



Pacific
Community
Communauté
du Pacifique

SOLOMON ISLANDS ACCESS TO JUSTICE PILOT PROJECT

REFLECTION REPORT



Australian
Aid





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Abbreviations

AJ	Authorised Justices
BCC	behavioural change communication
CF	community facilitators
CSO	civil society organisation
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade – Australia
DV	domestic violence
EVAW	elimination of violence against women
EVAWG	elimination of violence against women and girls
FPA	Family Protection Act
FPO	Final Protection Order
HRSD	Human Rights and Social Development Division
IEC	information, education and communication
IPO	Interim Protection Order
MEL	monitoring, evaluation and learning
MJLA	Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs
MOU	memorandum of understanding
MWYCFA	Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs
NGO	non-governmental organisation
PSC	Project Steering Committee
RRRT	Regional Rights Resource Team (former SPC division)
SPC	Pacific Community
VAW	violence against women
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

Background

The Family Protection Act 2014 (FPA) was a key milestone for the Solomon Islands government. The Act establishes a legal framework to ensure safety and protection for survivors of domestic violence. Civil actions for survivors in the Act include issuing police safety notices and two types of protection orders: Interim Protection Order (IPO) and Final Protection Orders (FPO). The Act is also significant because it makes domestic violence a criminal offence and expands its definition to include physical, sexual, psychological and economic violence.¹

The Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs (MJLA) and the Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs (MWYCFA) are responsible for the administration of the Act. Under Section 11 of the Act, the MJLA is responsible for the parts of the Act that set out duties, responsibilities and processes for the courts, legal agencies and law enforcement while the MWYCFA has the administrative oversight for Part 4 and Part 5 of the Act. Part 4 sets out specific victim-centred approaches for service providers from health, law enforcement and prosecution sectors and Part 5 outlines the functions and procedures of the Family Protection Advisory Council; duty to raise awareness on the FPA, and a system for registration of counsellors.

When the Act was implemented in April 2016, the courts were the first to assume their role and the first Final Protection Order (FPO) was issued by the Central Magistrates' Court in Honiara the same month. Data collected through annual reports of the MWYCFA show there is need for continued efforts to support Solomon Islands with implementation of the FPA. Support for execution of the Act has been provided by government stakeholders, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), civil society organisations (CSOs) and development partners.

The Pacific Community's Regional Rights Resource Team (RRRT) – now the Human Rights and Social Development Division (HRSD) – has been a partner with the Solomon Islands Government in its efforts to eliminate violence against women for more than 15 years. Supporting the journey of the Act to Parliament and providing capacity-building training, SPC worked to strengthen a mechanism under the Act that was specifically designed to ensure safety and protection of survivors of violence in remote rural communities in Solomon Islands.

¹ Solomon Islands Family Protection Act 2014

The Access to Justice (A2J) Project

The *Pilot Project to Increase Women's Access to Justice in Guadalcanal and Malaita* was developed and implemented by HRSD (formerly RRR) from April 2017 to June 2021.

The goal of the pilot project was to increase access to justice in Guadalcanal and Malaita for women and girl survivors of domestic violence. This was aligned to the key objective of the FPA to ensure safety and protection for survivors of domestic violence. Of a population of just above half a million, approximately 80 per cent of Solomon Islanders live in rural areas in the country's nine provinces. The project was a pilot for access-to-justice for survivors who live in remote rural areas and make up the majority of survivors of domestic violence in the country. The project activity focused on strengthening the capacity of Authorised Justices (AJs) and Community Facilitators (CFs) in mostly remote communities on Guadalcanal and Malaita to raise awareness on the FPA and how victims can get help for safety and protection.

AJs are members of the Local Courts which, under the Local Courts Act [Cap 19], have limited civil and criminal jurisdiction. As such, the role of AJs focused largely on customary land disputes until they were given new duties and responsibilities under the FPA. CFs also have an important role as they are agents of change who carry out awareness on the FPA and the role of AJs.

The project was unique in that the work with the AJs and CFs fulfilled the responsibility of the MJLA and MWYCFA. Although the project has ended, the work of AJs to issue IPOs and the MWYCFA to support awareness and advocacy on the FPA continues.

Purpose of this reflection report

This report, marking the end of the pilot phase, is an opportunity to reflect on the development and implementation of the project and its activities, share key achievements and reflect on the challenges faced and lessons learnt. The project was handed over to the two key government partners – MJLA and the MWYCFA – to continue to support AJs and carry out awareness on the FPA.



Target audience

This reflection report is intended for the following audiences:

Solomon Islands Ministry of Women, Children, Youth and Family Affairs (MWYCFA) and the Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs (MJLA)

The MJLA and the MWYCFA as the key administrators of the FPA are also the main implementing partners for the pilot project. The project was a catalyst for ongoing training and monitoring of AJs and their work on domestic violence in rural areas by the Local Courts Office and the Policy Unit of MJLA. For the MWYCFA, the project supported their role to develop awareness tools to support both government and NGO stakeholders to fulfil their role under section 56 of the Act to “establish and support public awareness programs aimed at preventing domestic violence.” The project worked closely with the Local Court to share lessons and successes with the ministries in hosting, supporting and integrating the key deliverables of the project.

Other partners in the Solomon Islands

The Access to Justice (A2J) Pilot Project was an unusual working arrangement for SPC implementing activities in the outer islands. It was a project that not only required considerable financial resources to ensure effective implementation, but also an understanding of the local context of working in Honiara and rural and remote communities in the Solomon Islands. The project had to adapt to the restrictions posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, natural disasters (including cyclones, earthquakes, floods and unpredictable weather patterns), and the challenges that come with working with remote communities with no roads or basic services such as banks and telecommunications. The overall management of the project was provided from the main centre, Honiara and remotely from Fiji.

Other Pacific Island countries

It is key to note that domestic violence legislation (family protection laws) in some Pacific Island countries have similar provisions that set up systems or structures to assist survivors of domestic violence. This project will particularly be of interest to countries that have provisions that empower similar roles like the AJs to issue protection orders.

SPC staff

In this project, SPC took a different approach in implementing support with the member government. Previously, RRRT worked with a Country Focal Officer who had a mandate to support the host country with key deliverables set out in a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the host ministry, the MWYCFA. The project expanded on this model and placed an SPC project team in the ministry that worked closely with government counterparts to implement activities in remote locations. This provided great opportunities but also new challenges. This reflection report therefore provides key learnings for SPC to inform future projects that are implemented with partner countries.



Access to Justice at a glance

Context in 2016

When the FPA was gazetted in 2016, the Solomon Islands government began a journey to implement its legal framework to address domestic violence. The new law provided further clarity by defining *domestic violence* and *domestic relationships*. This was key because it extended the definition to include a sphere of violence that was previously considered private and only for the family to address. The law made domestic violence a crime and acknowledged it as a national issue that needed to be addressed. In addition, the law provided protection mechanisms and created new roles that ensured that the police would be able to issue *police safety notices* which provided quick, albeit temporary, relief for a survivor of domestic violence. It also addressed the need to ensure immediate protection for survivors of domestic violence by mandating the police to act immediately where there was an urgent need for protection.



