Research Paper   51

Supporting Coalition-based Reform in Vanuatu

Benedicta Rousseau and Dorosday Kenneth-Watson

January 2018

DLP DEVELOPMENTAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

The Developmental Leadership Program (DLP) is an international research initiative based at the University of Birmingham, and working in partnership with La Trobe University in Melbourne.

DLP aims to increase understanding of the political processes that drive or constrain development. Its work focuses on the crucial role of home-grown leaderships and coalitions in forging legitimate institutions that promote developmental outcomes.

DLP's independent program of research is supported by the Australian aid program.

Contents

About the author

Benedicta Rousseau of La Trobe University, Melbourne, is an anthropologist who has taught at universities in the UK, Australia and New Zealand. She has been undertaking research in Vanuatu since 2000, leading to publications on politics, leadership, indigeneity, law and development. Her current research and writing focuses on the politics of disaster management in the wake of Tropical Cyclone Pam, and changing understandings of urban identity and attachment in Port Vila.

Dorosday Kenneth-Watson has been Vanuatu's Director of the Department of Women's Affairs since 2009. Previous appointments in a long and distinguished political career include Director of the Department of Fisheries and then of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. She is the principal advocate for the equal rights of women and girls in Vanuatu and was instrumental in the introduction of reserved seats for women in municipal elections. In 2012, she was awarded the *Chevalier de l'Ordre National du Mérite* by the French government in recognition of her dedication to the strengthening of women's rights and to reducing domestic violence against women, children and persons with disabilities.

Abbreviations

AusAID	The former Australian Agency for International Development
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CSO	Civil society organisations
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DWA	Department of Women's Affairs
PACWIP	Pacific Women in Politics
PLP	Pacific Leadership Program
RRRT	Regional Rights Resource Team
SPC	Secretariat of the Pacific Community
TSM	Temporary special measures
WISDM	Women in Shared Decision Making

1 Introduction

This paper examines the recent introduction of reserved seats for women in municipal councils in Vanuatu as an example of a successful reform driven by a local coalition and supported thoughtfully by a donor program. Initiatives like reserved seats can be seen as a technical solution to a complex political problem. However, the process by which this reform was achieved provides a valuable case study of developmental leadership, coalition building and appropriate donor support that is informed by principles of thinking and working politically. The success of this coalition supports points made by Dasandi (2014), Tadros (2011) and others about the importance of working with elite agents and not always necessarily fostering broad-based civil society activism. This case also provides some specific lessons for working in the Pacific, particularly in relation to the roles that donors can play as facilitators if they are prepared to invest in locally led ways of operating politically.

This paper focuses on a group called Women in Shared Decision Making (WISDM) and the subsequent Temporary Special Measures (TSM) Taskforce comprised of senior public servants and politicians, which became the core group within a broader, shifting coalition of government, civil society, chiefs and representatives from political parties and women's groups. The paper distinguishes this example of coalition-based reform from classic civil society mobilisation by unpacking the role of key individuals in driving change in Vanuatu among a small, dedicated coalition of bureaucrats and politicians at the 'politics-bureaucracy interface' (Dasandi 2014). The paper also examines the make-up and behaviour of the TSM Taskforce as an elite group that purposefully distanced itself from civil society organisations in the context of divisions and diminished capacity among some groups working in the area of gender advocacy.

The paper begins by setting out the context for the policy reform in Vanuatu and the wider Pacific region. Second, it provides background to WISDM and how it worked as a coalition. Third, it explains the timeline for the reform, including crucial moments and the role of individuals in them. The paper concludes with reflections on supporting coalition-based reform.

It draws on data collected during research conducted for the Pacific Leadership Program as well as specific interviews and discussions with members of WISDM and PLP. While this evidence shapes the paper, the authors' personal exposure and involvement in this reform has been crucial to grounding much of its perspective.

2 A snapshot of Vanuatu's political system

Vanuatu has been a republic since gaining independence from Britain and France in 1980. It has a population of approximately 250,000, and is governed by a 52-member parliament, elected by universal suffrage. The head of state is chosen by an electoral college made up of all MPs and the six provincial government presidents. In the decade following independence, two parties dominated the political landscape of Vanuatu. Since the early 1990s, however, fragmentation of parties has meant that often unstable coalition governments have become the norm, with few seeing out a full four-year term.

