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**Listen, Learn and Link Up for a more gender just society:  
Lessons Learnt from Working in HIV/AIDS in the Pacific**

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\* The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations.

## Introduction

My area of expertise is HIV/AIDS in the Pacific Islands. I have worked in development in the Pacific for over 30 years - 15 years in trade and economic development, tourism and community work and 15 years in STI/HIV/AIDS education, care and prevention efforts. From 1990 – 96 I worked in the Secretariat for the Pacific Community's Pacific Islands AIDS /STD Prevention Project<sup>1</sup>. The project which targeted 16 Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs) was aimed at creating general awareness about AIDS and mobilizing community groups to help efforts to stop the spread of STD/HIV/AIDS. During the period 1997 to 2001 as the UNAIDS Country Programme Adviser for the Pacific, the focus of my work was to promote closer collaboration between the UN agencies while helping 12 – 15 PICTs implement their HIV/AIDS programmes<sup>2</sup>.

This paper is an attempt to summarise some of the lessons learnt from working in HIV/AIDS in the Pacific for the last 15 years, relevant to the role of men and boys in creating gender equality.

## Summary

Reviews of the projects found that we were particularly successful in our work with three sectors – the media, the church and youth.

The underlying philosophy of the work undertaken is best encapsulated in the slogan of the 1999 World AIDS Campaign (WAC) *Listen, Learn and Live*<sup>3</sup>. In summary, *Listen* to the needs of those people whose lives you are trying to improve (in the case of the WAC, young people, but it applies to individuals and groups<sup>4</sup>); *Learn* from the mistakes of others and as often as possible keep the groups you are working with informed<sup>5</sup> So that in the longer term, we can all *Live* in a better world. *Link Up* highlights the need to link up with others (programmes, agencies, work places, activities, organizations) to work together in equal partnerships towards creating more gender just societies.

Approaches that could be adopted or adapted for programmes on the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality are provided and suggestions made on what development partners, especially aid donors, can do.

## Working in HIV/AIDS in the Pacific

Pacific Island countries are mainly small, isolated and spread out over a large area of ocean – see map of the Pacific. Many aid agencies work through regional organizations. Most regional organizations and regional offices of many UN agencies are based in Suva,

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<sup>1</sup> AIDS Information Officer (1990-94) and Communication Specialist (94-96)

<sup>2</sup> This included implementing an AusAID funded Macfarlane Burnet Centre/UNAIDS/SPC project to develop the capacity of PICT in Strategic Planning which helped PICTs develop strategic plans.

<sup>3</sup> More information is available from the UNAIDS website.

<sup>4</sup> This applies at all levels – at the individual level, the family, community – including work place, communications with government officials, NGO personnel and aid donors.

<sup>5</sup> The SPC STD/HIV/AIDS Information Exchange regularly distributed materials to a wide variety of individuals and groups during the period 1990 – 2001. UNAIDS materials were also distributed.

Fiji. The oldest and the largest, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, which is based in Noumea, New Caledonia and has an office in Suva, implements a wide variety of social and development programmes. Frequent travel of programme personnel makes the coordination of activities difficult. Expensive travel costs means that a large portion of aid funds is spent on travel costs.

The lack of appreciation of the situation in the Pacific, including the cultural diversity that exists in the different island countries, the high costs of managing projects and the relatively low figures of “officially” reported cases of HIV/AIDS has disrupted the continuity of efforts.

### **Obstacles to HIV/AIDS work in the Pacific**

1. “A culture of silence” which promotes the myth that it is against our culture to talk about sensitive issues such as sex, sexuality, and interpersonal relationships. This applies at all levels in a variety of settings, in interpersonal communications, non-official and official at the work place, meetings, workshops and gatherings. This leads to a culture of denial.
2. Tradition – The decision making process of the traditional hierarchical structures in the Pacific is dominated by men. Traditions that need to be changed have to be challenged and the need for revision, clarified. Support for changes need to be championed by traditional leaders and “role models” from all sectors. The testimony of those who have suffered or continue to suffer because of “dangerous” traditions has been effective in convincing people that some traditions have to change.
3. Religion – The Christian church is a powerful force in the life of Pacific Islanders. Many church Ministers/ religious leaders consider sex, sexuality, unplanned pregnancies, child abuse etc to be too sensitive to discuss openly. Ways have to be found to convince church leaders otherwise. Quoting the enlightened ones to others in the dark has been effective.
4. Ineffective Leadership and poor coordination have led to regional HIV/AIDS efforts being disrupted twice over the last decade.

### **Why the Media, Church and Youth?**

Working on cross cutting issues such as HIV/AIDS requires open discussion of sensitive subjects such as sex, sexuality, tradition, culture, religion and gender roles. The interlinking influences of factors affecting sexual behaviour need to be understood by as many people as possible. The multi level interactions of these three sectors can help ongoing efforts to generate the multisectoral response required to effect behaviour change.

Given the diversity of people, settings, educational and literacy levels, all forms of media<sup>6</sup> are required to reach as many people as possible. The (Christian) Church is a major influence on the lives of Pacific Island people. Prior to the introduction of radio, newspaper and television, the church pulpit was and arguably continues to be the most

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<sup>6</sup> booklets, comics, theatre groups, drama, videos

powerful medium in the Pacific. In many countries today, the church have radio and television programmes, run many of the schools and hospitals<sup>7</sup>, organise community activities through women and youth groups – their effect on people’s lives is pervasive. The need to involve youth, especially marginalised youth is well documented.

An overarching goal of working with these groups was to encourage people to break the culture of silence and talk about the sensitive issues surrounding HIV/AIDS. The participatory approach to training and conducting workshops encourages open discussion of “sensitive” subjects and:

1. created a better understanding of the links between social issues, especially those related to gender, and the spread of HIV/AIDS.
2. provided people with the facts about transmission
3. discussed what individuals, communities and governments can do to inter alia, help create the more caring environment for people living with HIV/AIDS
4. raised options other than “use a Condom” as condoms continued to be **NOT** readily available
5. highlighted the urgent need to expand the definition of sex.

Presentations, articles and discussions with all three groups highlighted

1. the consequences of silence<sup>8</sup> - open discussions at different levels (personal, community, national, regional)
2. the need to challenge traditions that are no longer appropriate and to reclaim and adapt positive aspects of Pacific culture that can help create a more caring environment for people living with HIV and marginalized groups such as women and children
3. the role of individuals, the church and the community<sup>9</sup>

### **1. Overcoming the culture of silence –**

The widespread acceptance of the myth that “it is against our culture and tradition to talk about sensitive issues” has been promoted by the media, bureaucrats, church pastors and Ministers without any firm basis.

***“The fact is it is against Pacific Island cultures to talk about sex in certain situations. For example, when there are brothers and sisters together. Like most cultures, when you are with your own “peers”, friends and people you feel comfortable with, you can talk about practically anything. Like people in most cultures, Pacific Islanders love to talk about sex. And if we look at the statistics of unwanted and unplanned pregnancies, STD (Sexually Transmitted Diseases), the reasons for breakdown in relationships we***

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<sup>7</sup> The Catholic Church run the Divine Word University in PNG which has trained many of the senior journalist and continue to provide training in this area

<sup>8</sup> The Pacific has the highest rate of suicide in the world according to the Foundation of the Peoples of the South Pacific which recently launched a project on Masculinity, Mental Health and Violence. The inability to talk to others has been singled out as a major cause of suicide in the region.

<sup>9</sup> Role models were used at varying degrees to promote awareness and most importantly to identify the roles that individuals, organizations, governments and leaders can play in care and prevention efforts.

*find that not only are people talking about it, but they are also doing it, and often in ignorance.”<sup>10</sup>.*

Reliance on overseas media reports, information provided by researchers and aid donors<sup>11</sup>, reinforced by Pacific bureaucrats who should have known better, and the “sensational” views/opinions of church Ministers has perpetuated this myth and entrenched the culture of silence and perpetuated denial.

## **2. Challenging Traditions**

Rapid urbanisation, new technologies, dominating Christian values, unquestioning acceptance of the most vocal elements of society has contributed to the loss of gender positive aspects of some cultures in the Pacific. Eg. In Polynesia, traditionally it was the men who were responsible for food preparation, both men and women shared child rearing responsibilities and women were accorded a high status in society being responsible for redistribution of wealth, arranging marriages and settling disputes. Some Pacific cultures are matrilineal but with colonization and Christianity promoting male domination and new technologies such as cooking pots and stoves, the division of duties became more pronounced. Women became responsible for home duties while the men became the “breadwinner”.

One of the earlier tactics used in the Pacific was to request chiefs and church leaders to promote condoms. Their reluctance was attributed to culture and religion. In fact, this showed great insensitivity and did not take into account the views and beliefs of church and traditional leaders. It is beneath the dignity of people of high rank to talk about condoms. They can, and have facilitated educational efforts and sessions in villages if they are approached in a manner befitting their status and position. Responsible leaders anywhere are concerned about the welfare of their people and can be motivated to do what is needed to improve the quality of life of those under their charge when their concerns are taken into consideration, they understand the issues and see a positive role for themselves – see *Pacific Women Against AIDS*<sup>12</sup>

## **3. Mobilising Religious Support**

The condom focused campaigns and projects, the doom and gloom scenario of what was happening in other parts of the world, the early identification of HIV/AIDS with homosexuals, certain ethnic groups, IV drug users, sex workers - groups who were already marginalized, provided fodder for religious fundamentalists and fuelled denial and prejudices rather than knowledge and enlightenment. People in the Pacific found it hard to identify with a disease that many had not seen, let alone begin to address the

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<sup>10</sup> Myths that Kill – page 12-13 - Draft booklet distributed widely during workshops and meetings with journalists, teachers, church and youth leaders. The booklet has remained in draft because of, inter alia, the reluctance of decision makers to approve its publication

<sup>11</sup> often more concerned about their priorities rather than those of the country/area/group/client .

<sup>12</sup> Women Against AIDS – booklet to highlight women in the vanguard in the fight against HIV/AIDS in the Pacific, includes quotes from influential women in the church, the media, wives of Presidents and Prime Ministers, community workers and peer educators.

issues. Although most Pacific people have adopted Christianity, the culture of silence has perpetuated ignorance and promoted fear and discrimination

The church was confronted with the sensationalist media coverage of HIV/AIDS and the simplistic solution – Use a Condom - that was being promoted by the media. Media interviews with church leaders focused on condoms rather than listening to their concerns and that more appropriate role could be worked out for them. There are many people in the church who are concerned about social justice. Linking up with such people has helped to promote a more constructive role for the church viz to practice the love, care and compassion that is required. This continues to be a challenge.

## Lessons Learnt

### 1. Identifying and Establishing Strategic Partnerships

Multilevel strategic relationships were established and developed with a wide variety of individuals, community groups, organizations, existing projects and development partners to help overcome the culture of silence.

Highlighting the disastrous consequences of silence encourages discussion of sensitive issues among small groups to clarify what individuals male, female, families and the wider community and governments can do. Personal stories, videos, quotes from the more enlightened chiefs, church and community leaders were used and widely circulated<sup>13</sup>.

Addressing meetings, conducting training events; the regular production of a magazine *Pacific AIDS Alert*<sup>14</sup> which was widely distributed throughout the region; radio spots; production of videos, comics, assistance to theatre groups (there is a high level of illiteracy in Pacific Island countries – especially Melanesia) were some of the means used to generate discussions and establish working relationships.

### 2. Listening

#### Some of the lessons learnt from listening to small groups

**General:** The Family, Children, Christian principles, community values of caring for each other and your extended family, the “Pacific Way” of dialogue and consensus were some of the issues identified as being important to Pacific people. Feedback informed the production of materials, much of which aimed at promoting family, community and Pacific traditions of caring for people, especially children.

**Church:** Many church ministers resort to judgmental pronouncements quoting biblical verses and praying because they do not know the facts about reproductive and sexual

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<sup>13</sup> A Pacific Woman’s story – personal testimony of first Pacific Island woman to become infected with HIV by her philandering seafaring husband, Charlotte’s Story – video of Samoan woman talking about discrimination and reactions she faced while looking after her son dying from AIDS.

<sup>14</sup> Beginning with a production run of 3,500 in 1991, by issue number 12, circulation increased to over 10,000 copies by 1996. A French version was produced. Feedback informed the production of materials to mobilize Pacific people

health, sexuality, adolescence, marriage problems, human relationships etc. Unable to counsel and provide advice based on knowledge, the only instrument available to them is prayer and the Bible.

**Sex:** there is a need for a more “holistic” definition of sex. The refusal of some church Ministers to talk openly about the issues has perpetuated ignorance and divorced the physical from the spiritual aspects of relationships.

*The reluctance to talk more openly about sex has promoted the view that sex consists of penetrative heterosexual intercourse. Reducing sex to sexual intercourse is an insult to our creator. It denies the richness of human sexuality and the validity of other forms of sexual expression. It promotes a male centred view of sex, and limits people’s choice to either Yes or No to sexual intercourse. It ignores the pleasures of same sex relationships and invalidates the joys of non-penetrative sexual activities<sup>15</sup>.*

*This narrow definition of sex has led to many unsuccessful campaigns to promote safe sex behaviour and ruined many lives. The pervasive perception of sex being penis in vagina, male ejaculation, finish, contributes to the continuing opposition to sex education, to justify the abuse of children (because it’s not real sex) and promotes the ‘macho’ idea that to be a real man, anything short of “sexual intercourse” is not sex.*

*We can all do more to promote a wider definition and perception of sex – one that is more inclusive than a heterosexual male view, a definition that includes feelings, concern, caring for the needs of your sexual partner and is safer for both parties. One that accepts that other sexual practices (particularly the non-penetrative and safer ones) are valid ways of expressing sexual feelings and should not be dismissed as “kid’s stuff”*

**Sexuality:** Terms such as homosexual, bisexual, transsexual, transgender etc may be useful for research but when translated into other languages and cultures, may cause confusion. People are sexual beings and in HIV/AIDS work, it is better to concentrate on the risks associated with specific sexual practices rather than attribute specific acts to certain groups. There is a need to improve people’s understanding of human sexuality, especially how fluid it can be.

**Gender:** Focusing programmes on improving the status of women by blaming men and highlighting men’s negative behaviours and limiting gender issues to women and girls has created further division and resentment rather than promoting gender equality. The role of women in educating and raising boys, the role of men in setting examples is often overlooked. Men and boys can be a real force for change on gender inequality if gender is not identified as a women's issue.

Although there are differences in the status of women in different cultures, what is common is women’s subordination in marriage, lack of control over their fertility and limited economic (and sometimes education) opportunities. In a non threatening, non judgmental environment, the socio-economic factors that make women more vulnerable

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<sup>15</sup> Denying sexual activities of the disabled

to HIV/AIDS infection can be used to move men to understanding the need for a more gender just society. This approach may be less threatening when it is done men to men.

**Decision Makers/ Leadership:** Target decision makers concurrently with other groups – The absence of political will and commitment by leaders, compounded by the inherent conservatism of bureaucracies, a lack of appreciation of the linkages between issues such as education, poverty, women’s status, drugs and alcohol use, peer pressure, domestic violence and mental health and the spread of HIV/AIDS has highlighted the need to obtain commitment from the highest levels. The lack of support and understanding at the decision making levels can nullify gains and disrupt the progress of securing the much needed multilevel continuity of efforts that is required to minimise the spread of a virus that “does not respect, culture, religion and tradition.” .

The Forum which is the annual gathering of leaders of independent countries in the Pacific did not discuss HIV/AIDS until 2002. Mention of HIV/AIDS in the Forum communiqués for 2002<sup>16</sup> and 2003 can be used to leverage leaders and governments to be involved in programmes on the role of men and boys.

### **The Media**

The media can help spread the facts, create a better understanding of the linkages between societal problems, development issues and the spread of HIV/AIDS. It can help link up people and organisations, feature success stories, failures and sources of further information. To develop a rapport with the media, you need to understand their needs.

To establish a relationship with the media, regular press releases were issued, especially on special occasions such as World AIDS Day, Mother’s Day, Youth celebrations and festivals. “Best story” competitions, story line suggestions to journalists, and helping national and regional partners to use the media were some of the activities undertaken. Arranging for media people to be sent to international conferences on HIV and population-related issues helped to cement relationships with some journalists.

The media was urged to help put a human face to AIDS during meetings and workshops on HIV/AIDS<sup>17</sup>, as this had been identified as the most effective way of moving people in the Pacific to act.

A PINA (Pacific Island News Association)/UNAIDS series of Workshops with the media in Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu in 1998 was hailed as a best practice by the International Planned Parenthood Federation. The workshop was structured so that media people (journalists) could talk with community/youth workers, church leaders, health workers and government officials. To meet the needs of the publishers and broadcasters, radio programmes and articles were written during the workshop, critiqued and later published or broadcast. Ongoing relationships were established through “mock” interviews and press conferences with “role models” identified by young people.

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<sup>16</sup> The Forum has a policy on gender and now has a workplace policy on HIV/AIDS

<sup>17</sup> I conducted workshops and sessions at every annual Pacific Islands News Association conference between 1989 – 1999.

A magazine *UpFront* was produced to highlight lessons learnt, best practices and personalities involved in care and prevention efforts in the Pacific<sup>18</sup>. During the PINA conference in 1999, Maire Bopp Du Pont<sup>19</sup> – a young Tahitian woman journalist who had participated in one of our workshops went public about her positive status `because of the need to put a human face to AIDS. A video, *Maire* was produced and has since been used in many workshops. In 2000, PINA awarded Maire the PINA Media Freedom Award `` for her efforts to get sensitive issues of vital importance to the lives of people in the Pacific`` to be discussed more openly. Maire has since visited Pacific Island countries to address community groups, youth church leaders, students and women`s groups. In 2001, Maire was awarded a UN Prize and has been a featured speaker along with Mandela and Clinton at a World AIDS Conference. Maire established the Pacific Islands AIDS Foundation and continues to be the leading positive activist in the Pacific.

**Lessons Learnt:** Programmes to promote the involvement of boys and men in gender equality must develop an effective partnership/working relationship with the media, especially journalists. Radio, the most influential media in the Pacific reaches a wider audience - rural audiences and outlying islands – and is often conducted in the vernacular. Preference for mainstream media rather than NGOs may mean coverage of issues to be superficial and sensational rather than in depth and educational.

Most journalists in the Pacific are underpaid. The availability of school leavers to fill positions means the turnover is high and in depth knowledge of issues undeveloped. Workshops funded by aid donors provides training opportunities and increases knowledge about some of the issues but absolves employers from the responsibility of training costs and/or paying more for experienced journalists.

In countries where there is a high rate of illiteracy, videos, theatre groups and other means of reaching people – comics, talk back radio etc should be used.<sup>20</sup> More use should be made of University based journalism programmes. Suggestions can be made to select journalists on articles and angles to stories.

## **The Church**

Except for Fiji where there are other faith-based organizations because of the Indian and Chinese population, most Pacific Island countries are predominantly Christian.

Through attending church gatherings, conducting national and regional workshops and addressing church leaders and youth conferences, partnerships were established to promote a more caring environment for people living with HIV/AIDS.

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<sup>18</sup> Over 30,000 copies were distributed throughout the Pacific as a continuation of the 1998 Force for Change – World AIDS Campaign with young people and the part of the 1999 WAC, Listen, Learn, Live .

<sup>19</sup> Maire was one of a group of University of the South Pacific journalism students who participated at a workshop on HIV/AIDS which the author co-facilitated in 1997. Much was needed to be done for the sponsors to agree to include the group of students in the workshop.

<sup>20</sup> See SPC Publication Theatre groups in the Pacific. Comics were produced (in association with Streetwise Australia) for young people. These were later used by groups working on literacy programmes.

This led to a strategy to promote the introduction of sex, sexuality, gender issues and HIV/AIDS into the curriculum of theological schools in the Pacific. The process was delayed because of the insistence of one of the UN partners that they would get a consultant to do this. This eventually fell through because of budget cuts. In the meantime, advocacy efforts made with other partners, notably, CAPE-Fiji were successful and a partnership agreement was made with SPATS – South Pacific Association of Theological Schools at a meeting in Samoa in 2001. The agreement was achieved by arranging for the Samoa Minister of Health (one of the ardent supporters of HIV/AIDS efforts and a lay preacher) to address the SPATS meeting and make the suggestion. At the end of the meeting, the UNAIDS CPA position was terminated. A new CPA started in September 2004.

By 2001 a partnership was established with the South Pacific Association of Theological Schools (SPATS) to inter alia, introduce sex, sexuality and HIV/AIDS education into theological schools in Pacific Island countries. Efforts should be made to ensure that the curriculum will include a component of the role of boys and men.

### Lessons Learnt

1. Link up with the personnel of church-based organizations who are concerned about social justice issues and the role the church can play to help improve the quality of people's lives. Quote these people (and organizations) as often as possible. ***“AIDS does not have to be all bad news. Through its challenge it has the potential to make us all better human beings.”*** (Bishop Finau, Tonga, 1991)
2. Highlight the positive role that the church can play in enlightening people rather than promoting ignorance ***“Instead of cursing the darkness, light a candle.”***<sup>21</sup>
3. Remind Christians of the need to practice their Christian principles of love, care and compassion ***“People who discriminate against people with HIV/AIDS do not practice the Gospel of Christ”*** - Bishop Bryce of Polynesia
4. Talk about sensitive issues - ***“There is no religious constraint to talking about sex when it is in relation to better physical and spiritual health. Where we see injustices, it is our duty to speak out and work towards changing things. Silence breeds violence”***<sup>22</sup>.” Bishop Winston Halapua, 1993.
5. Create a better understanding of the linkages between the issues by finding entry points to church activities where HIV/AIDS issues including gender equality, can be introduced. These include marriage counseling, youth meetings and camps, and programmes to deal with social problems such alcohol and drug abuse.
6. Use the Peer to Peer Approach – pressure from overseas partners can help to convince their counterparts eg. In a World Council of Churches publication the following statement appeared in the 1990's“ through its silence the church has

<sup>21</sup> slogan used by now defunct CAPE – Fiji – Churches, AIDS, Pastoral care and Education.

<sup>22</sup> Bishop Halapua's words seem prophetic. A “Masculinity, Mental Health and Violence” project conducted by the Foundation of the Peoples of the South Pacific began in October 2003 to address the inter-related problems of young male-perpetrated violence and mental health in Fiji, Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea and Kiribati. The project will work on a community, national and regional level to raise awareness and de-stigmatise this issue among parents, teachers, policy makers and traditional leaders. The project will catalyse the development of support services for boys and young men by building coalitions of service providers at the community, national and regional-level, and will assist in the development of new services where needed.

- been more responsible for creating fear and ignorance and thus helped to spread HIV/AIDS and perpetuate discrimination”
7. Use occasions such as the Candlelight Ceremony and the 16 Days of Activism<sup>23</sup> at the end of November to link up with others concerned about social justice issues. There are many other occasions that can be used.

### **Successful approaches to hear from young people**

1. **AIDS Task Force of Fiji /UNAIDS Men who have Sex with Men (MSM) Survey** in three Pacific Island countries – young MSM were trained in how to conduct surveys, compile data and interpret the results. In partnership with the Melbourne based Australia Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society at La Trobe University, the trainees conducted the survey and learnt new skills. Involvement in the different stages of the survey meant that they were able to contribute to the follow up activities and implementation and at the same time educated and supported their peers.
2. **Youth Parliament (UNICEF):** schools in Fiji and the Tonga National Youth Congress were mobilized to “elect” young people to be Ministers in the Government. The group elect a Prime Minister and appoint other Ministers who on issues of concern to young people in a mock Parliament. Results were presented to the real Parliament to discuss the issues raised. HIV/AIDS and reproductive and sexual health were high on the priorities. These groups can be used for gender equality programmes.
3. **Sports Heroes** have been used to promote general awareness in a number of Pacific Island countries and in the region. A working relationship was established with the Oceania National Olympic Committee. A partnership was scheduled to be launched in 2000 when the theme of the WAC was Men Make A Difference. This had to be postponed because of the cessation of the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS in the Pacific.
4. **Samoa – Youth talk back:** In Samoa, youth peer educators from the NGO Sautiamai (Alcohol/Drugs/HIV-AIDS) conduct a popular talk-back radio programme every week. Magik FM is an English-language station targeted at youth with local news and Pacific regional (NZ/Australia) news bulletins. Its reach extends over the main island of Upolu and part of Savaii. Talofa FM is an all-Samoan station targeted at the rural village communities, with translated news bulletins supported by music. It has a wider reach, extending to the whole of Savaii.
5. **Tonga – Voices of the Future:** In Tonga, the government FM station is mainly targeted at youth. It includes Australian, NZ, and BBC news, and has several news bulletins throughout the day. With assistance from various aid donors, the Tonga National Youth Congress produces regular radio programmes and a youth magazine (Le’o ‘oe kaha’u – Voices of the Future). From humble origins (a crude

<sup>23</sup> In Fiji, the Fiji Women’s Crisis Centre uses this occasion to draw in the participation of an NGO Coalition of Human Rights to highlight violence against women

photocopy hand-out) it is today an electronically produced magazine with photographs. Stories and photographs are filed by youth correspondents from the outer islands and published in Nuku'alofa with computer and digital camera equipment funded by UNESCO. There is a need for training.

6. **YoutheMedia (Fiji):** A group of students who had been brought together to help “mainstream” children’s rights (Convention of the Right of the Child) by UNICEF were trained to conduct media activities (talk back, newspaper columns, television, discussion panels). The group participated in an attachment programme to media houses during the Christmas holidays as part of the 1999 World AIDS Campaign, Listen, Learn Live. Members of the group produced radio programmes, conducted talk back shows, wrote articles and produced a television documentary on issues of concern to young people. They learnt theatre skills and performed “skits” on issues of concern to young people.

### **Forward looking strategies**

1. Need to target leaders concurrently. Use communiqués and international commitments as leverage to establish and strengthen strategic partnerships with regional organizations. The Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP) has 10 members<sup>24</sup>. Other regional and international organizations include the UN system, bilaterals, Non Government Organisations, faith based organizations, professional associations and trade unions.
2. Identify entry points to assist efforts to promote the role of men and boys, in regional and national projects. Opportunities exist in the media, human rights and governance programmes
3. Education at all levels – informal and formal syllabus. Incorporate the value of women’s work and the role of men and boys (gender issues) into the school syllabus and out of school programmes.
4. Use sporting associations and sports heroes – a partnership with the International Olympic Committee at the international level might be pursued.
5. Target Prisoners: A more holistic approach to rehabilitation of prisoners, especially for those committing violence against women is needed. While stiffer sentences are being meted for offences, rehabilitation rather than retribution necessitates education and training in gender issues for prisoners as well as the community to accept prisoners back into society rather than continued ostracism.

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<sup>24</sup> The Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP) consists of ten regional organisations - Fiji School of Medicine (FSM); South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment (SPBEA); South Pacific Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA); Pacific Islands Development Programme (PIDP); Secretariat for the Pacific Community (SPC); South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC); Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS); South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP); South Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO) and the University of the South Pacific (USP)

6. Investigate possibilities of helping to reclaim progressive traditional features, values and practices that promote gender equality.
7. Use the growing number of FM radio stations which is catering to a large and impressionable youth constituency. Imported pop music dominates programme content, and there is very little serious news. This poses fresh challenges but also new opportunities to develop media activities that promote the principles of good governance, development and human rights.

### **The Role of Aid Donors**

1. Opportunities for collaboration with other donor bilateral/multilateral projects should be developed and utilized to maximize opportunities for collaboration, coordination, avoid duplication, minimize costs and strengthen the impact of activities. The UN Theme group mechanism, the CROP Working groups (on Health and Gender)
2. The proliferation of youth related problems such as alcohol and drug abuse, teenage pregnancy, mental health and suicide, child abuse, unemployment which are emerging in the wider context of increasing poverty, rapid urbanization, globalisation erosion of traditional values, practices and institutions such as the extended family, provides opportunities for the inclusion of components to promote the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality. These should be investigated and utilized.
3. Heads of development agencies and bureaucrats might make a greater commitment to Listening to the needs of the people whose lives they are trying to improve, rather than being preoccupied with their own agendas including flag waving for their agency, promotional prospects and next posting, pleasing personalities, jobs for consultants from their own countries etc. In these days of good governance, human rights and social justice, it is important that those in the forefront of international efforts to convert the rest of the world to these ideals, set a good example and practice the principles they are promoting – equality, transparency, accountability.
4. Assistance to the media in the Pacific should be provided to training NGOs, youth and women's groups to help improve understanding about issues including the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality; to strengthening the capacity of civil society to use the media, monitor its performance and ensure that the media is more responsive to the needs of the communities they are serving. The "mainstream" media provides a shallow coverage of issues affecting the lives of people, perpetuates social problems and injustices and is driving people into a consumer culture that is unaffordable, unsustainable and creates unrealistic expectations.

5. Donors working in media development can investigate ways to incorporate gender and HIV-related issues into their other aid programmes.
6. Reaffirming a commitment to the participatory approach to development and research rather than the top down approach. Appropriate programmes can then be formulated to enhance the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality.