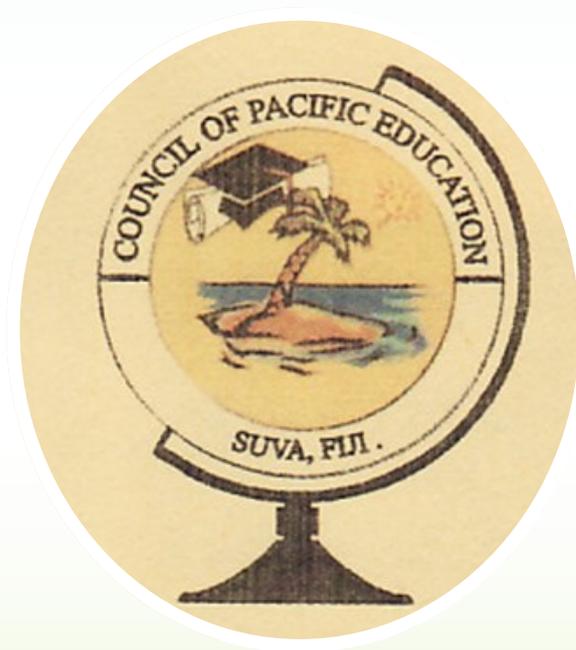


Council of Pacific  
Education

2016 / 2017

# Women's Networker



# COPE Women Coordinator Report

**By Hilda Takarobo - Women Coordinator**

The past three years have been a busy period for the Women Networks. Having received a fantastic Women's Conference in the last triennial (2013) the women understood their potential better. The training was followed by a further three days of rigorous awareness on ILO Standards followed by another 2 days of COPE meetings.

Since then, we had noted some major achievements in the region. In particular, the women network has created a Facebook page and most of us are well connected on a wide range of issues.

In the region I have known that in the past there were times that women networks hardly held meetings in between conferences. However, since the last triennial most women networkers have had meetings and training programmes. I thank the Secretary General of COPE for his vision in proposing triennial meetings – I can see that we are doing a lot more work in between our conferences.

The Women Network conferences and training programs are adding immense value to Women Network. It is an indication that in the COPE region, our sisters are changing for the better.

The various Women Network Activities Report highlights many achievements. Some of these achievements may not be easily recognised. Our women are now making better contribution in the meetings. We are now able to organise our own workshops after being trained by COPE and provided with presentations and papers and other technical assistance.

In this meeting hall, we have women who have hesitated to say a word in gatherings of this nature. However, with the help of COPE development programs, today they speak with confidence. I am deeply touched by the power of COPE to transform networks in some affiliates and has helped women to stand up for their rights.

I know it hasn't been easy for most of our own women as we have to deal with several obstacles at any given time. I salute the men who understand the rights of women and vigorously campaign for those rights with other men. For women to have dignity, we need the support of our brothers too.

## **Gender Violence**

We all know that violence against women is a serious matter and the statistics presented at the 2016 Women's Network Conference is most alarming. I would like to call upon COPE and EI to do a lot more against gender violence in the Pacific.

## **We need to communicate**

Women networks – we also need to do a lot more than what we are currently doing! Part of this battle has to be fought by ourselves. We need to make better use of the training that we are getting and share it with others. Many times our women receive training but do not filter it down to others. Let us start contributing to the network by writing to each other and COPE what we are doing in our unions and our schools – after all we call ourselves women leaders!



The biggest issue I had during my term as network leader is the lack of communication from my sisters. It has been difficult to even write up women network newsletters. However, we have managed to produce women's network newsletter. I again thank Christine Cooper (IEU) and Govind Singh (COPE Secretary General) for their assistance.

I would like to conclude by thanking women network leaders for their hard work. When we come back in 2019, I am confident you will have more success stories to share.

I know that as we go along we will help each other to build a more just society.

# as we say goodbye...

## COPE Women's Coordinator

The COPE Woman's Network says farewell to **Ms Hilda Takarobo (SINTA)** as COPE Women's Coordinator.

Hilda has been a dedicated Coordinator, diligent in overseeing the work of the COPE Women Networks and despite the many challenges faced in the region, has ensured that women have continued to make progress.

By working closely with the COPE Secretariat, Hilda has ensured that capacity building training programmes have been regularly conducted in each Women's Network, even visiting PNGTA to be part of their Congress and Women's Network Caucus.

Hilda has represented COPE in various Education International meetings including the EI Asia Pacific Regional Conference and the EI 7<sup>th</sup> World Congress.

Our women networks have been well served by Hilda and the COPE Women's Network thank her for her time and commitment.

**Ms Neselinda Meta from Vanuatu Teachers' Union** was elected at the 2016 COPE Women's Network meeting as the incoming COPE Women's Coordinator and will continue to be assisted by **Ms Christine Cooper (IEUA) as the Assistant Women's Coordinator.**

Neselinda, a 2015 Alisi Fusi Wightman recipient has worked hard to ensure that the women within Vanuatu Teachers Union, particularly those in the outer regions, receive capacity building training. It is through such activities that Vanuatu Women's Network are empowered to campaign for change.

We look forward to the next three years of women's network success stories.



Hilda Takarobo (outgoing COPE Women's Coordinator)  
Christine Cooper (Assistant Women's Coordinator)  
Neselinda Meta (incoming COPE Women's coordinator)

## COPE President Farewells Us

Ms. Tili Afamasaga had an outstanding career in COPE's journey. While Tili had the distinguished leadership of the COPE President, she also became the President of the Samoa National Teachers Association (SNTA) in 1995 and continued to provide service for 18 long years. Tili demonstrated her robustness and dynamism in 2002 as she took up the challenge to become one of the COPE Vice Presidents. Her outstanding flare compounded with natural leadership skills set the platform for her long career in COPE.

Tili became the COPE President in 2004. She decided to leave in between and take a break. This provided an opportunity for Mr. Tevita Koroi of FTA to take the COPE presidency post. He served for a while, another dynamic leader, until the military coup in 2006. The Bainimarama government undermined the trade union



rights in Fiji as well as threatened trade union leaders in the country who exercised their rights.

As such, Mr. Koroi was positioned in a very difficult situation which resulted in his resignation as COPE President and he had decided to find shelter abroad.

COPE members in their own deliberate judgement decided to elect Tili again as COPE President and lead the council during the tough journey that we went through. She came back as President and gave 16 years of the best of the service that any institution, trade union and regional organisation was looking for.

Colleagues, Ms. Tili gave 16 years of service to COPE and 18 years of service to SNTA. Overall, Tili dedicated 34 years of distinguished service to the work of trade union when the trade unions of the island state were in the formative years, at that time when only few of our members were ILO members. Ms. Tili helped the Council's agenda by ensuring that every state amongst our members joined ILO. As Ms. Tili is leaving COPE, all COPE affiliates are members of ILO.

The council congratulates Ms. Tili for her work, for the lobbying she has done over the years, her contacts, the vision demonstrated in making things happen as well as her confidence and leadership. When the going gets tough, wisdom comes to play. Whenever wisdom was required the council fell back on Tili. She came with the level of diplomatic skills no

matter what the problem was, always very calm, no matter how rough the situation was and together we always found consensual way out of difficult circumstances.

Colleagues, the trade union arena is not an easy one in the Pacific. It's a huge challenge standing up against the union busters. If you really want to have a dream for the region, then we need to put our hands together, cooperate and support one another and shape the destiny of the region. There was no doubt that Tili had a hand in contributing towards the status of teachers in the Pacific. She has been an epitome of decent work agenda.

It is with much pleasure that COPE bestows upon Gatoloaifaana Tili Afamasaga the highest award for outstanding teacher union work in the Pacific, "**The Krishna Datt Award.**" A unionist like sister Tili never retires. I know she has a definite agenda to improve the Samoa Trade Union Congress.