In late 2015, fourteen MPs were successfully prosecuted for bribery relating to payments received for supporting a motion of no confidence, which had led to a change of government in mid-2015. This publicly revealed the role played by money in insider political processes in Vanuatu. The centrality of money in Melanesian politics is often seen as a key factor excluding women from elected office (Spark and Corbett 2016). Women rarely have access to the level of wealth required for campaigning in a culture where candidates must demonstrate their capacity to deliver as political patrons. Men are also extremely reluctant to give up the pecuniary and other rewards available to successful parliamentary candidates.

In terms of the broader cultural context, Vanuatu is predominantly a Christian country, and combines this with persistent and generally highly valued cultural traditions, often referred to as *kastom*. *Kastom* encompasses a set of values predominantly in line with Christianity, privileging also notions of peace, unity and respect.

These orienting belief systems contribute in many cases to conservative understandings of gender relations, but some argue that this is not a necessary or an accurate interpretation of indigenous practice and belief. *Kastom* can be mobilised in arguments both for and against gender equity reforms. Reform can threaten established social norms and attract opposition from senior men (Taylor 2008). However, it can also be argued that gender equity reforms can address contemporary social problems such as lack of respect for particular groups or causes of disunity. Tor and Toka (2004), for instance, argue that respect for women was and should be strong in *kastom*.

Thus, disavowal of violence towards women has an indigenous basis and precedent beyond the introduction of externally derived rights-based remedies (Jolly 2000). Persistent conservatism, however, has influenced the ability of women to attain candidacy and election to political office.

A further factor of relevance is the cultural weight placed on consensus decision-making. This leads to community bloc voting that, in turn, reduces the likelihood of success for non-traditional (e.g. female, youth) candidates.

3   Temporary Special Measures in Vanuatu and the Pacific

Temporary Special Measures (TSMs) are an internationally recognised method for increasing the number of women in elected office. They work by reforming electoral laws to reserve a certain number of seats (either existing or newly-established) for women candidates for a limited period. The 2013 and 2015 legislation for reserved seats for women contesting municipal elections in Vanuatu requires that 30-34% of seats be set aside for women candidates for the next four electoral terms (16 years). Both the percentage of seats and the length of time are more ambitious than TSMs elsewhere (Krook 2014).

TSMs have been encouraged by Article 4, paragraph 1 of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), an international treaty adopted in 1979 by the United Nations General Assembly. The CEDAW Committee's 1999 recommendation on the subject and UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security have given them further impetus. Their adoption in the Pacific has been lobbied for and recommended as a mechanism to bring about the broad goal of gender equity in political decision-making – through, for instance, the Revised Pacific Platform for Action on Advancement of Women and Gender Equality 2005-15, the 2009 Pacific Islands Forum Pacific Plan and the Pacific Leaders' Gender Equality Declaration 2012.

TSMs are a significant reform in Vanuatu and the broader Pacific region, where women are poorly represented in government. The concept of TSMs has gained traction with legislators in the region, but their adoption and implementation is proceeding slowly. French Pacific territories have benefited from parity laws that have brought women's inclusion in elected office rapidly up to 47% (Zeitlin 2014). However, to date, Samoa is the only independent nation in the Pacific to have adopted TSMs at the national level, with five seats reserved for women in the 2016 election. Legislation for reserved seats in Papua New Guinea had broad support among parliamentarians in 2012 but did not gain the two-thirds majority required (Zeitlin 2014: 263). In addition, the sitting female members of parliament all came out against the introduction of a quota, arguing that women should be elected 'through the normal process' (Delilah Gore, MP, quoted in Zeitlin 2014: 263). In both Tonga and Tuvalu, while no legislation has yet been introduced, there appears to be political will to increase female representation in elected office (Baker 2015; Molotii, Baker and Corbett 2014).

Political participation by women at subnational level is uniformly low across Pacific nations. However, there has been greater adoption of affirmative action measures at this level. Interestingly, these largely stipulate that women be appointed to such positions (for instance, in Samoa and Tuvalu), rather than elected (Tavola 2014: 4). The House of Representatives in Bougainville, an autonomous region of Papua New Guinea, also includes reserved seats for women, and in the most recent elections a woman was also successful in an open seat (Baker and Oppermann 2015).[1] Following the 2013 legislative change, Vanuatu now stands as a regional leader in facilitating the election of women to local government office.