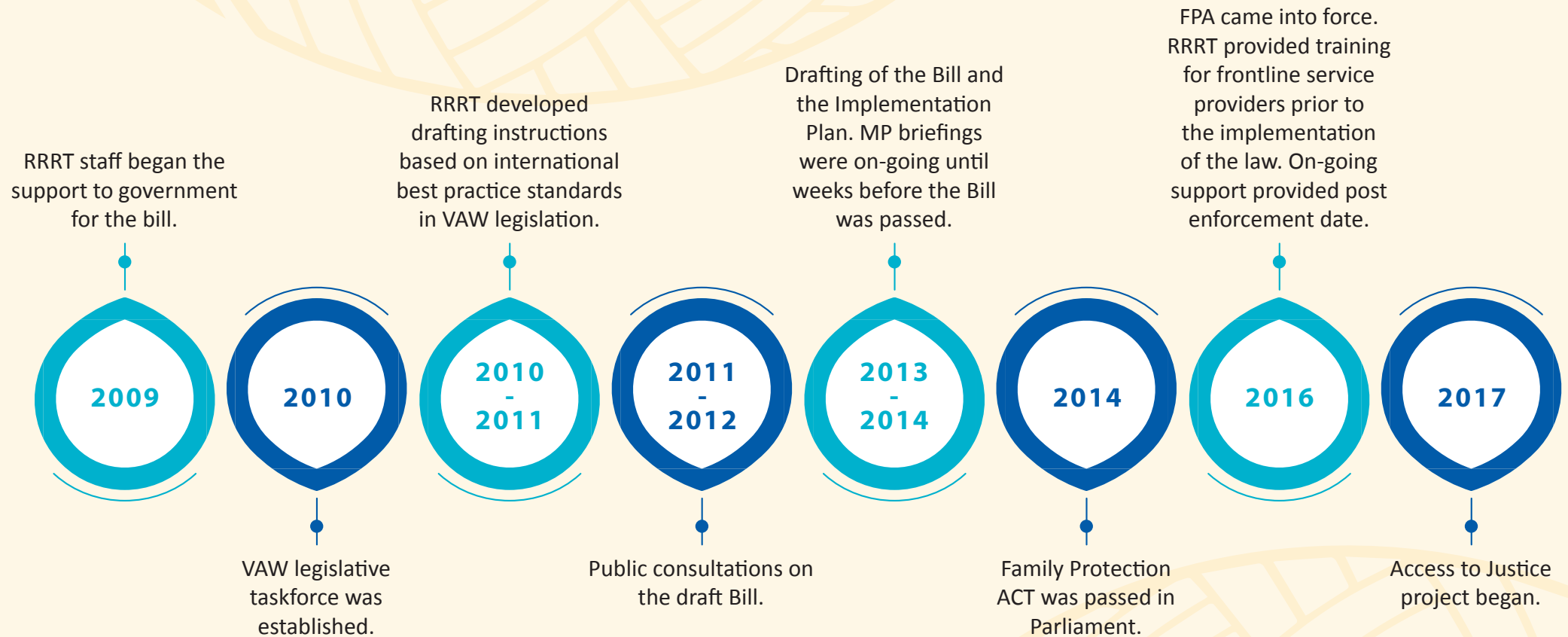


Figure 1: Timeline of support by HRSD/RRRT towards the Family Protection Act

Under the FPA, survivors are able to apply for a protection order through the Magistrates Court. The law recognises that the majority of the population in Solomon Islands live in rural and remote areas and are not able to access the courts. There is a need for survivors to be able to access immediate protection when the courts are not open, or in situations where the survivor has to travel long distances to access the courts. These Interim (temporary) Protection Orders (IPOs) can be issued by Magistrates' Courts and AJs.

The IPO is directed towards stopping the perpetrator (also referred to as the respondent) from committing domestic violence and may contain conditions which they must adhere to. An IPO is in force while a Full Protection Order (FPO) is being considered or granted by the Magistrates' Court (Solomon Islands' court of summary jurisdiction).

Key challenges for Authorised Justices (AJs)

AJs are community-based lay judicial officers appointed under the Local Courts Act. Under section 17(2) of the Act, Local Court Justices are given powers to be Authorised Justices and they can make, change or end IPOs. As such, all existing Local Court Justices were made AJs by virtue of the FPA when it came into action. Local Court Justices are appointed by the Chief Justice and are supported by the Local Courts. The majority of Local Court Justices were male and were chiefs or elders. The A2J Project had a specific focus on supporting them in their role as AJs under the FPA.

This AJ role provided for in the FPA was a new role. The FPA provided this additional role to an existing structure that was established by the Local Courts Act. The implementation of the role of the AJs was one that government had not been able to progress prior to the A2J Project. There was a need to clarify who these AJs were, if all AJs would be expected to be able to assist survivors of domestic violence (DV) and also the need to ensure there was training provided, on the law, DV and the impacts on a survivor.

With the geographical setting of the islands, it is an everyday challenge for people in communities to travel to urban centres to access services. This was a reality for survivors of DV who may have had to walk for hours, travel by trucks or boats in the open ocean to be able to seek the assistance of a magistrate to issue an IPO or a final order. Prior to the implementation of this project, no IPOs had been issued by AJs.²

² Presentation by Chief Magistrate Emma Garo at the project's final annual stakeholder meeting in 2020.

Another challenge was that the application process for the IPO required people to fill out forms that were printed in English and be able to engage with the court system. This took time and resources that would present the biggest barrier for women and girls experiencing violence in their homes. In addition, while the FPA provided relevant forms to be completed, there was a lack of forms, particularly forms to assist the AJs in their role of issuing IPOs. However, this gap was addressed by the project as all relevant forms were made available.

The A2J project recognises that the high rates of DV being reported are much lower than the reality in communities since many cases go unreported because of the challenges that a victim faces to access needed services.

Rational for the A2J Pilot Project

The Regional Rights Resource Team (RRRT) undertook two scoping missions to Solomon Islands in 2016 to inform its strategy for intervention and support for family protection in Solomon Islands. The first scoping mission revealed the need to provide technical support for AJs to fulfil their role as defined under section 17(2) of the Act which permitted AJs to issue, amend and revoke IPOs. It was crucial to provide the support to AJs as they were in a position to cover remote areas where there are no courts and no police.

The second scoping mission revealed several gaps in the implementation of the Act, in particular the barriers faced by women survivors of violence to access protection under the FPA. Under the system at the time, the Magistrates' Courts were the only judicial body empowered to issue IPOs. The problem was exacerbated for women who lived in rural communities and could not access the Magistrates' Court. There was nowhere else for women to obtain protection orders. In addition, survivors of DV often found it difficult to report the abuse being committed against them and were often re-victimised in the process of obtaining formal redress for the abuse.

The pilot project

The A2J project commenced as a pilot in May 2017 in two island provinces: Malaita and Guadalcanal. The project was co-implemented by the SPC, the MWYCFA and the MJLA. The project was accommodated within the Women's Division of the MWYCFA. The project was funded by the United Nations Trust Fund for Ending Violence Against Women (UN Trust Fund) and the Government of Australia.

The project was initially designed with the sole support of the UN Trust Fund. That part of the project concluded in December 2020. Additional funding support provided by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) in Solomon Islands allowed the team to strengthen outcomes and also apply some of the learnings from the implementation, taking into account data from the monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) component of the project to ensure that the project was further contextualised for the project sites identified.

Access to Justice (A2J) project focus

The three key outcomes of the A2J project were:

- ▶ AJs in Guadalcanal and Malaita complying with their duties under the FPA in a gender-sensitive manner by project-end;
- ▶ Women in Guadalcanal and Malaita having agency to engage with Human Rights Advocates (HRAs, subsequently renamed Community Facilitators) and AJs to access justice for DV; and,
- ▶ Community-based organisations (CBOs) and Human Rights Advocates (HRAs) consistently utilising behavioural change communication (BCC) and information, education and communication (IEC) materials on FPA when delivering community awareness sessions.

The project was directed towards advancing the implementation of key elements of the FPA working with 46 AJs in 37 communities. In addition, the project created a new role: Community Facilitators (CFs). This role – of which there are 40 incumbents, 20 in each project province – was largely focused on alerting the main project beneficiaries (women and girls), and others, about the role of AJs, issues of gender-based violence and their rights under the FPA. Broadly, the project supported AJs to be able to provide immediate protection for survivors of DV while also focusing on developing IEC materials that were designed to generate awareness on DV, FPA, IPOs and the role of the AJs. The project provided an avenue for survivors of DV to access a service that was previously primarily available in the main centres where the courts are.