I wish her well.

Govind Singh  
Secretary General  
Council of Pacific Education

## Alisi Fusi Wightman Scholarship

### *Empowering Women Teachers*



Alisi Fusi Wightman was Vice-President of Fiji Teachers' Association and was its only female leader at the time. She had strong values and encouraged women in the teaching profession. As a union leader during the 1970's and 1980's, she became a pioneer who developed the foundations of COPE.

Tragically she died suddenly in her early 50s in 1989, soon after moving to Tonga with her husband.

COPE is proud to run a scholarship program in memory of Alisi Fusi Wightman for two female union activists. The scholarship focuses on developing and strengthening union and professional skills in order to increase recipients' knowledge and confidence. Recipients spend one week in Australia meeting with representatives of the Australian Education Union and the Independent Education Union of Australia and then a further week in New Zealand with Post Primary Teachers Association (PPTA) and NZEI Te Riu Roa.

The recipients for this round of scholarships are **Sima Diveka Kumar** from Fiji Teachers' Union and **Tuvale Leau Vaasa** from SNTA. Both women are looking forward to gaining more skills on recruitment and leadership so that they can share with their networks upon returning home.

## Japanese Teachers Union Award For Increasing The Participation of Women in Union Activities



The JTU Award is presented to an affiliate which has made the most progress in increasing the participation of women in union activities over the past three years. It is a Triennial Award presented at the COPE Triennial Conference

The 2016 JTU Award has been presented to Vanuatu Teachers Union for ensuring that all women members, particularly those in the regional areas of the country had access to capacity building skills and rights knowledge through a dedicated schedule of training programs for women. As well the VTU has increased the financial literacy and support of their women members through a Teachers' Credit Union project. Through this project more than 50% of union members now have greater financial support and access to micro loans to sustain living. This will make substantial difference to the lives of women in Vanuatu.

Accepting the JTU Award for the Vanuatu Teachers Union is **Ms Neselinda Meta**, Coordinator of the Women's Network.

# COPE Women's Network Conference

## *Campaigning Together for Change and Justice*

29 August 2016 – 2 September 2016

The 2016 COPE Women's Network Conference provided an opportunity to bring together women network members from across the Pacific; not only to discuss issues affecting women members, but also to strengthen skills and develop strategies.

Within the context of Pacific political, economic and environmental concerns, issues such as trade union rights, domestic violence, workplace safety and security, recognition of the rights of women and girls, access to professional development and union training, and dealing with disaster responses (such as cyclones and earthquakes) made up the Women's Network Conference agenda.

### Keynote speakers

The keynote speakers at the conference included the **Hon Rosy Akbar, Fiji's Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation**, and **Ms Shamima Ali of the Pacific Women's Crisis Centre**.



Both spoke strongly of the need for women and girls to feel safe at home, at work and in the community. They also emphasised that there are no excuses for domestic or family violence - not culture, not religion, not family background.

### Our Women Networks: Successes and Challenges

The first panel discussion for the conference focused on the COPE Women Network successes and challenges. Expertly facilitated by **Eva Hartshorn-Shanders from NZPPTA**, the conference participants were asked to consider their network successes. Further, participants were to identify one challenge which they could overcome in order to make their networks stronger.

### Campaigning with Women Networks

Wonderful presentations on campaigning were conducted by **AEU and NZPPTA and NZEI Te Riu Roa**. Participants gained insight into campaigns on paid parental leave and bullying and harassment. The presentation by **NZEI Te Riu Roa, Laures Park** outlined the Pasifika Strategic Framework provided participants with an excellent structure to consider their network plans. The "Say It" "Do It" "Own It" became a feature in all subsequent round table discussions during the conference.

### Addressing Issues of Domestic Violence

Conference participants rolled up their sleeves on the issues of domestic violence and gave consideration to the infor-

mation provided by **Ms Shamima Ali of the Pacific Women's Crisis Centre**. In round table discussions, facilitated by **Pam Smith (IEU NSW/ACT)** participants were asked to consider what actions could be taken by the various Women Networks and National Unions within COPE to educate around domestic violence. Through round table discussions, participants identified the need for awareness programmes on the prevention of coercive, emotional violence as well as physical and sexual violence, in addition to actively promoting the rights of women and girls.

It was recognised that in order to do so, the COPE Women Network Strategic plans should include strategies and resources for training programmes when addressing domestic violence. It was also recommended that all National Union executives hold discussions and training on the issue



### Identifying the Good and the Bad: The Chat

Throughout the conference, round table conversations were held so that participants could talk about their experiences of work, their lives, and what is important to them. These sessions were lead by **Marit Clayton (IEU VICTAS)**.

The purpose of these sessions was to identify issues common to all women across the Pacific, assist in the development of a strategic plan for change, and inform campaigns and policies for all affiliated unions.

In particular, participants were asked to brainstorm some good things and some bad things about being a woman in their country and working in a school.

In answering these questions, participants considered the stories told by women in their network.

Participants built a 'wall of good and bad' issues and then voted on the three most important issues by using yellow dots for the good issues and red dots for the bad issues.



### Looking for Opportunities

Having identified the three main good and bad issues affecting women, participants were lead through discussions by **Louise Firrell (IEUSA)** to consider what were the main causes behind these issues. Importantly, participants discussed how the “good issues” could be used to strengthen their network and how women network could take action on the “bad” issues.

### Celebrating Women

During the session on Celebrating Women; Designing an Action, facilitated by **Therese O’Loughlin (IEU VICTAS)** participants identified the importance of celebrating the work of their Women Networks and saw International Women’s Day as an opportunity for celebration. Participants strategized on activities which could be undertaken in schools across the islands on the same day. As a priority, participants committed to ensuring the International Women’s Day was highlighted in the National Union calendars.

### Supporting Women at Work

An excellent panel session, facilitated by **Sally Thompson (AEU)**, asked participants to identify the important rights that had been achieved by women in their country. Participants discussed the issue of access to rights, stressing that while

entitlements existed on paper through legislation, it was often the case that women were not able to access these entitlements in practice. Women Networkers identified the real need for the continuation of women training and recognised the work of the COPE Secretariat in providing such important training.

### Financial Literacy

The Financial Literacy workshop, conducted by **Mr Jaswant Singh** from the COPE office, highlighted the importance of understanding our union finances. Participants saw that it was women network’s responsibility to ask questions about the union finances, and develop an understanding on how member’s money was responsibly spent. Importantly, participants agreed that they should never shy away from asking questions about union finances.

### Strengthening Our Networks

**Caryl Davies (IEUA-QNT)** enthusiastically lead the round table discussions to identify strategies which could be used to overcome barriers to increasing membership. Participants recognised that by asking women to belong to their union’s women’s network they were not ‘asking them for a favour’ but rather giving them an opportunity



# COPE Women's Network Conference

## Recommendations

The 2016 COPE Women's Network Conference endorsed the following recommendations:

1. *The conference affirms the role of COPE and the COPE Women's Network in supporting and strengthening the voice of women education unionists in the Pacific.*
2. *The conference calls upon all participants to inform and engage with their women's networks on key elements of this conference as follows:*
  - Prevention of domestic and family violence
  - The value of networking and partnerships
  - Advocacy and campaigning
  - Women's
    - rights at work
    - leadership potential
    - role in recruiting union members
    - financial literacy
3. *Further, this conference calls upon all women's networks to develop action plans and commit to implementation; taking into consideration the EI Gender Equity Action Plan, the COPE strategic plan and the COPE Women's Action Plan. Such action plan will review the 2013 plan and consider in the development of the next action plan for 2016-2019 the following key elements:*
  - Awareness and prevention of domestic violence with reference to the recommendations by the Pacific Women's Crisis Centre report presented by Shamima Ali:
  - Evidence based prevention programmes.
  - Gender equality and awareness included in school curriculum and teacher training programmes.
  - Programmes on the prevention of coercive, emotional violence as well as physical and sexual violence, in addition to actively promoting the rights of women and girls.
  - Innovative methods for reaching young women and men such as through social media, performance art and sports groups.
  - Recruitment strategies and targets.
  - Gender equity programmes in classrooms and workplaces.
  - Communication strategies with members (particularly focusing on remote regions) and with the COPE office and women's network broadly.
  - Representation of women in leadership roles in education and in union positions.
  - Strategies which develop young women union activists.
  - Celebrations which recognise and enhance the status of women in the workplace, in the community and the union.
  - Education and skill development of women for full and equal participation of all aspects of life and work.
4. *This conference recognises the fundamentals significant of the EI Gender Equity Action Plan, the COPE Strategic Plan and calls upon both COPE Executives and each national union executive to develop budget provisions which provide further professional development and resources for the implementation of the Women's Network action and for the greater participation of women in their unions.*

# SAMOA NATIONAL TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION (SNTA) WOMEN'S NETWORK

Prepared by Epenesa Esera and Tuvale Leau  
(Women's Reps to the COPE Women's Conference. August 2016)

## **Introduction**

This is a brief report on the status of the SNTA Women's Network on proposed activities and programmes for the empowerment of women teachers in their role as professionals in administrative positions, leaders of primary and secondary schools and classroom teachers.

An Action Plan of 2013-2014 which was drafted by female teachers who have been active in the SNTA is presented in this report. However, since its draft, changes in the education system such as contracting principals affected female teachers in some schools and in the end dissatisfaction and discrimination meant they had to leave. As such, the Action Plan which was envisaged to be implemented in 2013 was not implemented and much of the activities planned for professional sharing and the development of female teachers including young leaders did not take place.

## **Recruitment drive**

A recruitment drive was implemented in 2016 and has successfully met the targeted 100% membership. SNTA Executive will now be able to ensure that the Women's Network is given priority in the next two years.

The Women's Network is led by a young principal from one of the colleges that are in close proximity to Apia. Another long serving member who has returned and teaches at one of the tertiary institutions would also provide the support to get the Women's Network up and running. Moreover, the Young Leaders Workshop conducted by members from COPE and Fiji's Credit Union in Apia from 30 June-1 July guaranteed that more young females would be recruited to assist in the implementation of the Action Plan.

## **Key Elements of the Action Plan 2016– 2017**

The Action Plan that was drafted three (3) years ago has now been revised as the Action Plan 2016-2017. The purpose of the Action Plan was to provide opportunities for professional sharing and exchange of ideas to promote teachers professional development and to support women in the juggling of their home, cultural, communal and professional responsibilities.

Some of the specific objectives are as follows:

1. To develop and implement knowledge and understanding of the executive members' roles and responsibilities.
2. The Women's Network to endorse the Action Plan which would include a timeline of activities scheduled.
3. Women's Workshop to assist understanding of PSC regulations, MESC policies, MCIL and government initiatives that affect teachers.
4. A publication of women members' stories e.g. first year of teaching, journey as a teacher, a best practice, an innovative pedagogical technique, a teacher that has been a role model.
5. To support literacy and numeracy teaching in the schools from Years 4-6.
6. Discussion of teachers' views on the Teachers' Act – implementation and practice.
7. To have teachers actively engage in the PaBER Project findings.
8. To extend teachers' knowledge and understanding of the QAPA and salary improvement.
9. Sharing and fellowshiping that can be rejuvenating and therapeutic.
10. Develop a women's newsletter.
11. Organizing of the Women's Network fund for activities and school support.

## **Action Plan**

The Revised Action Plan provides an outline of activities the SNTA Women's Network has scheduled for implementation in the period 2016-2017. It also contains specific objectives and outcomes that should better prepare members of the association, particularly women members and young leaders to become better equipped re: knowledge and skills and understanding their role as members of the association, professional teachers and community leaders. Moreover, it also reflects the future needs of the women's network in promoting children's literacy and numeracy levels, understanding the socio-economic environment that is an obstacle to student achievement and their own empowerment in the teaching & learning process.



Specific Objectives	Strategies	Activities/outcome	Dates	Person responsible
1	Bi monthly meetings	Minutes, decisions made & progress	Every first Friday from Nov 2016	Women's Executive
2	Women's meeting	Adopt the Action Plan	Friday 11 Nov 2016	Women's Executive
3	Women's Workshop	Strategizing decision making	Friday 25 Nov 2016	Women's Executive
4	Submission of 10 stories from each branch	Writing Workshops for Savaii & Upolu 2017	January 2017	Women's Branch Rep
5	Project proposal for funding	Develop proposal & seek funding	Target June 2017	Women's Executive & National Executive
6	Solicit views on Teachers' Act	Compile, disseminate & collect questionnaire for SNTA	August 2017	National & Branch Executives as facilitators
7	Workshop on PaBER findings	Compile a list of Dos & Don'ts	August 2017	Women's Executive
8	Women members from each branch	Women Branch Rep to facilitate	August 2017	Women's Executive
9	Women's camp	Weekend camp	Teuila Festival	Women's Executive
10	Women's Executive meeting	Update women members of important programmes & events	Every two months from Jan 2017	Women's Executive
11	Women's Executive & 2 members from each branch	Compile list fundraising activities for 6 months	January 2017	Women's Executive

## COOK ISLANDS TEACHERS INSTITUTE ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN TEACHERS COUNTRY REPORT – 2016

**Apii Napa - AWT Women's Coordinator**

*Kia Orana tatou katoatoa I te aroa maata o to tatou Atua ko Iesu Mesia.*

**(CARE, more than others think is wise; RISK, more than others think is safe; EXPECT, more than others think is possible; DREAM, more than others think is practical)**

This report focuses on the work of CITI/AWT with regards to the COPE Action plan for women and girls. Specifically focusing on these objectives:

- To promote, develop and acquire skills to get in and remain in positions of influence and decision making.
- To take steps to ensure that all forms of discrimination against women are prevented.
- To raise awareness of the negative impact on girls and women of all forms of violence.

AWT together with Cook Islands National Council of Women (NGO) have been working collaboratively since 2014 and now are an affiliate along with women groups in the country supporting the work of the council. Through our affiliation with the council we were able to support council work that was instrumental in our delivery of the following objectives. It was the belief that working with other agencies in the community was our way of giving back to the community and strengthening our voice as a woman group.

### **Future of the Women Network**

The future of CITI/AWT lies in us, continuing to work with partners and build relationships with other community groups. Recruitment is a priority activity and we must continue to build advocacy amongst our members. The CITI/AWT will continue to find opportunities which support our women in leadership roles and importantly develop the next generation of young women members.

*Te Atua te Aroa*

# KIRIBATI UNION OF TEACHERS (KUT)

## Women's Network Report

### Bubunrenga Maurintekeraoi

#### Introduction

The women's network like the youth wing is a subsidiary body that has just been included in the structure of the Kiribati Union of Teachers. A new kind of force to the bigger body, provided with clear terms of references. The need for this body was realized when women who take leadership roles have at times arranged workshops on certain issues that are useful to women in their capacity as not only teachers in the classrooms but also teachers at home and in their respective communities. The need for their role in the union as highlighted in their overwhelming number to carry outreach programs to their fellow women teachers is highly treasured by COPE and a special workshop was conducted for them to equip them for such. In fact it is the women's network which submitted this as their project. However, due to inconveniences to fully implement the project, the Executive Committee mandated the General Secretary to carry out.

