

# SOLOMON ISLANDS



- Some Background
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- Challenges & Barriers to women getting elected
- SI constitutional Congress
- Why a women's submission?
- Why Affirmative Action?
- Women's Submission to the Constitutional Reform Process



# Background History

- The native administration ordinance was tabled in 1963. In this ordinance there was provision for the right to vote at the age of 18 -Clause 7(a).
- 1965- Lily Ogatina was the first Solomon Islands woman elected to Parliament. At that time it was called the Legislative Council.
- After Independence in 1978 – Hilda Kari became the first Solomon Islands woman to be elected 15 years after Mrs. Lily Ogatina Poznanski.



# Eight years after the Crises...

- Review of the 1978 constitution began in 2002-2004 where a draft constitution was designed and develop after much consultation. Thus the Draft Constitution 2004.
- To build on the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) and the Pacific Platform for Action (PPA) and the Solomon Islands National Women's Policy 1998, Solomon Islands became a State party to CEDAW in May 2002.



# Cont....

- Creation of a new Ministry for Women in 2007.
- Reporting on CEDAW is in progress.
- 5 out of 25 Permanent Secretaries are female.
- Three (3) women elected into the Provincial Assemblies in 2006.
- There are women representatives on the Chief's Councils. (1 in Isabel, 1 in West Guadalcanal, 1 in West AreAre and 2 in North Malaita).
- Improved coordination by donors and NGOs towards a systematic approach-strengthen partnerships with development partners and women stakeholders including other Ministries.
- Increased number of women candidates in the recent elections 26 in 2006.
- Fifteen (15) women in the Constitutional Reform Process
- Law Reform Commission – 1 woman member
- 1 woman now chair the Land Reform Commission
- 1 woman now chairs the College of Higher Education Council
- RAMSI MoG Project that supports the work of Government to increase women in decision making positions in Public Service and in Parliament.
- Review of the National Women's Policy.



# Challenges and Barriers

- **Structures & Cultural Barriers** - still very evident among community and church leaders during campaign time.
- **Institutional Regulations** - (e.g. Public officers fear of losing their jobs; Legislative amendments may be made through respective projects and institutions but there is the question of whether change of legislation will be supported by a male dominated Parliament)
- **Electoral System** - not gender friendly. Eg. Women are often victims of lack of registration and voting because of not having bus fares or being unable to reach polling stations that are inaccessible. There needs to be change of legislation to ensure double voting is minimized.
- **Political Party System and Administration** - not clear. Does not represent women's views in their manifestos.
- **Election Financial Systems** – No proper organization and management. E.g. lack of strong political parties commitment.
- **Vote Buying** - E.g. Devils Night [Night before Election]



# The SI Constitutional Congress

- The SI Constitutional Congress was established as a special Unit within the Prime Minister's Office in August 2007 to continue with work by UNDP/SIG which began in 2002.
- It is made up over 50 members of which 15 are women.
- It is made up of seven thematic committees and the eminent person's committee.



# Why a women's submission to CRP?

- SIG move towards Federal System of Government – means a change in the whole Public Administrative system from Unitary system which we inherited from United Kingdom to a Federal state system. This requires a national consultation including consultation with women.
- Although women were consulted between 2001-2004 the environment in which women spoke was one of conflict and not peace. Many did not fully understand what the two systems mean.
- Women are still anti Federal because they believe in National Unity...but see this as an opportunity to be part of a wider national process initiated by the Government.



# Why Affirmative Action?

- Timely for legislating special measures to advance women in political empowerment and leadership.
- Timely for the recognition of women as promoters of peace and national unity thus the need for their greater participation.
- SIG obligation to UN through CEDAW



## K. Article 88 Representation of women

Currently, there are no provisions in the Constitution for affirmative action to ensure representation of women in parliament. In keeping with Solomon Islands commitment to CEDAW state parties must adopt temporary special measures aimed at accelerating *de facto* equality between men and women. We commend the drafters of the FDC for providing for legislation to be passed requiring that within three years of coming into force legislation shall be enacted to secure the fair representation of women in parliament. In addition studies show that quotas are the best way of kick starting the process, even if as a temporary measure. However, the women of the SI regard this current provision as being inadequate and recommend that there be immediate provision in this Federal Draft Constitution (FDC).



## Cont...Recommendation 14

- We recommend that an additional 10 seats be reserved for women in Parliament effective after passing of the FDC. The selection should be based on the principle that there should be one seat per State plus Honiara City in which only women may compete. It is important that members appointed under this section shall have full voting rights as equal MPs and equal remuneration and benefits.



Tank lu Tumas!

