torres of the Anglican Church of Melanesia on 8 March 2026 at Sarakata Anglican Church in Luganville, Santo. Under the theme “Give to Gain,” the event brought together church members, women’s groups, youth, and community representatives to honour women’s contributions through worship, Mothers’ Union activities, video screenings, and an awards ceremony. This event was a significant step in women’s leadership being legitimised by the church in Vanuatu.



On the far left is Bishop of the Diocese of Vanuatu and New Caledonia, Right Reverend Bishop James Tama, and on the far right is Bishop of the Diocese of Banks and Torres, Right Reverend Bishop Anthony Ling, pictured with the women award recipients.

- BOP carried out two activities socialising the findings of the Voter Motivation Research (VMR) in Nakere Community on 6 March and Hog Harbour on 9 March 2026, engaging over 50 participants. The sessions encouraged community reflection on voting behaviour, leadership, and gender dynamics, with participants openly discussing issues such as electoral corruption, community expectations of leaders, and the barriers faced by women in politics. Strong engagement was observed, including commitments from local leadership to improve women’s inclusion.
- BOP Co-Executive Director Jennifer Kalpokas Doan delivered a keynote address at the Pacific Islands Investment Forum Women in Super Network Conference in Port Vila, bringing together regional delegates to explore women’s financial inclusion and retirement outcomes. Drawing on Balance of Power’s work, she highlighted the barriers faced by women in the informal sector and the importance of strengthening access to financial systems. The conference provided a platform for Pacific institutions to share insights,

strengthen collaboration, and advance inclusive approaches that support women’s financial security and leadership across the region.

Tonga

“I am one of the very few female Town Officers throughout Tonga. I recently won the by-election for the Haveluloto town officer and I have witnessed the challenges of being a woman in this role. However, it has been such a rewarding experience and I encourage other women to aspire and contest in local and national elections.” Finau Tutu’u- Haveluloto Town Officer

- BOP program officers were invited to a dinner meeting with Tonga’s Minister for Internal Affairs, Employment, Women, Social Protection, Youth and Sports, Hon. Fane Fituafe, Australian High Commissioner to Tonga, H.E. Brek Batley, First Secretary Hannah Birks; and DFAT GEDSI team members Tess Connolly and Liz Cowan. It was a productive evening with insightful conversations on strengthening partnerships through faith-based organisations, gender equality, and local government. The discussions highlighted key opportunities for collaboration between the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Australian Government, and BOP.



BOP Program Officers pictured with Tonga’s sole female MP and Minister for Internal Affairs, Employment, Women, Social Protection, Youth and Sports, Hon. Fane Fituafe, Australian High Commissioner to Tonga, H.E. Brek Batley, First Secretary Hannah Birks, and DFAT GEDSI team members Tess Connolly and Liz Cowan.

- BOP attended the Langafonua Annual General Meeting which was chaired by Her Majesty, Queen Nanasipau’u who reminded the women of the purpose of Langafonua ‘a Fafine Tonga. She recognised the hardship women face in their responsibilities in society but counseled them to remain motivated and contribute to building a resilient Tonga for generations to come.

- BOP continues to support women in local government, including Mrs. Finau Tutu’u, Town Officer for Haveluloto, by facilitating ‘safe space’ discussions through regular informal catch-ups for reflection on their leadership journeys.
- BOP met with the Minister for Internal Affairs, Hon. Fane Fituafe, who is focusing on immediate plans to empower women in the Tongatapu 6 constituency ahead of the June 2027 local government elections.
- BOP supported Tonga’s Public Service Commission to deliver Cohort 3 of the Adaptive Leadership Training through a three-day workshop with 24 senior government officers. Using discussions, case studies, and practical tools, participants explored authority, challenged default behaviours, and strengthened their approach to adaptive challenges, including shifting mindsets on women’s leadership legitimacy.

Regional

- BOP contributed Fiji-based and regional insights to consultations developing the Pacific Gender Equality MERL Guidance Note, strengthening gender-responsive monitoring, evaluation, research, and learning across the region
- BOP participated in the regional consultation to refresh the Pacific Framework for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (PFRPD), contributing to discussions on strengthening disability inclusion and advancing the rights, leadership, and participation of persons with disabilities.
- BOP met with UN Women Fiji Multi-Country Office Representative, Alison Davidian and Policy Specialist, Lisa Kindervater to explore collaboration on women’s political leadership and participation at national and regional levels.
- BOP held initial discussions with the Gender Desk of the Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC) on providing technical support to document women’s stories. The proposed initiative will focus on key themes including climate change, women’s leadership in churches, violence against women, and the PALM scheme.