#### Proposal

The geographical makeup of our country is a hinderance to have female teachers participating in outreach programs, however, the main island and nearby islands must be given programs to women to enhance their skills. Where possible and when the environment with the current government seems favorable, teachers will be involved with outer island activities. This should not give the understanding to teachers that their service in the classroom is undermined or limited.

#### Knowledge and Understanding of the Union

There is lack of knowledge and understanding on the basics and this caused a lot of misunderstanding causing the majority of members (women) to provide insufficient support.

#### Proposal

That more trainings and workshops are attended by women and that the Executive Committee through the General Secretary conducts these trainings and workshops to keep members well informed in all related skills and knowledge pertaining union matters.

#### Representation

We are represented on the Executive Committee through women who are there as the Vice President and Treasurer.



#### Proposal

After learning how the women operate within the structure of their own union, there will be a push to get the women's network well represented on the Executive Committee.

I wish to express our sincere thanks to COPE that has assisted women in the workshops that have been conducted, one last year and another recently. Being the majority, in terms of membership, any assistance given to KUT, definitely will benefit women. Our gratitude also goes to our international body EI. We all compliment the hard work and persistence.

## PNGTA WOMEN'S REPORT

### Kua Ava

In a country geographically divided by four regions, 22 provinces, 89 districts, a scattered population of 7 million people and 800 languages intrinsically linked to our culture and history, the task of improving status, opportunities, health and well-being of women, children, disadvantaged, disabled or those from diverse or marginalized backgrounds remain our constant development challenge.

PNGTA, representing approximately 23 thousand union teacher members of which 12 thousand are women, has reached milestone achievements in progressing human rights of women teacher members through union affiliate leadership and direction. While the Women's Network may have demonstrated inadequacies to lead and facilitate all relevant processes for advancement of women in the past, steps are currently being taken to reignite the commitment to address all outstanding issues affecting development of women in our teacher union.

Recently, our union has undertaken the task to review our existing Women Network Policy which is a core component of our union gender policy. This is a major achievement as a guiding framework for activities affecting women members in the teacher's union, and coincidentally is a first for unions in PNG. It sets the parameters for equal power-play within the union and in society, and protection of rights of women to equal and improved social, political and economic status.

Section 15 of the PNGTA Constitution calls for equal participation of women in the union's political and administrative structure, and union education and training appears a critical catalyst for such as an enabling process. Under the *2016 – 2020 PNGTA Women's Equality Action Plan (WEAP)*, education and training for union women members will focus on 7 priority action areas: *education and training; women membership; union decision-making; gender-based violence; health and well-being; HIV & AIDS and economic empowerment.*

In our attempt to regain the confidence of our regional and international affiliates having failed in the recent past our mandated responsibilities to facilitate and support advancement of women in our teacher union, several workshops are being planned, the first of which was held in October 2016.

Yes, we may be behind in our commitment towards supporting effective women teacher union development given our inadequacies and recently the union political impasse; however with the revised *PNGTA Gender (Women) Policy* framework; and the *2016 – 2020 PNGTA WEAP*, we stand committed to support women members in and at all aspects of PNG teacher unionism.

Some of our initiatives to progress protection of rights of women through the PNGTA Women Network include:

- Development of PNGTA Gender/Women Policy
- PNGTA Women Equality Action Plan – 2016 – 2020
- HIV/AIDS & the Workforce Project
- Leadership and Management Training
- Annual National Women's Conference
- Sustainable Partnership Development



## SINTA Women's Network Report

Hilda Takarobo

SINTA women's network organized several capacity building workshops to enlighten women on their legal rights. There are women who have little knowledge on procedures of dealing with issues affecting them at the work place.

The recipient of the workshops included young women teachers, school leaders and men of selected schools in the provinces and in Honiara capital. Workshop sessions were based on human rights, discrimination against women, domestic violence, child labour and quality education. Women's network invited officers of Ministry of Education, police officers, retired SINTA paralegal trainers and COPE General as facilitators of the organized workshops.

SINTA women's network attended a Child Labour and Trafficking Forum which was organized by ILO in the capital Honiara. Research on child labour and trafficking was conducted by selected participants from Government Ministries and non government organizations. The results of the research on child labour and trafficking research were compiled and forwarded to ILO office, Suva.

New elections of two SINTA provincial branches women's network representatives were conducted, however the majority of the provincial branches are yet to hold proper elections. The establishment of provincial executive committees should be prioritized by the SINTA Secretariat as a way forward for SINTA Women's networks to connect and move forward with activities stated in the Women's SINTA action plan.

SINTA Women's network has experienced some challenges for the last three years. Positions of provincial women's networks not being filled due to delay of elections, SINTA action plan yet to be implemented, scatterings of Islands and distance hinder visitation of women's network in the provinces.

SINTA Women's network would like to thank the Secretary General of COPE for generous support and assistance rendered towards all our workshop training. We look forward to your continuous support.



## Tuvalu Teacher's Association

### Women's Wing Report

Redina Auina

#### Introduction

TTA women's wing continued to uphold the values and aspirations of the organisation in the periods from 2013 to 2016. It focused on issues that could be supported by the financial resources that were available for its planned developmental work. In this regard, the TTA Women's Wing (WW) was able with some success, to commit itself to conducting awareness workshops and recruiting new members. Funding constraints limited any other developmental activities of the organization.

#### Membership

The TTA has a standing total membership of 255, an increase of more than 60 members from last year. This includes all pre-school teachers and support staff. It is expected that more members will join the organisation by the beginning of next year, as some independent ECE teachers have indicated their interest in joining the organization. The drive will be to train these members to become active.

#### International Women's Day (IWD)

The IWD is celebrated by all women in Tuvalu including the TTA Women's Wing. The activities are planned by a task force committee of which TTA is represented annually. This year's celebration was highlighted by the presentations on CEDAW and Domestic Violence by key speakers from the Office of the Prime Minister. As part of the program, the women were given the opportunity to be screened by female doctors for Non Communicable Diseases, the increasingly prominent silent killer of Tuvalu women now.

### **World Teachers' Day (WTD)**

The annual celebration of the WTD has become a very important occasion for the WW in the sense that promotional activities such as the putting up of posters around the capital and inviting retired teachers and those in the profession who have moved to other professions to make special appearances for the organisation. It should be noted that these activities are organised jointly by the WW and the main office of TTA.

### **Awareness Workshops and AGM**

Awareness workshops were planned for WW members in 2014 but as most participants who came from the outer islands were the same teachers who attended the WW awareness workshops, the percentage of participants who turned up for the planned workshops was very disappointing.

In 2015 TTA planned to piggy-back its workshops on the school holidays government workshops but this had to be cancelled as most of the teachers were involved in the Department's activities until the time they were due to return to their islands by the departing ships. Included in the main agenda were the COPE's Action Plan, and the CRC.

The TTA's 2015 AGM was scheduled for the third week of December, to coincide with the end of the last week of the Department of Education's intensive in-servicing workshops for teachers, and had to be deferred to the following year. The current plan is to hold this in November 2016.

### **Recruiting visits**

The WW planned trips for the executives to the outer islands in 2014 to recruit new members and also to conduct awareness workshops. This was eventually realised when the WW Coordinator was able to travel to all of the outer islands, on official duties for the Education Department. However, due to time constraints, the WW Coordinator was only able to talk to some members on the outer islands, but no proper workshops were possible. In August 2014, the WW Coordinator travelled to Niutao Island and stayed there for four weeks on official duties. It enabled her to recruit six new members and to conduct workshops on awareness with new and other members of TTA on the island.