The project recognised that working with AJs would provide opportunities for easier access to IPOs for victims of DV, but would also pose challenges as most of the AJs were older men who held cultural leadership roles in communities. This

could deter survivors of DV seeking assistance through this process, bringing to head the realities of a deeply entrenched patriarchal society.

Having CFs was a strategy to ensure that survivors knew about AJs and their role, and to ensure continued messaging on DV and the need for it to be addressed. This role was a response to addressing the gap of dissemination of information on the FPA. While the law had progressive provisions and protections, there was a lack of information reaching communities and a gap in understanding by service providers. Through the work of the CFs, the project applied a model of continued information on DV, the impacts on families, the FPA and the role of AJs, in a way that was easily understandable, acceptable and accessible for people in the community.



Fast facts



46 Authorised Justices in
37 communities

40 Community
Facilitators

20 in Malaita (16 women and 4 men)

20 in Guadalcanal (18 women and 2 men)



2 guides

Produced 2 step-by-step guide on how to apply for an Interim Protection Order





7000+

booklets on the FPA and on the role of the AJs have been disseminated in the communities in the two pilot provinces.



48%

received materials containing information on domestic violence and/or AJ

**216
Survivors**

AJs assisted 216 survivors of domestic violence.



40

Interim Protection Orders issued by AJs



Project governance

The MWYCFA hosted the project while the MOJLA through the Local Courts Coordinator, the Policy Unit and Magistrates' Court provided support and advice to ensure that the project activities were aligned with their mandate.

The direction and management of the project was guided by two key coordinating mechanisms that convened once a year: a Project Steering Committee, and a Stakeholders' Meeting.

Project Steering Committee (PSC)

The PSC facilitates high-level decisions on programming. Its membership consists of the MJLA and the MWYCFA, DFAT as a donor partner, UN Women, the courts including the Local Court and the Magistrates' Court and an NGO representative. The committee is jointly chaired by the MWYCFA and DFAT. During the implementation of the project, the PSC provided guidance on the following:

- ▶ strategic guidance and quality oversight to programme implementation;
- ▶ resolving of strategic level issues and risks;
- ▶ amendments to the operations of the project;
- ▶ assessment/review of project progress, and
- ▶ advice and guidance on sensitive partnership issues.

Annual Stakeholders' Meeting

Once a year, the project convened a meeting with key stakeholders working within the access-to-justice sector. The meetings were a platform for the project team to share the implementation status of the project, achievements and challenges. In addition, this meeting enabled the project staff to explore how the project could link to and complement other work on eliminating gender-based violence in the locations where the pilot project was implemented, and in Honiara.

Practicalities of access to justice in communities – implementation and adaptation

A fundamental principle of the project, which is also aligned to the FPA, is a survivor-centred approach. The approach places the survivors of violence at the centre of all interventions for their safety and protection. The approach entails treating survivors with dignity and respect, ensuring privacy and confidentiality of information, access to safe, supportive and non-judgmental service providers, access to information and support for informed decision-making by the survivor.

Facilitating AJs to perform their role

Capacity building and mentoring

The project focused on supporting AJs through building their capacity on the FPA in terms of understanding DV and its impacts, as well as their role to support a survivor of DV through the issuance of an IPO. RRRT developed a training manual for AJs. It was developed in a way that encouraged AJs to learn, think and talk about DV and its impacts on children, women, families and communities as part of their responsibilities. In addition, a 'user manual' was also developed that contained the same information the AJs would be learning through the training and would assist them as they carried out their role. The purpose of the AJs' manuals was to:

- ▶ Raise awareness among participants on violence against women and girls, including on DV;
- ▶ Provide participants with the necessary skills and knowledge to perform their duties as AJs, and
- ▶ Build confidence in participants to be AJs in Solomon Islands

These training manuals were used in the annual trainings for AJs which were held separately for each province, and brought together all the AJs in the respective provinces. Content for the training manual was written in simple and clear language to ensure that the AJs were able to easily grasp the information.

However, there were several lessons learnt during the course of the project and necessary adaptations were made when and where needed. Key lessons include:

- ▶ **Step-by-step approach to capacity-building** – An important feedback shared at the beginning of the trainings was the need to conduct a series of trainings or mentoring sessions that presented information in different blocks. This allowed more time for each topic and catered for the need to proceed gradually with the content that was being shared.
- ▶ **Annual training** – There was recognition that there needed to be more trainings and mentoring provided for the AJs, recognising that AJs are officers who have been given judicial roles, but do not have any legal training. As the project progressed the team adapted the training modality in a series of trainings to assist the AJs better understand the content.
- ▶ **Education level** – A key aspect of capacity-building is the need to understand the level of education and understanding of participants. The reality was that the AJs had different levels of understanding of training content and the team had to be flexible and adapt the tools and methods to provide capacity and mentoring support. While the manuals were pitched at a simple level, there was a need to break the content into smaller sections and to include additional time for AJs to action what they had learnt. Finally, ongoing mentoring was required to ensure that AJs had the space to receive further support.
- ▶ **Expectation and reality of skills** – The A2J Project had a key focus on supporting AJs to undertake their role of issuing IPOs for survivors of DV. However, the reality was that for some of the AJs, being able to complete the forms was a challenge. This was fed back to the MOJLA as it would be a factor that could hinder the AJs' ability to assist a survivor with an IPO.
- ▶ **Entrenched gender bias** – The project worked with AJs who were also cultural and faith leaders in their communities. In a patriarchal society there is a deeply entrenched gender bias which the AJs come with into their role. This is an additional factor that the project had

to also take into consideration. This added an additional layer as the project focused on building capacity and changing behaviour towards survivors of DV to be better able to assist them. Based on the project learning, it is imperative that future AJs go through a process of re-learning, addressing their gender bias and prejudices in order to be able to provide the best support to a survivor.

- ▶ **Monitoring support for AJs** – Emphasising the do-no-harm principle was essential throughout the life of the project to ensure that the team continued to keep in close contact with the AJs. Whether this was through the trainings, mentoring or through calls with the AJs, it was important to monitor the support that AJs provided – or chose not to provide – for survivors. Further support was provided to government ministries involved to ensure that queries were responded to or issues were addressed. Finally, it was important that the project team was also available to respond to calls from AJs, or to assist them with any challenges they were facing. Through this monitoring support provided to the AJs, the project team was able to also identify that some AJs being supported by the project were not suitable for appointment as AJs (for various reasons). The team shared this feedback to the Chief Justice when the list of AJs to be appointed was being finalised.

Guidance for using the FPA IPO forms

The FPA provides several forms that people must complete in relation to an IPO.³ These include:

- ▶ **Form 2** – Application for Protection Order
- ▶ **Form 3** – Protection Order
- ▶ **Form 4** – Application for Variation/Revocation of Protection Order
- ▶ **Form 5** – Notice of Variation/Revocation of Protection Order
- ▶ **Form 7** – Notice to Attend
- ▶ **Form 8** – Withdrawal of Application for Protection Order

³ Form 1: Police Safety Notice and Form 6: Affidavit of Service (require for an AJ to issue an IPO).



As part of capacity-building, it was key that the AJs understood what the various forms were for, their role in supporting survivors of DV, and in what situations they would need to complete the forms. Noting that all the forms were in English, it was important that the forms were explained in detail and through the training and mentoring support the AJs were also provided with the opportunity to practice using the forms and seek clarification where needed. The project also developed a guide to assist AJs in their role to issue an IPO. A similar guide targeted at survivors was also designed with the aim to help them understand the information that would be required in the forms. These guides supplemented the trainings that were provided to AJs.