4 How TSMs became a goal

Initial lobbying efforts for TSMs in Vanuatu through the 2000s were supported through the programs of regional organisations, including UN Women, UNDP and the SPC's Regional Rights Resource Team (RRRT), and by donors such as AusAID (later DFAT – the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade). This pattern of rights-based initiatives being initiated by international or regional bodies is common across the Pacific (Tavola 2014: 5). However, it is a major risk for gender reform that this is seen as an 'outsider-driven' project (True et al. 2012: 42). The anthropologist John Taylor (2008) has documented a men's 'backlash' movement in Vanuatu that argued the concept of women's rights was a foreign imposition incompatible with Christianity and *kastom*. Taylor's work (also Jolly 2000) indicates the potential for entrenched opposition to gender equity reforms when they are perceived in these ways.

True et al. (2014: 44) argue that 'local civil society organisations advocating the benefits of women in decision-making' will alleviate this risk, an approach also supported by the Regional Rights Resource Team (Rousseau/PLP 2014a: 6). This broad approach informed the inception of WISDM. However, in practice the work of introducing TSMs was not a 'bottom-up' campaign shaped by CSOs with external support. Rather, action by high-level elected officials and public servants propelled reforms at key points. The timeline given here outlines how TSMs became a policy objective in Vanuatu, and how a coalition emerged that eventually moved that policy through to legislation.

In December 2010, a report on women's political leadership in Vanuatu, commissioned by AusAID and completed through the Department of Women's Affairs, recommended TSMs as a strategy for addressing the poor levels of female political participation (Ilo-Noka and Dalesa-Saraken 2010). This report outlined the paucity of opportunities for substantive involvement by women in political parties in Vanuatu. At that time, only one party – the newly formed *Graon mo Jastis Pati* – had included TSMs as part of their gender policy strategy, although NUP, VP, UMP, the Green Confederation, Family First and the Nagriamel Federation had also voiced some support for them.

---

1   See, for instance, Krook (2009) for a comparative discussion of quotas globally, and Baker (2014), Clark and Rodrigues (2009) and Fiji Women's Rights Movement (2012) for discussions pertaining directly to the Pacific. Corbett and Liki (2015) provide an overview of women's experience of political leadership across the Pacific.

The release of this report coincided with the appointment of Dorosday Kenneth-Watson[2] as Director of Women's Affairs. Kenneth-Watson is a senior public servant with considerable experience in other portfolios. She adopted the objective of increasing women's political participation as a central aim of her tenure in the role. She judged that other women's organisations were already working on a range of other priorities, such as women's economic empowerment. Therefore, political participation was an issue that needed to be advanced, as few other parties were actively promoting it.

In 2011, the Regional Rights Resource Team (RRRT) ran the first of two legislative lobbying training workshops in Vanuatu's capital, Port Vila. RRRT is a human rights training program of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), the regional intergovernmental peak body. The workshops were also supported by AusAID through the Pacific Leadership Program, and included a campaign for TSMs as one of eight campaigns.

By late 2011, Kenneth-Watson had begun convening a committee called 'Women in Decision Making'. Its purpose was to provide guidance and assistance to the department on how to increase women's representation in all spheres of political life in Vanuatu. It was later renamed 'Women in Shared Decision Making' (WISDM). The final name was chosen as more inclusive, enabling participation by men and so seeking to avoid being seen as an externally driven feminist project that would be likely to attract opposition. The group focused on women's political leadership, working first on a strategy to encourage the adoption of TSMs by SHEFA Provincial Council[3] before targeting other levels of decision-making.

In mid-2012, RRRT ran a second round of Legislative Lobbying training in Port Vila. Three campaigns were pursued, including another one focused on TSMs. The developers of that campaign were not directly affiliated to a CSO or the Department of Women's Affairs, and included a male chief. As with other campaigns, ongoing support was offered by the Ministry of Justice, in this case through the Department of Women's Affairs (DWA), which housed the RRRT in-country representative.

Both the Director and the department's Governance Officer were influenced by the policy-drafting component of RRRT's training. As a result, a policy paper proposing TSMs was written and given to the Council of Ministers. This first paper (developed in 2006) was rejected, but the feedback was used to rework the paper for resubmission. This was carried out by a scaled-down WISDM in association with the Parliamentary Counsel at the State Law Office. The resulting paper was submitted to the Minister for Justice in late 2011, but, due to cabinet changes, he was unable to pursue it at that time.