### **Women in management positions**

The women's drive for equal access and opportunities in the field of education is quite remarkable. All leadership positions in the Ministry and Department of Education, apart from the Minister himself are all women. These female leaders include the Secretary for Education, the Director of Education, and all the 8 Head-teacher positions of all primary schools in the country. This trend will continue into the future as reflected in more and more female scholarships for tertiary level studies being awarded to female students on merit every year.

Although the TTA's President is a male, all the other executive members are females. In fact we are in the process of replacing him with a female in the near future.

### **Projects**

The TTA WW's was awarded a project in 2009 by COPE on Leadership with an emphasis on Action Plan. TTA WW's also implemented a project from the Health Department on Family Life Education (FLE) this year. Funds for the project have not been used because we would like to use them at the end of this year.

### **Challenges**

There are many challenges, faced by the TTA WW including:

- Lack of young members interest to take over from the ageing leaders.
- Lack of effective check off system for collecting members' dues.
- Poor communication and transport means.
- Recruitment difficulties

### **Future Direction**

The TTA Women's Wing will endeavour to strengthen and uphold:

- Positive membership recruiting drives.
- Responsible Leadership Roles.
- Good Governance practices.
- Transparent and responsible management practices.
- The Professional interests and Well-being of their members.
- Its National code of ethics.



## FRIENDLY ISLAND TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION Women Network Mele KaKala Tahaafe

It is pleasing to hear about the many achievements that women around the world have reached especially here in the Pacific where the very battle of gender equality is greatly challenged by the traditional viewpoints of our cultures. The Friendly Island Teachers' Association (also known as the FITA) has been steadily progressing and successfully thriving in Tonga despite the cultural setbacks and stereotyping. However, it has its challenges. I would like to discuss a few suggestions as well as implemented approaches that have worked for the FITA women network and why.

### GENDER EQUALITY IN EDUCATION AND TEACHING

Education and teaching environments and professions have been a successful factor in bridging the gender divide in Tonga and have contributed to the rapid and increasing success of the FITA women network. It is no surprise that women are overrepresented in the education system by a majority of them occupying mainly teaching roles in the classroom.

The abundance of female teachers in the workplace has kept the FITA thriving during the past few years as well as today. The association's objectives emphasized by the current President Mr. Finau Tutone has encouraged women to realize, embrace and fight for their human rights as citizens and workers and to voice their opinions against government decisions that might affect their place in society.

### FITA TO WIDEN ITS HORIZONS

The recent FITA meeting held on July 18, 2016 was spent discussing the prospect of possibly widening FITA's horizons to include women from other professions such as law, medicine (nursing), agriculturalists and many others. A letter was received from the Nursing Committee in Tonga requesting FITA to widen its horizons to include them in the FITA women network. During the meeting, plans were drawn up to consider this approach.

FITA can also widen its horizons by carrying out women empowerment workshops in villages where speakers can help loosen the cultural conformity of female villagers who think that women's roles are archaic and should be based at home. Some of these women as a result vote for men instead of women parliamentarians due to this cultural conformity. If only these traditionally conforming women knew what gender equality can achieve for women who work as well as what a woman MP can achieve or fight for them (i.e. provide more commercial handicrafts opportunities or further vocational training), they would think twice before voting fellow female MP's out of parliament.

### MEN TO JOIN IN THE SUPPORT OF GENDER EQUALITY

So far FITA's fight for women rights and equality in education, parliament, higher employment positions, etc. has been progressing at a rapid speed when an increasing number of FITA male members urged by Mr. Finau Tutone have been effectively supporting women's rights and gender equality.

During the FITA meeting in late December last year to early January of this year, the FITA women members voiced out many of their concerns. The main issue in this meeting was the need to request a five percent raise in teachers' salary (COLA). Usually women's concerns over a lot of issues are silenced by the very stereotypical remarks or perspectives based on their gender by a society clinging to medieval beliefs and conformity. However, the FITA president Mr. Finau Tutone together with the few FITA male members supported this concern and took the issue in the form of a request letter to the PSC and the members of Cabinet and discussed the issues with them. In early January, this request was granted by Cabinet and the COLA was awarded to teachers.

It is therefore vital for men to support women's networks and help loosen society's grip on the notion that only men can lead or achieve and pave the road for their female co-workers for they are as equally capable and talented.

In conclusion, it is sad to say that all measures taken to advocate for women's rights in both FITA and Tonga are hindered by women themselves. If a woman is nominated for one of the higher positions in a job, women co-workers should have been the ones actively supporting their counterpart who was nominated. However, driven by belittlement and competition, these fellow women co-workers vote for the men who were nominated instead of their female counterpart. We need to get rid of this medieval mentality and work cooperatively in order to achieve what we are fighting for. As 'Epeli Hau'ofa so clearly stated in *A New Oceania: Recovering Our Sea of Islands*, "...we need to stop actively participating in our own belittlement, in propagating a view of hopelessness". This meeting here today is a great example of empowering women. Let us all take what we learned in this meeting to return and continue to empower our various women networks at home.

# VANUATU TEACHERS' UNION WOMEN'S NETWORK REPORT

Neslinda Meta

The VTU-SEV women's network is growing in its membership. It is experiencing a lot of good things after the crisis, however, it is still facing a lot of challenges .

These are mainly the need for more awareness which will therefore increase recruitment of members, and since the islands are scattered geographically, it is evidently very expensive for the recruitment and empowerment for a better and promising future of the VTU-SEV Women's Network

However, the Vanuatu Teachers' Union Women's Network has been very active over the past three years; implementing workshops, projects and an overseas tour.

Each of these activities had particular aims.

**WORKSHOPS:** seek to broaden and strengthen unionism among women in the network

**PROJECTS:** seek to help improve and update the members life skills

**TOUR:** seek to help broaden the members vision as well as build connections and exchange valuable ideas

## 2014

### Workshop

In July 2014, a capacity building workshop was facilitated by Mr Govind Singh in Ecole Sainte Jean D'arc . The theme of this workshop was **Empowering and Strengthening VTU-SEV Women's Network** and was attended by 20 participants from schools around Port Vila, Efate. A highlight of this workshop was the launching of the UNITE FOR THE QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL campaign. Women Networkers recognised that a challenge remained in recruitment of more members since most members have withdrawn after the 2013 crisis.

### Tour

In December 2014, a tour to Suva Fiji to meet with FTU and FTA was arranged. 11 delegates from 7 schools around Vanuatu participated.

The tour set out to exchange cultural and educational knowledge between FTU, FTA and VTU-SEV women's network members as well as explore how the Fiji Teachers Credit Union operates. This tour was made possible by COPE assistance in accommodation provided and per diem given to each delegate.

## 2015

### Project

A sewing machine and an over lock machine were bought by VTU-SEV and are currently being kept at the VTU office in Port Vila. The sewing project aimed to teach mainly the young VTU-SEV WN members on how to sew which is part of strengthening their life skills. The intention is to educate and train members but also raise fund for the maintenance so interested members have to pay 100 vatu [\$1]. Many challenges have been experienced in implementing this project. Members are often tied up on schedules, and so not many are making use of the opportunities. Many don't have the skills, so trainings were organised.

### Workshops

There were 3 workshops organised for 2015 which aimed to strengthen and empower all the members of the Women's Network as well as give information to help the Women's Network members to build a successful Teachers Union and a powerful network.

The first workshop was held in June 2015 at the VTU Conference room. The workshop was facilitated by Mrs. Loreen Bani and Ms. Neselinda Meta [National Treasurer, WN Secretary] and attended by 13 schools in the rural part of Efate.

The second workshop was held at the Vanuatu Teachers College in July, 2015 and again facilitated by Mrs. Loreen Bani and Ms. Neselinda Meta. 35 members attended! The third workshop was held in Ambae, PENAMA province in November, and facilitated by Ms Neselinda Meta. 25 members from schools scattered around Ambae including the PEO [Provincial Education Officer] attended.