To ensure successful completion of the application process for an IPO, it was important that AJs understood the types of questions or information they would require from a survivor of DV to issue an IPO. In addition, it was important to ensure the AJs *did no harm* as they assisted a survivor through the process of attaining an IPO. The project therefore developed two step-by-step guides to apply for an IPO. One was a how-to guide for AJs to write an IPO and assist survivors to apply for it, and the second guide was to assist survivors apply for an IPO.

The project supported the government by drafting the remaining forms (Forms 4, 5 and 8) that were outstanding, and also assisted government in printing all six forms that AJs needed to carry out their role under section 17(2).

While the pilot project addressed the need for survivors of DV to access justice, the bigger justice system also had to be working so that a survivor could receive the protection needed. The role of the AJs is but one aspect of the bigger cycle of justice. All service providers need to work together, and the systems (established by service providers) would have to adapt to the realities of people in the rural areas so that they could better access services set out in the law and that no survivor was left out.

The Solomon Islands has the SAFENET⁴ network, which is the coordination grouping of the relevant service providers that support for survivors of DV. However, the AJs are not linked to SAFENET since the role of issuing of IPOs is done by court-appointed officers, hence maintaining their independence.

Therefore, it is important that stakeholders such as SAFENET assist in disseminating information about AJs in their communities.

4 Solomon Islands Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs: <http://www.mwycfa.gov.sb/resources-2/media-releases/33-safenet-s-more-coordinated-quality-services-for-survivors-of-violence-against-women-and-girls.html>

Community Facilitators (CFs) – capacity building and ongoing support to raise awareness in the community

The pilot project identified a group of CFs who resided in the same village as the AJ or in a nearby community so they could work closely with them. Their role was to carry out awareness sessions within the community on DV, the impacts of DV, the FPA, support available for survivors (and referral to other services) and the role of the AJs.

Identification of the CFs from the pilot sites

In appointing the CFs it was important to identify people who had some understanding and initial training on gender, DV and preferably the FPA. This ensured some form of vetting had been carried out on the person, as they would be recommended by partner CSOs that worked on DV. They would have attended some prior training and therefore the A2J Project was not starting from scratch. In doing no harm to survivors, there would have been some vetting of the person's ability to share information and be a trusted person within their communities.

Another factor taken into consideration was that women may not feel comfortable sharing their intimate family issues with men within their communities. Issues of safety and confidentiality were key when selecting CFs. At the beginning of the A2J Project there was a challenge as the majority of the CFs appointed were men. The project initially planned to work with the recommended CFs identified by CSOs to be suitable for the role. However, there was recognition that the partner CSOs did not work in all the project sites and therefore the project team would need to find other candidates. This process had to be undertaken again with a specific objective to recruit more women as CFs. Given the purpose of the project to increase women's agency to access protection under the Act there needed to be more focus on identifying CFs (preferably women) who lived in the same or close to the community as an AJ. The project had to rely on the recommendations of AJs who identified people in their communities that could undertake this role of CF. The AJs went back to their communities to find people who might be interested in becoming a CF; some nominated a male and female. Those nominees who made it past the project's screening questions were interviewed and selected. Ongoing mentoring and monitoring of the CFs assisted in confirming the suitability of some of them.

Capacity building and ongoing support for CFs – certification process

A process was designed to support the CFs through the capacity-building process and certify CFs who were ready to engage in community awareness programmes. A CFs' manual was also developed to support this training. CFs received resources to assist them through the community awareness as well as ongoing mentoring and monitoring opportunities to continue to strengthen their capacity throughout the certification process.

As a result of these engagements the A2J Project was able to track the messages CFs were sharing in the community. Mentoring and advice were provided on how CFs could carry out the awareness sessions. Preparation of CFs to engage with communities and how they responded to questions was also supported. Finally, CFs were observed in their interactions with communities and feedback provided at the completion of these sessions.

While the certification process was set up to ensure that CFs' skills gradually improved, it had to take into account the realities of working with CFs with diverse education levels and who were not used to assessment methods. This is an aspect that projects that may want to include certification processes need to consider. For example, it would be useful to consider if the group that is brought together is used to paper-based assessments and considering how this may be woven into verbal assessments or through observation sessions if needed. Again, the *do-no-harm* principle is key, not only in ensuring that CFs do no further harm to survivors but also providing the correct information that would assist people in communities.

Finally, the project acknowledged that this was a pilot and wanted to leave the CFs with a certification process that would create a pool of trained facilitators at the end of the project. These facilitators could then be linked to support existing work by CSOs or could be considered as potential AJs.

Tools for awareness

HRSD developed an awareness pack to support the CFs in their sessions within communities. The pack contained several tools that CFs had been trained on and could use. These tools focused on gender roles, DV, FPA and application for an IPO. It also included a list of frequently asked questions (FAQs) that the

CFs could be asked, as well as a set of answers which they could use in their responses. The awareness packs also had contacts of key stakeholders and services that the CFs could refer survivors to for assistance.

Separate booklets were developed for men and women. These booklets focused on behavioural change messages for both genders and were shared with communities. The booklets had the same content but were contextualised for the respective audiences. For men, the message was focused on protecting their families and not inflicting harm. For women, the booklet encouraged them to seek assistance if experiencing some form of violence, and that a happy and safe home was one that did not have violence.

The A2J Project team worked with government and CSO stakeholders to develop messages for the awareness packs and the IEC materials. This engagement was key to confirming that the content and the messages were pitched at an appropriate level for Solomon Island communities, and to confirm that people were able to engage with the content. Materials were written in simple English and in the local language, Solomons Pidgin, to boost accessibility for communities. To ensure relevance, appropriateness of the content and adequacy of the translations, stakeholders were given an opportunity to provide feedback on the materials and the suitability of illustrations. This ensured greater ownership and acceptance of the materials.

In addition to stakeholders, the project team also asked for feedback from communities to determine whether the messages and images in the materials were acceptable. It was interesting to note that communities preferred to keep messages and images that content designers thought may be seen as too confronting and would not be supported by communities. **This was a key lesson for the project:** to not just rely on the feedback of CSOs that work in the space but to also check with the communities where material would be utilised.

Volunteer role of CFs

The CF is a volunteer role which relies on people from within villages who are passionate about assisting members of their community. It was important to sustain the CFs' passion to ensure continued awareness within villages, most

of which were in locations that could only be accessed by trucks or boats. To remedy this, a small allowance was provided to CFs as they carried out awareness in the communities. However, this proved challenging given that many did not have bank accounts, and banks and ATMs were not available in these communities. Therefore, going forward, there is need to find other means of making these payments. Alternatively, future projects could explore opportunities to embed these positions within existing government structures at the local level. The A2J Project lost some CFs who moved because of employment or education opportunities and had to be replaced. However, this demonstrated an unplanned positive outcome of strengthening the capabilities of the CFs in that they were able to find other opportunities.



Other monitoring and evaluation tools

Implementing monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) systems for a rural-based EVAWG project

In a pilot project such as this it is important to set in place strong monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) systems. This is to assist learning and be adaptive throughout the course of the project. Projects that work with service providers need to track the change in knowledge as a result of capacity-building, and the corresponding behaviour change of service providers as it would impact their ability to implement or take action.

Monitoring and evaluation tools

a) **Authorised Justices**

There were several tools used to monitor the work the AJs undertook as well as the effectiveness of the capacity-building programmes provided. These included:

AJs logbook

The logbooks were used by AJs to document the number of DV cases they were assisting. The account tracked the number of IPOs that the AJs had issued and was also used to document referral cases. However, to implement this tool effectively there needs to be sufficient resources allocated to ensure that a dedicated team member is following up to collect this information.

Training pre- and post-tests

To support the ongoing capacity-building and mentoring support provided for AJs it was essential that pre- and post-tests were administered. The tests were also translated into Pidgin to make it accessible for the AJs.

The tests provided a better understanding of the baseline information the AJs had prior to the training. The tests also showed any shifts in knowledge, attitudes and practices. As per the projects experience, the tests need to be appropriately crafted for the range of education levels of AJs.



b) Community Facilitators

The training pre and post-tests also monitored the understanding of CFs with regards to the content that was shared in the training and mentoring support. This tool provided the project team with better assessment of the effectiveness of the methodology that was utilised in the training and to also know what content the CFs were able to understand from the training.

Community Facilitator's logbook

Like the AJs, the CFs also used a logbook. The CFs used the logbook to record the numbers of people that attended their awareness sessions, and to track how many women the project was able to reach. This data was disaggregated by gender, age and disabilities. This information was shared with the project team over the phone and then verified by the team using the logbooks when the team visited the communities. As the project required updated data as soon as possible and it was proving challenging for CFs to keep logbooks updated, the project trialled using tablets with a small number of CFs to assist in data collection to allow the project team to receive this information in a timely manner. However, challenges encountered with this method included connectivity issues, availability of electricity and ensuring the safety of the devices in the communities. Considering this, tablets were not widely distributed.

Annual focus group discussions

Focus group discussions conducted on an annual basis consisted of open-ended questions that focused on DV and women's access to justice, understanding the use of IEC materials and perspectives on the AJs' attitudes towards violence against women. The feedback collected from these discussions informed the review of the IEC materials and the improvements that needed to be made. The AJs' perspectives were also utilised by the team to look into areas the training and mentoring programme needed to strengthen.

Additional resources developed

Drama scripts – Dream Cast Theatre

Domestic violence is a difficult topic to discuss in communities and families. The project had to find creative ways to engage families and communities in these conversations. It was important that the strategies and solutions were developed by communities. To initiate this, a script was developed by the team that incorporated DV scenarios. The A2J Project contracted a local theatre group, Dream Cast, to role-play scenarios of DV to open up discussions on the skit and also strategies of addressing DV.

Pacific Way video

Through the *Pacific Way*, SPC's television programme, the team was able to document and share the work that the A2J Project was doing in Solomon Islands. The *Pacific Way* crew filmed the work that Dream Cast theatre group was doing in the communities performing in villages in Guadalcanal including Lambi, Marau and Kusika. Filming was another way of encouraging discussions in the communities on a difficult topic and sharing with a broader audience.

Radio messaging

Recognising the wide reach of radio in the provinces, PAOA FM, a national radio station, was used as a platform to share key information with people in the community. This proved especially useful when COVID-19 proved to be a challenge for the project in 2020 and 2021. As movement became restricted, the project team used radio to share key information about the AJs and services that were available for survivors of DV during the pandemic.

Impacts of the project

The A2J Project was set up to assist AJs understand their roles under the FPA and to be able to assist survivors of DV with accessing an IPO. When the project began, IPOs had only been issued by magistrates and this service was not available in rural and remote communities. The A2J Project worked with 46 AJs from both Guadalcanal and Malaita provinces and by 31 December 2020, AJs had issued a total of 40 IPOs.

It is important to note that an IPO does not come into effect unless it is served on the perpetrator. This is a limitation of the project as it did not focus on the serving of IPOs. However, the project has been able to work with the police to carry out training on the FPA, DV, the role of police in assisting a survivor, and the role of the AJ in the serving of an IPO. This work also focused on supporting the networking between AJs and the police and better understanding their roles. After a police training in Malaita, an AJ worked with one of the participants to serve an IPO that had been issued.

The project's focus was to assist AJs understand their role, the content of the law, the gendered aspect of DV and the impacts this may have on a survivor which could affect their ability to access the law and its protection. The project was able to facilitate the increase in knowledge and understanding of the FPA for the AJs. The project also supported building capacity and changing behaviour to ensure that AJs were able to undertake their role of issuing IPOs as set out in the FPA. As a result, increase in AJs' knowledge on the FPA was a key impact of the project. The project team provided ongoing technical advice on the implementation of the FPA, supported the identification of appointable AJs and assisted through the process of identifying prescribed persons.

A key lesson learnt was that more time needed to be factored in for trainings and training content needed to be simplified to ensure that AJs were able to understand the FPA and the expectations of them. Another lesson was that deeply entrenched gender bias would take longer than the life of the project to change. The project was able to see the change in some of the AJs and some had even begun to work closely with their fellow AJs to support their learning.

The diagram below shows the key impacts for the project as it ensures long-term sustainability of the project.

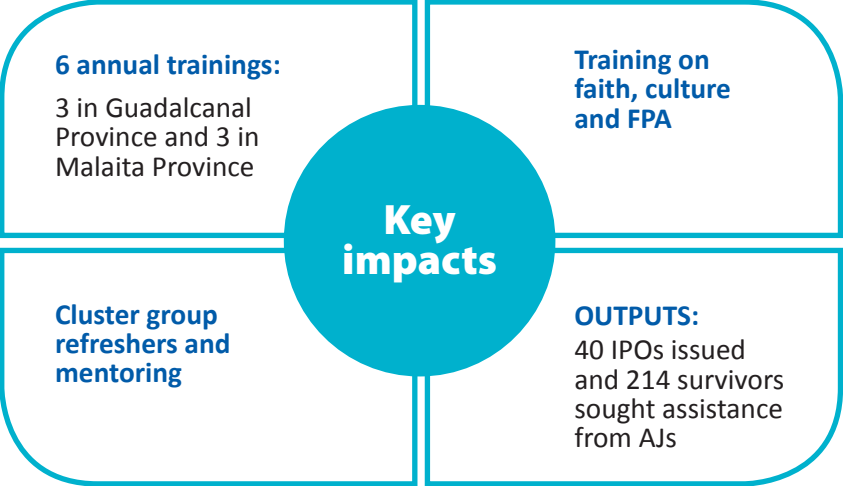
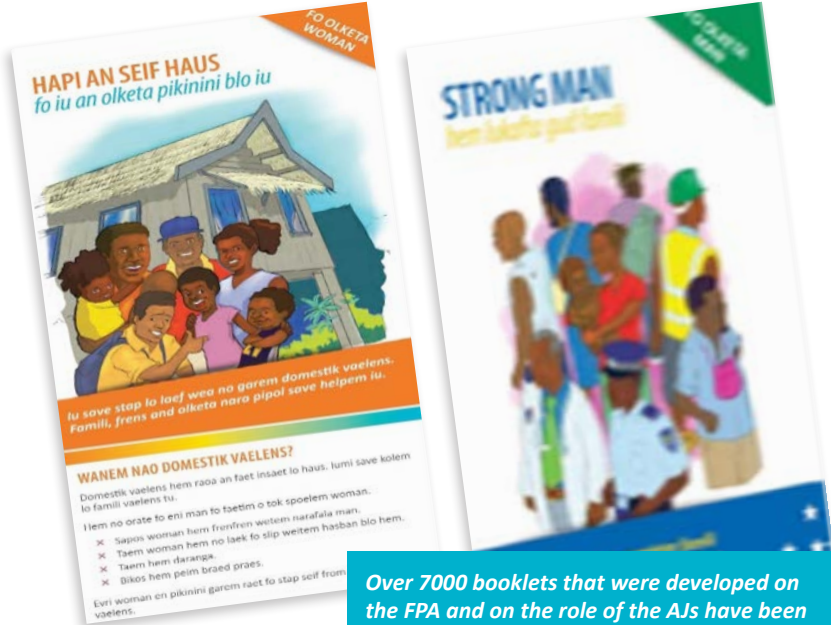


Figure 2: Key impacts of the Access to Justice Project

Impact of CFs’ work

The final project evaluation indicated that the training and awareness materials developed as part of the project have generally been well distributed in project communities as shown in the table below: Among woman respondents across the two provinces (n = 138), half had been provided with materials which contained information about DV and/or AJs. This was a similar situation to males (n = 81), with 48 per cent having received these materials (52 per cent not having received them). Most women and men had received these materials from a CF (46 per cent of women and 34 per cent of men).

According to the survey, the main thing women respondents learnt from the materials – and resoundingly so – was the different kinds of domestic violence (DV). This was also the case for the male respondents. There are signs that the IEC materials will continue to be used after project completion. In addition to being physical items that will potentially circulate within communities for a period, discussions with Oxfam Solomon Islands for the final project evaluation indicated that they have been distributing the Pidgin versions of the male and female booklets as part of their ‘Seif Families’ project. Oxfam stated that the materials had reached as far as the Shortland Islands, close to Bougainville.



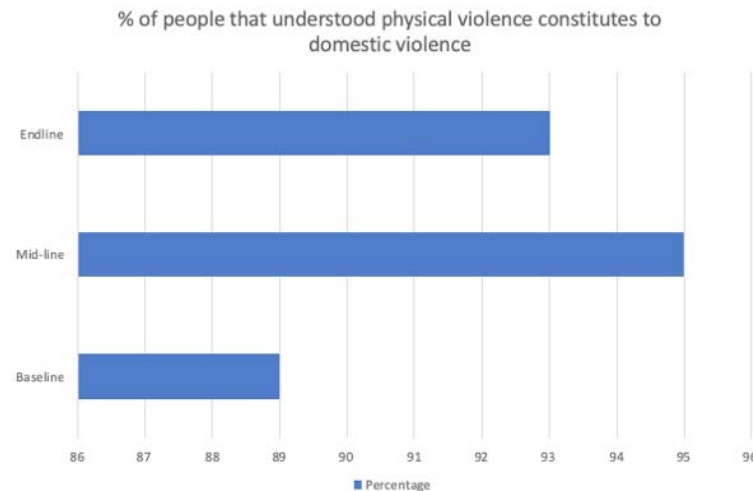
Over 7000 booklets that were developed on the FPA and on the role of the AJs have been disseminated in the communities in the two pilot provinces.

Impacts for rural women

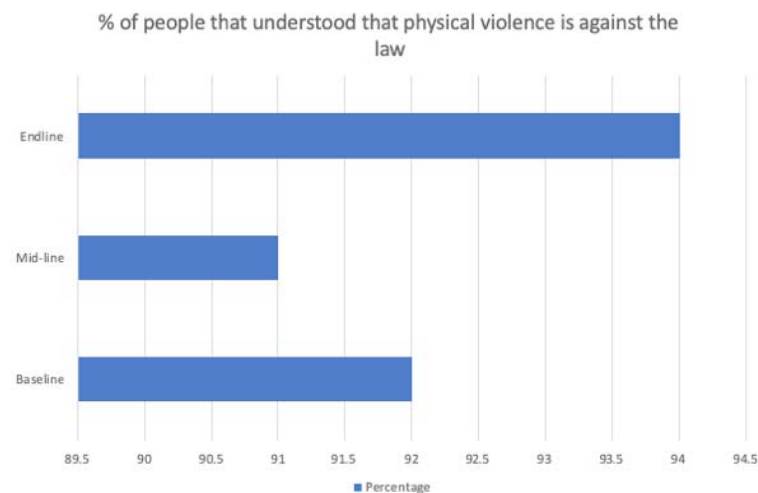
The final evaluation of the project revealed broader behaviour and attitude change in project communities. These were gauged through a series of questions that were asked over the life of the project: at a baseline survey undertaken in May 2018; at a midline survey undertaken in August 2019; and at an end line survey undertaken in September 2020. The project consistently covered three sites across the three data collection exercises. The six sites in the end line survey were sites surveyed during the midline as well. Some sites were inaccessible due to bad weather/road/accessibility, and therefore the project had to identify other sites. As part of preparations for these surveys, questions were translated into Pidgin and enumerators were trained. Twenty questions were posed to the project’s primary beneficiaries (women and girls in select project communities) over the three data collection exercises. These questions focused on women’s understanding, attitudes and responses to DV. Noting the important limitations outlined in the earlier sections of the evaluation report, including limitations due to the remote locations of the evaluation sites, the results are mixed and, in general, show there has not been an across-the-board increase in positive responses across the three surveys. Among the more

notable results are:

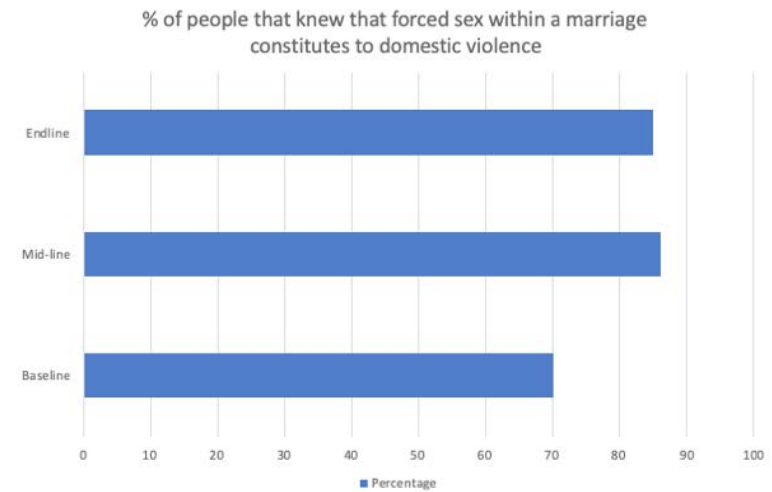
- The vast majority of respondents understood that a man beating his wife constituted DV with this number having changed.



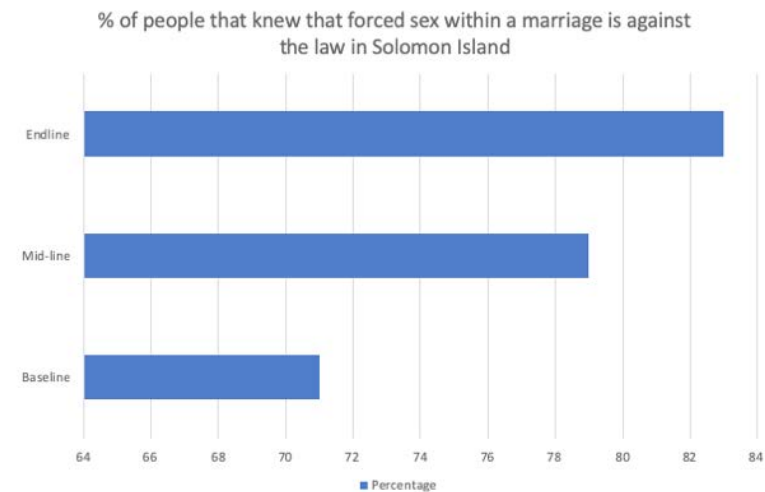
- The vast majority of respondents knew that if a man beats his wife, it is against the law in Solomon Islands:



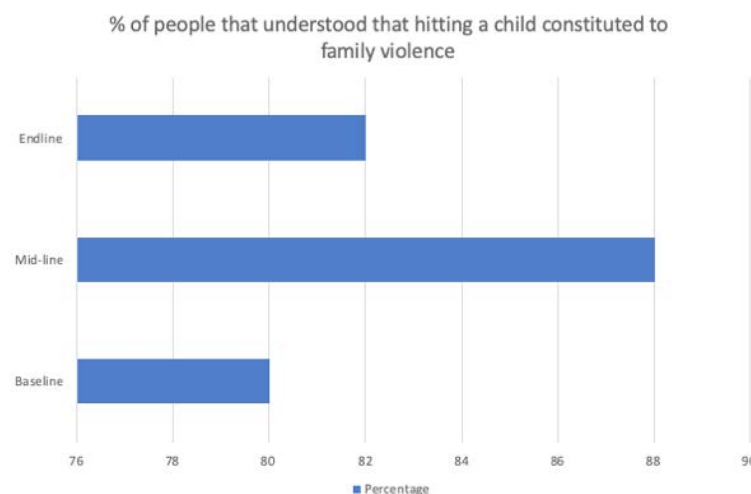
- More respondents knew at the end of the project that forced sex within relationships or between individuals in a relationship is domestic violence:



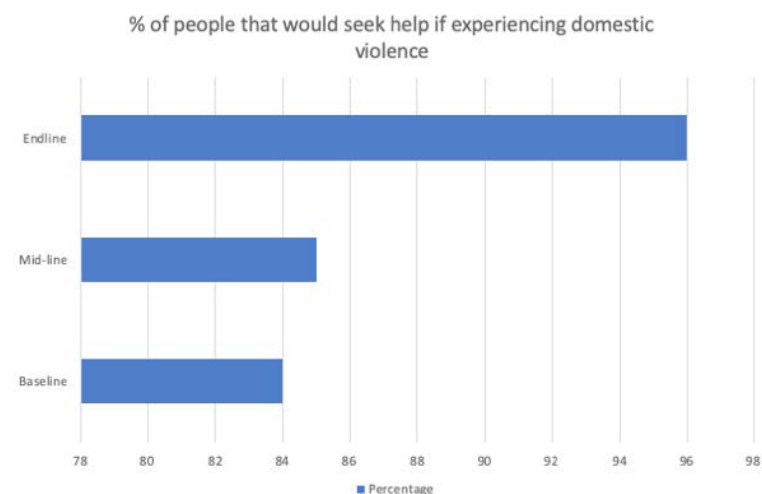
- More respondents knew at the end of the project that forced sex within a relationship is against the law in Solomon Islands:



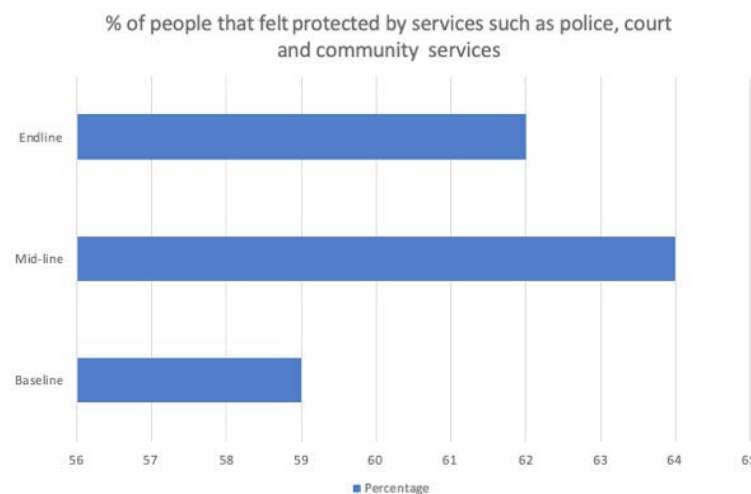
- A vast majority of respondents understood that a parent hitting their child constituted family violence, with the figure having changed:



- Most respondents indicated they would seek help if experiencing domestic violence, with the number having increased over the life of the project:



- A majority of respondents felt protected by services such as the police, courts and community services, with this figure having changed:



These ongoing tracking of communities was key to seeing the change in knowledge, behaviour and practice the project contributed.⁵

⁵ End of Project Evaluation, (2021), *A Pilot Project to Increase Women's Access to Justice Guadalcanal and Malaita Provinces Solomon Islands*, SPC, Pacific Community.

Other impacts of the project

Collaboration with the police

A gap identified by the project was the need to work with the police to ensure serving IPOs on the perpetrators (respondents). To assist, trainings were organised with the police in Auki and Marau Provinces. The project team supported the facilitation of the training and the introduction of the police and court staff to the AJs in those provinces. As a result of the training support, the Auki police have worked with an AJ to serve IPO. There are opportunities to continue this collaboration to ensure that the support provided by an AJ is then translated to the service of an IPO on a perpetrator.

Support for the judiciary

In carrying out a project such as this, it is important to maintain strong relationships/networks with the courts. To do this, the project team worked with a group of magistrates to provide support for a training programme for magistrates. This helped build and strengthen relationships with the magistrates and the Local Courts. Despite this being broader than the focus of the project, it was important that the A2J Project was able to contribute within this space.

Geographical reach of the project and applying the FPA in the provinces

A key focus of the A2J Project was to test the applicability of the provisions of the FPA. Any law that is passed in a country must apply equally to all people regardless of where they live. For HRSD, it was a challenge to implement a project outside the main centres where the Country Focal Officer is based. It was therefore important for the project to work closely with the AJs and CFs to improve their understanding of the FPA to strengthen the support they provided to survivors.

Despite the challenges in implementation, the project reached and worked with communities that had not received this type of support previously. Geography proved to be a challenge for this project. There were challenges of transportation in these remote communities making it difficult to maintain regular face-to-face contact with AJs and CFs. Some of the community sites required the team to travel on large trucks, hire vehicles and drivers to take them to the site and in other cases the team was required to travel on small boats to access the communities. To help, the team identified trusted

vendors who could assist the team and the AJs as they travelled to support the implementation of the project.

Communication was another ongoing challenge in terms of monitoring data collection and mentoring for AJs and CFs. The team ensured that regular calls were made to maintain contact with AJs and CFs. The project team was also receptive of calls from AJs at odd hours to respond to their questions and provide support. It was a challenge for the team to find ways to provide ongoing support to AJs and CFs and ensure that survivors of DV in these areas were able to access avenues that were previously not readily available.

For this to work there needed to be a project team in Solomon Islands that understood the challenges of working in the provinces. It was key to have members of the team who understood the layout of the community sites where the project worked. Also key was understanding the learning context within the communities and the best ways to engage and share messages with community members.

The project required a team consisting of problem solvers, as many of the approaches the team undertook to get support to the two provinces were not previously used by partners. Therefore, ongoing learning and strategising was required throughout the pilot to ensure that the project was appropriate to the context and would achieve its key objectives.

Co-implementing arrangement with the ministries

The FPA is being co-implemented by the MWCYF and the MJLA so it was important that the pilot project worked closely with the ministries in implementing the project. This was to ensure the long-term sustainability of the project. The Permanent Secretaries for both ministries were consulted throughout the project and their views taken on board in mapping a way forward for the project.

Participation of women in the project – CFs' role

While the A2J Project was focused on ensuring that women and girls were able to access justice it was important that those who had a role in the project were also supportive towards women. One of the ways this was done was

through recruiting more women as CFs. Having more women assist survivors also addresses the cultural barriers that may restrict a woman from seeking help from a man in her community, noting that survivors of DV may want to access help, or advice and share their experiences with another woman. At the beginning of the project the team had to relook at the group that was selected to be CFs to ensure they included more women. Forty CFs were engaged through the A2J Pilot Project: 20 in Malaita (16 women and four men) and 20 in Guadalcanal (18 women and two men).

Prescribed persons – contributing to the process

The AJ's role was determined by law and those who held the position in the island court system were cultural and faith leaders. In many communities older men held these roles. These AJs reflected on the challenge in supporting a survivor and the perception their communities and their families had towards them as they worked closely with women. While the project worked to address gender biases and stereotypes, with the AJs there was also a recognition that there needed to be more women who were able to issue IPOs. This took into consideration cultural barriers and gender roles in the communities that may restrict a woman from seeking assistance from a male member of their community. There are cultural constraints for a woman to share her experiences of family violence with an AJ (who is an older man or is someone of chiefly title). Part of the project feedback was support for the recommendation to include more women who could be considered "prescribed persons" under the FPA. This is another category of persons who can also issue IPOs.

The A2J Pilot Project was able to contribute to the discussions on developing regulations for the prescribed persons. The project team has contributed to the briefing paper requested by the Chief Justice that examines options for the appointment of prescribed persons. The A2J Project has also identified some CFs who can be considered as potential prescribed persons.⁶ The pilot project undertook the first training with potential candidates for prescribed persons. However, there is no further information on who would be included in this group.

⁶ Prescribed Persons is a category of persons that can issue IPOs as set out in the FPA.

Influencing the make-up of AJs and contributing to the discussions for 'prescribed persons'

The lessons learnt in engaging with AJs and the challenges faced by the project have been shared with the Chief Justice as his office considers the final group of AJs who will officially be appointed to their roles. The A2J Project was an opportunity to understand the ability of those island court justices to be able to support survivors of DV. There were some AJs, who despite the trainings and mentoring, chose not to assist a survivor seeking an IPO. This information was also shared with the Chief Justice's office.

A gap in the island court justices was the limited number of women who could be appointed. This was because the role usually went to selected cultural or faith leaders from the pilot provinces. They were usually men and therefore the names suggested for AJs were mostly that of men. However, "prescribed persons" make up a third category of those who can issue IPOs and work is under way to define who this category of people may be. This is an opportunity to ensure that more women are appointed into this role to better assist other women. This provides an opportunity to ensure that a key challenge highlighted by the project is addressed.

Making connections to the broader work of ending violence against women in Solomon Islands

The A2J Project contributes to the broader work of ending violence against women (EVAW) in Solomon Islands. The project shared learnings of implementation and lessons learnt while supporting survivors in areas outside the main centres with partners who work in the EVAW space.

One such network is SAFENET, a referral network that includes government and civil society members who work on ways to improve quality services for survivors of gender-based violence. The network continuously explores ways to improve how survivors of gender-based violence access services. The AJs and CFs connect with members of SAFENET when they have meetings in their communities and share the work that they do to support survivors.

Another set of connections were developed during the implementation of the A2J Project where the team worked with the MWYCF and police staff. Members of the respective organisations were able to join the project team for activities to observe and co-facilitate sessions. This was an opportunity to strengthen relationships with both organisations and strengthen capacities of the ministry staff who would continue the implementation of activities after the project ended, ensuring sustainability plans were in place.

Finally, the A2J Project had a specific focus on supporting survivors of DV, however, it was important that it remained connected to the bigger access-to-justice projects managed by UNDP or the World Bank.



Contributing to the FPA review process

In 2020, Solomon Islands began a review of the FPA. This was an opportunity for the A2J Project to share some of the challenges in the implementation of the law that could be considered during the review, particularly providing feedback on the practical challenges of implementing provisions of the FPA in the outer islands. An example of this would be the challenges to serve IPOs in geographically challenging communities and options for categories of people who may provide the IPO service, particularly where there is no police station/post in an outer island. This was a key challenge since an IPO issued by an AJ does not come into force until served on the perpetrator.



Lessons for the future

Consulting the stakeholders in Honiara and the pilot sites

In developing a project like this, it is key that stakeholders in Honiara, Guadalcanal and Malaita are consulted, so there is detailed information on how the project plans to implement its activities. Consultations allow input from partners on the realities they face, and the challenges and opportunities of working in the communities. It also provides an opportunity to capture stakeholder feedback about strategies that may work in the provinces. These can later be used to inform implementation. These consultations catered for the need to test assumptions and spend more time building the project.

The A2J Project was flexible enough to respond to the many challenges that were faced in implementation. However, these could have been addressed earlier with wider consultation and understanding of the community context.

Embedding government partnerships from the start

It is important to ensure that government partners are included in the development of a project from the very start, and that their leadership in the project is maintained throughout. The Permanent Secretaries and senior staff for both lead implementing government ministries are members of the Public Service Commission (PSC) and need to be included in the key discussions at the various stages of the project. Government ministries understand the challenges in the implementation of legislation and policy and some of the realities of undertaking programming outside the main centres. It is also important to include government staff in the implementation of activities. This encourages ownership of the work, builds capacity, promotes sustainability and also contributes to resources available for a government ministry. This way government ministries may incorporate project activities into their workplans and link them to the respective ministries' priorities.

Bringing the process of issuing IPOs closer to communities

Any law is as good as its implementation and the ability of people to be able to access the protection under that law. The process of AJs being accessible to those in remote communities without having to travel far is a unique solution that a few countries in the region have included in their laws. It is an innovative way of bringing services closer to remote communities.



However, this project has highlighted the need to ensure that selection processes are clear and certify people to undertake these roles, in turn safeguarding survivors of DV.

Continuing the CF accreditation process

The CFs contributed immensely to the project ensuring that their communities had the relevant information on the FPA, DV and an understanding of the role of AJs. It is key to ensure CFs are well equipped and prepared to carry out awareness sessions clearly and understand the various services that survivors can be referred to. A clear certification process needs to be developed that maps out the learning progression for CFs. The process should be applicable to the context and the learning capabilities of the CFs who are recruited by taking into account the varying education levels and learning styles that apply to the group.



Where to next

Integration of the programme into the two ministries

The A2J Pilot Project activities implemented aspects of the FPA that the respective co-implementing government ministries would lead through their work going forward.

There are plans for continued capacity-building and mentoring support for AJs in Malaita and Guadalcanal provinces through the ongoing work of the Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs (MJLA). Awareness on the FPA with stakeholders and the community would also continue through the respective ministries.

The project will support the lead ministries in reprinting the IEC materials for their ongoing awareness programmes and also to share with CSO partners that are also currently utilising the materials in their community awareness programmes.

SPC's ongoing support to the co-implementing ministries

SPC's HRSD would continue the ongoing support to the MWCYF and the MJLA. This is part of the bigger work the division does on EVAW and also as the secretariat of the Regional Working Group on the Implementation of Domestic Violence Legislation. Below are some areas of work that the HRSD would continue to provide support on:

1. **Regulations for the FPA** – HRSD has committed to working closely with the MJLA in the development of the regulations for the “prescribed persons” to be appointed under the FPA.
2. **Forms for the FPA** – HRSD has supported Solomon Islands in printing forms under the FPA and has committed to supporting the MJLA in the development of the remaining forms (*Variation of an IPO* and *Revocation of an IPO*) and printing for the forms.
3. **Training support for AJs** – HRSD has committed to supporting the institutionalisation of capacity-building support for AJs. This is through finalising the manuals and IEC materials considering learnings from the project implementation. The manuals and IEC materials will then be printed and available for the MJLA.



4. **Development of proposals** – HRSD commits to working with the respective ministries to develop funding proposals for the necessary financial resources to continue the work already undertaken by the project and for possible expansion into other provinces. HRSD will continue to provide ongoing support to the ministries as it explores options for continuing work in the pilot sites and the possibility of expansion for a national roll out.
5. **Review of the FPA** – HRSD will continue to support the next steps for the review of the FPA and to support the implementation of the key recommendations from the review that is linked to the division's work.
6. **Police training** – HRSD will explore opportunities to work with trainers in the Solomon Islands police to embed training content on the FPA with justice sector providers in a sustainable way.





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