

Final Evaluation of the UN Women
Strongim Mere Programme

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Acronyms

AGJP	Advancing Gender Justice in the Pacific
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CSO	Civil society organisation
EU	European Union
HCC	Honiara City Council
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MP	Member of Parliament
MWYCFA	Ministry of Women, Youths, Children and Family Affairs
NCW	National Council of Women
NGE	National General Election
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
SIBC	Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporations
SIEC	Solomon Islands Electoral Commission
SIG	Solomon Islands Government
ToR	Terms of Reference
ToT	Training of trainers
TSM	Temporary Special Measure
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
VMBS	Vois Blong Mere Solomons
YWPG	Young Women's Parliamentary Group

Executive Summary

Project overview

The project, 'Strongim Mere: Promoting Women's Political Participation and Representation in the Solomon Islands' (or Strongim Mere), aimed to strengthen women's political participation in Solomon Islands in the lead up to the 2014 National General Elections. The project was funded by the European Union (EU) and implemented by the UN Women Solomon Islands country office from January 2014 – June 2016. The immediate project objectives were to:

1. Strengthen women candidates' voices and transformational influence in the 2014 national elections;
2. Increase non-Honiara-based women's voices and participation in the 2014 national elections;
3. Increase understanding of women's roles as leaders and peace agents; and
4. Strengthen political party leadership.

The project promoted women's participation as candidates, advocates and voters using a number of accessible interventions, and in partnership with three local civil society organisations, Vois Blong Mere Solomons (VBMS), the National Council of Women (NCW) and Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation (SIBC):

1. **Practice Parliament** – to expose participants to the realities of policy making, parliamentary engagement and public speaking;
2. **Transformational Leadership training** – held for women candidates, political party members, and other emerging leaders, and focused on gender, leadership styles, media communication and campaigning;
3. **Time-to-stand radio series and comic books** – a 10-episode drama series related to women's political participation;
4. **Post-election radio dialogue** – between the winning female MP and a successful female candidate for the Provincial Assembly;
5. **Pre-election and post-election Empowerment Series** – to increase dialogue and awareness on issues related to women's political participation, including Temporary Special Measures (TSMs).
6. **Post-election gender and voter behaviour survey** – to better understand the barriers to women's political participation.

The timeframe for the project was initially from January 2014 – January 2016, but a six-month, no-cost extension was granted to 30 June 2016. This extension occurred since the short timeframe between project commencement and the elections meant some activities needed to be redesigned or required additional time to implement.

Evaluation overview

UN Women commissioned an end-of-project evaluation to assess progress (and challenges) towards project outcomes. The objectives of the evaluation were to:

1. Assess the design and effectiveness of the project in addressing identified gaps;
2. Validate results in terms of achievement with a critical examination of how and to what extent outputs/results contributed to the project's key outcome;
3. Assess the potential for sustainability of results; and
4. Document good practices and lessons learned to inform and strengthen UN Women's programming approaches and interventions in this area.

The data collection and analytical methodology used a mixed-methods approach, which was strongly participatory and focused on being gender and human rights responsive. The primary data collection methods were:

- *Process of change workshop*, attended by implementing partners, to document how the project was implemented *in practice* and refine the theory of change;
- *Desk-based research*, including donor reports, activity reports, UN Women report, project artefacts, and relevant Government policies and frameworks;
- *Key informant interviews* with project beneficiaries (including training participants), UN Women staff, EU representatives, and other relevant stakeholders; and
- *Participatory workshop*, held with 11 women who participated in one or more of the Transformational Leadership trainings to reflect on the trainings and their contribution to results achieved around women's political participation and leadership.

The evaluation was conducted by Kiri Dicker, Alison Barclay and Afu Billy of Think Out Loud International, and explored questions related to relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the project.

Findings: Relevance

The evaluation examined the relevance of the project in contributing to gender equality and women's empowerment, and addressing problems identified; of project objectives in addressing the rights and need of target groups, and of the project design being articulated into a coherent structure.

The evaluation found that overall, the project contributed to gender equality and women's empowerment. In a country where only two percent of national parliamentarians are women, and women are systemically excluded from leadership

positions at all levels, there are few initiatives more relevant than one that aims to increase women's political participation.

However it is mixed as to whether the project design was coherent, project objectives addressed identified rights/needs, and the project activities addressed problems identified. In particular, the short-term nature of the project made it hard to address some of the longer-term needs and barriers to women's political participation. The initial log-frame did not recognise this gap and included short-term activities with measures geared towards long-term outcomes. In addition, early project activities did not recognise the amount of time required for implementation; subsequent refinement of project activities better addressed identified needs, but the log-frame remained untouched.

Findings: Effectiveness

The evaluation examined the effectiveness of the evaluation, by considering progress to expected outcomes and results, results achieved, and reasons for achievement or non-achievement.

The evaluation concludes that overall, progress towards over half of the project's short-term outcomes occurred through various project activities, with the Transformational Leadership training contributing to the greatest number of outcomes. The main factor affecting a more extensive achievement of outcomes was the project design, which focused on short-term activities to address a long-term issue. In relation to specific activities, the evaluation found that the Transformational Leadership training could have strengthened its targeting of participants, and the radio drama series was aired too closely before the national elections, once voters had already likely selected a preferred candidate.

Findings: Efficiency

In relation to efficiency, the evaluation focused on the delivery of outputs in a timely manner and factors that led to the delivery of quality activities with limited resources.

It is clear from project documentation that UN Women staff and partners worked very hard to implement a large number of activities before the 2014 National General Election. While not all of the Strongim Mere project activities were completed prior to the 2014 election, an analysis of the original project design suggests that it was overly ambitious and unrealistic given the short timeframe available.

However, while there were project delays, Strongim Mere's implementation of activities were often efficient and cost-effective. This was demonstrated with the

Empowerment Series, Transformational Leadership trainings, and general partnership approach to implementation of the project.

Findings: Impact

The evaluation found the overall project impact to be low, without any significant, long-term results demonstrated. This was largely due to project design, rather than implementation, in which the large majority of the activities were delivered as short, one-off workshops and events. In addition, there is no evidence to suggest that the Transformational Leadership trainings enabled female candidates to improve their ranking and increase their share of votes during national elections.

The Provincial Empowerment Series was the activity that, while not engaging beneficiaries in sufficient depth to create any long-term impact, had the greatest potential to effect change, given the interest of participants and immediate steps taken by some to action changes on women's representation at the provincial level.

Of all the project activities, the impact of the radio drama series and post-election dialogue were the most difficult to measure. While support for women candidates was demonstrated through multiple project activities, the evaluation identifies that the now significant body of evidence in Solomon Islands that these high levels of 'notional' support for women's political participation do not necessarily translate into votes for female candidates.

Findings: Sustainability

The evaluation examined three aspects of sustainability: the likelihood of activity continuation, as well as continuation of benefits, after the project's completion; demonstrated leadership commitment or technical capacity of SIG or NGOs to continue activities; and national ownership being demonstrated.

The evaluation concludes that VBMS demonstrated increased capacity and leadership commitment through the project, but other CSOs or government partners did not. In addition, most project activities did not generate sustainable benefits and ownership, aside from the radio drama series and leadership training, which was adopted by implementing partners and implemented in other settings.

Summary of Recommendations for UN Women

Relevance

1. Future programmes adopt an action-learning approach to programme design that encourages programme iterations where needed, but ensures that they are documented and used to enhance programme learning;
2. Care is taken to ensure that programme outcomes and indicators are realistic, relevant and measurable;
3. That UN Women continue to use South-South exchanges to promote knowledge sharing and exchange on improving women's political participation;
4. That UN Women continue to use radio dramas and dialogues as an advocacy tool to promote dialogue about women's political participation in Solomon Islands;
5. In future programming, communications products are initially produced in the common language of the intended audience (e.g. Solomons Pijin) and then translated into English (instead of vice versa); and
6. The Transformational Leadership training manual be revised and updated, taking into account feedback from trainers and participants and incorporating locally relevant examples.

Effectiveness

7. Engaging men as champions of women's political participation should be done so with a clear purpose, and involve separate and specifically designed programmes;
8. Identification of aspiring female candidates should be done in partnership with community leaders and organisations; and
9. UN Women continue to work with political parties to ensure that they provide meaningful support to female candidates.

Efficiency

10. Where capacity exists, goods and services should be procured locally. To enable this, a wider range of local organisations and businesses should be registered as vendors on the UN system.

Impact

11. UN Women should consider working more intensively with a smaller number of individuals and/or in few locations where change is most possible; and

12. If candidate training programmes are used, female candidates who are unsuccessful in their campaigns should be provided support post-election, including de-briefing and if necessary, support to re-enter the workforce.

Sustainability

13. In future programming, all implementing partners should be engaged in a formal MOU or partnership agreement from the outset of the project, which clearly sets out the roles and responsibilities of each organisation.

1. Introduction

The project, 'Strongim Mere: Promoting Women's Political Participation and Representation in the Solomon Islands' (or Strongim Mere), aimed to strengthen women's political participation in Solomon Islands in the lead up to the 2014 National General Elections. The project was funded by the European Union (EU) Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights and implemented by the UN Women Solomon Islands country office from January 2014 – June 2016. Strongim Mere formed part of UN Women's Pacific regional programme: Advancing Gender Justice in the Pacific (AGJP).

1.1 Evaluation Overview

UN Women commissioned an end-of-project evaluation to assess progress (and challenges) towards project outcomes, with measurement of the achievement of project outputs and identification of factors that affected the implementation of activities. The objectives of the evaluation were to:

1. Assess the design and effectiveness of the Strongim Mere project in addressing identified gaps;
2. Validate results in terms of achievement (or non-achievement) with a critical examination of how and to what extent outputs/results contributed to the project's key outcomes;
3. Assess the potential for sustainability of results; and
4. Document good practices and lessons learned to inform and strengthen UN Women's programming approaches and interventions in this area.

The evaluation was designed to be a learning tool. The information, findings and recommendations generated by the evaluation are intended to be used by UN Women, the EU, Solomon Islands Government (SIG), civil society organisations (CSOs) and other key stakeholders to inform and strengthen policy, programme and advocacy interventions around women's political participation.

The evaluation was conducted by Kiri Dicker, Alison Barclay and Afu Billy of Think Out Loud International.

1.2 Evaluation methodology

The evaluation explored questions related to relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the project:

Relevance

1. Do the partners, target groups (e.g. potential women's candidates/leaders, male allies) and beneficiaries consider that the project contributed to gender equality and women's empowerment in Solomon Islands?

2. Did the project objective address identified rights and needs of the target group(s) in national and local contexts? How much does the project contribute to shaping and supporting women's rights in political participation?
3. Do the activities address the problems identified?
4. Is the project design articulated in a coherent structure? Is the definition of goal, outcomes and outputs clearly articulated?

Effectiveness

5. What was the progress made towards the achievement of the expected outcomes and expected results?
6. What are the results achieved?
7. What are the reasons for achievement or non-achievement?
8. To what extent have beneficiaries, including women candidates, been satisfied with the results?
9. To what extent have capacities of gender equality advocates and male allies been strengthened?

Efficiency

10. Have the outputs been delivered in a timely manner?
11. Could the activities and outputs have been delivered with fewer resources without reducing their quality and quantity?
12. Have UN Women's organisational structure, managerial support and coordination mechanisms effectively supported the delivery of the project?

Impact

13. What are the intended and unintended, positive and negative, long-term effects of the project?
14. To what extent can the changes that have occurred as a result of the project be identified and measured?
15. Is there evidence that the project enabled the candidates to improve their ranking and increase the number of votes during the national election?

Sustainability

16. What is the likelihood of the benefits from the project being maintained after the project finishes?
17. Is the project supported by SIG and non-government organisations (NGOs)? Do these institutions demonstrate leadership commitment and technical capacity to continue the efforts and activities supported by the project and/or replicate them?
18. Have requirements for national ownership been met?
19. What operational capacity of national partners, also known as capacity resources, such as technology, finance, and staffing, have been strengthened?

The data collection and analytical methodology used a mixed-methods approach, which was strongly participatory and focused on being gender and human rights responsive. The primary data collection methods were:

- **Process of change workshop** – The evaluation commenced with a process of change workshop, attended by representatives of implementing partners, to document how the project was implemented in practice, how it evolved over time, and what was the impact of this evolution;
- **Desk-based research** – A review of project documentation, including donor reports, activity reports, UN Women report, project artefacts (e.g. training manuals), and relevant SIG policies and frameworks;
- **Key informant interviews** – One-on-one interviews were conducted with: project beneficiaries (including training participants), UN Women staff, EU representatives, and other relevant stakeholders. See **Annex A** for a full list of people consulted in the evaluation; and
- **Participatory workshop** – A participatory group workshop was held with 11 women who participated in one or more of the Transformational Leadership trainings to reflect on the trainings and their contribution to results achieved around women’s political participation and leadership. A programme outline for the participatory group workshop is included as **Annex B**.

The evaluation allowed for the participation and consultation of key stakeholders, including: staff of UN Women and other UN agencies (e.g. UNDP), donors, implementing partner organisations, representatives from key government offices, ministries and agencies, civil society representatives and project beneficiaries.

The UN Women Evaluation Policy, UN Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards for Evaluation in the UN system, the UNEG Ethical Guidelines, and the UNEG Human Rights and Gender Equality Guidelines and Code of Conduct were the main guiding principles of the evaluation.

The evaluation was limited by the fact that a number of key stakeholders were unavailable during the data collection period. Most notable of these was a representative from the Ministry of Women, Youths, Children and Family Affairs (MWYCFA), as well as the previous programme manager employed by UN Women to manage the Strongim Mere project, whose contract had since expired. There was also staff turnover in the EU office country office, and the person responsible for managing the funding contract with UN Women had left the country. In addition, final financial reports for the project were not available for the evaluation team to review, rendering analysis of the project’s efficiency and value for money incomplete.

1.3 Report overview

This report contains four sections. *Section 1: Introduction* provides an overview of the project and the purpose of the evaluation. *Section 2: Background* details the components of the project, and the theory of change. *Section 3: Findings* presents key findings and lessons learned in response to the evaluation questions, and is organised around the domains of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. Section 3 also provides recommendations for future programming. *Section 4: Conclusion* provides a number of lessons learned from the evaluation.

Five annexes contain additional details relating to key informants, workshop overviews and outcomes, the project log-frame, and meta-analysis of project activities.

2. Background

2.1 Project overview

Women's political participation is an area needing considerable strengthening within Solomon Islands. When the project commenced, only one of the country's parliamentarians was a woman, and she was just one of three ever elected since independence in 1978.

In an effort to strengthen women's political participation in the Solomon Islands, UN Women collaborated with SIG and three CSOs to implement the Strongim Mere project. The CSOs were Vois Blong Mere Solomons (VBMS), the National Council of Women (NCW) and Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation (SIBC). The long-term objective of the project was to promote women's empowerment, gender equality and peace through women's increased political participation and representation. The immediate objectives were to:

1. Strengthen women candidates' voices and transformational influence in the 2014 national elections;
2. Increase non-Honiara-based women's voices and participation in the 2014 national elections;
3. Increase understanding of women's roles as leaders and peace agents; and
4. Strengthen political party leadership.

In addition, the project was designed to respond to gaps around the following:

- Capacity building for the MWYCFA and CSOs addressing women in political governance work;
- Engagement with traditional leaders (women and men) at community levels to actively participate in awareness and gender sensitisation programmes and contribute to a change to mindsets/attitudes;
- Advocacy and awareness with women to be more visible in decision making at all levels (formal and informal structures);
- Legislation and policy reform to advance women's leadership at all levels and adhere to the standards set out in the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW);
- Thorough research to ascertain women voter and general voter perceptions of women candidates;
- Technical assistance in the implementation strategy of gender policies in country; and
- On-going technical advice and assistance to the SIG Temporary Special Measure (TSM) Taskforce in drafting government policy on TSM and its outcomes.

To meet its objectives and respond to these gaps, the project promoted women's participation as candidates, advocates and voters using a number of accessible interventions:

1. **Practice Parliament** – This was organised with UNDP to expose participants to the realities of policy making, parliamentary engagement and public speaking.
2. **Transformational Leadership training** – Five trainings were held for women candidates, political party members, and other emerging leaders. These were practical trainings focused on gender, leadership styles, media communication and campaigning. The trainings were held both before and after the elections, with the post-election trainings focusing less on campaigning and more on leadership approaches.
3. **Time to Stand radio drama series and comic books** – A 10-episode drama series related to women's political participation was produced by SIBC. The series was aired once before the elections and then converted into a comic book series after the elections. Both the radio and comic series have been distributed to radio stations and schools in Honiara and provinces.
4. **Post-election radio dialogue** – After the election, a radio dialogue was organised between the winning female Member of Parliament (MP) and a successful female candidate for the Provincial Assembly.
5. **Pre-election and post-election Empowerment Series** – Empowerment Series were organised to increase dialogue and awareness on issues related to women's political participation, including TSMs. Two types of Empowerment Series were organised. The first was a South-South exchange held before the elections, involving Samoa's Electoral Commissioner Papali'i Malietau Malietoa, who drafted a Samoan constitutional amendment to create five 'floating' parliamentary seats for women. The second was held after the elections and focused on dialogue at the provincial level around TSMs and women's leadership (called the 'Provincial Empowerment Series').
6. **Post-election gender and voter behaviour survey**¹ – In order to better understand the barriers to women's political participation, a voter attitude survey was conducted with 172 people across four provinces after the elections. This occurred at the same time the evaluation was conducted.

These activities were strengthened by strong local partnerships and by UN Women's holistic approach to promoting women's political participation and empowerment in

1 Roughan, K. & Wini, L. (2015). Report on voter behaviour towards women candidates before and after the 2014 Solomon Islands National General Election. National Parliament of the Solomon Islands.

Solomon Islands. UN Women worked closely with VBMS to implement the bulk of project activities, as well as with NCW and SIBC. These organisations are respected members of the women's movement in Solomon Islands and across the Pacific.

The project was part of AGJP, a wider UN programme that supports the SIG, civil society, and regional institutions, to enhance structures, create an enabling environment, and promote individual transformation for greater gender-responsive governance processes. Strongim Mere was also implemented in parallel to a project (also funded by the EU) supporting Solomon Islands to advance gender equality through compliance with, and utilisation, of CEDAW.

The timeframe for the project was initially from January 2014 – January 2016, but a six-month, no-cost extension was granted to 30 June 2016 via a project addendum agreed by the EU. This extension occurred since the short timeframe between project commencement and the elections meant some activities needed to be redesigned or required additional time to implement. The above-described activities are those *actually* implemented, rather than those planned. Planned activities are discussed further in Section 3.

2.2 Theory of change

The approach of the evaluation was to determine any evolution of activities and intended outcomes, and assess the project against these evolved activities/outcomes, rather than solely against the activities and outcomes in the log-frame. This was done because in development practice, programmes are rarely implemented the same way as they are intended, due to a variety of internal and external opportunities and constraints.

The first stage of the evaluation focused on reviewing the log-frame developed for the project (see **Annex C**), to determine the relevance and appropriateness of its outcomes and indicators. This occurred through the process of change workshop, described above, and was initiated because the desk-based review of project documentation revealed that many outcomes and indicators in the original project design were highly ambitious for a short-term, one-off project, while others were immeasurable. For example, the original log-frame suggests that the impact of the project could be measured by the number of female participants elected in the National General Elections. This indicator is not only highly ambitious, but there are so many influencing factors outside of the scope of this project that the evaluators did not deem it an appropriate measure of the effectiveness of Strongim Mere. Therefore, the evaluation team concluded that new measurements of success would need to be developed to measure the effectiveness of the programme.

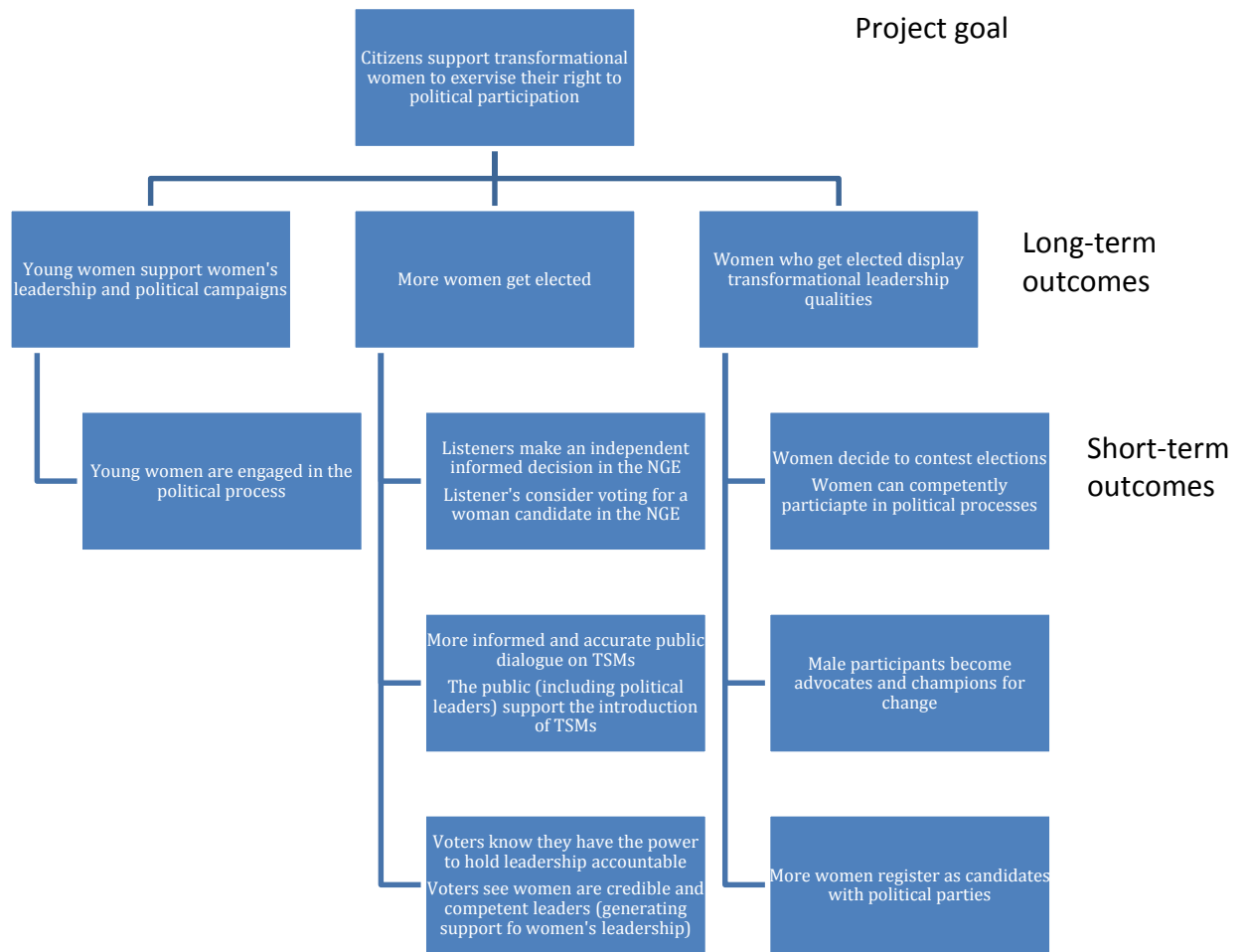
The outcomes of the process of change workshop, detailed in **Annex D**, were used to build a theory of change for this project. This theory of change (Figure 1) conjects that if the project activities are implemented well, they will contribute to achieving the short-term outcomes; if the short-term outcomes are achieved, then they will contribute to the achievement of the long-term outcomes; finally, it is suggested that these long-term outcomes, when accumulated, will contribute to achieving the project goal.

This evaluation measured the effectiveness of Strongim Mere against the achievement or non-achievement of the *short-term* outcomes from Figure 1, namely:

1. Women decide to contest elections;
2. Women can competently participate in political processes;
3. Male participants become advocates and champions for change;
4. More women register as candidates with political parties;
5. Voters know they have the power to hold leadership accountable;
6. Voters see women are credible and competent leaders;
7. More informed and accurate public dialogue on TSMs;
8. The public (including political leaders) support the introduction of TSMs;
9. Listeners make an independent informed decision in the National General Election (NGE); and
10. Listeners consider voting for a woman candidate in the NGE.

The outcome in Figure 1 relating to the work with the Young Women's Parliamentary Group (YWPG), 'young women are engaged in the political process', is not included in this evaluation, as this activity occurred outside the timeframe of the evaluation stipulated in the project Terms of Reference (ToR).

Figure 1: Strongim Mere Theory of Change



3. Key Findings

This section presents the findings of the evaluation. It is organised according to the evaluation domains of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability, and subsections broadly respond to the evaluation questions. Please note that not all evaluation questions have been answered in this section, because of lack of available data or focus on specific topics during interviews.

3.1 Relevance

The evaluation examined the relevance of: 1) the project in contributing to and addressing gender equality and women's empowerment; 2) the project design being articulated into a coherent structure; and 3) project objectives in addressing the rights and need of target groups.

The evaluation found that **overall, the project contributed to gender equality and women's empowerment**. In a country where only two percent of national parliamentarians are women, and women are systemically excluded from leadership positions at all levels, there are few initiatives more relevant than one that aims to increase women's political participation.

However it is **mixed as to whether the project design was coherent, project objectives addressed identified rights/needs, and the project activities addressed problems identified**. In particular, the short-term nature of the project made it hard to address some of the longer-term needs and barriers to women's political participation. The initial log-frame did not recognise this gap and included short-term activities with measures geared towards long-term outcomes. In addition, early project activities did not recognise the amount of time required for implementation; subsequent refinement of project activities better addressed identified needs, but the log-frame remained untouched.

3.1.1 Coherent project design and objectives addressing identified rights/needs

The evaluation indicates that the original **project design was overly ambitious and not achievable in the short timeframe** before the 2014 National General Election. The project design pursued a long-term outcome (i.e. getting more women elected), using strategies that were more suitable for immediate change. One of the most likely reasons for this was the fact that the project was clearly designed to 'fit' a short-term funding opportunity that wasn't necessarily suitable for a women's political participation programme requiring a much longer-term outlook.

As described above, the Strongim Mere project evolved significantly during implementation, and certain activities were abandoned, re-configured or postponed

until after the election (the donor granted a no-cost extension for this project). This was largely due to the short timeframe between project commencement and the elections. The key changes to the project design were:

- A planned mock parliament was abandoned and instead UN Women provided support to another Mock Parliament being conducted by UNDP;
- A community-level radio dialogue was abandoned and replaced with a post-election radio dialogue between two successful female candidates;
- The Empowerment Series was only conducted once before the elections and continued after the election (referred to as the Provincial Empowerment Series), however the nature and scope of the activity changed;
- New activities included a gender and voter behaviour study and a Transformational Leadership workshop with young women leaders after the elections.

Annex C identifies the activities in the original log-frame that did not happen (shown in strikethrough) and that changed in scope (shown in red).

The evaluation team assessed that **overall these changes had a positive impact on progressing towards the project goal**, and allowed implementing partners to focus on activities that could be implemented in the short timeframe.

While project documentation provides a rationale for some of these changes, the **log-frame was not revised to reflect these changes**, and the newly configured project activities were not clearly linked to the project outcomes and overall objective. This significantly impeded the potential for quality monitoring and evaluation, which is an important lesson for future programmes. This evaluation recommends the use of an action-learning approach that allows programmes – and programme theories – to evolve in response to internal and external opportunities and challenges in a systematic and structured way. It is critical that this approach is robust, systematic and methodical. Programme iterations need to be regular, but not constant, and backed up with a solid rationale that is derived from programme learning. Structured opportunities for reflection need to be built into the programme design, and accountability mechanisms are required to ensure that changes to programme design accurately incorporate the outcomes of these reflections.

3.1.2 Project activities address problems identified

The evaluation found that **considerable efforts were made to ensure that project activities were relevant to the Solomon Islands context**. This was particularly apparent in the Empowerment Series, the radio series and the Transformational Leadership trainings.

Empowerment Series

The **Empowerment Series** was originally intended to be *'an international exchange of leaders who have demonstrated a dedication to women's political participation and representation'*.² The series was to have a strong focus on South-South exchange, by bringing high-calibre international leaders to Solomon Islands to share their knowledge and experiences of increasing women's political participation. The evaluation concludes that as a concept, the Empowerment Series was a relevant activity for Strongim Mere. As a senior leader from a Pacific Island country and a champion of women's political participation, Mr Papalii Malietau was an appropriate choice of guest speaker. While all countries have unique political contexts and systems, the use of South-South exchanges in this context is considered to be a useful way of providing people with global perspectives on common issues they face.

Radio drama series and post-election dialogue

The **radio series** was also relevant to the Solomon Islands context, in particular the use of radio programming to increase community dialogue about women's leadership and political participation. Initially, the Strongim Mere project design included a much larger component of radio programming, in the form of a community radio dialogue with female candidates. However this was ultimately abandoned because it was considered to be too politically sensitive so close to an election.

In Solomon Islands, radio is arguably the only effective mass media strategy. An analysis of a sample of episodes from the drama series revealed that the content was relevant to both the Solomon Islands context and the aims and objectives of Strongim Mere. The series was aired in Solomons Pijin (an English version was also produced for stakeholders), and the messages were clearly framed using rights-based language to promote transformational gender norms and attitudes about women's leadership. While a copy of the post-election radio dialogue could not be obtained during the evaluation, staff at SIBC confirmed that it was among their most popular programmes, with significant audience engagement in the form of call and text-ins. This suggests that the context was relevant to listeners.

The only exception to the relevance of the radio drama and comic books series is the fact that it was outsourced to Fiji-based company, Pasifika, to develop and record the products in English. Pasifika then sub-contracted SIBC to adapt the radio drama to the Solomon Islands context, including translating the script from English to Solomons Pijin. SIBC staff reported feeling frustrated and constrained by this

² Strongim Mere project documentation: Report on TSM consultation meeting. Auki, Malaita Province, Solomon Islands. February 2016.

arrangement and felt that they would have been able to create a more relevant product at a lower cost if they were engaged directly to produce the series.

“If it was up to SIBC, we would have made it more suited to community level”.
(Producer, SIBC)

Furthermore, a decision was made to produce the *Time to Stand* comic book in English rather than Solomons Pijin, however the style of English used lacked localisms (local slang, place names etc.) and was not necessarily suitable for a low literacy audience. Nonetheless, a Solomons Pijin version of the radio drama was aired on national radio prior to the election and data showed that audiences retained its key messages.

Transformational Leadership trainings

The **Transformational Leadership trainings** were also developed to be relevant to the Solomon Islands context. While practitioners generally agree that candidate training programmes alone are not sufficient to get women elected, it has been concluded that, when tailored to the local context and coordinated with a broader suite of initiatives aimed at facilitating individual, institutional and social change, such programmes can be an appropriate strategy to improve women’s political participation.³⁴ In an effort to tailor the content of the training to the Solomon Islands context, UN Women adapted content from the Caribbean Institute for Women in Leadership Transformational Leadership training for women candidates. Additionally, a training manual was developed, and a group of 12 trainers participated in a three-day Training of Trainers (ToT) workshop. However, a number of participants and trainers interviewed in the course of the evaluation commented that the training manual could be improved if it was revised and updated with more locally relevant case studies and examples.

Three of these trainers were participating in a South-South exchange from Tonga. It is unlikely that the inclusion of three Tongan participants as trainers contributed to the overall relevance of the Strongim Mere candidate training, or provided any great benefit to other participants. Not only does Tonga operate as a constitutional monarchy, which is vastly different to the political context of Solomon Islands, but their experiences and contributions do not feature at all in project documentation. That said, the experience may well have been of personal benefit to the Tongan participants themselves (that is beyond the scope of this evaluation) and was in line

³ McLeod, A. (2009). Police capacity development in the Pacific: The challenge of local context. *Policing and Society: An International Journal of Research and Policy* 19(2): 147-160.

⁴ Wood, T. (2015). Aiding women candidates in the Solomon Islands: Suggestions for development policy. *Asia and the Pacific Policy Studies* 2(3): 531-543. Crawford School of Public Policy at the Australian National University: Canberra.

with UN Women’s priorities to facilitate South-South exchanges through its programming.

Overall

In spite of focusing on relevance to the Solomon Islands context, project activities did not always effectively address needs and barriers identified, both by intending women candidates and by national and local institutions in Solomon Islands. One of the main reasons for this is that at the time of the project, there was insufficient data available on what these needs and barriers were. The decision to commission a gender and voter behaviour study as part of Strongim Mere was a way to better understand these needs and barriers and to strengthen the relevance of future women’s political programmes in Solomon Islands.

Through the evaluation (participatory group workshop), past women candidates who attended the Transformational Leadership training completed ‘journey maps’, which highlighted the barriers they faced and their needs in the lead-up to the election they contested. The key needs and barriers emerging from this activity were:

Need/Barrier:	Participant Quotes:
Access to campaign funds	<p><i>“Men who are in Parliament now are ready for the next election; they have the funds...\$50 on Devil’s night is a big thing”.</i></p> <p><i>“I wanted to set up some initiatives to show people my capabilities as a leader, but I had no financial support to start projects to show people”.</i></p> <p><i>“Another candidate living in Honiara who had the money chartered a boat and all my voters who travelled on the boat to our constituency ended up voting for this guy”.</i></p>
Lack of support from voters (gender attitudes/cultural beliefs)	<p><i>“They look at your personal life. Not your leadership capabilities”.</i></p> <p><i>“Some villages do not want a woman to stand in front and speak, so they want a guy to stand in front and speak on my behalf. But someone who talks will not deliver the message that I want to deliver”.</i></p> <p><i>“I had seven villages to campaign in but two villages did not want me to campaign to them (because I was a woman)”.</i></p>
Lack of support from political parties	<p><i>“During my campaign I was supposed to take a party person to come and campaign with me, but they couldn’t make it”.</i></p>

	<p><i>“All the male party members were very welcoming but when we became affiliated, and asked them to support us with funds for the campaign. They did not give us any.”</i></p> <p><i>“We were lured into joining political parties”.</i></p>
<p>Lack of support from women/women’s organisations</p>	<p><i>“If our programmes can connect with the women’s groups and raise awareness...because they do not know information and have no resources, they go for the money”.</i></p> <p><i>“Women were scared to vote for me because their husbands say that if she gets into Parliament and does a wrong decision, all you women will be blamed”.</i></p>

When participants were asked whether the Transformational Leadership training had addressed these needs or barriers, participants largely agreed that it had not:

“Women have transformational qualities already. What is the point of teaching women to be transformational leaders when the community do not want transformational leaders?” (Transformational Leadership training participant)

“Training is good but awareness in community is more important”. (Transformational Leadership training participant)

“The training was too close to the election – transformational leadership takes time”. (Transformational Leadership trainer)

“The training was okay, but when we went ‘out there’, that’s when we faced the problems and no one was there to help us”. (Transformational Leadership training participant)

This corresponds with the findings of the gender and voter behaviour study, which revealed that voter behaviour in Solomon Islands is overwhelmingly transactional; in other words, voters are likely to pledge their support to the candidate who is most likely to provide financial and material benefit to themselves and their family.⁵ On the one hand, while Transformational Leadership may hold the key to transforming this culture and strengthening democracy, in the short-term, it is unappealing to voters.

These findings pose an important question for those wishing to increase women’s political participation in Solomon Islands: do we teach women to ‘play the game’ (i.e.

⁵ Dicker, K., Billy, A. & Barclay, A. (2016). The influence of gender attitudes on voter behaviour in Solomon Islands. UN Women. Unpublished.

do whatever necessary to get elected), or do we teach women to ‘change the game’ (i.e. transform the system for the greater good)? The evaluation concludes that the Strongim Mere project design was not clear on this point. UN Women chose to use a model of leadership that is clearly a ‘change the game’ strategy, but delivered it to intending candidates less than a year before (and in some cases only a few months before) the election they intended on contesting. This evaluation concludes that transformational and gender-sensitive leadership models are relevant as part of a long-term strategy of enabling women’s leadership, but are far less relevant in helping intending candidates win elections.

Relevance recommendations

This evaluation makes the following recommendations to future programming on women’s political participation in the Solomon Islands to strengthen its relevance:

1. Future programmes adopt an action-learning approach to programme design that encourages programme iterations where needed, but ensures that they are documented and used to enhance programme learning;
2. Care is taken to ensure that programme outcomes and indicators are realistic, relevant and measurable;
3. That UN Women continue to use South-South exchanges to promote knowledge sharing and exchange on improving women’s political participation;
4. That UN Women continue to use radio dramas and dialogues as an advocacy tool to promote dialogue about women’s political participation in Solomon Islands;
5. In future programming, communications products are initially produced in the common language of the intended audience (e.g. Solomons Pijin) and then translated into English (instead of vice versa); and
6. The Transformational Leadership training manual be revised and updated, taking into account feedback from trainers and participants and incorporating locally relevant examples.

3.2 Effectiveness

The evaluation examined the effectiveness of the evaluation, by considering: 1) progress towards expected outcomes and results; 2) the results achieved; and 3) reasons for achievement or non-achievement. The evaluation concludes that overall, progress towards short-term outcomes occurred through various project activities. The main factor affecting project achievement was the project design, which focused

on short-term activities to address a long-term issue. In relation to specific activities, the evaluation found that the Transformational Leadership training could have strengthened its targeting of participants, and the radio drama series was aired closely before the National General Election, once voters had already likely selected a preferred candidate.

3.2.1 Progress made towards expected outcomes and results

The **project obtained a wide reach through its project activities**. While not all planned activities were implemented, Strongim Mere still managed to obtain considerable engagement on numerous topics related to women's political participation:

- **Transformation leadership trainings** - Transformational Leadership trainings focused on nurturing and strengthening young women's skills as transformational leaders, by developing participants' understanding of and skills in leadership styles, women's political participation, governance, CEDAW, campaigning, media communication, and fundraising. The initial focus of the trainings was on women leaders who were considering running in the 2014 elections, but was expanded to include men who were supportive of women candidates, as well as other emerging women leaders. The trainings began with the ToT workshop described above. Following this, three trainings were held before the elections for women candidates. Participants at all training events represented all provinces of the Solomon Islands. After the elections, UN Women organised a training for young women associated with the Young Women's Parliamentary Group, but this was outside the scope of the evaluation.
- **Empowerment Series** – UN Women originally planned for two Empowerment Series prior to the 2014 National General Election, canvassing both Honiara and Provincial capitals. The first Empowerment Series occurred in Honiara from 29 to 31 July 2014. Approximately 140 people participated in the first Empowerment Series, including 90 high school students, 15 media representatives, 20 stakeholders and 24 participants of the Transformational Leadership training.⁶

The **post-election Provincial Empowerment Series** evolved in response to a decision to postpone the remainder of the Empowerment Series until after the 2014 election, due to time constraints after a last-minute cancellation of the planned guest speaker. In doing this, partners re-configured the activity into a half-day consultative workshop on women's leadership, including TSMs and their role in improving women's political participation, primarily targeted at Provincial Assembly leaders. The series was run in December 2015. In total,

⁶ Strongim Mere activity report: Strongim Mere Empowerment Series. 29-31 July 2014.

approximately 115 Provincial leaders and decision makers participated in the post-election Provincial Empowerment Series, including 20 from Western Province, 27 from Choiseul Province, 15 from Honiara City Council, 20 from Isabel Province and more than 30 from Malaita Province.

- **Radio Series** - It not possible to know exactly how many people the radio series reached. In the gender and voter attitude survey, which occurred immediately prior to this evaluation, a number of questions were asked regarding the radio programme to a sample of 156 male and female voters in urban and rural areas. The exact question asked in the research was, *“In the lead up to the 2014 election, did you hear any programmes on SIBC that discussed the issue of women in Parliament?”*. While not asking specifically about the *Time to Stand* drama series, it is likely, but not fully certain, that respondents were referring specifically to the series. Overall, 28% of the sample said that they had heard the programme on the radio.⁷ While this may seem low, it is important to take into account the fact that 47% of the sample did not have access to a radio.⁸ Of the people who did have access to radio, approximately 91% said they recalled hearing at least one episode of the 10-episode series.⁹

3.2.2 Results achieved

As described earlier, this evaluation has measured the effectiveness of the project against the short-term outcomes described in the theory of change in Figure 1. The evaluation has identified **evidence to suggest progress was made toward six of the short-term outcomes**, through the range of project activities implemented during Strongim Mere. This includes progress towards the outcome, ‘male participants become advocates and champions for change’, which was identified as a separate evaluation question. The outcomes achieved and contributing activities are as follows:

1. Women decide to contest elections – achieved through the Transformational Leadership trainings;
2. Women can competently participate in political processes – achieved through the Transformational Leadership trainings;
3. Male participants become advocates and champions for change – achieved through the Transformational Leadership trainings;
4. More women register as candidates with political parties – achieved through the Transformational Leadership trainings;

⁷ Dicker et al, 2016.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

5. Voters see women are credible and competent leaders – achieved through the radio drama and post-election dialogue; and
6. More informed and accurate public dialogue on TSMs – achieved through the Empowerment Series and Provincial Series.

There was not sufficient evidence to suggest that the project progressed towards the following short-term outcomes:

1. The public (including political leaders) support the introduction of TSMs;
2. Voters know they have the power to hold leadership accountable;
3. Listeners make an independent informed decision in the NGE; and
4. Listeners consider voting for a woman candidate in the NGE.

Transformational Leadership trainings

The Transformational Leadership trainings contributed to four short-term outcomes:

- Women decide to contest elections;
- Women can competently participate in political processes;
- More women register as candidates with political parties; and
- Male participants become advocates and champions for change.

As part of the participatory workshop in the evaluation, participants of the Transformational Leadership trainings were asked to list the immediate results of the trainings, followed by the short term, and long-term outcomes. These were then compared to the intended results/outcomes articulated by participants in the process of change workshop, in order to deduce whether the leadership training achieved the intended results (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Comparison of anticipated results/outcomes of the training from implementing partners and workshop participants

Immediate results		Short-term results		Long-term results		Impact	
Partners (process of change workshop)	Participants (participatory workshop)	Partners	Participants	Partners	Participants	Partners	Participants
Better understanding of constituency demographics.	Had a better understanding of my constituency.	Women can competently participate in political processes.	Felt able to confidently participate in the election process.	More women get elected.	Got elected (2)	Citizens support transformational women leaders to exercise their right to political participation.	
Ability to consider future leadership opportunities.	Developed a clear vision/plan for my leadership.	Women candidates register with political parties.	Registered with a political party (became more politically active).	Women who get elected display transformational leadership qualities.			
Ability to make an informed decision about whether to contest the election.	Reflected on my leadership strengths and weaknesses.	More women decide to contest elections.	Decided to contest the election (or not).		Successfully pursued other leadership opportunities.		
Gained skills in designing a campaign strategy.	Gained skills in designing a campaign strategy.	Male participants become advocates of change.	N/A				
Connected with political parties.			Shared the information I learned with other women.				
Gained practical experience in public decision-making.							
Increased emotional intelligence and leadership skills.	Had greater emotional intelligence and leadership skills.						
	Gained self-esteem and confidence.						

Figure 2 illustrates that the immediate results experienced by participants were almost exactly the same as the intended results identified by implementing partners; in other words, **the workshop achieved what it set out to achieve, at least in the short-term.**

One difference worth noting was that participants articulated an important short-outcome that was not necessarily captured by partners, either in the original or revised project design; that is, they **shared the information they learned with other people in the community.** It is possible that partners may have assumed that this would occur and therefore did not think to articulate it in the project design, however it is in fact an important result and indicator of the impact and sustainability of the project.

While the short-term outcome: **‘male participants become advocates of change’** was not assessed in the participatory workshop (as there were no males present), male candidates who were seen as potential champions for women’s issues were targeted for the Transformational Leadership trainings. One male champion was successful in the elections, he is the current leader of opposition and is actively supportive of women’s participation. An interview with another male participant confirmed that the training had resulted in him becoming a greater advocate for women’s leadership.

“It made a lot of difference to my life as a man. Some of the ways I regard women have changed”. (Transformational Leadership participant)

The intended results and the actual results of the Transformational Leadership training **differed most around long-term outcomes.** The main intended outcome of the Transformational Leadership training articulated by UN Women was that it would increase women’s chances of getting elected, as well as giving them the transformational leadership qualities needed to contribute to fair and transparent governance at a national level. However, this was the actual outcome for only two of the participants who attended the training (both from Temotu Province), one who was elected in the 2014 national election and one who was elected in the Provincial election.

Despite this, **participants did report some significant changes that happened for them,** both as a result of their participation in the workshop and as a result of the decision to contest the election.

“The training transformed my understanding of how to become an advocate and understand the needs of my constituents”. (Transformational Leadership training participant)

“It gave me a better understanding of the SIG system of governance, weaknesses in the constitution, and the ability to support to provincial governance, villages and communities”. (Transformational Leadership training participant)

“I became fully aware of the political system and the connection with leadership skills”. (Transformational Leadership training participant)

Overall, participants agreed that the **most significant result** of the Transformational Leadership workshop was that they were able to **actively participate, as leaders, in political processes**. A number of participants reported that since the training they had been **elected to other governing bodies**, and had continued to develop their leadership potential. For example, one had been elected as the Vice President of the Guadalcanal Provincial Council of Women, another had been elected to a Provincial Government Planning Committee, and another had been elected as a member of her political party’s Executive. These are all small but significant gains for Solomon Islands women and play a crucial role in helping women to build the public profile needed to run a successful campaign.

Finally, the evaluation concludes that the Transformational Leadership workshop did result in **more women registering with political parties**, however it is unclear whose interests were served by this and to what extent it either helped or hindered their election campaigns. The new Political Parties Integrity Act encourages (but does not mandate) that 10% of all candidates of any political party should be women; therefore connecting political parties to women candidates would have been beneficial to them as it would help them fulfil this requirement. Some female candidates reported feeling genuinely supported by the party they chose to represent, while others did not.

Empowerment and provincial series

The empowerment and provincial series **contributed to one main outcome**: a more informed and accurate public dialogue on TSMs. During the process of change workshop in the evaluation, implementing partners identified this as the desired outcome of the Empowerment Series. The main outcome identified through the evaluation from this series was that it resulted in a significant increase in print and radio reporting on the issue of TSMs, both nationally and regionally. As the events were short (two or three hours) and conducted almost two years before the project evaluation period, the evaluation team did not attempt to triangulate the project reports by interviewing people who participated in the events. Based on a desk review of information provided, it is fair to conclude that the first Empowerment Series was likely an effective strategy for creating **informed public dialogue around TSMs as a method of improving women’s political participation**.

Moreover, findings from informant interviews suggests that the Provincial Empowerment Series also contributed to **some increased dialogue around TSMs, and in some cases, even direct action towards improving women’s representation.**

“After the workshop, other [Provincial Assembly] Members are now thinking of involving women. Some Members are starting to introduce the concept in their own rural communities, for example the Member of Katupika Ward told his community that it is good to involve both sides (women and men). I am the Chairman of the provincial organising committee for the Choiseul Second Appointed Day. I established a local committee at Posarae Village, where the celebrations were being held. I made the Committee have as members the same number of women and the same number of men. So half of the Second Appointed Day Local Organising Committee is women and the other half men”. (Christopher Makoni, Clerk to Assembly, Choiseul Province)

“Now that the Honiara City Council Act (1999) is on review, it is our intention to embed into the review for additional positions allocated to women”. (Eddie Ngava, Deputy Mayor, Honiara City Council)

“After the UN Women’s training, I am now mindful about gender. When I go down to villages before we do any projects, I try to involve women. A good example is last week when we went down to Qorabara Village, South Choiseul, to sign an agreement for the installation of a water supply project there, I ensured that women, youths and children attended our meeting. When they set up a committee to look after the proposed water supply project, I told the community leaders to also have women represented in the committee. So they listened to me and selected two women to be in the five-member committee. One woman is the Secretary of the Committee and the other is one of the members”. (Nevol Lekelalu, Principal Works Officer, Choiseul Province)

“With regards to the UN Women’s training, we have to start somewhere. Their approach is good. and we learn from the lessons that we encounter and keep improving... I believe that what we are doing is empowering women to be leaders by enabling them to participate in committees and meetings. It is also a subtle way of breaking through the culture of male dominance. You will see more women in planning, meeting, deciding on community decisions and even implementation as well”. (Jackob Zikuli, Rural Development Programmeme, Choiseul)

However, this evaluation concludes that while the Provincial Empowerment Series may have been effective at raising awareness about the role of TSMs in women’s political participation, and promoting more informed dialogue on the topic, **it fell far short of what was necessary for leaders to promote the adoption of affirmative action strategies at a provincial level.** This is a lost opportunity given that there

seems to a significant opportunity to promote women's participation on governance bodies at a provincial level.

Radio series and post-election dialogue

The evaluation identified that the radio drama series and post-election dialogue **contributed to one main outcome**: voters see women are credible and competent leaders. However, the evidence of this was more limited, because of lack of available data.

The post-election radio dialogue between with female MPs, Freda Tuki (National MP for Temotu Vatud) and Jocelyn Ipei (Member of the Temotu Provincial Assembly), appears to have been effective at achieving its desired outcome of giving **constituents the opportunity to connect with their elected female representatives**. In an interview with the programme's producer, Moddie Nanu from the SIBC, she described the programme as being very popular with listeners, with lots of engagement from rural audiences, via call-ins and text messages. A record of text messages was not available for the evaluation.

With the radio drama series, most of the people surveyed in the gender and voter attitude study who did recall hearing the programme **could clearly identify its key messages**. Some also demonstrated the view that women are credible and competent leaders.

"Both men and women need to contribute to decisions so that decision making is balanced". (Adult male, Honiara)

"There are good Solomon Island women who have good ideas to run for Parliament too. I am interested in these stories". (Adult male, Isabel)

"Let's try women in Parliament because they are 50% of the population". (Young male, Isabel)

"They emphasised the importance of women taking part in Parliament and being the voice on behalf of women". (Adult male, Malaita)

"Yes, I remember. They discussed gender equality and women's right to contest Parliament." (Adult woman, Honiara)

The evaluation concludes that while the radio drama series built **notional support for women's political participation** (i.e. it resulted in people being supportive of the idea of women's political participation), it is unlikely to have had an impact on voter behaviour, as the implementing partners had hoped. This should not be seen as a failure of the activity but as a now proven fact that when it comes to voting in

Solomon Islands, there is little if any relationship between notional support and actual support for female candidates.¹⁰ Despite this, activities that build notional support for women's political participation are still important in ensuring that high levels of notional support are maintained.

3.2.3 Reasons for achievement or non-achievement of results

As noted above, the project design was a barrier to achievement in the project, in that a series of short-term activities were implemented in the context of needs and barriers around women's participation that were far more structural and long-term than could be addressed in a short timeframe.

In relation to specific project activities, evaluation informants did identify some issues that detracted from the effectiveness of the activities. With the Transformational Leadership training, it was identified that **potential participants could have been better targeted to attend the training**. Partners reported that participants were primarily identified through Vois Blong Mere and Provincial Council of Women networks, and mostly consisted of women who had already announced their intention to contest the election or women who were acting as campaign managers. Partners also reported that some participants were not genuinely considering contesting the election or were clearly unsuitable to do so for a range of reasons. Overall, partners reported that the criteria and methods for selecting participants were unclear.

“Selection (of participants) should not come from NCW, but from the local communities. They are best placed to say who can lead them”. (Caspar Fa'asala, NCW)

In addition, the drama series was aired later than anticipated, immediately prior to the election. SIBC reported that this was a result of delays in getting the script approved by UN Women. Most of the research available indicates that constituents align themselves with their candidate well in advance of elections, however the evaluation concludes that even if the programme was aired on time it is still unlikely to have had a significant impact on the achievement of the desired outcome.

¹⁰ Dicker et al, 2016.

Effectiveness recommendations

This evaluation makes the following recommendations to future programming on women's political participation in the Solomon Islands to strengthen its effectiveness:

7. Engaging men as champions of women's political participation should be done so with a clear purpose, and involve separate and specifically designed programmes;
8. Identification of aspiring female candidates should be done in partnership with community leaders and organisations; and
9. UN Women continue to work with political parties to ensure that they provide meaningful support to female candidates.

3.3 Efficiency

In relation to efficiency, the evaluation focused on the delivery of outputs in a timely manner and factors that led to the delivery of quality activities with limited resources. Please note that lack of access to financial documentation during the evaluation means the analysis of efficiency is incomplete.

It is clear from project documentation that **UN Women staff and partners worked very hard to implement a large number of activities before the 2014 National General Election**. While not all of the Strongim Mere project activities were completed prior to the election, an analysis of the original project design suggests that it was perhaps overly ambitious and unrealistic given the short timeframe available.

While there were project delays, Strongim Mere's implementation of activities was largely efficient and cost-effective. For example, UN Women's decision to schedule four separate Empowerment Series forums over a three-day period, reaching approximately 140 participants, suggests that this was an efficient and cost-effective activity. In addition, the decision to deliver the leadership trainings in partnership with civil society partners also contributed to the efficiency of the project. Partners helped ensure the project fit with the local context, engage participants and encourage trust. While UN Women's structure and systems are not always conducive to the implementation of community-level programmes, most partners agreed that it is unlikely that Strongim Mere could have been implemented as effectively without UN Women's support (i.e. if the donor had worked directly with civil society organisations).

The one area where implementation was less efficient was the radio drama series. Fiji-based multi-media company, Pasifika, was contracted directly by the UN Women Multi-Country Office to produce the radio drama series, along with the comic books. There is no clear rationale for this decision in project documentation, however the two most likely reasons are because it was perceived that the expertise to produce these outputs was not available in Solomon Islands, or that local businesses were not registered as vendors on the UN procurement system. Pasifika then sub-contracted SIBC to translate and produce the Radio Drama in Solomons Pijin. Financial reports for Strongim Mere were not provided to the evaluation team, therefore it is difficult to fully assess the cost effectiveness of this approach. However SIBC reported feeling frustrated that they had to deliver the project 'at cost', while a private company profited. SIBC reported that they had the capacity to design and produce a radio drama series in both English and Solomons Pijin as this was their core business.

Efficiency recommendation

This evaluation makes the following recommendations to future programming on women's political participation in the Solomon Islands to strengthen its efficiency:

10. Where capacity exists, goods and services should be procured locally. To enable this, a wider range of local organisations and businesses should be registered as vendors on the UN system.

3.4 Impact

The evaluation's focus on project impact centred on: 1) the long-term effects of the project; 2) the extent to which changes were measurable; and 3) evidence that the project enabled the candidates to improve their ranking and increase the number of votes during the national elections.

The evaluation found the overall project impact to be low, without any significant long-term results demonstrated, due largely to project design, rather than implementation. In addition, there is no evidence to suggest that the Transformational Leadership training programme enabled female candidates to improve their ranking and votes during national elections. The Provincial Empowerment Series was the activity that, while not engaging beneficiaries in sufficient depth to create any meaningful impact, had the greatest potential to effect change.

3.4.1 Long-term effects of the project

This evaluation concludes that despite a concerted effort by UN Women and project partners, the **overall impact of Strongim Mere has been low** and the project has not resulted in any significant changes to women's political participation in Solomon Islands. This should not be seen as a flaw in the project *implementation*, rather a flaw in the project *design*, as described earlier. That said, the project, along with a number of initiatives, has contributed to keeping the issue of women's political participation on the public agenda, and has therefore been worthwhile use of donor funds.

One factor that contributed to the project's low impact was the fact that the large majority of the activities were delivered as short, one-off workshops and events. For example, the Transformational Leadership training consisted of a three-day ToT workshop; three, five-day workshops for different groups of intending candidates; one five-day workshop for media representatives; and one three-day workshop for young women leaders. The Honiara Empowerment Series included four short hour speaking events: one for students, one for media representatives, one for stakeholders and one for intending candidates. Finally, the post-election Provincial Empowerment Series included half-day workshops in Isabel, Choiseul, Malaita and Western Provinces and a lunchtime event at the Honiara City Council. In fact, when the evaluation team went to interview participants of the Provincial Empowerment Series in Malaita, there was confusion over exactly which workshop the evaluators were discussing, as UN Women had facilitated two other workshops there around the time. While this approach may have reached a large number of beneficiaries, it did not engage them intensively enough to create meaningful change and ultimately detracted from the impact of the project.

The Provincial Empowerment Series was the activity that, while not engaging beneficiaries in sufficient depth to create any meaningful impact, **had the greatest potential to effect change**. The evaluation showed that there were some immediate results of the Provincial Empowerment Series, namely, that provincial government executives were more mindful of gender balance when forming committees, and in some cases were implementing their own kind of 'special measures' to ensure that women were represented. This is highly significant given the scope of the project (a half-day workshop). Unfortunately, UN Women did not plan to continue this line of work in any form, a fact that was noted by the participants.

It is suggested that **UN Women could achieve significant improvements for women's participation if it chose to focus its efforts at a provincial level**, working both with emerging women leaders (using the transformational leadership model) and provincial government executives (using TSMs) to create leadership

opportunities for women, and connect suitable women with these opportunities. Additionally, UN Women could work through civil society partners to grow the pool of women leaders in provincial areas, and work through grassroots women's networks to assist leaders to plan and respond to community needs. Over time, and having demonstrated to communities that they are able to provide for their needs, these women may gain sufficient profile and support to contest elections, most likely at the provincial level.

3.4.2 Extent to which changes are identifiable and measurable

It varies to what extent the changes occurring through the project are identifiable and measurable. The evaluation's findings around effectiveness illustrate that changes have been identified and measured as a result of the Transformational Leadership training and empowerment series. However, the impact of communications advocacy activities like the **radio series and post-election dialogue are inherently difficult to measure**. While they may contribute to changes in attitudes towards women candidates over time, they are unlikely to result in significant changes to voter behaviour in the short-term.

There is now a significant body of evidence in Solomon Islands to show that high levels of notional support for women's political participation do not necessarily translate into votes for female candidates. For example, in 2009 the RAMSI People's Survey found that, despite the fact that 81% of men and 86% of women said they would vote for a 'good' woman candidate¹¹, not a single woman came close to being elected in the 2010 National General Election the following year. Furthermore, the gender and voter behaviour study found that, despite nearly unanimous notional support for more women in Parliament, only 38% of women and 24% of men intended to vote for a female candidate and only 26% of men and 27% of women actually did.¹² The reasons for this are complex, but are largely centred around the fact that elections in Solomon Islands operate within a highly transactional political culture, where voters support the candidate they believe is most likely to provide financial and material benefit to themselves and their family, as opposed to the candidate who they believe is best able to govern the country.¹³ This does not suggest that the radio component of Strongim Mere was a waste of time (in fact, the opposite is true); rather that they are not an effective strategy for getting women elected in the short-term, and are not easily measurable.

11 Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (2009). *People's Survey 2009*. ANU Enterprise: Canberra.

12 Roughan & Wini, 2015.

13 For further analysis of this issue, see Dicker et al, 2016.

3.4.3 Evidence that the project improved candidates' ranking and votes

The activity most associated with candidates' ranking and votes during the national elections is the transformation leadership training. There is no **evidence to suggest that the Transformational Leadership training programme enabled female candidates to improve their ranking and increase their share of votes** during national elections. This is unsurprising given the fact that there is no evidence to suggest that female candidates who attend training programmes poll higher than female candidates who don't.¹⁴ While some of the participants from the Transformational Leadership training reported that the training had enabled them to pursue other leadership opportunities, an equal number reported that their decision to contest the election had a negative impact on their personal life and financial situation.

"When I agreed to become a candidate, I applied for resignation from the Ministry of Education...At the first place I took a risk, I went from \$2800 a fortnight to zero. I have five children to support and 12 others I look after from relatives who are schooling in Honiara. Now I am struggling. I asked Public Service, and they gave me long service benefit and sustained me for six months. I struggled for a year, but now I am getting on with life".

(Unsuccessful female candidate, 2014 NGE)

"I went through a traumatic personal experience. My husband left me and the children. I used our business money for my election campaign". (Unsuccessful female candidate, 2014 NGE)

While this cannot be attributed to the Strongim Mere project itself, it is important that if UN Women and partners continue to implement candidate training programmes, that they better understand the impact of unsuccessful election campaigns on women's lives and extend support to female candidates after elections.

¹⁴ Wood, 2015.

Impact recommendations

This evaluation makes the following recommendations to future programming on women's political participation in the Solomon Islands to strengthen its impact:

11. UN Women should consider working more intensively with a smaller number of individuals and/or in few locations where change is most possible; and
12. If candidate training programmes are used, female candidates who are unsuccessful in their campaigns should be provided support post-election, including de-briefing and if necessary, support to re-enter the workforce.

3.5 Sustainability

The evaluation examined three aspects of sustainability: 1) the likelihood of activity continuation, as well as continuation of benefits, after the project's completion; 2) demonstrated leadership commitment or technical capacity of SIG or NGOs to continue activities; and 3) national ownership being demonstrated. The evaluation concludes that VBMS demonstrated increased capacity and leadership commitment through the project, but other CSOs or government partners did not. In addition, most project activities did not generate sustainable benefits and ownership, aside from the radio drama series and leadership training, which was adopted by implementing partners and implemented in other settings.

3.5.1 Likelihood of activity continuation and continuation of benefits

This evaluation found that some **benefits of Strongim Mere have been maintained to some extent**, which can be evidenced by testimony from both project partners and beneficiaries. The most sustainable project activities were the Transformational Leadership training for intending candidates and the radio drama series, because they were designed in a way that allowed them to be re-used after the project finished (although this didn't necessarily always happen). For example, the radio drama was recorded in English and in Solomons Pijin with plans to distribute these to communities, however this has yet to happen.

The least sustainable activities were largely one-off workshops and events with no planned follow-up. In particular, the evaluation concludes that the Honiara Empowerment Series and the post-election radio dialogue were not necessarily designed with sustainability in mind. However, the purpose of these activities was to build information and awareness, rather than produce sustainability.

As noted earlier, the post-election Provincial Empowerment Series had significant potential to effect long-term change and showed some early results, but without any planned follow up, these are unlikely to be sustained. Participants were disappointed that workshop was not part of a genuine relationship or clear plan of action by UN Women to engage with Provincial Assemblies.

“The session does highlight the continuous flagging of women participation in politics and, yes, whilst there is a place for women to participate in politics, there also need to be a continuous relationship between the responsible SIG Ministry, UN and HCC. The progress is slow because after the workshop, there was no follow up from the workshop by the Ministry and UN to involve the HCC Women Councillor in other awareness programmes”. (Eddie Ngava, Deputy Mayor, Honiara City Council, HCC)

“I did not really understand the context in which the training was being held, so did not really think of follow-up strategies to be implemented after the training”. (Hon Jacob Sogavare, Ministry of Laurus Affairs, incl. women’s portfolio)

“If they want government for TSM, they should have planned it better and spend a little more time to explain the concept of special measures to the premier and his executive as well as the other provincial members of Malaita Province”. (Clara Rikimani, Women’s Development Officer, Malaita Province)

“No detailed plan of action on what to do next. There was no plans to push this further. They held it after the elections, one year later”. (Felix Ngeno, Minister of Commerce and Tourism, Malaita Province)

“It would have been appropriate and a big help for women’s development in Malaita Province if UN Women had produced some form of document on the subject of women in leadership and reserved seats for the Malaita Provincial Government. They should then submit the document to the Premier who will discuss it with his Executive, and if approved the paper goes to the rest of the Malaita Provincial Assembly to debate and pass. If the document is passed then it becomes an official document of the Malaita government, which is then obliged to ensure its implementation”. (Matthew Maefai, Clerk to Malaita Provincial Assembly)

This evaluation concludes that in re-configuring the Empowerment Series from a short speaking event to a half-day workshop, UN Women inadvertently increased the expectations of participants, and in doing so, failed to fully address them.

3.5.2 SIG or NGOs have leadership commitments and technical capacity

Strongim Mere project documentation refers to a number of implementing ‘partners’, who delivered or assisted to deliver certain project activities. These included: UNDP, VBMS, NCW, SIBC, MWYCFA, YWPG and Solomon Islands Electoral Commission (SIEC). An overview of the involvement of partners with project activities is provided in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Strongim Mere Implementing Partners

Project Activity	VBMS	SIBC	SIEC	UNDP	NCW	YWPG	MYWCFA
Transformational Leadership training for intending candidates	X		X		X		
A Time to Stand Radio Drama	X	X					
Post-Election Radio Dialogue							
A Time to Stand Comic Books	X						
Support to UNDP Mock Parliament				X			
Transformational Leadership training for young women leaders						X	
Transformational Leadership training for media representatives	X		X		X		
Honiara Empowerment Series							
Provincial Empowerment Series	X				X		X

This evaluation found that while working through implementing partners significantly benefited the project (particularly in terms of relevance and efficiency), the project did not always result in strengthened capacity of partner organisations themselves. This was largely due to the way that partners were engaged in the project. The only documented partnership in Strongim Mere was between UN Women and VBMS, who signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with UN Women at the inception of the project.

VBMS was the only partner who reported an overall increase in capacity as a result of their participation in the project. Josephine Taeakeni, Director of VBMS, said that she believed that there was mutual respect between UN Women and VBMS, and that their involvement in the project had increased the organisation’s overall

capacity, particularly in regards to their ability to undertake political reporting in communities.

“...it strengthened our networks and experience beyond just media and into the broader political party space.” (Josephine Taeakeni, VBMS)

In 2015, VBMS was engaged by UNDP to deliver Transformational Leadership training as part of the *Transformational Leadership for Peaceful Co-Existence* programme. Josephine believed that UNDP identified VBMS as a suitable partner for this project, in part as a result of their involvement in Strongim Mere. VBMS continues to draw on their Transformational Leadership trainers, including those based in the provinces, to deliver an adapted version of the training in a variety of settings, including on a recent trip to Temotu Province, where they facilitated the gender and leadership modules of the manual to over 70 men and women.

The remaining partners did not report an increased capacity as a result of their participation in Strongim Mere. Despite delivering significant parts of the project, NCW was not engaged directly by UN Women, but as part of an informal arrangement with VBMS. UN Women staff stated that this was in part due to difficulties engaging the NCW Board of Directors at the inception of the project (this was confirmed in an interview with an NCW staff member). A representative from NCW reported that the overall capacity of the organisation had not increased as a result of participating in the project. Other partners, including SIBC and SIEC, also reported that their capacity had not been strengthened a result of the project. Staff from SIEC did not recall much involvement aside from a one-off request to deliver training to media representatives, and SIBC felt like they could have offered a lot more in terms of expertise to the project if they were given the opportunity. This demonstrates that meaningful engagement of partners is crucial to their strengthened capacity and to project sustainability. The fact that only one partner has reported and demonstrated increased capacity ultimately detracted from the sustainability of the project.

3.5.3 National ownership

This evaluation found that the most sustainable project activities were those that generated a sense of national ownership among partners and beneficiaries. The project activity that achieved the strongest sense of national ownership among partners, stakeholders and beneficiaries, was the **Transformational Leadership training**. This was aided by the inclusion of the ToT component and development of an associated training manual that was adapted from a similar manual used in the Caribbean. There was evidence of partners and beneficiaries using the manual and its concepts in other contexts, which is an indication of national ownership, and which contributed significantly to the sustainability of the project. For example,

modules from the Transformational Leadership manual were used in a workshop with young women leaders in partnership with the YWPG.

“I have been to a few gender trainings, but the way <the head trainer> approached ‘demystifying gender’ was very effective. Now I run this session every January with the staff of my kindergarten”. (Transformational Leadership trainer)

“After the training I successfully applied for a grant from the Women’s Development Division to run a transformational leadership workshop for the women in my community”. (Transformational Leadership participant)

Sustainability recommendation

This evaluation makes the following recommendations to future programming on women’s political participation in the Solomon Islands to strengthen its sustainability:

13. In future programming, all implementing partners should be engaged in a formal MOU or partnership agreement from the outset of the project, which clearly sets out the roles and responsibilities of each organisation.

4. Lessons Learned

This evaluation points to a number of lessons learned around the project’s implementation. These can inform future programming on women’s political participation in Solomon Islands, and are further spelled out in the evaluation recommendations:

- Engagement on women’s political participation at the provincial level is important, given the potential for more immediate change around women’s representation at this level. This can then pave the way for national changes;
- Project activities should match the problems identified. In the context of women’s political participation in Solomon Islands, this means consideration of strategies to address the more extensive needs and barriers to women’s participation and how to ‘change the game’ around this;
- Engagement of local partners (including CSOs and government agencies) in all aspects of implementation, and a concerted consideration of project beneficiaries is important. There is greater potential to engage male or advocates in future projects;

- Project activities should be comprehensive with adequate follow up and ability to be adopted by local and government partners in future settings; and
- The use of radio as a medium of advocacy is effective, but more continuity is needed.

Annexes

Annex A: Evaluation participant list

Annex B: Participatory workshop programme

Annex C: Project log-frame

Annex D: Process of change workshop outcomes

Annex E: Original Project Logical Framework

Annex E: Meta-analysis of project activities by evaluation domain

= High
 = Medium
 = Low
 ? = Difficult to Measure

Project Activity	Relevance	Effectiveness	Impact	Efficiency	Sustainability
Radio Drama Series			?		
Comic Books					
Transformational Leadership training					
Support to UNDP Mock Election					
Honiara Empowerment Series					
Provincial Empowerment Series					
Post-Election Radio Dialogue			?		
Overall Programme					