The 3 workshops had lots of good things happening such as members having the opportunity to attend such workshops for their first time, helping to revive and even set up better and stronger women network in certain regions. However, it must be acknowledged that it is very expensive to visit all places around Vanuatu due to their locations geographically from the main office in Port Vila.

## 2016

Tour to Banks Island in May 2016 by: Ms. Neselinda Meta and Mrs. Claudie Bule. This tour set out to educate and train members on how to be a successful union member- theory and practically and to fulfil the yearly plans for the union which is always never met.



## FIJIAN TEACHER'S ASSOCIATION WOMEN'S NETWORK REPORT

Mrs. Unaisi Vuetaki

FTA Women's Network continued to grow and empower its members through workshops, branch/school visits and forums. It has grown from strength to strength and has maintained the number of Women Executives at five after the 2015 election of our National Executives.

Over the years we had a number of women holding the helm of leadership at FTA. This included Esiteri Kamikamica, Susana Tuisawau and Merewairita Moci. The two ladies who once held the position of General Secretary were Esiteri Kamikamica and Lavenia Kaurasi.

With more Union Education workshops and Empowerment Programs, we hope to see more women take up leadership positions in future.

### Women's Network Committee

FTA Women's Network Committee comprises of 10 members who meet on a monthly basis at FTA's Education House, in Suva. This committee is made up of the elected women Executive members and those co-opted during the Women's Network forum at the Annual Delegates Conference. At the conclusion of 2015, a total of five women were elected into the National Executives of FTA. We are anticipating more women involvement and participation in years to come.

### Resignation of Mrs Merewairita Moci

The former FTA President, Mrs Merewairita Moci officially resigned from FTA on Friday 11th July, 2015 due to personal reasons. While we respected her decision, it was indeed a big blow to the women as it loses its President and a strong woman leader. She held COPE's Vice President's position at the time of her resignation and was replaced by Nanise Kamikamica.

### Total Membership

The number of women members make up more than 50% of the total membership of FTA. This figure is encouraging as the strength of the union lies in the hands of the women.

### CONCLUSION

FTA Women's Network is thankful to COPE as it continues to provide funding to organize workshops for our maritime teachers over the years. It has been quite a challenging task to visit our branches scattered all over the nation. A 2-day workshop conducted in early January is usually targeted at them who come to the capital during the long vacation.

We also acknowledge the contribution and support of FTA, our umbrella body, towards the empowerment of teachers within the Association. The notable increase in the number of women executives over the last two terms is the outcome of the many women empowerment and capacity building workshops and outreach held over the years.

### Date Claimer

### 8 March 2017 International Women's Day.

### Empower a Woman, Empower a Nation

International Women's Day provides women, often divided by national boundaries and cultural, economic and political differences, with an opportunity to come together to celebrate.

It is also a day which challenges all women across the Pacific to decide what legacy will be passed onto future generations of working women as they take on the role of family caregiver.

On 8 March 2017, all COPE Women Networks are called to celebrate International Women's Day in their schools.

Photographs and reports of International Women's Day celebrations should be forward to the COPE Secretariat at [cope@connect.com.fj](mailto:cope@connect.com.fj)

Together, COPE Women will empower the women across the globe

# #MakeItHappen



## International Women's Day

## THE FIJI TEACHERS UNION WOMEN'S WING

Vidya Singh

The Women's Wing of Fiji Teachers Union spread all over Fiji in most of the branches tried to empower the women on various union issues. Some of them showed the eagerness and interest to join hands with us and empowered more members in their own areas. The executive met regularly to discuss issues concerning women and girl child and facilitated the drawn plan.

The Women's Wing strengthened those who were slightly drifting away in their own world by having workshops in those districts especially reaching out to places like Levuka.

The Women's Wing had divisional workshops and branch workshops on 'Child Labour' and 'Protection of Women against All Forms of Violence.' Workshops were also organized to educate the women members on Union issues. The workshops were held in the Central and Western divisions of the country and also in Levuka. The importance of protecting children from being abused and from child labour was on the top list together with elimination and solutions for all forms of violence against women and girls. Educating teachers on protection strategies and the Ministry of Education's Policy on Child Protection and No Child To Be Left Behind and No Child Labour were important issues. Empowerment of women and girls on protecting themselves from any form of violence either at home, in school or in the community was also very important issue. The roles the women members play at the school and at home are very important and it displays the good leadership qualities they have in them.

The aim to organize these workshops was to empower women teachers so that they are well versed with gender perspectives for equality between men and women in the world of work. To give implicit attention to social differences which exists between women and men in every society based on the specific roles, responsibilities and needs. To empower the women members on how to guide their female students and other women members in their areas on the protection of all forms of violence against them.

### Joint FTU and FTA Workshops

The FTU Women's Wing and the participants greatly appreciated and have expressed their gratitude to COPE for funding their workshops whereby the women members have realized how important it is to protect themselves and their children at home, in school and in the community as well. During the workshops, members expressed views and ideas for protection and also showed the skills to protect themselves and their children.

The joint workshop of FTU and FTA was a success and members who attended had a greater knowledge on the ILO operations in Fiji and on the revised ERP. The members after these workshops have planned to hold similar workshops in their own communities in order to decrease the child abuse cases and violence against women.

### International Women's Day

To recognize and mark the achievements of women and girls, our Women's Wing has been celebrating annually. The International Women's Day in most of its branches and also appreciated the work carried out by the retired teachers and other women around them. Our members also donated towards the cyclone appeal and distributed cash and kind to the cyclone affected families.

The Women's Wing also organized workshops for the professional development of members to be fully equipped with the changing policies of the Ministry of Education.

### Challenges

The FTU Women's Wing faced a major challenge organizing workshops on Saturdays. Teachers were taking Saturday classes to finish the syllabi and also a lot of the teachers are upgrading their qualifications so they are taking Saturday class and these made us difficult to achieve our set targets.

### Our Future

The FTU Women's Wing will keep on organizing workshops on issues related to women and children and also on Union matters. More empowering of women members will be done with more strategies so that the teachers would be able to take similar workshops in their schools. We members would be more vigilant in finding out more solutions to protect women and children from all forms of violence at school, home and in the community.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the Fiji Teachers Union for the support, guidance, and assistance provided to the sisters and always being there for them whenever the need arose. I would also like to thank COPE for its guidance and financial assistance provided to the FTU Women's Wing. I wish the sisters present from all over the Pacific happy deliberations and a wonderful triennial.

## AEU, IEU, NTEU

The following report outlines progress towards these aims within Australia in the period 2013 – 2016 and is provided on behalf of the AEU, the NTEU and the IEU.

### Aim 1: To increase the influence and participation of women in the unions at all levels in the COPE region.

#### AEU

The AEU's membership broadly reflects the gender breakdown of teachers in public education in Australia. Approximately 78% of staff in Australian public schools are women and 75% of the AEU's membership are women. Women are represented throughout the leadership structures of the AEU with 61% of office holder positions held by women, including Federal AEU President, Correna Haythorpe and the Federal AEU Secretary, Susan Hoggood.

The AEU has built the leadership capacity of women over many years through a range of strategies. In the period of this report these have included:



AEU's website for Women unionsworkforwomen.com.au

- An annual audit of women's participation in both the teaching profession and in the AEU is tabled at Executive to ensure that hard won gains for women's participation are maintained and built on.
- Women in Leadership Development (WILD) programs are run in three states to train emerging women leaders.
- An annual federal Women's Conference is held to discuss issues impacting women members and to develop recommendations to the Executive of the AEU.
- The annual Rosemary Richards Memorial Scholarship provides financial support for a woman member to undertake professional development. The 2013 recipient researched and developed a parental leave kit to help women members in Queensland to negotiate parental leave. The 2014 recipient developed a website to be used for recruiting women into the AEU [www.unionsworkforwomen.com.au](http://www.unionsworkforwomen.com.au) The 2015 recipient is studying factors that impact mental wellbeing upon return from maternity leave.

#### IEU

The IEU Women and Equity Committee meets nationally and also links with the work of the various IEU Branch Women and Equity Committees, with the ACTU, the States' Trade and Labour Councils and with various community organisations. Sitting within the IEU Branch Women and Equity Committee are numerous regional networks. These branch committee meetings also meet face to face or via teleconference. These meetings are well attended by members and provide our union with the opportunity to engage women on issues relevant to them

#### IEU Women and Leadership Programme

A 3- 4 year mentoring and professional learning programme for IEU women activists is currently under development and will be launched in March 2017 with a 1 – 1.5 day National Forum in Canberra. Participants would be drawn from women currently in leadership roles, aspiring to leadership roles, and active in structures within the IEU Branches and identified as future Union leaders. The programme will have a significant future orientated focus in terms of developing women leadership skills.



#### NTEU

The NTEU has a majority of women members (57%), which reflects the gender distribution within the higher education sector. Currently, 47% of elected officials in the Union are women, with 10 out of 22 National Executive members' women (including the National President, Jeannie Rea).

As an organisation with more than 100 employees, the NTEU is required to report on the gender equity balance of our staff and gender equity policies and processes to the Workplace Gender Equity Agency (WGEA). The Union takes these reporting requirements seriously, and a copy of our most public recent report can be found at <https://www.wgea.gov.au/report/public-reports> under *National Tertiary Education Industry Union*.

Research across unions has shown that women appreciate unions working for women and on matters of interest for women. As such, the Women's Action Committee (WAC) is a critical part of the NTEU's structure and functions.

- Monitoring gender equity legislation and progress in the sector and in the NTEU.
- Participating in trade union women's activities.
- Contributing feminist critique to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander policy, industrial and higher education policy and research analysis, education and training, recruitment and campaigns.
- Monitoring the gender implications of the Union's broader activities and identifying new issues.



The WAC has been instrumental in the Union's wins on paid parental leave (achieving across the sector up to 36 weeks employer paid maternity and adoption leave) and more recently on leave to deal with issues around domestic and family violence. The WAC also organises the NTEU's biennial national women's conference, coordinates the annual Bluestocking Week and has oversight of the annual women's magazine *Agenda* (see <http://www.nteu.org.au/women/publications/agenda>). The WAC work on initiatives aimed at improving the participation of women in the Union, particularly in leadership roles and on government bodies. The work of the WAC can be seen on the Union's dedicated website at [www.nteu.org/women](http://www.nteu.org/women).

The NTEU also supports women academics through the Carolyn Allport scholarship (worth \$5,000 per year for a maximum of 3 years, for a woman undertaking postgraduate feminist studies, by research, in any discipline).

The Union works closely with the Council of Australian Postgraduates (CAPA) and the National Union of Students (NUS) on issues and campaigns relating to women, the most recent being NUS's "Stop the War on Women" campaign, which focuses student safety and the prevention of violence and harassment of women on campuses. In the same context is University Australia's Respect. Now. Campaign, which the NTEU is also supporting.

It is NTEU policy that the Union's Divisions and Branches include women's business on meeting agendas, and that paid staff support is given to WAC representatives in undertaking their work. The Union actively monitors this policy, and promotes our support for women and gender equality broadly throughout our industrial, policy, campaigning and recruitment platforms.

## **Aim 2: To improve the work conditions of COPE women teacher members**

### **Fighting to Protect Paid Parental Leave**

The 2013 Women's Network Country Report for Australia outlined the Australian union movement's success in implementing a Commonwealth Paid Parental Leave scheme of 18 weeks' pay at the minimum wage. This scheme was designed to complement workplace based entitlements gained over time through enterprise bargaining.

Since the 2013 report, the conservative Liberal National Party government have attempted to wind back the scheme by restricting access to it for women who also have workplace entitlements.

The LNP's attack on Paid Parental Leave was a direct attack on unions and women union members as those workplaces where women had an entitlement to paid parental leave were overwhelmingly workplaces where unions had negotiated an enterprise agreement.

In an attempt to find budget savings, the LNP Government announced on Mothers' Day 2015 that it would stop access to the government-funded component of paid parental leave if workers also had an employer-funded component.

Mothers who accessed both schemes in accordance with the scheme's design were called "rorters" who were "double-dipping".

The AEU, IEU and the NTEU members joined with other unions to fight to protect this hard won right for our women members. We have used our member networks to actively lobby the cross bench Senators to vote against the LNP savage cuts and save the Federal Parental Leave Scheme. After this concerted lobbying by Australian unions, the proposed legislation was blocked by the Opposition parties and some independent Senators in October 2015.

Undeterred, the LNP Government included the cuts to Paid Parental Leave in its 2016 Budget and in their policy platform for re-election. The Australian Election, held on July 2, 2016 returned the LNP government but with a reduced majority. While cuts to Paid Parental Leave remain their policy, they will be more reliant on Opposition parties and independents.

The Union movement will continue its fight to save Paid Parental Leave.

### **Insecure Work**

Increasing levels of casual, contract and outsourced work in Australian schools, TAFEs and Universities continues to disproportionately impact women teachers and to undermine their access to hard won entitlements such as paid parental leave.

The NTEU is running active campaigns aimed at reducing the levels of insecure employment (see <http://www.unicasual.org.au/>), and has had industrial success with the introduction of around 900 Scholarly Teaching Fellows (STFs) which convert previously casual positions to ongoing positions. However, with ongoing pressures on the sector to cut costs and an agenda by the conservative Federal Government which seeks to reduce protections and entitlements of workers, there is much more that needs to be done, and the work of the unions is ongoing in fighting the unfettered growth of insecure employment.

### **Domestic Violence**

In Australia, violence is the leading contributor to death, disability and illness of women aged 15 to 44 years. One in three women experience intimate partner violence in their lifetime.

There has been significant movement in public awareness and action about the scourge of domestic violence. A high profile victim / survivor of family violence, Rosie Batty was named Australian of the Year in 2015. The Victorian government has implemented a Royal Commission into Family Violence and committed to implementing all of its recommendations. Australian Unions have worked closely with Rosie Batty and with community organisations to make sure that workplaces support victim / survivors.

In 2012, the University of New South Wales, with Government funding, established the Domestic Violence Clearinghouse, which sought to raise the level of national consciousness around violence against women and address domestic, family and partner violence through industrial mechanisms. As a result of the ground breaking work by the Clearinghouse, championed by the union movement, Australia is now at the forefront internationally in treating domestic, family and partner violence as not only a societal issue, but as an industrial and economic issue. As a result, over 1.6 million workers in Australia now have access to paid domestic violence leave in union negotiated workplace agreements. We note that the push to address domestic, family and partner violence is now also being taken up internationally and by the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

The Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) is in the process of making a submission to the Fair Work Commission to have 10 days of paid leave to support women impacted by domestic violence added to the Modern Award Safety net, making it available to all award reliant workers. The paid leave is designed to help women deal with the practical challenges of escaping violence such as attending court or accessing support services without losing their paid work.

The AEU, IEU and NTEU have been successful in negotiating specific clauses in a number of industrial agreements to support our members, their families and support networks, who may be victims of domestic violence.

To illustrate, the NTEU has formulated a comprehensive mandatory domestic and family violence leave claim, which has been adopted in various forms at most universities. Central to the NTEU's claim is the provision for dedicated leave of up to 20 days for all staff (including casuals) to deal with matters arising as a result of domestic violence, the provision of appropriate support for staff impacted by domestic violence, appropriate training for those designated as contacts for staff needing to access domestic violence support and leave, and access to flexible working arrangements for staff affected by domestic violence.

### **Return to work after parental leave**

In 2009, Australian workers won the right to request flexible work arrangements, such as work from home, job share or changed hours, in certain circumstances including returning to work after a period of parental leave.

While these requests cannot be refused except on "reasonable business grounds", union members still experience great difficulty accessing flexible work.

In the IEU submission to the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) *Supporting Working Parents: Pregnancy and Return to Work National Review 2014*, members reported that they were denied access to part time and job share arrangements, in some cases being forced to resign from their position. Other members were unlikely to regain their formal earning capacity as they were denied access to leadership positions.

Women need more than simple a right to request flexible work arrangements. We need an enforceable right to access flexible working arrangements.

In 2014, the SA Branch of the AEU successfully negotiated a clause in their enterprise agreement which gives teachers an absolute right to part time work for up to two years after returning from maternity leave.

The NTEU has a model clause around the right to return from parental leave on part-time or reduced hours which includes provisions for the employee who returns to work on reduced hours to continue to work on reduced hours for a period not exceeding six years from the date of birth or placement of the child. At the end of the six years, or at any time on the giving of 12 months' notice, the employee has the right to return to their pre-parental leave fraction of employment. Should the employee's original job no longer exist, then the claim also allows for conversion to a suitable position nearest in status and pay to the original job, on the same fraction of employment they held prior to taking leave, or on reduced hours.

In addition to workplace bargaining, the AEU, IEU and the NTEU are actively assisting the ACTU in its application to vary all Federal Awards to include new entitlements which provide an enforceable right to return to work part-time after taking parental leave.

**Aim 3: To ensure, through education, girls and young women realise their potential and are equipped to participate fully in social, political and economic life.**

### **Girls School Education**

Two Australian states, Victoria and Queensland are trialling Respectful Relationships education in primary and secondary schools. The classes are aimed at preventing violence against women by challenging sexist attitudes and gender stereotypes at a young age.

The highly successful Safe Schools Program, designed to prevent bullying of LGBTI students in schools, has been under concerted attack from the LNP government and sections of the media for the past year. The LNP Government have indicated that they will not refund the program when it finishes at the end of 2016. The Victorian state government has indicated that they will fully fund Safe Schools in all Victorian public schools from 2017 onwards. However other states have not committed to the future of Safe Schools.

### **Privatisation and Corporatisation of TAFE and Universities**

Ongoing attempts at privatisation and corporatisation of Australian VET and Higher Education systems continue under the LNP government, doing immense damage to public TAFE's and Universities. The negative impacts of attempts at privatisation and marketisation have disproportionately impacted women students.

#### Vocational and further education

Australia's public TAFE system once enjoyed an enviable international reputation. However, successive Australian state governments have been reducing funding per student contact hour to public TAFE's for more than a decade, as well as increasing the proportion of funding that is only available via competition with for-profit

colleges. The introduction of a VET loan scheme in 2012 (VET Fee HELP) was the final ingredient needed to dramatically increase the cost of courses, introduce hundreds of low quality private training colleges into the system and dramatically increase the amount of debt carried by students who do TAFE and VET courses.

Women have overwhelmingly borne the burden of these new vocational education debts because, on average, they earn less money than men in the same industry, are more likely to be out of the workforce for periods of time caring for family and are more likely to be working in low paid feminised industries. Nearly two thirds of VET Fee HELP debtors are women and a high percentage of these women are estimated to be unable to pay off these debts in their lifetime. Current Australian policy is for education debts to be "written off" when a person dies. However, proposals currently being put to the Australian government would make family members liable for these debts along with the power to take debts from deceased estates.



The AEU's Stop TAFE Cuts Campaign has called for an immediate guarantee of 70% of government VET funding to go to TAFE, the suspension of the operation of the student loan scheme (VET FEE HELP) pending a thorough review; stopping the registration of any new private providers; and developing and implementing strong regulation and monitoring for all private colleges.

### Higher Education

The Federal Government has actively targeted higher education over the last 4 -5 years, through an agenda that would see widespread funding cuts to universities, a push to increase the levels of corporatisation and commercialisation in teaching and research, increased debt burdens on students and the opening up of public subsidies to private providers. Throughout this, the NTEU has actively campaigned against these changes, through our popular *No \$100K Degrees* campaign. The growth of public opposition to their plan for universities, as well as other proposed changes saw both a change of both the Minister for Education and Prime Minister during the term of the last government. The recent federal election campaign saw the Government try to steer clear of firm policies for higher education, although a white paper released just prior to the election made it clear that they still intend to implement much of their original agenda to privatise and commercialise higher education.

In summary, the Government plans to strip \$5 billion in public funding to higher education over the next 4-5 years, which would see universities lose between \$60m and \$300m (depending on the size of the institution) as a direct result of these cuts. Should these cuts be realised, there will be a negative impact on the quality of teaching and research in Australian universities, and the

already historically high levels of insecure employment for both academic and professional/administrative staff will continue to climb (noting also, that women are over represented in casual employment in universities).

The Government also plans to make Australian students to pay more, both with the proposed 'flagship' deregulated courses as well as shifting more of the tuition costs to students (ignoring the fact that Australian students already are amongst the highest fee paying students in the OECD). The 'flagship courses' are in place of the previously proposed full deregulation of university fees, and would allow universities to charge whatever they wish for 20 per cent of their course offering. This will result in \$100,000+ tuition fees.



The Government is also considering a number of proposals for recouping debt from students who don't make enough to repay any or all of their tuition debt, including:

- Introducing a household income test in an attempt to get repayments from 'wealthy' women who work part-time or not at all
- Recouping debt from deceased estates
- Extending government subsidies to private, for profit higher education providers.
- Not allowing retirees (defined as those who are no longer in the "permanent work force" - so may include disability recipients too) access to the loans scheme to undertake what the Government considers 'recreational degrees'.

The NTEU has run a gender lens over the impacts of these changes and found that these changes would have considerable impact on women, who are already disadvantaged by the gender pay gap, higher levels of insecure employment and often relegated to lower paid jobs or roles, impacting on their ability to pay back what would be high levels of debt.

### **Aim 4: To increase the political awareness, effectiveness, confidence and abilities of women members in the Council of Pacific Education Unions within their own societies**

#### International Women's Day

International Women's Day is well celebrated by AEU, IEU and NTEU women members across the country. International Women's Day provides us with time to reflect on the progress made by generations of working women and their families in the struggle for fair workplace rights, decent employment conditions and equal pay. It is also a time to acknowledge the significant contributions women educators and professional school assistants have made and continue to make in delivering quality education. Education Unions celebrate the day by holding morning tea activities in the schools/workplaces or holding early morning breakfast or cocktail functions. This year in the state of Victoria, women union members held a week of focused activities to raise awareness of the challenges facing women and celebrate our achievements



## **COPE Women's Network Action Plan. A Pathway To Success**

The COPE Women's Network Action Plan acts as a benchmark and guideline to women's networks in the region. The Action Plan aims to:

**Increase** the influence and participation of women in the union at all levels in the COPE region

**Improve** the work conditions of the women teachers in the COPE region

**Ensure**, through education, girls and young women realise their potential and are equipped to participate fully in social, political and economic life.

**Increase** the political awareness, effectiveness, confidence and abilities of women members

**Increase** the political awareness, effectiveness, confidence and abilities of women members.

# COPE Women Networks



## Get Connected...

A Facebook page has been developed to connect the network of committed professional women within the various teacher unions across the Pacific.

## Interested in joining the Facebook group?

Send an email to [cope@connect.com.fj](mailto:cope@connect.com.fj) and a link will be forwarded to you.