In July 2012, Kenneth-Watson and other DWA staff attended a workshop on adaptive leadership, organised by the Pacific Leadership Program in Brisbane. Present at this training were most of the members of WISDM. When asked to speak at the workshop on the role of coalitions, Kenneth-Watson focused on the topic of lobbying for TSMs in SHEFA province. In mid-2010, SHEFA provincial council had passed a resolution to increase women's representation on the council. They had formulated an action plan to adopt CEDAW recommendations and included increased participation by women on the council as part of this work. While no immediate further action was taken on this, Kenneth-Watson looked back on it as a sign of burgeoning attitudinal change. For her, the incomplete steps taken to this point represented a challenge to take on in her new role with DWA. According to Kenneth-Watson, this workshop presented her with both the space and conceptual tools to assess the appropriateness of further lobbying for TSMs and how best to pursue that.

5 How WISDM formed and worked

Kenneth-Watson regards the sequence of workshops described above as formative for the eventual success of TSM legislation. Through these different processes, her own understanding of the merits of TSMs increased, and their introduction to the legislative process was cemented as a goal for her. These events and activities also developed momentum around the issue, creating a context in which further action could take place.

Following the workshops, Kenneth-Watson decided to put together a group of allies dedicated to bringing TSMs into legislation. Kenneth-Watson initiated contact with people she considered had relevant skills or positions of influence, sounding out selected individuals for future involvement. As the Director describes it, she developed this network in such a way that others who felt they might have a stake in the issue of TSMs, but whom she did not want to include at this time, would not be aware that any grouping had taken shape.

This initiative occurred in a climate of upheaval among CSOs working on gender advocacy in Vanuatu. The Vanuatu National Council of Women had previously provided leadership in this area, but conflict between council members and staff had reduced their capacity and the level of respect accorded to them nationally and internationally. As such, they may not have been immediately useful lobbyists.

The next major step towards TSMs involved gaining political support for a resolution to be passed by the Council of Ministers for legislation to be drafted and presented to parliament. This built on the previously prepared paper, but the new version

---

2   Co-author of this paper.

3   Vanuatu is divided into six provinces, each overseen by an elected council. SHEFA covers the central Shepard Islands group and Efate (excluding the Port Vila municipality, although responsible for large parts of the town itself).

benefited from additional work by the Director and a government minister, the leader of the Graon mo Jastis Pati. This party has a history of successfully engaging voters in policy questions, which runs counter to many academic characterisations of Melanesian politics as fundamentally clientelistic (Rousseau 2012).

Following the adoption of the proposal by the Council of Ministers on 29 May 2013, an expanded network of players took on tasks ensuring the successful passage and implementation of the legislation. These included the Parliamentary Counsel from the State Law Office, the Principal Electoral Officer and Technical Advisor to the Electoral Office, the IT officer from Statistics and, in strategic advisory roles, a government minister and an expatriate political scientist. Kenneth-Watson refers to the consolidation of this group as the start of the 'real coalition'. From this point it was more commonly referred to as the 'TSM Taskforce'.

The period up to the passing of the legislation saw much effort from the TSM Taskforce to ensure that legal misunderstand-ings were overcome and the process of legislative drafting went ahead as hoped. Kenneth-Watson called a meeting with CSOs and other interested parties, informing them of progress to date, but stated that a plan for implementation of TSMs was still being considered. Those who wished to be involved in the planning process were told that they would have a chance to be involved later.

What resulted here was a two-stream approach: a larger network of those who were engaged with the broad issue of increasing women's participation in elected office, referred to as the 'coalition', and a 'taskforce' of those who could effectively lobby for and bring about the introduction of TSMs. The importance of the taskforce grew: politicians and bureaucrats were key drivers of the TSM initiative. This represented a deliberate strategy by elites who did not believe that lobbying from civil society alone would be sufficient.

The potential for obstruction on the way to the Council of Ministers was also being addressed through circumvention. The passing of the TSMs proposal through the Council in 2013 was the result of cooperative endeavours between the Director, DWA and a government minister (often described as a taskforce member). The Council meeting took place in the Banks Island group in the north of Vanuatu, well removed from the institutionalised setting of Port Vila. The proximity this engen-dered between the ministers and select few bureaucrats there allowed the TSM proposal to be presented without strict gatekeeping processes. The Director of DWA was encouraged to present the paper by the government minister, and she made use of accidental meetings with other politicians during these few days to bring the general topic of gender equity in elected office to the front of their minds.

The presentation of the paper at this time was also a strategic decision, based on a general 'climate of reform' in Vanuatu. The Director of DWA cites a number of legislative reforms undertaken during 2013-14 – land reform, accompanying constitutional amendments and the passing of new citizenship provisions – as demonstrating that major change was politically possible. This provided the necessary confidence that TSMs could be introduced.

The passing of TSM legislation in October 2013 with bipartisan support within parliament is testimony to the efforts of taskforce members (although it has been suggested that some parliamentarians did not fully understand the scope of the measures they were supporting). With a relatively short lead in to the actual municipal election, efforts to publicise the new voting procedure were undertaken by the Electoral Office, assisted by PLP funding through the DWA. Television ads were rapidly developed and the taskforce met to discuss this and other issues, right down to what colour the ballot papers for the reserved seats should be (ultimately pink). This matched with the hands-on approach taken by Kenneth-Watson throughout this process – even to the extent of personally seeking out the Clerk of Parliament at Port Vila airport to get the necessary signature for the legislation to be gazetted.

The election process ran smoothly, with five women duly being returned in the reserved seats. However, the printing and production costs of the ballot papers resulted in an untenable budget increase for the Electoral Office. As a result, the process for increasing the number of women in elected office had to be reconsidered, reformulated and re-lobbied for, resulting in new legislation being brought in for the Luganville municipal elections in 2015.

6 What made the TSM campaign successful?

The TSM campaign has succeeded in introducing reserved seats for women at municipal level and has generated consider-able momentum for further changes at other levels of government. The success of the campaign can be attributed to three main factors:

- the leadership and composition of the coalition;
- strategic framing of the issue;
- the modest scale of the desired reforms.

The leadership and composition of the coalition

WISDM was not a popular, civil society-driven coalition but an elite group led by senior public servants. The purposeful separation of WISDM/TSM Taskforce from CSOs working in the area of women's advocacy allowed the coalition to be removed from an arena currently affected by internal disagreements, while also taking on the lobbying role often assigned to CSOs. The coalition has focused on developing strategies for the government's role in promoting women's political leadership. Acting collectively and from the public service upwards has helped to avoid the legitimation problems for TSMs encountered in Samoa, where they have been perceived/portrayed by opponents as an imposed whim of the Prime Minister (Baker 2014).

Since TSMs have been driven by ni-Vanuatu public servants, this has also allowed them to be seen as emerging from the state, rather than as an 'external' reform. This challenges a perhaps common-sense assumption that the impetus for reform is more likely to be found among CSO personnel and elected officials. However, coalition members have clearly enjoyed the opportunity to take on a new project where they can deploy their political savvy and other skills developed over often lengthy public service careers.

WISDM and the TSM Taskforce were able to be focused and strategic because of the close relationships between key individuals involved. In Vanuatu, high level public servants, political advisers and influential politicians come from a small, largely shared social milieu. Deep personal connections can be grounded in kinship, shared church denomination or the high likelihood of having attended the same national and regional educational institutions. Many of the Taskforce members, as well as many of the current leaders of political parties, studied at the same time at the University of the South Pacific. This shared history facilitates interaction, offering, as one person put it, a 'common language' that can cut across institutional hierarchy. While this does not ensure that working relationships are always cooperative, it does mean that people often have social ties that predate their immediate workplace roles and that provide a resource for accessing decision-makers. These connections have been leveraged by the taskforce, with positive impact on the decisions of the Council of Ministers.

The TSM Taskforce then matches closely with the description of 'a like-minded reform design team' given by Dasandi (2014: 5). Such teams typically include 'influential bureaucrats and politicians. Success is more likely when teams: are strategically placed within the bureaucracy; plan before inviting wide discussion; create networks within government and with international funders; and leave executive leaders to manage pressure from public and bureaucratic opinion.'

Dasandi (2014: 5) breaks down his analysis to these four points, all of which can be used to describe the TSM Taskforce:

- close working relationships between politicians and bureaucrats within an elite group;
- bureaucrats who have much greater influence in designing policy than is usually the case;
- shared pro-development values and goals within the core group of political and bureaucratic leaders, bolstered by informal ties;
- strong and committed political leadership and a strategy to deal with opposition.

In specific reference to the criteria of 'shared pro-development values and goals', it is likely that a variety of factors would coalesce, including family background, education, previous work experience and religious beliefs. In the case of WISDM, shared religion, for instance, has formed links between the coalition and PLP. This suggests that the question of context-specific forms of connection is relevant to donors too (Leftwich and Wheeler 2011).

Strategic framing of the issue

The taskforce decided not to pursue TSMs in alliance with the CEDAW implementation committee, despite the obvious overlap in substance and ethos. This was explained as a way to avoid the same marginalised categorisation of the TSM legislation as a 'women's issue' that had occurred earlier with the Family Protection Bill. That bill mandated the introduction of protection orders in instances of domestic violence (not only between a woman and partner). It was the most recent substantial legislative reform undertaken in Vanuatu with the aim of altering women's standing in communities and their access to justice. Much of the lobbying for the bill came from civil society with support from external agencies, and it was opposed over a long period of time by – predominantly male – politicians, traditional leaders and church groups. These groups were able to portray the bill as an intrusion of foreign ways into Vanuatu life. The opposition to the Family Protection Bill provided a cautionary tale of how not to pursue gender-based reform in Vanuatu.

Dasandi (2014: 21) has noted that unlikely reforms may succeed when their supporters avoid framing the issues in terms of a left/right political dichotomy. Vanuatu's politics do not map easily onto a left/right spectrum. Rather, ideologies of development, Christianity and *kastom* provide the main orienting points for political debate in contemporary Melanesia. In their strategies for framing TSMs, WISDM members were intent on avoiding the opposition that had assembled around the Family Protection Bill.

The choice made by WISDM instead was to present TSMs as part of a technocratic electoral reform, rather than primarily a gender reform project. At present, electoral reform is a broader concern in Vanuatu as a response to ongoing instability due

to frequent 'floor crossing' in parliament and fragile coalition governments. Political party strengthening measures are being considered, and changes to the electoral system are being investigated as a way to build stronger government into the future. Such electoral reforms are designed to create more stability but also to reduce the incentives for corrupt politics. Ni-Vanuatu are deeply concerned about corruption in government, so to nest TSMs within a broader collection of electoral reforms on the grounds of more inclusive decision-making could be a successful strategy for avoiding opposition.

Scale of the reforms

Municipal council elections do not attract the same level of competition as national elections because of the status and pecuniary advantages of being in the national parliament. Salaries for national MPs are generous and the position comes with an MP's allocation of funds to be dispersed to their electorate that can increase perceptions of power in their home community. Holding national office can also create further licit and illicit opportunities for generating income. Municipal level campaigns are not as expensive as those for parliament, making them more accessible to women and non-traditional candidates. Therefore targeting this level of government was a sound way of creating a new precedent in Vanuatu with relatively little controversy. Taking on TSMs at municipal level is thus advantageous and in line with the taskforce's approach that the electorate is 'mature' enough to accept increases in women's representation through TSMs, and does not need persuasion in advance of legislation. While starting at this level has been successful, it has also generated momentum for further changes at provincial and national levels.

7 Key lessons for donors and implications for future programs

The TSM campaign was a 'politically smart, locally led' (Booth and Unsworth 2014) initiative in which the political skills and personal networks of leaders within the WISDM coalition played significant roles. However, this case study also highlights the value of external support to effective local leadership.

The Pacific Leadership Program (PLP) has been providing support to DWA since 2012 with the aim of fostering leadership for change in women's political representation. This support has largely been low-key and small-scale, focused on training for women candidates; provision of ideas and information, including public awareness raising; leadership workshops for coalition members; mentoring; and generally providing space for women leaders and their allies to refine their strategies. PLP's modest support has provided resources that have catalysed the mobilisation an effective reform coalition.

In their recent overview of PLP, Denney and Maclaren (2016: ii) list a number of lessons for donors wishing to support developmental coalitions in the Pacific. Drawing on several recent case studies, including WISDM, they argue that:

- '*Donors need to be pragmatic when choosing developmental leaders to support.* This involves engaging with leaders and coalitions that have the interest, power and ability to influence change, not necessarily those that adhere to 'good governance' principles.

- *Leaders do not need formal authority to be effective*. PLP-supported coalitions show leaders may emerge from both the formal and informal spheres. In addition, leaders can wield both 'hard' and 'soft' power, and the latter is especially important to consider when looking to work with women leaders in the Pacific.

- *Coalitions can emerge organically or be proactively nurtured*. While some coalitions emerge organically, with donors playing a purely supportive role, donors can also play a more proactive convening role to encourage the emergence of new coalitions. What appears to be important is that the reform is genuinely locally led by either the already existing or brokered coalition and that donors are not seen as using local actors for their own agenda.

- *Coalitions do not necessarily have to be inclusive to be effective*. Coalitions that are quite exclusive in their membership can still achieve results, such as policy or legislative change. However, exclusive processes may not be able to achieve broader attitudinal changes that support implementation of policy or legislative reforms.

- *Coalition membership does not need to be fixed or formalised to be effective, but rather can be fluid and evolving*. This may be particularly important in the Pacific context given the small population size and the density and overlapping nature of networks.

- *Coalition membership need not be equal*. Coalitions need members to fulfil a range of functions and some may be required more than others. Often a small core group within the coalition may take responsibility for driving the process, drawing on others as needed.

- *It is not always necessary for people to know they are part of a coalition*. As long as there is a central leader (or leadership group) coordinating or prompting the inputs of others towards achieving the coalition's objectives, it might not be possible or desirable for all coalition members to be brought together.'

To varying degrees, most of these principles are relevant to the WISDM example. The success of the TSM reforms can be attributed to several factors, but two key lessons emerge from this case study. These map reasonably well onto analysis by Booth and Unsworth (2014). To achieve 'politically smart, locally led development', donors need to allow local actors to take the lead, and may be able to provide valuable space for the development of reform coalitions.

Allowing local actors to take the lead

Donors need to be able to trust local leaders' political judgement while providing support for the strategising and coalition building described above. PLP allowed local actors to take the lead in determining the constitution of WISDM and the TSM Taskforce, PLP showed itself to be astute and flexible. PLP continued to support an unconventional approach to gender equity reform that, at times, bypassed civil society organisations. This is not to say that the partnership's approach was entirely an exclusionary process. The voter awareness activities run by the Electoral Office and Leadership Vanuatu, supported by PLP, were successful in fostering informed popular engagement with the reforms. This also demonstrated PLP's willingness to incorporate WISDM allies when planning their support.

Providing valuable space for the development of reform coalitions

Much of the value of the PLP contribution to WISDM was in providing conceptual 'space' (and time) for leaders to think and build consensus. Andrews et al. (2010) refer to 'change space', meaning the ways in which leaders can create space for change to occur within their organisations. PLP's interventions allowed Kenneth-Watson and other leaders to expand the 'change space' available to them by creating opportunities to get together and refocus. As noted above, the adaptive leadership workshops are seen by key participants as formative events in the development of their coalition because they provided space for the refining of strategies that ultimately were successful in progressing legislation through parliament.

The opportunity for WISDM members to meet outside public service locations, and indeed outside Port Vila, was highly valued. Participants pointed to the value of off-shore training sessions such as the Adaptive Leadership Training Workshop in Brisbane, not only because of the training received, but also because of the networking that took place among participants, even those who already work together. WISDM members at that workshop used the time to reflect and develop strategies for their coalition.

8 Conclusion

Vanuatu's TSMs are in line with international trends towards legislative remedies for low levels of female participation in elected office. Currently the legislation only addresses representation at municipal level, but the WISDM coalition shows interest in lobbying for further measures at provincial and ultimately national level.

The achievements to date have been primarily driven by a small, dedicated coalition of bureaucrats and politicians, with limited external support. The make-up of the coalition has entailed a purposeful distancing from civil society organisations in order to avoid divisions within some women's organisations. Additionally, by working from within the state bureaucracy, the campaign for TSMs was able to reframe the issue as an electoral reform and so avoided the national identity politics that had raised opposition to earlier law reforms in relation to family violence.

The coalition has worked smartly and successfully 'with the grain' of both the cultural and political realities of the country to introduce a small-scale technocratic reform with wider implications for women's political participation. Previous research indicates that such techniques of 'soft advocacy' and 'backstage politics' yield results, reflecting as they do an understanding of the context in which reform will take place (Hodes et al. 2011; Tadros 2011). This research expands those previous analyses to show how such strategies are relevant in public service/government contexts as well as civil society.

The ways in which the WISDM coalition went about achieving its aims are highly relevant for donors involved in 'thinking and working politically'. In this case, PLP has provided sensitive and adaptable support that has enabled local leadership on TSMs to be nurtured. Moreover, PLP's respectful and low-key support to WISDM provides a successful model of donors 'doing development differently'.

References

Andrews, M., McConnell, J. and Wescott, A. (2010). *Development as leadership-led change*. HKS Faculty Research Working Paper Series, RWP10-009. Harvard University: John F. Kennedy School of Government.

Baker, K. (2014). 'Explaining the outcome of gender quota campaigns in Samoa and Papua New Guinea'. *Political Science, 66*(1): 63-83.

Baker, K. (2015). *Women's under-representation and special measures in the Tongan Parliament*. In Brief 2015/33, State, Society and Governance in Melanesia Program. Canberra: ANU.

Baker, K. and Oppermann, T. (2015). *The election of Josephine Getsi – Making political history in Bougainville*. In Brief 2015/49, State, Society and Governance in Melanesia Program. Canberra: ANU.

Booth, D. and Unsworth, S. (2014). *Politically smart, locally led development*. London: Overseas Development Institute.

Clark, L. and Rodrigues, C. (2009). *Utilising Temporary Special Measures to promote gender balance in Pacific legislatures: A guide to options.* Suva: UNDP Pacific Centre.

Corbett, J. and Liki, A. (2015). 'Intersecting identities, divergent views: Interpreting the experiences of women politicians in the Pacific Islands'. *Politics and Gender, 11*(2): 320-344.

Dasandi, N. (2014). *The politics-bureaucracy interface: impact on development reform*. State of the Art Paper, No. 2. Birmingham, UK: Developmental Leadership Program.

Denney, L. & McLaren, R. (2016). *Thinking and working politically to support developmental leadership and coalitions: The Pacific Leadership Program.* Birmingham, UK: Developmental Leadership Program.

Fiji Women's Rights Movement (2012). *Balancing the power: Promoting women's political participation in Fiji through Temporary Special Measures*. Suva: Fiji Women's Rights Movement.

Hodes, R., Thorpe, J., & Stern, O. (2011). *Structure and agency in the politics of a women's rights coalition in South Africa: the making of the South African Sexual Offences Act, 2007*. Birmingham, UK: Development Leadership Program.

Ilo-Noka, T. & Dalesa-Saraken, S. (2010). *Gender profile of political parties and elections*. Port Vila: Government of the Republic of Vanuatu.

Jolly, M. (2000). '"Woman ikat raet long human raet o no?" Women's rights, human rights and domestic violence in Vanuatu'. In Hilsdon, A.-M., Macintyre, M., Mackie, V. and Stivens, M. (eds.), *Human Rights and Gender Politics: Asia-Pacific Perspectives*. London and New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group: pp 124-146.

Krook, M. L. (2009). *Quotas for women in politics: Gender and candidate selection reform worldwide*. Oxford, UK: OUP.

Krook, M. L. (2014). 'Electoral gender quotas: A conceptual analysis'. *Comparative Political Studies, 47*(9): 1268-1293.

Leftwich, A. and Wheeler, C. (2011). Workshop paper – Politics, leadership and coalitions in development: Findings, insights and guidance. Birmingham: Developmental Leadership Program.

Levi, M. (2012). 'Messages from Theory: What messages does political theory have for coalition formation and success?'. In *Coalitions in the Politics of Development*. Birmingham: Developmental Leadership Program: pp 16-17.

Molotii, A., Baker, K. and Corbett, J. (2014). *Women's representation and the question of Temporary Special Measures in Tuvalu.* In Brief 2014/17, State, Society and Governance in Melanesia Program. Canberra: ANU.

Peiffer, C. (2012). *'Reform' Coalitions: Patterns and hypotheses from a survey of the literature*. Concept Paper No. 3. Birmingham: Developmental Leadership Program.

Rousseau, B. (2012). '"Vot long stret man": Personality, policy, and the election of Ralph Regenvanu, Vanuatu 2008'. *The Contemporary Pacific, 24*(1): 98-118.

Spark, C. and Corbett, J. (2016). 'Emerging Women Leaders' Views on Political Participation in Melanesia'. *International Journal of Feminist Politics*. DOI: 10.1080/14616742.2016.1189680

Tadros, M. (2011). '*Working politically behind red lines: Structure and agency in a comparative study of women's coalitions in Egypt and Jordan*'. Birmingham: Developmental Leadership Program.

Tavola, H. (2014). *Mapping of existing legislation, programs and other mechanisms to support women's leadership in the Pacific*. Canberra: DFAT.

Taylor, J. (2008) 'The Social Life of Rights: gender antagonism, modernity and *raet* in Vanuatu'. Special issue: Changing Pacific masculinities. *The Australian Journal of Anthropology, 19*(2): 165-178.

Tor, R. and Toka, A. (2004). *Gender, kastom & domestic violence : a research on the historical trend, extent and impact of domestic violence in Vanuatu*. Port Vila: Department of Women's Affairs.

Zeitlin, D. (2014). 'Women in parliaments in the Pacific region'. *Australian Journal of Political Science, 49*(2): 252-266.

DLP
DEVELOPMENTAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM